

## The Henadic Origin of Procession in Damascius\*

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The question of procession occupies much of the third volume of Westerink's and Combès' edition of the *Aporiai kai Lyseis*, and as usual it is incumbent upon us, as readers of Platonists like Damascius, in whom hypostatic refinements have reached a very advanced stage, to restore for ourselves an immediacy of philosophical significance to the speculative language of the text. This process begins, I would argue, with discerning the distinction in these Platonists between the first, self-constituting entities and the elements implied by their self-constitution. Procession is never for Damascius, nor for other Platonists, a question of the generation of an abstract multiplicity from an abstract unity. Rather, the question Damascius asks within the first few pages of the *Aporiai kai Lyseis* is how, among the existentially given manifold of things, reciprocal determination and a certain intelligible organization is immediately present: "All things are seen at once in some sort of manifold [*plêthos*] and in a certain determinacy [*diakrasis*]; indeed, we do not conceive the All without these <traits>; how, then, has a certain determinacy and a manifold appeared immediately [*euthus*]?" (DPI 2.21-23).<sup>1</sup> Damascian protology, therefore, can only truly be understood from the viewpoint of procession already accomplished.

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<sup>1</sup> *DP: Damascius: Traité des Premiers Principes*, 2nd ed., ed. and tr. L. G. Westerink and J. Combès, 3 vols. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), translations mine. *IP: Damascius: Commentaire du Parménide de Platon*, ed. and tr. L. G. Westerink and J. Combès, vol. I, 2nd ed. (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2002), translations mine. Where context indicates Proclus' commentary, *IP* refers to the latter. References to texts of Proclus are to the critical editions of his *Parmenides* commentary, *Elements of Theology* [*ET*], *Platonic Theology* [*PT*] and *Timaeus* commentary [*IT*], with all translations mine.

What presents itself immediately for reflection, according to Damascius, are two kinds of multiplicity: “All things are not in every manner of determinacy and multiplicity, but rather the summit of the Many <things> [*ta polla*]<sup>2</sup> is the One, while the monad of determinate things is the Unified, [80] and the One is simpler than the monad” (2.23-3.2). These two principles have a fundamentally different relationship to their corresponding manifolds. The monad is all things, but the One is no particular one (3.4-5). Accordingly, each manifold has its own constitutive problematic. The problematic of the monadic manifold, which is the manifold of the Unified, the ontic manifold, is that its totality is also a member of the set, its wholeness, as it were, is another part of it: Being also *is*, is a being. The problematic of the One’s manifold, that is, the unitary or henadic manifold, on the other hand, is that its totality is in a sense *nothing*: “The one coordination of all things, which we call ‘all things’, is without principle [*anarchos*] and without cause [*anaitios*], lest we proceed to infinity,” (*DPI* 2). The One is the principle of *each* of the Many, without being a unity of *them all*.<sup>3</sup> Ultimately, Damascius will affirm three virtual ‘first principles’ under the ineffable

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<sup>2</sup> I believe that it is important to try to preserve in English the fact that Damascius uses a plural term for his second principle, rather than available singulars such as *plêthos* or, as in a rare instance at *DP* III 136, the singular *to polla*. This corresponds to his preference for *ta panta*, “all things”, over singular terms for totality.

<sup>3</sup> That the ‘Many’ of Damascius are, in fact, the henads can be seen from the technical use of *polla* by Proclus in a passage referring to the henads (*IP* 1190.4-1191.7), (discussed in Edward P. Butler, “Polytheism and Individuality in the Henadic Manifold,” *Dionysius* 23 (2005), 92-93). Moreover, we find side by side with *polla* in this passage the technical use of *alla*, ‘others’, the use of which in Damascius’ interpretation of the Third Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*—of which we cannot know with certainty how much is Proclean—is heralded by Combès as “inaugurat[ing] ... a new type of negativity ... Foreign to all exemplarity, this brute negativity ... is the negativity of the *others* (*ta alla*), understood no more as simply different (*hetera*) from the One...” (“Proclus et Damascius”, in *Études neoplatoniciennes*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grenoble: J. Millon, 1996), 263). (All translations from *Études* mine.) Yet Combès does not address the evidence that Proclus vested this “antitypy” which “escapes originally from the relation of the same and the different” (“Négativité et procession des principes chez Damascius”, *ibid.*, 110f) primarily in the henadic manifold, which is characterized above all else by individual peculiarity (*idiotês*) prior to formal identity-and-difference. Cf.

non-principle, each one “all things prior to all things” (*DP* II 34.23-35.1): the One, principle of individuation; the Many, the positive unitary manifold in which there is yet no distinction between *hyparxis*, the existential, and *ousia*, the substantial, corresponding thus to an originary indivision between theological and ontological discourses; and the Unified, principle of contradistinction and antithesis.<sup>4</sup>

Damascius foregrounds the existing Proclean opposition between the unitary (*heniaios*) and the unified (*hênômenos*), which yields the two basic kinds of multiplicity—“Every manifold is composed either of things unified [81] [*hênômena*] or of henads” (*ET* prop. 6)—in order to focus ever more closely upon the founding moment of procession. Procession begins from the henads, each of whom is *authupostatos*, self-constituting, and *autotelês*, perfect in themselves. The founding moment in the procession of Being for Proclus and *mutatis mutandis* for Damascius as well, is the distinction between the henad and its power, for it is from the powers, *dynameis*, of the henadic individuals that arises the universality of Being. Thus at *DPI*.118.9-17 Damascius speaks of the distinction between *hyparxis* (existence) and *dynamis* (power) in “the First” as the “minimum distinction”, and at *DP* II 17.11-13, “the principles called two” are “the One and the Relation, which is Power, for Power is the first of all relations”; similarly, at II 20.7-8 according to “the Chaldean hypothesis” power is “the first to separate itself in whatever fashion from its proper

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also *DP* II 35.5-7, which asserts that the Many “is all things not <as> things determinate [*diôrismena*] nor things unified [*hênômena*], for they are not participants.” Non-participation is a principal trait of the henadic manifold.

<sup>4</sup> Damascius speaks of our conceiving totality according to three modes at *DPI* 3.14-17, the *unitary*, the *unified* and the *pluralized* (*peplêthusmenos*), but the latter, as the hierarchically ordered totality (see especially *ET* props. 36, 62, 95), is causally dependent upon the procession of henads into intellectual manifolds (upon which more below) and thus supervenient upon the dialectic of the unitary and the unified. Damascius is justified in dignifying intellectual multiplicity in this fashion, however, inasmuch as he affirms, in a key tension with Proclus, the fully henadic nature of the intellectual moment as such.

*hyparxis*.” *DP* II 36.4-6 shows the manner of extending the number of principles into three: “The three principles are disposed toward one another . . . as *hyparxis* and *dynamis* of *hyparxis* and intellect of *dynamis*,” i.e., (1) existential individuality (*haecceitas*), (2) property(-ies) of existence, (3) science of existential properties.

In the moment of original distinction, however, lies the roots of two divergent series, in which divergence lies the distinction between *theology* and *philosophy*. In Proclus, this difference in genre echoes the transition from the henadic to the ontic mode of unity. Philosophy’s formalizing discourse is the product of the emergence of intellectual organizations among the Gods, organizations which are in some respects necessary corollaries of the expression of the powers of the Gods and the ensuing dialectic of difference within the henadic individuals and reciprocal relations among them. In another respect, however, the intellectual organization is intertwined with culturally determinate theophanic contents, as we see in the account of the intelligible-intellective, intellective and subsequent planes in Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*, an account drawing on an array of Hellenic theological material as well as the texts of Plato.

The relationship between the unitary and substantial, between the Gods and Being, is also, concretely, a relationship of discourses, theological and philosophical, and practices, theurgical and dialectical. In the procession of Being beyond the intellective plane, an *opposition* becomes discernible between what we may term the existential and the ontic series of procession. This opposition is particularly evident in the option souls possess for reversion upon their principles either according to philosophical eidetics, or theurgical symbols.<sup>5</sup> The former express the characteristic formalism and universality or translatability

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<sup>5</sup> See Edward P. Butler, “Offering to the Gods: A Neoplatonic Perspective”, *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 2.1 (2007), esp. 18-20 on the parallel reversions.

that is the goal of the intellective organization, [82] while the latter preserve the original state of untranslatability, uniqueness and facticity characteristic of henadic existence. Damascius presses the formalization of this opposition itself to a further stage than in Proclus, by tracing the distinction between these two modes of procession back to the individual henad, whereas Proclus treats the *process* as sufficient to ground the two modes. This diachronic emergence of the ontic series through the diremption of the henadic individual and the resulting concretion of the reciprocal relations among henads is the subject of Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, as I have discussed elsewhere.

Damascius rejects, however, what he characterizes as the 'rider-and-vehicle' model of the relationship between the Gods and Being. Thus he stresses that just as on the intelligible plane "One-Being <is> a simultaneous whole, and not separated into antecedent and consequent" (*IPI* 4.11-13), so too "the unitary series"—that is, the henads as well as the theurgical series of *synthêmata* and *symbola* depending from each God—"is intertwined with the substantial <series> in each part of substance," so that "the unitary series becomes the vehicle of substance as well" (5.9-12). Being is not just the vehicle emerging in the midst of the henads, the henads are *its* vehicle as well. But Damascius balances this by speaking of an *immediate* generation in the henadic individual of two series, so that the ground of the distinction between the theological and the philosophical discourses can be traced directly to each henad. In this way, what depends for Proclus upon the cooperative action of henads—and hence in a culturally-determinate space internal to diverse pantheons—is more clearly established as happening ultimately *within* each henadic individual and as a property of that individual.

The Gods, in proceeding to full-fledged intellective activity, generate a plane of Being that is somehow really distinct from themselves, with sufficient autonomy that

philosophy can proceed as something *other* than revealed theology: “The intellective God as a whole has come to be together with a suspended substance, but *as* suspended, while the intelligible [God] as *one* is at once intellect and henad” (*IP* I 7.6-9). The ‘suspension’ of the substance produced together with the intellective activity of the Gods is both its autonomy and its dependency—this is the dilemma Damascius confronts. Philosophy has for these thinkers a constitutive ambivalence between the projects of the ontological exegesis of theological contents immediately revealed by the Gods, and the development of ontology through the exercise of free speculative and dialectical reason. Reason is guided, no doubt, by the Gods as well, and arrives at results harmonious, albeit not identical with revelation, but with a different *act-character*, and this leads Proclus to speak on the one hand ‘theologically’ and on the other hand ‘philosophically’, in his characteristic turn of phrase.

[83] The primary subject-object relationship constitutive of Intellect is between the demiurge and the paradigm, that is, between the henad in the position of the third intellective monad (third intellective ‘father’) and the henad in the position of the third intelligible monad (third intelligible triad, intelligible intellect, ‘paternal’ intellect). There are four ways of conceiving this relationship. (1) We may conceive it as wholly internal to the demiurge, since all henads are in each, and in this respect the moment of the intellect’s *subjective* positing is primary. (2) We may conceive the relationship instead as wholly contained in the paradigm, for the same reason, all henads being in each, but in this regard the moment of the *objective* positing of the intellect, the universality of being-object-of-intellect, is primary. (3) We may regard the relationship as reciprocal between two henads, in which case the relation itself is primary. (4) We may conceive the relationship as one of *participation* by the demiurge, but any participation by a henad is necessarily equivocal, because the demiurge, as a henad, does not, strictly speaking, participate anything.

In Damascius, however, there is an additional proscription falling on the side of the paradigm in this relationship, because for Damascius there is a sense in which henads must also be said to be *unparticipated*. The ‘unparticipated’ henads are, he explains, synonymous with the intelligible class—or quasi-class, as I have characterized it—of Gods,<sup>6</sup> and elsewhere that “the unparticipated henads are completely united with the participated henads, which is why we call the same ones now participated, now unparticipated, on account of the wholly inexpressible and indistinguishable unity [of them]” (*IP I* 2.17-20). Hence Damascius must reject, at least in some respect, that “the father of Intellect”, i.e., the God in the position of third intelligible triad, the paradigm or prime object of intellection, is participated (*IP I* 19.23-24). Instead, he says, there obtains here “a different [special] mode of participation; for it is as *object of desire* [*orekton*] that he offers himself to the intellect” (24-25).

This special mode of participation falls entirely within the henadic domain, insofar as *desire* is a transcendental, theological term, being said of Gods and beings alike, while ‘participation’ strictly speaking belongs to the narrower domain of the ontological. Participation in this sense is also, however, essential to the nature of the intellectual plane of Being, and therefore it would seem, according to the axiom that “Every God begins his characteristic activity from himself” (*ET* prop. 131), that to participate and to be participated are to be experienced by the Gods active on the intellectual plane. “If the Intellect [84] is also paternal,” i.e. has a properly henadic dimension,<sup>7</sup> “then there is a father of the Intellect,

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<sup>6</sup> *DP III* 107.15-108.11; cf. Proclus, *PT III* 28.100, which speaks of “the intelligible genus of the Gods” as “an unparticipated and divine intelligible”. Hence what is true of the class itself for Proclus is for Damascius applied to each member. On the intelligible class of Gods as actually encompassing *all* the Gods, see Edward P. Butler, “The Intelligible Gods in the *Platonic Theology* of Proclus,” *Méthexis* 21 (2008).

<sup>7</sup> In accord with the definition of ‘paternal’ at *ET* prop. 151 as “standing in the position of

too, and the father is participated” (*IPI* 19.22-24). The question here is really whether the status of being a God is in itself a participated property in the ‘lower’ orders, and Damascius, like Proclus, holds the line against this. In fact, Damascius, in positing the desiring relation as an alternative mode of participation, prevents any deleterious systematic consequences of occasional equivocal uses of ‘participation’ by Proclus. Establishing putative relations of ‘participation’ among Gods as relations of *desire* between them maintains the priority of the theological, for we look to mythic narrative and theophanic iconography for expressions of divine desire, and derive ontological content from that hermeneutical inquiry.

Making desire paradigmatic, as it were, also clearly renders the relationship active on the object’s as well as the subject’s side: the paradigm *offers* itself as an object of desire and hence knowledge. Put another way, “[i]f the intellect is *in* the intelligible ... then it is evident that it is united [with the intelligible] *qua* God, and thus God-to-God” (*IPI* 20.16-20). What does this mean, though, for *our* exercise of intelligence? There is no dispute between Damascius and Proclus regarding the constitution of the Intellect by the intellectual activity of the Gods. But the problem Damascius is wrestling with, ultimately, is the *objectivity* of the intellectual product of divine interaction. For Proclus, the objectivity of the ultimate categorical determinations is given by their *declination* relative to the existential status of the Gods. This begins—and, in a certain regard, of course, ends—in the first intelligible triad, where the dialectic of *hyperaxis* and *dynameis* in the divine individual results in a *conception* of the God as a Mixture, a synthetic unity. We can trust in the objectivity of the outcome of this dialectic precisely because the result is sub-divine, and that goes for each of the ontic products of divine activity all down the chain of Being. Each of these hypostases is a

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the Good” at the head of any order of Gods, and thus frequently especially in Damascius synonymous for the henadic in distinction from subordinate hypostases.



‘secular’ product, so to speak, of the activity of supra-essential henads, all the way down to the psychical and corporeal planes.

In rendering the third, intellectual moment in all of these generative triads fully and properly divine in their own right, however, through positing the Unified and adducing theological resources for it, and then reinforcing this move by framing the encounter between the intelligible intellect and the intellect proper as a relationship of mutual desire, Damascius risks opening a relativistic abyss at the very same moment that he reinforces ontology’s *existential* grounds. It seems at times, too, that he suspects he cannot help falling in—the aporetic tone of his discourse testifies to this. But Damascius [85] does not lapse into relativism or skepticism, despite understanding the potential for doing so from *within* the Platonic system itself, in which the very divinity of Being risks overwhelming its intelligibility.<sup>8</sup> But he does not solve this problem by opening a wider gap between the Gods (or ‘godhood’) and Being, but by a critique that, explicating and clarifying implications of Proclus’ account, establishes on genuinely henadic grounds the autonomy, or at least the auto-intelligibility, of Being.

The problem, for Damascius, comes down to the status of the procession of ‘external multiplicity’ (*to exô plêthos*), for example, the procession of Intellect into intellects, because this is the problem of *pure declination* as such: “Perhaps nothing proceeds according to declination [*hyphesin*] alone of the same peculiarity [*idiôma*], unless there is added to it also some difference [*diaphora*] modifying somehow according to form the things proceeding” (DPIII 5.4-7). But if simple declination involves a new *idiôma*, then so-called ‘external’ multiplicity will be ‘internal’ after all, that is, the declination will involve a

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<sup>8</sup> See, on this possibility, Eric D. Perl, “Neither One Nor Many: God and the Gods in Plotinus, Proclus, and Aquinas,” *Dionysius* 28 (2010), 182-183, who speaks of it, however, as a danger in the *interpretation* of the Platonic system.

novel formality, as when Intellect proceeds, not into intellects, but into Soul. It is not hard to see the unsettling possibilities here for philosophical cognition, the art of identity and difference, which requires sameness with respect to a property and purely numerical difference (cf. the concern regarding atomic individuals at 5.11). *Idiotês*, however, ‘peculiarity’, refers to the plane of henadic or existential determination, of uniqueness and of the primitive positivity of characters. The positive difference that can ground the two complementary kinds of ontic multiplicity, ‘internal’ and ‘external’, must therefore be sought in the henadic domain. But Proclus does not fully clarify the relationship between the positive theological processions of the Gods and these negative, eidetic processions. Damascius sets himself this task.

He begins by posing the ontological question in purely henadic terms: “whether procession is of two sorts, as the philosophers say, the one similar in form [*homoeidês*], as Athena <proceeds> from Athena, the other dissimilar in form [*anomoeidês*], as Athena <proceeds> from Zeus, or whether all procession is of one nature according to both processions together,” (*DP* III 6.11-15). Athena’s procession from Athena refers to her activity on specific planes of Being, which is discerned particularly from the revelation of contradictory mythic narratives. Thus, for example, the minor tradition making of Athena a daughter, not of Zeus, but of the giant Pallas, would in the typical fashion of Neoplatonic exegesis be treated as a procession on a plane lower than that where Athena is daughter of Zeus, both these narratives expressing processions from Athena’s henadic totality.

Damascius treats these processions as grounding [86] the *homoeidês* ontic procession, e.g., of intellects from Intellect or of souls from Soul, which produces ‘external’ multiplicity. The procession of Athena from Zeus, on the other hand, grounds the type of procession involved, e.g., in Soul proceeding from Intellect. We must not be misled by the example

Damascius chooses here, because the point is not the temporal succession in the mythic narrative, where Zeus precedes Athena, but rather the two ways in which all the henads are in each: on the one hand, the manner in which all the Athenas are in Athena, on the other, the manner in which Athena is in Zeus, or, equally, Zeus in Athena. Only through this prior structure can the issue of procession be posed in a sufficiently universal fashion, since the type of procession involving narrative temporality is specific to intellectual and infra-intellectual processions. The question regarding similar-formed and dissimilar-formed procession—which includes, under the rubric of similar-formed procession, the declination peculiar to the emergence of Being as such—has been resolved into the question regarding the two modes of henadic inclusion: inclusion of the similar and inclusion of the diverse.

*Homoeidês* and *anomoeidês* procession have therefore a pre-eidetic ground in the supra-essential determinations inherent in henadic natures:

Athena and Zeus are not *homoeidês* because they are Gods and intellects and demiurges; for these <determinations> are common [*koina*] and coexist with things-similar-in-form [*tois homoeides*] ... It is not therefore by the more common [*tois koinoterois*] genera that one must define the similar-formed, but by the more proper existences [*kuriôtêrais huparxesin*], in which also proper names [*ta kuria tôn onomatôn*] are perceived. (DP III 47.7-14)

The formal similarity between Athena and Zeus cannot rest on universal determinations, because these all lie on the side of Being, even the most generic determination of being-Gods. The ‘uniformity’ of, e.g., Zeus and Athena, and which grounds ontic uniformity, cannot itself be *formal* or common, *koinos*, but must instead be *existential* (*huparctic*) and proper (*kyrios*). It is not in any generic being-God that Zeus and Athena have their ultimate commonality, for all such qualities have an integral subsistence in the *works* of the Gods, in

Being. Rather, this commonality is grounded, Damascius asserts, in the peculiar relations that subsist between the peculiar divine individuals in question, for example, the familial relations of the Olympians. These relations, too, are works, in the sense that they are projected from the integral henadic individuality, but in a stage prior to the emergence of fully consolidated Being, Being that is integrated into itself.

Damascius follows up his reference to *proper names* with a reference below to *surnames (eponymiai)*: “And there are more generic surnames that are similar in form or dissimilar” (47.16-17). The procession from the henadic to the ontic [87] is here treated as the transition from the proper-named mode of existence of the henads to a plane of ‘surnames’, more universal determinations, an interesting manner of describing the primary phase of henadic diremption. In the class of ‘surnames’ Damascius includes the dissimilar-formed processions of henad to substance, Being to Life, Life to Intellect, Intellect to Soul, and Soul to the corporeal (18-20), as well as the similar-formed processions from God[hood] to Gods,<sup>9</sup> Substance to substances, Life to lives, Soul to souls, and “from the one natural animal the many animals of that kind” (48.2-3). From the activities and relations of proper named henads, therefore, arise ‘surnames’ or eponymic patterns displaying similar- and dissimilar-formed characters appropriate to ground the ontological functions in question. So we could speak of Athena’s eponymic pattern, her web of relations to the other Gods in the Hellenic pantheon, as producing the similar-formed series of intellective, hypercosmic and cosmic Athenas, and with these, the similar-formed *ontic* series of intellects, souls, and bodies participating their ontic principles, while also producing the dissimilar-formed series of the Gods with whom she is in reciprocal relations, resulting in the dissimilar-formed ontic

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<sup>9</sup> On the nature of this procession, see *DPI* 123.3-10, which speaks of “as it were, a single root of the many Gods ... proceed[ing] along with them, like a monad, if one may say, of the divine series.”

series of the hypostatic chain of principles homologous to the disposition of the pantheon. The inseparable nature of these processions at the henadic level thus exhibits and grounds the similarity in the dissimilar-formed procession and the dissimilarity in the similar-formed procession.

Damascius concludes the consideration of this particular aporia with a general reflection about procession. “All procession,” he concludes,

is an *ekstasis* from the producer, and all *ekstasis* carries the product off into the dissimilar-of-form. This dissimilar-of-form coexists with the similar-of-form, and perhaps one would concede that this <dissimilarity-of-form> is prior [*presbuteron*] <to the similar-of-form>. But this is not the case. For it is necessary prior to this that there be the similar-of-form as well, with which the dissimilar-of-form coexists; for each thing proceeding remains <too>, and remaining in the cause produces toward that <cause> likeness and sameness. (48.15-23)

Damascius, interestingly, half-concedes that the ‘ecstatic’ nature of procession as such grants an ontological priority to dissimilarity-of-form. This ekstasis of production would be the ontological counterpart to the primordial henadic diversity. But he demands that dissimilarity- and similarity-of-form remain strictly equiprimordial, particularly inasmuch as similarity-of-form, now conceived as ‘external multiplicity’, also has an immediate foundation in the henads. The independence of the individuals in the henadic manifold, who are perfect in themselves, *autotelês* (64.13), secured by Damascius through [88] an inquiry beginning from the phenomenal (*DP* III 65-69), thus serves also, reciprocally, to support the independence apparent in phenomenal beings such as individual souls.

The defense of polytheism is thus intimately united with the specifically philosophical inquiry “concerning each series said to be arranged under each principal monad, whether it is *autotelês* or only pluralized by illumination” (64.15-18). The point is that *both* conditions should be existentially grounded. All of the double series—the series of homoiomerous and anhomoiomerous parts, of synonymous and homonymous/heteronymous names or terms, of the vertical and the horizontal, of external and internal multiplicity—must originate in factors immanent to the henadic individual. That these different kinds of divergent multiplicity pertain intimately to one another can be seen from a passage such as *DP* III 31.1-7:

Perhaps then the division of each producer is twofold, and of the products as well, the one vertical, of the whole series unfolding according to declination, the other horizontal, of the forms and anhomoiomerous parts encompassed in itself. For the vertical division anticipated in it [viz., in the producer] is homoiomerous, and hence synonymous, while the other <division> is dissimilar in form, whence also the generation according to this is heteronymous.

Similarly, at 35.16-19 homoiomerous and anhomoiomerous division are brought into conjunction with vertical and horizontal production, respectively. Clearly, then, it is not necessary to seek a separate origin for each of these kinds of divergent series. But just how do these divergent series arise from the henadic individual? What is it in the nature of henadic existence (*hyparxis*) that results in him/her producing in these two manners, and what does this mean for our own cognition?

Damascius begins by considering the synonymous series descending from a God, e.g., the series of Zeuses descending from Zeus:

How is the series of Zeus from Zeus, one out of the many series unfolding from him? All synonymy is produced according to the whole producer, and on account of this is synonymous with the whole, even if it inclines in some respect more on account of the more particular; for all <of> Zeus is father of all the Gods, even if in some respects he has proceeded further than the Gods in him. For the duplex transcendent is everywhere whole; and if it is indeed called Zeus, and one of the partial sources in it is Zeus, as another is Helios, and another Athena (for each partial series of a God flows from a certain partial source), in this fashion if a certain source is called Zeus homonymous<ly> with the whole, it will produce also a partial series from itself. (*DP III 37.1-12*)

The synonymous procession from Zeus here corresponds to the one-to-all relationship of Zeus—or any other God—to all the other Gods. Here Damascius plays on the technical and non-technical senses of ‘father’. When regarded in his/her paternal *hyparxis*, any God supersedes all the others, who [89] are regarded as included within him/her; but this very inclusion means that in certain respects a God is also ‘younger’ than Gods to whom he is ‘father’ in the non-technical sense—some Zeus will have proceeded ‘further’, for example, than his son Apollo (cf. Proclus, *IP 936f*). This is a corollary of the primacy of every henad relative to the relations of which they are productive with others, others who may also be regarded, from a different perspective, as parts of themselves.

The ‘duplex transcendent’ (*dis epekeina*) mentioned here is often translated ‘twice-beyond’, but insofar as that which is, in turn, beyond *it* is called the *hapax epekeina*, the ‘simplex transcendent’, ‘duplex transcendent’ captures better in my judgment the sense of this technical term from the *Chaldean Oracles*. The sense of ‘once’ and ‘twice’ in these terms refers, I would argue, to the henad in its primary or ‘simple’ phase as transcending relation,

and in initial, dyadic relation respectively. The chief exemplar of this dyadic relation is, of course, demiurge and paradigm, a dyad which may also be understood as a diremption of the demiurge into intellectualive subject and intellectualive object. Hence the duplex transcendent stands for any God in an intellectualive procession, a procession which inherently involves the production of an external multiplicity of, e.g., partial Zeuses from Zeus.

The duplex transcendent may be regarded as an intelligible form, a ‘source’ (*pégê*), embodying synthetic or intellectualive unity. Note that even when the duplex transcendent “is called Zeus”, the ‘source’ or intelligible form within it that is Zeus is called such “homonymously with the whole”, rather than synonymously. Zeus, a supra-essential henad, can never be synonymous with an intelligible form. This is the difference, we may say, between Zeus as intellectualive subject and Zeus as intellectualive object: object-Zeus is only *homonymous* with subject-Zeus. Thus, the production of Zeuses from Zeus is on the one hand *synonymous* production, on the other hand *homonymous* production, the former reflecting the henad’s identity-with-self in production, the latter the henad’s nonidentity-with-self in the same process, a nonidentity manifesting itself in the henad’s presence in another henad, and *a fortiori* in the generation of ontic hypostases. Damascius continues with the procession from the source or intelligible form in its own right:

Perhaps the whole source is not called Zeus, but only the partial, or vice versa; and if the name is common, it will be homonymy. For the nature of the two is different, if indeed the one is among the universal sources and sends forth from itself one fontal series, while the other is among the partial <sources> and proceeds into principles and archangels and azones and zones, as is the norm of the procession of the sources termed ‘partial’. For already among the other whole and partial sources homonymy is seen, even if at the same time a certain kinship of nature is perceived and synonymy is



exhibited, as in the Zeuses, and in the Synoches and Teletarchs in the Principials. (37.13-38.2)

[90] On the one hand, we may take the intelligible form of Zeus as a whole of which the other deities are parts; on the other hand, the whole form can be that of some other deity, and Zeus a part of that. There is homonymy between the instances of 'Zeus' in these two situations doubling the original homonymy between the deity and their source-product. Within the product there is homonymy, too, as is confirmed by the divergent series.

Where Zeus is the whole the series sent forth is itself 'fontal' (*pêgaios*), i.e., a series of intelligible forms, and is in this respect also, therefore, homoimerous. This series must be, ultimately, a series of deities: subordinate hypostases of Zeus, but also Zeus' children among the Olympians, and more broadly the entire Olympian pantheon, since all relations among Gods are ontically productive, and more broadly still all the other Gods as such, though they are no longer deducible from relations internal to a single intellectual procession, but once given are grasped as Gods, as sources of Being, and so forth. (Let us continue to bear in mind that Zeus is merely an example, there is nothing here unique to Zeus, but all could be said of any henad, any God.) The other series mentioned here is a declension from Zeus as part, rather than as whole, a whole which is obviously established thereby as anhoimerous. It proceeds from source to principle (*archê*), to archangels, azones and zones, filling out the realm of that which, though 'real being' (*ontôs on*), is nevertheless subdivine, accounting thus for the procession of a God's subdivine potencies, and by extension the entire domain of purely ontic productions. Synonymy and homonymy alike are hence found in the properly divine series as well as in the immediate subdivine products.

In what follows, Damascius traces, in rather surprising fashion, the transition from theological to ontological determinations, emphasizing the continuity between them: “Every principle emanates from a partial source; accordingly principal Hekate is said to emanate from the Crown <of Hekate> as the principal soul and principal virtue from the partial sources according to the Girdle <of Hekate>” (38.2-6). The relationship between ‘sources’ and ‘principles’ (*archai*) is analogized by Proclus to the relationship between identity/difference and likeness/unlikeness, fixing the production of *archai* to the transition from the intellective to the hypercosmic, and from intelligible to intellective form.<sup>10</sup> The *pêgai*, as intelligible forms, have their locus in the third intelligible triad, or intelligible intellect, the henad as intellective object, but object of the intellection *of other Gods*, rather than of mere beings—hence Proclus states that intelligible forms are in immediate relationship to the Gods, but not to souls (*IP* 965).<sup>11</sup> While intelligible [91] forms are accessible to a *gnôsis* of some sort (*IP* 924),<sup>12</sup> discursive reason “is in general only competent to discern the bare fact of their existence” (*IP* 994f), owing to an inability to “project the understanding that would be adequate to them” (*IP* 925), and hence deploy them like mundane concepts. Frequently virtues are characterized as *pêgai*, generating forms as hypostatized products of living activity, shining outward from the intelligible-intellective plane.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *IP* 1191, 1198; cf. *PT* VI, chap. 1, pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> The third intelligible triad as locus of intelligible form: *PT* III 12. 46. 7-10; as “source of sources”: *ITI* 451.

<sup>12</sup> Compare *ET* prop. 121 on the ‘gnostic’ nature of divine intellect, i.e., the third intelligible triad.

<sup>13</sup> See Edward P. Butler, “The Second Intelligible Triad and the Intelligible-Intellective Gods,” *Méthexis* 23, esp. 150-154.

The transition from theologically- or henadically-determined ‘sources’ to ontic/monadic ‘principles’,<sup>14</sup> as determinative for the operations of the human intellect, is given meticulous attention by Damascius, focusing on the relationship between ‘sources’ and ‘principles’ *within* a particular deity, in this case Hekate. From Hekate’s totality proceeds, on the one hand, further partial hypostases of herself, such as ‘principal Hekate’, and on the other, processions from sources to principles in a purely ontic series occurring nevertheless as her existential projections. Damascius thus seeks to locate the transition to the ontic directly on the theological and mythic topography of a divine body and through a God’s symbolic equipment. Hence he explains, with respect to the ‘anticipation’ of series or chains (*seira*) in partial sources and partial sources in turn in universal sources, that

the partition [*merismos*] of the many internal parts of each perfect-whole [*holotelous*] source that are partitioning themselves [*merizomenôn*] is anticipated by the partial sources subsisting externally around the universal sources. For the cosmos surrounding the parts corresponds [*analogeî*] to the parts organized [*kosmoumenois*] by the very divine shape; the Girdle corresponds to the Goddess’ girdled flanks, the Crown to the temples and the front of the divine head. In turn, this division into parts of the Goddess, being horizontal and a series <proceeding> from the emanation of the hebdomad, is anticipated vertically in the monad, united [*sunênôtai*] in the impartible and whole <of the Goddess> (*DP* III 39.1-11).

To accomplish the transition Damascius intends, the henad Hekate, who is the example here, is first conceived as an intelligible form, a *holotelous* source, preparing the henad to be understood as the common origin of theological and ontological ‘parts’ alike. Damascius

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. *ET* prop. 21, which defines a monad as “having the relative status of a principle [*archês echousa logon*].”

characterizes these parts as ‘internal’ and ‘external’, but if we analyze his concrete example, we see that their disposition is virtually chiasmatic. The divisions of Hekate’s body, head, flanks, et al., express or externalize themselves in equipment (crown, girdle, etc.); clearly we are still on a wholly theological plane. But from these, as [92] we have seen (38.2-6), come further processions of Hekate that are at once theological, but also ontological moments in the procession of Being. Here is the chiasm, in which the proto-ontological divine *equipment* turns back upon the divine person, generating both divine and ontic activity. In this way, Damascius elaborates his point that the henad does not merely ride upon Being as a vehicle, but is, as it were, *affected* by the procession of Being from him/herself. This is not, however, a solely diachronic or processual division, but rather the horizontal division is vertically anticipated in her *monadic* nature, i.e., the henad as ‘unified’ or passive unity, *hênômenon*, which as we know Damascius has elevated to a fully divine, and so paradoxically *active*, moment in his system. The horizontal or formal differentiation of the Goddess occurs “from the emanation of the hebdomad,” the intellectual plane of divine activity, in which all reciprocal determinations of the henads are externalized.<sup>15</sup>

The intellectual activity of the Gods is genuinely relational, and in this field of relation horizontal, anhomioimerous, and internal difference is expressed, while the planes above and below, as it were, exhibit different forces. Thus, while the plane of radical Being or the Unified knows only homioimerous division, according to which everything is simply

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<sup>15</sup> The intellectual hebdomad is formed by each of the moments of the basic triad of divine activity being doubled by a ‘guardian’ monad, producing a structural hexad, with a seventh diacritical monad securing the total reciprocal relationality of the system, so that the fundamental structure of the intellectual activity of any God is hebdomadic in the same sense that the structure of any God’s *intelligible* activity is triadic; and in the same way that the intelligible triad is effectively a unit’s unfolding, the intellectual hebdomad is a genuine triple. On the hebdomadic structure of intellectual activity, see Edward P. Butler, “The Third Intelligible Triad and the Intellectual Gods,” *Méthexis* 25 (2012), esp. 139-141.

a *being* or a passive unit, Damascius also explains that “the manifest [*dokousan*] division” is homoiomerous (53.9-11)—the phenomenal field is homoiomerous, composed of manifest objects in just the fashion that they are manifest. But a primordial diversity underlies this homoiomerous intelligible multiplicity, namely that pure Many who do not in the first place differ *from one another* (ibid., 6-9), not because they are one and the same, but because each is one of a kind—a kind of internal or formal multiplicity prior to form. The original manifold is not all-in-one and differential, but *all-in-each*, namely, the henadic manifold.

Since there is no external multiplicity, as such, in the intelligible (54.8-10), external multiplicity *per se* arises in and through the Intellect:

[F]rom the simply Intellect<sup>16</sup> the Connective [*synochikos*] <Intellect> proceeds, and from this the Titanic, and then from this the Demiurgic. In the simply Intellect are all <of these>, but a certain one of the many in that one specifies [*eidopoiei*] each, whether the [93] Connective form [*eidos*] or the Titanic or the Demiurgic. Likewise among the many more partial; for from the Demiurgic the Apolloniacal and the Areïc and the Athenaïc <intellects proceed>, and then there is generated with respect to the more partial according to each form that should dominate, a certain whole/universal intellect subsisting by itself [*eph'heautou*] specified according to this form, as for example according to <the form of> Human or Horse; for it is necessary in this way that an external multiplicity of intellects be produced from the internal multiplicity of forms. (50.8-19)

Note that the external multiplicity of intellects is still a multiplicity *of universals*, forms generated from forms; hence the problem in assigning an external multiplicity to the

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<sup>16</sup> That is, the third intelligible triad or intelligible intellect, “an intellective God in the primary sense” in Proclus’ formulation (*PT* III 14. 51.9-11).

intelligible, for that multiplicity, which must include ultimate particulars, could not be generated by a process of specification. This is precisely why the Gods are again mentioned at this point. The Connective, Titanic and Demiurgic intellects are direct products of divine activity corresponding to the intelligible-intellective, primary intellective and tertiary intellective planes respectively. Damascius here troubles the neat distinctions in Proclus between theological and philosophical classifications. The *demiurgic* is a formal or functional classification, as is the connective, but the ‘Titanic’ class is a grouping according to ‘surnames’, as it were, that is, existential associations between certain discrete henads. It is thus an untranslatable—at least without remainder—moment of *Hellenic* theology, but provoking a declension of *Intellect itself*. This is reinforced by the declension, from the formal position of *demiurgy*, of formal specifications of demiurgy corresponding to Apollo, to Ares, to Athena. These are not participants of demiurgy in the first place; they are, in the first place, *children of Zeus*, who is a demiurge, not by virtue of participating anything, but through the power of existential *origination* of the demiurgic position, as we may say of any demiurgic God. Hence we see once more a chiasm of originary divine action and divine *reaction* to Being. What is produced by virtue of the existential dispositions of deities relative to one another is in one respect universal, in another respect particular; in one respect an internal, formal multiplicity, in another respect an external multiplicity, the externality of which is on the one hand an externality relative to form in the sense of being *posterior* to some form, but also in the sense of having an ultimate derivation from the henadic dimension *prior* to form altogether.

The primary relations belong to the primary units, the unique units or henads. But Damascius strives to understand this interactive characteristic of the henads as something pertaining to each one individually. Hence he explains that

[T]he philosophers say that each thing is threefold, <subsisting> according to cause, as Athena in Zeus; according to *hyparxis*, as Athena in [*kath*] herself; and according to participation, as <Athena> produced [*gegonuia*] in Kore, and they speak correctly, [94] except that one must define all <as> *hyparxeis*, that of Zeus, inasmuch as she [Athena] completes [*sumplêroi*] the discriminated *hyparxis* of Zeus, and that of her in herself, and that of Kore, inasmuch as she [Athena] completes the manifold of Kore. (45.9-16)

The initial formulation, as “the philosophers say”, is in straightforward accord with *ET* prop. 65, which states that everything subsists either as a principle (*archoeidôs*) and according to cause, or existentially (*kath'hyparxin*), or according to participation, as an image (*eikonikôs*). Now, as *ET* prop. 118 explains, the Gods have no attributes by participation; but Damascius harmonizes this doctrine with equivocal usages of ‘participation’ in Proclus referring to Gods of the intellective and subsequent classes. This leads him to an interesting formulation with respect to what we might term dependent included existence. There are thus two ways in which one God ‘completes’ another.<sup>17</sup> The one corresponds to some existential action that exists in both (Zeus’ being-father-of-Athena, Athena’s being-daughter-of-Zeus), the other to a purely formal presence of all in each, or a formal commonality of hypostasis (Athena and Kore as both ‘virgin Goddesses’). The latter, reciprocal participation is said to be ‘produced’, in accord with the ideal-diachronic emergence of the purely intellective determinations of Being. Mythic relationships are thus distinct from relation in and through a common form, that is, a common ontic product and *dialectical* result of divine activity. But this generated, participatory subsistence must yet be regarded from the *existential* perspective as belonging

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Proclus, *IP* 936.13-16, which speaks of supra-essential entities ‘completing’ [*plerôtikon*] their essence ‘for themselves’, i.e., encompassing their relations as powers of themselves.

to this or that deity—in the example, it must either be Athena from the perspective of Kore, or Kore from the perspective of Athena. This supplies an existential derivation for the dialectical unit in a fashion analogous to the absolute mythic relation between henads, and renders intellection at once objective *and* relative. The *likeness* of Kore and Athena helps to ‘complete’ Kore’s manifold; but insofar as this likeness is itself a product of divine activity on the hypercosmic plane,<sup>18</sup> does this mean that the cognitive operation establishing the likeness is another moment of revelation, akin to a mythic narrative involving Athena and Kore? If so, can we structurally distinguish the two kinds of divine product? I will return to this question below, but first it will be useful to see the further ontological consequences of the basic tripartition of subsistence.

Having established the three modes of subsistence on the foundational, henadic level, Damascius proceeds to explain the *dialectical* and *logical* dimensions of its operation. Hence from the triplicity of manners of subsistence is generated “more dialectically” (45.17) substance, life, and intellect according to modes of distinction:

[95] For what are called the genera of Being complete everywhere the hypostasis constituted from them, but substance <qua> unified <entities>, life <qua entities> discriminating themselves, and intellect <qua> discriminated <entities>, and the simple <intellect> according to discriminative equilibrium [*kata tēn isostasion diakrisin*], while the <intellect> ever more partial according to the inclination toward this or that of the genera or of the parts or of the forms according to dominance. (45.17-24)

Dialectic thus expresses the process by which entities emerge into reciprocal relation with

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<sup>18</sup> *Parm.* 139e7-140b5 (cf. Proclus, *IP* 1191-1201).



one another. Things are *hênômena*, unified entities, as they exist ‘causally’, because unity is the primary causality, and so the nature of something’s unity exhibits its causal derivation, as well as its own causal efficacy; but this is an *individual* determination. Next, things are present to Life, whether they are literally living things or not, inasmuch as they are interacting, but this interaction is still for each thing *for itself*, though a common space is created through this activity. Finally, the emergence of Intellect is accomplished through the units’ relations becoming concrete, from which comes declination proper. “More logically” (45.24-46.8), meanwhile, the structure in question generates, e.g., human in Animal, human in itself, and human in the participant, these all possessing *hyparxis*. The emphasis Damascius places on the existential authenticity, so to speak, of each of these ontic phases refers back to the insistence at 45.13 upon the *hyparxis* of, e.g., Athena in the three phases of her activity. It does more than refer to it, however: Damascius leverages the irreducibility of the Gods to one another in order to secure the reality of all the phases in the procession of Being, so that we are not left anymore at the procession’s end with ‘mere images’.

The procession of Being begins from internal difference—the kind seen in the forms within Intellect, the parts within the living wholes of Life, and the ‘elements’ (*stoicheia*) within substance. On the primary and most universal plane, accordingly, is elemental differentiation within the unit. Elemental determinacy is “not eidetic, nor the difference opposed to identity ... nor the difference of parts from one another, but that by which elements grow apart [*diephu*] in whatever fashion, and become many, not *simpliciter*, but as many hastening to commixture with one another.” This is an “internal coaggregation” which determines the impulse toward homogeneity of substances which have proceeded (53.15-25)—the dynamic aspect of intelligible multiplicity. This differentiation internal to the unit in turn forms the basis for a receptive unity of Being that embraces units according to their

common properties:

Thus the unified multiplicity is undifferentiated and solely multiplicity, each of the Many is undivided according to union [*kath'henôsin*], not according to mingling [*krasin*]; for as we have seen, this applies to elemental diversity, the other to the union of Many which do not differ [*henôsis tôn adiaphorôn pollôn*], which is why it signifies for us the Unified, <while> that <*krasis*> <signifies> that which is of elements; this is why the procession of that which is of elements proceeds externally, declining itself [*hypobasa*] according [96] to the differences [*diaphoras*] of the elements, while the <procession> of the Unified remains entirely internal, because there is no difference of vertical and horizontal in it proceeding to externality; for diversity [*diaphoras*] being absent <from the Unified>, it has remained in convergence upon <its> internal totality and wholeness. (55.14-25)

There are two kinds of 'indivision'. In the first place, there is the indivision according to union, the indivision of individuals whose properties are inseparable from them, which is the radical multiplicity and solidarity of the Many, the ultimate units. (Compare the "procession by way of unity" Proclus assigns to the henads at *IP* 745.) In the second place, there is the indivision which is the medium for the unit's internal differentiation of its properties. This original, internal arousal of difference in *each* unit is the basis for a community that is necessarily 'external' because it rests on the power of confusing *whose* is the property in question, the occultation of existential identity in formal identity.

Ultimately, there are two sources in the henad for ontic multiplicity: the manifold of potentially universal potencies, properties and attributes subsisting in every God, and the *other* Gods, also subsisting in every God, albeit in a different way. The former is what Damascius terms 'elemental' multiplicity, and it is the self-differing of elements within the

henad that begins the process from which the horizontal/vertical distinction arises. This process begins as the emergence of an ‘internal’ multiplicity, in which the entire procession is present as the henad’s individual development, its continuity, whereas in the relations between henads comes about the discontinuity, the expression of contradictions in the henadic individual, which produces the ‘external’ multiplicity of selves with inconsistent properties, as when Zeus is at once sole sovereign of the cosmos on the intellectual plane and one of three sovereigns on the hypercosmic plane. Henadic intersubjectivity comes thus at the cost of the formal consistency of the individual. These contradictions testify to the priority of existential individuality over formal unity. But as Damascius emphasizes, the contradictions in the henadic individual are also the source of the external multiplicity of instantiations, such that to be ‘another horse’, ‘another man’ has its ultimate ground in the God’s being *another self to him/herself*. External multiplicity arises from formal identity, which permits so-called ‘numerical’ difference. External multiplicity thus requires the emergence of forces in the henad that negate existential unity. In the indetermination of the continuum of henadic powers, and then in the solidarity of Being secured intellectually, henadic individuals experience negation from their own potencies, which acquire autonomy, in a certain respect, at their expense.

The peculiarly Platonic articulation of the law of noncontradiction is stated in overtly henological terms: “the same thing will not do or suffer [*poiein ê paschein*] [97] opposites in the same respect and in relation to the same thing and at the same time, so that if we should find these coming to be in something, we shall know that it is not the same thing but more than one [*pleiô*]” (*Rep.* 436b). Plato’s use of the term *pleiô* here, as well as the distinction between active and passive potencies, clearly informs Damascius’ technical use of this terminology to express the processual dimension he wishes to elucidate within the henadic

individual. See, for example, the prominence accorded the agent/patient opposition at *DP* II 19.26-28: “One will be the form sought after in each <case>, namely the first agent and the first patient.”<sup>19</sup> For Proclean precedent, we may look to *ET* prop. 131, in which we can distinguish the God as agent and as object of his/her own activity, and note the subtle transgression of identity implied in a God’s *superabundance*, for “that which is full is only autarchic, and not yet ready for distribution [*metadosin*].” Henadic autarchy is surrendered in some degree by the expression of power, because something of the divine person is thereby *shared*. This much is implicit in participation; and part of the reason why Damascius seeks to codify an unparticipated status for the henad is because he draws greater attention to the loss of integrity henads experience so that Being may be consistent in itself. The henad, in expressing his/her potencies, becomes contradictory and hence non-self-identical. This negation, when it is in turn negated, produces the Unified: “The Unified is produced <when> the One acts upon [*apergazetai*] the more-than<-one> [*pleiosi*]” (*DP* II 42.5-6), i.e., in the henad’s reappropriation of his/her transgressive potencies. Being is, in turn, the synthetic unity of these transgressive units: “Being is unified according to property [*têi idiotêtî*] because in it multiples [more-than-ones, *pleiô*] have entered together into the same thing” (II 25.18-22).

Internal multiplicity originates in the differentiation within the henad of a multiplicity of *elements*, a multiplicity which cannot be simply identified with the henad’s powers, although the elemental multiplicity occupies essentially the same hypostatic position as the powers, inasmuch as the Mixture, third moment of the first intelligible triad, is composed of elements, according to Damascius. We can in fact see the doctrine of elements in Damascius as providing a systematic account of the divergence between Proclus’ ‘elemental’ account in

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. also Plato, *Phaedrus* 270d.

the *Elements of Theology* and the ontology that unfolds in his commentaries and the *Platonic Theology*. Proclus seeks for his ‘elemental’ account no empirical theological resources, nor any textual loci; and this accords with the position of elemental multiplicity in the Damascian account of procession as coming *before* the intellectual activity of the Gods which yields their diacritical, narrative relations. The hermeneutic of these, in conjunction with the hermeneutic of philosophers in a given tradition, such [98] as Plato in the Hellenic field, yields the ontological taxonomy we find in the commentaries and the *Platonic Theology*. In this sense, the elemental account holds philosophy’s inherent aspiration to transparency and universality, an aspiration that already for Proclus can never reach perfect fulfillment. The hermeneutical dimension of philosophy is not a compromise, it is the divine *telos* of theophany in interpretation. Hence Proclus, when working *within* the space of the Hellenic theophany, is not concerned to apply the taxonomy of divine classes peculiar to the *Elements of Theology* (props. 151-159). We ought rather to see these classes as an attempt to articulate principles that might be applied in the uncertain space of translation.

Translation is not a space of accomplished demythologization, that *telos* which a certain basic misrecognition has repeatedly imposed upon ancient polytheisms,<sup>20</sup> but an essentially transitional and processual space, the space of elemental productivity. To know the fate of philosophy in a world of irreducibly diverse theologies, therefore, is to determine the henadic roots and trajectory of elemental production.

At *DP* II 61.7-22, Damascius explains that Being is not to be conceived as “a simple *idiôma*, like substantiality, or vitality in the case of Life or intellectuality in the case of Intellect,” but rather as

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<sup>20</sup> For a recent example, see the theory of “cosmotheism” as advanced by Jan Assmann.

a certain mediation between the element and the entire composite form, such as the entire intellectual pleroma; for the elements pass from one thing into another and are in the relation [*en logô*] of matter with respect to the form-giving *idiotês*, while this characterizes, assembles and assimilates to itself the elements ... As for the whole made up of the two [elements and *idiotês*], it is the form or the kind or the intellect or the animal or Life or Being, which we posit as first of the things so constituted.

The elements projected by the henad thus constitute as it were the matter of a composite in which the 'form' is supplied by the unique or peculiar positive character of the henad, the individuality or *idiotês*, and this structure may be generalized essentially to all beings from Being Itself, which is nothing other than the schema of this structure itself, in a certain respect. But we may regard it concretely as the very mediation between *idiotês* and *stoicheia*, in the same way that Being as radical intellect is the mediation between existence and powers (*hyparxis* and *dynameis*).

The difference between the opposition of *idiotês* and *stoicheia*, on the one hand, and *hyparxis* and *dynameis*, on the other, is that the resolution of the latter lies in the kind of ontology we find in the *Platonic Theology*, which is fundamentally hermeneutic, reading Plato's texts and the primary texts of Hellenic theology, its message that Plato's theology is Hellenic theology, that Plato is the principal philosophical moment in an indivisible, theophanic cultural edifice. The resolution of the opposition between individuality and [99] elementality, however, issues in a different kind of philosophy, exemplified by the *Elements of Theology*, which is not hermeneutical but as it were transcendental and phenomenological.<sup>21</sup> Such a philosophy operates wholly within the transitional space of

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<sup>21</sup> See the treatment of the *Elements* as a regressive transcendental procedure in Annick

translation and is thus as it were displaced, *a-topos*, because its origins precede the intelligible-intellective space in which Gods shine upon one another, the play of desiring intersubjectivity that results in myth and hermeneutics. The intelligible-intellective space is the source of the ‘concepts’ (*noêmata*), at once of divine origin and native to human languages, upon which Damascius remarks at *DP* III 140.20-141.3. ‘Elemental’ philosophy, if we may thus characterize it, expresses by contrast the *material* moment of the one-on-one theophany between an individual deity and an individual worshiper, an “intelligible abyss” we sound only at the cost of *displacing* ourselves from the divine truth of factual revelations (*ibid.*, 141.3-8).<sup>22</sup>

Radical Being, therefore, is also radically equivocal in Damascius. He explains that “We call the summit of the Unified the Mixed, constituted of elements; the intermediary the whole <constituted> of parts; the third, monad and eidetic series accompanying the monad...” (*DP* II 214). Just what *are* the elements of the Mixed, however? He suggests at II 45.23-24 that perhaps the elements in contradistinction in the Mixture “are only homonyms of [the One and the Many], with a different type of hypostasis.” Thus the actual elements of the Mixed would be underdetermined insofar as we would try to grasp them as anything other than a multiplicity of transgressed unities or “more-than-ones”. This underdetermination is seen again in his remarks that the elements of the Mixed are “at least two”, while the second principle, the Many <things>, is a *dyadic one*, rather than a dyad

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Charles-Saget, *L'architecture du divin: Mathématique et philosophie chez Plotin et Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 244f, 250-253.

<sup>22</sup> This passage, as it continues down to 141.19, suffices to show that Damascius is far less sanguine about this operation than Tresson and Metry, who speak of him having delivered a “*coup de grace*” to “theurgy” and indeed “the whole mystico-magical universe” (“Damaskios’ New Conception of Metaphysics,” in Berchman and Finamore (eds.), *History of Platonism: Plato Redivivus* (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005), 235f). For Combès, by contrast, philosophy in Damascius is “the inquiry into the critical conditions of the consciousness of salvation” (*Études*, 281).

strictly, “and many <things> and unlimited as plurality and unlimitedness are each only one, while individually [*têi idiotêti*] many <things> and unlimited. *The elements of the Unified are not there, then*” (*DP* 42.1-5). Plurality and unlimitedness are single qualities, but with the *property* of being many, or rather, they are as such *many properties*. The second principle is not a dyad because it is not an *antithesis*; antithesis, contradiction, is in the Unified.<sup>23</sup> The significance [100] of ‘at least’ here is that the Mixed does not have just so many elements as its abstract parts. But if the elements of the Unified do not come from the second principle, does this cast doubt upon our ability to conceive Being as “intellecion of *dynamis*” (II 36)? Damascius is ambivalent about identifying the radically plural Many with the continuum of power(s), the latter being too smoothly integrated into ontology: at *DP* II 15, he at first states that the Many are to the One as “power relative to *hyparxis*”, but then takes it back, for “in truth it is not like this either (for power is of substance itself).” If philosophy has these two grounds then, one effectively in the individual henad alone, the other in a henadic collective, then philosophy itself is homonymous, with the power and responsibility to intervene in the hermeneutics internal to diverse pantheons or traditions on behalf, not of a totalizing, universal other, but of the *concrete others* who are members of these very manifolds—the Gods themselves, but also, by extension, their worshipers, that neither be reduced to mere moments of substance.

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<sup>23</sup> Thus Combès speaks of the Unified as a synthesis *a priori* (*Études*, 287, 332 et al.) and of the *De principiis* itself as a “phenomenology of the soul”—phenomenology, that is, in the Hegelian sense (*ibid.*, 254).