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for the Modern Greek Studies Association
of Australia and New Zealand (MGSAANZ)
Department of Modern Greek
University of Sydney NSW 2006 Australia
Tel (02) 9351 7252 Fax (02) 9351 3543
E-mail: Vrasidas.Karalis@modern.greek.usyd.edu.au

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**MODERN GREEK STUDIES
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Editors

VRASIDAS KARALIS & MICHAEL TSIANIKAS

Book Review Editor

HELEN NICKAS

Text editing: **Katherine Cassis**

Address for all correspondence and payments

MGSAANZ

Department of Modern Greek, University of Sydney, NSW 2006 Australia

Tel (02) 9351 7252 Fax (02) 9351 3543

E-mail: Vrasidas.Karalis@modern.greek.usyd.edu.au

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for his heroic efforts to make this journal readable.
This issue is dedicated to Véronica and Andras.*

TIM BUCKLEY

The University of Sydney

AN ONTOLOGY OF FREEDOM IN
PROCLUS' *COMMENTARY IN PARMENIDEM*
1022.24-27

“The smile, then, represents the invisible and hidden activity of the divine, whereas laughter represents its progression onto a more visible plane; for laughter is more perceptible than a smile...”¹

Proclus the Neoplatonist is best known as head of the Academy in the middle of the fifth century, and as an interpreter of the works of his master Plato. His commentaries on the dialogues of Plato are filled with esoteric interpretations of seemingly mundane details of the dialogues – the number of interlocutors, their ages, where they are sitting and the like. The example I have quoted, which serves as the point of departure for this article, is memorably odd. In the dialogue that bears his name, a smile shared between Parmenides and his protégé Zeno is suddenly recalled and given meaning, linked with Zeno’s laughter at Socrates’ importuning of his master.

To many minds such interpretation has been seen as doing violence to the dialogues, and as being no manifestation of a true Platonic tradition. To engage in forced metaphorical interpretations of the dialogues seems to augur badly, to suggest that from the outset something has gone wrong. That is one perceived problem. More generally, the dependence on the Platonic text demonstrated thereby has been interpreted as evidence of the feeble and derivative state of later Greek philosophy. Without seeking to defend Proclus on all the many charges that have been laid against him, I want to examine some of the ideas that lie behind these more “fanciful” elements of the commentaries. In particular, I would like to return to one of the more disconcerting and controversial aspects of his thought – the scope and meaning of symbol.

There are many ways of investigating Proclus’ interpretive strategies, some more and some less obvious. As much of what follows is less than straightforward, and some of it unapologetically speculative, I would like to frame this as an *ad hominem* question, demand-

ing the answer from Proclus in his own terms. What could allow Proclus to make such bewildering edifices of his commentaries around Platonic texts? And how might he have justified or explained these edifices? Immediately we are not just looking at symbol or any other instrument of meaning, but at the capacity that allows the instrument to be wielded.

What I want to argue against is a watered-down version of symbol which sees it as analogy “with a twist”.² Particularly when this twist is made insufficiently plain, or seems too minor to account for the peculiarities of Proclus’ interpretations of the dialogues, we need to return to square one. Symbol allows a smile, a twitch, to represent the most sublime operations of the Good, while the trope of analogy is a deliberate use of proportion to shape meaning. Where symbol is inherently unpredictable, even unreasonable, analogy as we understand it here betrays an essential reasonability. And whereas symbol comes unannounced, hidden from common inspection, analogy announces its intention in its very construction. It is true that the exegesis of symbol can be framed in such a way as to resemble analogy, and can function as an eccentric analogy, just as the example at the head of this article is structured in the classic analogical series A:B::C:D;

smile : invisible divine activity :: laughter : divine activity revealed

but the content of this example also works against its structure. It is not so much the unusual nature of the relations between the terms of this series, as the fact that A and C *represent* B and D without necessarily closely *resembling* them. This is the heart of the matter – that in symbol there is a programme of radical identification of objects, rather than a proportioned comparison of objects through likeness. So when symbol and analogy are seen as being parts of a sliding scale, I feel their indisputable difference has been ignored. At the same time, I think that this idea of a sliding scale *is* fair, and is a reasonable response to the vagaries of Proclus’ use of these two terms, symbol and analogy. Proclus’ confounding of the terms is frustrating in the extreme, and for him the word analogy can encompass anything from the Aristotelian definition thereof, through mystically charged catalogue of procession from the One, to a grandiose way of saying of “um, kind of...”.³ A great many of the “analogies” in the first few books of the in Parmenides are in fact symbols. So clearly there is some intimate connection between these terms.

Rather than limit the problem to the linguistic level, I wish to locate symbol within the broadest outlines of Proclus’ metaphysics. The main impetus for such a broadening of scope is to be found in this catch-all term we most commonly find discussed in relation to symbol, analogy. Analogy is in some ways better understood than symbol, and can be more succinctly defined and passed over; and yet the sheer breadth of its non-linguistic function is such that we may find it difficult to bring together its various elements into a more general understanding. Of particular concern is the fact that analogy, beyond being a specific linguistic

pattern, is for Proclus a *universal* patterning and structuring, murkily described, and seemingly ubiquitous. Most mysterious of all, but of the greatest interest, is the fact that it is nigh on impossible to determine whether analogy arises out of or gives rise to a universal structure. In one of the few places in Proclus' writing where he might give a solution, the chain of logic is willfully tautological.⁴

Beyond the general interest of giving an account of this extra-linguistic aspect of analogy, there is the far more important fact that in some fundamental way this structuring aspect of analogy gives rise to the human soul, and the faculties it possesses. This is a point I will develop throughout this paper.

Given this breadth of scope, our task will be one of differentiating symbol from analogy not by treating them as members of the same class, but by positing a construction of symbol *out of* analogy. In this way we may avoid treating them as either mutually exclusive on the one hand or essentially undifferentiated on the other. This approach will mean not spending so much time dealing with symbol per se, but charting a path towards it from analogy. Of course this movement towards symbol will invoke other elements of Proclus' psychology and metaphysics. As is often the case in short articles, I must apologise in advance for the summary manner in which some of these other elements will be brought into (and dispatched from) the argument.

The first step in this path towards symbol is to elaborate some of the characteristics of analogy that make it a precondition not just of symbol, but of human activity in general. This means saying something about the soul's unique position in Proclus' universe, and the way its nature is defined by this unique position.

THE SOUL IN AN ANALOGICAL SYSTEM

The system that all Proclus' writings describe is a hierarchy. Its structure is complex and refined, but at all levels exhibits symmetry and comprehensiveness. These latter qualities result from the described structure being a product of the overflowing goodness and generosity of the first principle, the One itself. Symmetry is most clearly seen in Proclus' interpretation of the second part of the *Parmenides*. This dialogue's second section had, since at least the time of Plotinus, been taken as a metaphysical blueprint. Rather than taking these dialectical exercises as displays of dialectical wit, as exercises or games, Plotinus made them markers of the procession of the entities from the first principle. Over the centuries separating Plotinus and Proclus variations of this mode of interpretation proliferated – indeed it is one of the few relatively uncontroversial markers of what we call Neoplatonism.

What distinguishes Proclus' (and his master Syrianus') particular version of this theory is its emphasis on symmetry. Of the nine hypotheses that Proclus recognises in the *Parmenides*,

he allows that only the first five correspond to real objects. The first of these is of course the One itself, while the next four map out the defining elements of the system that arises out of the One. The last four hypotheses are then taken to be demonstrations of the absurdities that follow if one denies the first principle.

Of the five “real” objects described, the third and central object is the human soul. This is a potent expression of the recurrent image in the dialogues of the soul’s position between the glory and the abyss, or as being composed of opposites. We may chose to link it with statements of the division of soul and body (as are found in the *Phaedo*), the divisions in the soul itself (as are found in the *Phaedrus* and *Republic*), and with the structuring of the soul in opposites such as we see in the *Timaeus*.

MEDIATION AND PSYCHIC STRUCTURE

The nature of Proclus’ philosophy is one of mediation. It is an axiom that everything contains every other thing, each according to its nature.⁵ Mediation is ultimately an expression of causal relations which inhere in the structure of things, and of Proclus’ dynamic ontology, in which the universe is the outline of a process of emanation from, and return to the One.

In the case of the human soul, it should be clear that its central position makes it a focus of mediation, even a product of it. In aligning the soul with the third hypothesis of the Parmenides, midway between the one and the many, Proclus can treat it as an amalgam of one-and-many, surely the most succinct expression of its mediating nature. Proclus states explicitly “Each soul is all things...”⁶

We can best understand the ramifications of the placement of the soul among other objects in light of Platonic descriptions of the soul’s internal constitution. Just as the broader system of Proclus’ thought forms an external hierarchy that embraces the soul, the *Republic* gives a vivid, if complex, picture of the soul’s internal hierarchy. The more venerable Platonic doctrines are fitted into later and broader structures in ways which reinforce their similarity, like Russian dolls. A third stream of psychology that supports a hierarchical view of the soul can be traced through Aristotle’s *de Anima* and Plotinus’ treatments thereof.⁷

So when a faculty, phantasia for example, is by common consent placed midway in the hierarchy of the soul, or when human freedom is described as a middle state,⁸ this can take on an unusually loaded significance in Proclus’ psychology. This is a point I will develop in the remainder of this article.

We have reached a point now where we can at least see the chessboard, and most of the pieces have been put in place. To continue the metaphor, what will follow may not constitute a real exhibition of chess, but will at least demonstrate some of the peculiarities and niceties of the game.

FREEDOM AND MEDIATION

From what I have already said about Neoplatonic interpretations of the *Parmenides*, it can be seen that all levels of reality are characterised primarily as variations of unity and plurality. At the top of this scale is the One itself, and at its base is matter, plurality without unity. As we have seen the soul is neatly placed between these extremes. What I have not yet made explicit is the link between unity and power. This is most simply expressed in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Proposition 62: "Each multitude as it is closer to the One is lesser than more distant things in number, but greater in power."⁹ The more like to the One something is, the greater is power and causal range, so that it can resemble the One in giving rise to lower entities. Furthermore, as we follow the types of power manifested further up this chain it can be seen that a measure of unity is to be self-constituting as well as giving rise to other things: "Those things which have being through themselves and self-constituted existence precede all things that proceed from another cause."¹⁰

The human soul is characterised by Proclus as just such a form of unity as will guarantee its own existence: and it is precisely in proportion to its unity that this guarantee resides. Thus in a specific sense the soul as a *henad* – a part of the divine procession of unity into multiplicity – already has a particular form of freedom, which we would more accurately call autonomy of being.¹¹ But it is equally true that entities such as daemons and gods will also be self-constituting. In what way then is our type of unity and autonomy of being peculiar, and how does this relate to our more tangible liberty and will?

The one-in-us, the particular unity to which the human soul is anchored, is extremely odd, largely as a result of the medial position of the soul which is so much the focus of present discussion. Although it is called "the flower of the soul", the "print" and "image" of the One itself, and given other mystical names, it is equally true that the one-in-us, remarkably, does not exist. To be more precise, it is called the "seed of non-being".¹¹ If we investigate this name in light of the soul's mediation of all things we can begin to speculate about some unusual possibilities. Non-being is the province of the highest and lowest things, by transcendence and deficiency respectively, those most distant realms of Proclus' philosophy. What kind of non-being could the soul encompass at the very midst of things?

From descriptions of the one-in-us as the image or print of the One, it is clear that we are not possessed of a part of the One itself, at least not directly. But what of the other possibility – that the soul encompasses something that we might well call material, for want of a better word? It is at least tenable as a possibility, or as part of the solution, and it is not unusual in Proclus' hermeneutics for the lowest to find meaning in comparison with the highest.¹² Moreover, it would help to explain why the one-in-us can so often fail to restrain us from evil and ignorance, and can seem to be little more than a cipher – in other words, can perhaps

account for the peculiarities of human freedom. For the purpose of the present study, I will defer decision on the exact nature of the one-in-us, with a view to seeing what results might flow from identifying it with either or both the highest and lowest forms of non-being.

FREEDOM AND MEDIATION II

The ambiguity of the one-in-us that I have described in many ways is mirrored by the double nature of $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\phi'\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ in Proclus' philosophy. This thing, literally "what is in our power", our capacity to will and to act, is described as being not of the highest, nor of the lowest, but of the middle rank: not because it is a static median point, but because it can be equally impelled upwards and downwards, towards and away from the Good.¹³ And though we find the human soul anchored to a median point, it is worth noting that the anchor itself, the one-in-us, shares just this same tendency towards identification with the highest and the lowest elements of Proclus' philosophy. But what other reasons may lead us to forge links between $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$ and $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\phi'\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$, and what might this mean for our discussion of freedom and the use of symbol? This question takes us into the realm of Proclus' doctrines concerning power and its outflow from the entity that produces it. The following passage shows that $\tau\acute{o}\ \acute{\epsilon}\phi'\ \eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ possesses a radically intensive quality:

"Ubique autem rursum illud praexistere dico, scilicet qualem impetum et electionem characterizare to in nobis, et esse hoc animae opus in ipsa manens, *ineferibile in universum.*" (my italics)¹⁴.

To understand fully the implications of this passage, we need to bear in mind some tenets of Proclan causality. Entities give rise to powers, and the range and efficacy of a power in direct proportion to the ontological (or me-ontological) status of that which gives rise to it. Thus, the powers that naturally flow from the One itself extend across and limit the entirety of the all (in a way that immediately summons up the image of analogy). Obviously, if the one-in-us were quite this exalted, it would give rise to powers in the soul that would embrace the universe. A concomitant of power is some extension beyond the entity that produces it.

But as this quotation makes clear, there is an intensity to our freewill, a potential that cannot extend out to operate on other entities – it is *ineferibile in universum*. If it is a power, it is one which remains immanent in the soul, rather than flowing out from it and converting back to it as should happen. Why should this be?

With an understanding of the peculiarities of the one-in-us, one can approach the problem from the other side, and ask what kind of power could flow from something which is perhaps more a béance than an entity.¹⁵ The highest element of the soul is also that which is least likely to give rise to a standard dynamic system.

The one-in-us seen as an expression of poverty as much as of grandeur must give rise to a power which is similarly unique in its deficiency and value, and such is the *inecferibile opus* which Proclus describes. Clearly this power is one which *could* lead to characterisations of freedom such as those we gave in the first example. As a power that stems from a trace of the One itself, this freedom can allow the soul access to communion with the One, but at the same time can lead one into the depths. It will be a power characterised by external impotence, an inability to mould the world to itself, and yet in invoking it in a discussion of symbol, we allow that it can work upon the most diverse elements to create expressive order.

The intensive nature of this power may seem, in light of this possibly negative source of generation, to explain nothing of the great scope of human freedom in its own milieu, in human society. But it should be apparent that impossibly cramped as the range of freewill is in comparison to the vastness of the system that encompasses it, within this minute range the entirety of that system is mediated. To turn inward is to encounter a microcosm. And at the centre of this microcosm is the blank point, τό ἐν ἡμῖν ἔν.

FREEDOM AND SYMBOL

Freedom becomes an extremely important part of our discussion when we turn to the subject of language, and in particular symbolic use of language. I have been at pains to demonstrate that freedom can be placed, with some ingenuity, within the limits imposed by the symmetries of Proclus' metaphysics and psychology. Beyond that, I have linked these symmetries with the non-linguistic aspect of analogy. This has been done somewhat haphazardly, and can only be the subject of bald affirmation in an article of this length. Moreover, I have not explored the range of analogy, beyond affirming that it bears the trappings of ubiquity. (It should be clear that we have by now cast off the provisional, Aristotelian definition of analogy.)¹⁶

To recap, analogy plays a key role in Proclus' metaphysics – in fact it plays *too* big a role to account meaningfully for linguistic analogy (i.e. that form off analogy that we have just now sloughed off), and the symbolic use of language. It is, among other things, an expression of the wholeness of the Neoplatonic universe, and its order. As a guarantor, product, or power of this symmetry, analogy effectively places limits upon the Neoplatonic universe.

This extra-linguistic sense of analogy is the primary one in Proclus' philosophy, and the linguistic sense is logically dependent upon it. Analogy may well said to be a precondition upon which the universe is founded – that there will be a unifying and thorough-going power of communion which will bind the highest to the lowest. But it must immediately strike one that analogy, framed in these terms, will be insistently symmetrical, and in its linguistic guise, such symmetry can only be at the expense of expressiveness. I say symmetrical, and not merely relational, because it is the nature of analogy to create order without

necessarily privileging higher terms over lower. Thus, the One itself and matter are given expression through negative analogy as two fields of non-being which lie beyond the frame of being. In this instance analogy itself does not accord these higher and lower position, but produces meaning out of their symmetry.

Thus analogy accounts for parity, but it is precisely a lack of parity which allows for the symbolic use of language. That is, each relevant term in the dialogic tableau can be paired one for one with a theological fact, but while the doctrinal content will inevitably fit within the schemata carefully laid out in Proclus' theology, the details of the dialogue will be by their very nature haphazard and mundane. The parities that are expounded are arbitrary, insofar as Parmenides' smile for example can represent whatever Proclus wants it to represent so long as the symbolic exchange is relatively thorough, and will account for other parts of the tableau. In short, any parity to be found in symbol is of a superficial kind, and does not go any way to explaining what processes are actually involved in Proclus' symbolic interpretation of elements of the dialogues.

Analogy as a principle of universal organisation links the lowest to the highest, and through doing so, binds all things together. But it does not follow from this that once this binding has been achieved, any item, particularly any item or event of human experience, can be tied by that same principle to any other thing and produce meaning. The reason for this is simple enough: an event is transitory, stabilised and given meaning perhaps only through language: on the other hand, the universe bound together through analogy is necessarily eternal, or at the very least eternally generated in conformity with the whole, as is the case with matter. Matter itself, for all the bad press it can receive from Plotinus, is a permanent fixture of Proclus' Neoplatonism, and a valued adjunct thereto. To an even greater extent, the manifestations of form and unity in the material world are of value, and in this capacity can be linked analogically with higher manifestations of those same principles. But specific events themselves, the fleeting waves that ripple through matter and time, these pass, and cannot be woven into any permanent or meaningful configuration through analogy. Nor can the *infimae species*, the brow of Socrates or the smile of Parmenides, bear true analogical ties to higher entities without doing violence to any theory of forms.

(I must mention that Proclus' truly analogical statements can be no less spectacular than the instances of symbol that have been remarked. The cascading series of linked entities that share a sun-like or moon-like aspect, from for example the god of the Sun itself down to the humble heliotrope flower, is a powerful and wonderful construction worthy of Hölderlin.¹⁷)

Given the amount of latitude allowed by these observations it is clear that the freedoms invoked by the commentator are great, and cannot be explained by making mention of analogy and passing on. It is also clear that freedom is the point around which this discussion should revolve, and its relationship to analogy.

As is to be expected, each element of this discussion can be ultimately traced back to the One itself. Analogy, to be understood as a kind of erotic impulse which binds together lower and higher, is of the most mysterious genealogy: and as I must emphasise, this mystery is precisely in proportion to its seeming ubiquity. There is properly no part of the Proclan system from which it is absent. Where it fails, the universe itself comes undone, or can go no further. More than describing or framing a principle of likeness, it demarcates the extremes of being and non-being. As a power of the greatest imaginable range, it flows in some ineffable way from the One, in order that it might span the gulf from this highest principle down to matter, the uttermost reflection of unity: no other source could give rise to a power of such magnitude and range.

Although analogy thus seems somewhat mysterious, there can be no doubt about whence it ultimately springs: it seems in some way to be an articulation of the superabundance of the first principle, a natural and inherent ordering of the One's generosity. As for τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, it presents a more easily traceable genealogy, even if this genealogy is controversial or dubious. I have already suggested that it is a power, but a power with tendencies quite the opposite of analogy. While analogy extends to the limits of non-being and embraces all between them, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν seems to be incapable of even emerging from the entity which gives rise to it: it is *ineferibile*. Nonetheless, both stem from and extend to the limits of being. In the case of analogy I have made this clear enough, in its binding of the two furthestmost levels of (non-)being; matter is connected with the One, but by a negative correspondence, which depends upon the more central levels of being as a term of reference. The one is as superior to being as the other is inferior to it, and being becomes the criterion for this similarity.

In the case of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, it is by the present description a power which arises out of the one-in-us, which is an absence within us. But this absence is in turn given its unique properties by analogy. In the same way that matter and the One are aligned in a negative correspondence, so too the absence within us, lying as it does at the centre of our being, and thus at the centre of everything, is placed in a negative correspondence with both the highest and lowest things. Its deficiency may become by analogy a representation or imprint of the highest non-being.

But just as this absence is the mid-point between the One itself and matter, so it should and does bear the imprint of the both. One might say that the one-in-us derives its transcendent darkness from the One, and its simple lack from matter: both are woven together in the most intimate operation of analogy. The very faculty that we are trying to extract from the standard description of analogy is a product of analogy itself: the one-in-us, which I am using as something of a bulwark against too great an application of analogy to question of symbol, turns out to be the apogee and flowering of analogy.

So we begin to see that a discrete matter, such as the free use of symbolic language in the commentaries, very quickly floods out into discussion of the most far-reaching principles,

and of the basic interplay of being and non-being. The soul's central position, and the ontological peculiarities thereof, are revealed as determinants of our freewill, and by extension of our free use of language.

What should be apparent is that whereas analogy is a principle of fecundity extending over the greatest range, τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν is intensive, personal, and fundamentally negative.

If one's autonomy is an activity directed inward to its source, and if this source itself springs from the workings of analogy, there must be a point at which the two can be seen together, and their relationship gauged. In particular it will be of the greatest importance to find out whether the negativity that I have ascribed to our freedom is to be seen in any actual negating capability, and if such a capability exists, to determine its extent. At the risk of doing too little with the evidence thus far amassed, I will give the following guess.

We know our use of language is, along with τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, a fundamentally human faculty, and that in its use there is the constant displacement of lexical items through metaphor. In other words, aside from any volitional basis to language per se, there are clear examples of structures in language which are generally accepted as being willful deviations from an imaginary standard of usage. If one tries to describe these variations referring them back to analogy, one faces the problem that analogy is the cause and expression of the ordered symmetry of the world, and not of deviation from this order. Analogy gives the human soul its central place in the scheme of things, and those faculties which attach to this central position: among which are those powers of autonomy which allow for the possibility of change and reordering.

But if one thinks that this change and reordering is accomplished by the unmediated agency of analogy, one is mistaken. One must therefore look to how something like τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν can run counter to the stratifying tendencies of analogy and give rise to the identification of diverse objects we find in symbol. We have accepted that τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν is in some form negative: one would need only assume further that it may negate analogy or aspects of analogy for this capacity of identification to be explained. Furthermore, because the power of human autonomy is directed inward one can easily see how such a negation might be sharply limited in scope. One also sees what preconditions in analogy itself might make this negation possible. For we are looking here at the absolute centre of things, and at this middle point there seem to be several ways of describing how freedom might arise out of analogy. The following seems to me preferable. We might imagine it reaching a point in which the opposites which it unites are so close as to be identical – in other words, at the centre where an upper and lower term cease to exist – and thereby have no identifiable efficacy at this point: this point would be the sphere of τὸ ἐφ' ἡμῶν, the tiny but all-important range in which this capacity is effective.

Indeed, it would be precisely in this unimaginably small range that one could credit the collapse of analogical structure down to a singularity, within which meaning can be rebuilt

according to the dictates of the soul's need for meaning and expression on its own terms. One notes that analogy is the agency behind both elements of this interaction. It brings to bear all the outer mediations that surround this middle point, and in some way presents – or makes present – the entire contents which it comprehends. But it is also at this focal point that its very mediation of being and non-being can allow human freedom a sphere of activity. Perhaps these are merely two ways of saying the same thing.

If we choose to describe human freedom in this way, we need to mark out clear lines along which we may imagine its intersection with language. Does all use of language exhibit the kind of radical freedom that we have been discussing? Indeed, is everything we do suddenly raised to absurd grandiosity if we impute to human will a deeper reservoir of doctrine than befits it? The simple statistical expedient of going through Proclus' work leads to the conclusion that he did not see much inherent greatness in human activity and will. Indeed, looking at his frequent condemnations of error and misjudgment one is left with the feeling that two ideas which are often confounded in the single word freedom, nobility and capriciousness, have for him separate existence: in fact, they are so divided that it may be that neither really deserves the term freedom. What we may generally think of as free action may simply be for Proclus evidence that while there is only one real path upwards, there are a million illusory ones leading down. What are then these two freedoms, neither really conforming to our general notions of that concept?

The freedom that conforms to our ideal of human will as something inherently noble on the one hand, but does not encompass its capriciousness, is, according to my suggestion, an expression of our unique unity, the one-in-us. Through one's experience of this central element of soul one is granted the self-sufficiency and power of a unit in the great unfolding of the One itself into lesser forms of unity and multiplicity. One has become an active part of that great truth which philosophy seeks; but in so doing, one's acts become strangely circumscribed. They have nothing of the indeterminacy and variety, the *freedom* of more ignorant activity. Truly one is free because one is responding to what is authentic, and yet one's response is essentially one of assent and devotion. Moreover, there is no guarantee that this freedom will be anything more than fleeting – Proclus on several occasions mentions that this experience of unity must be recaptured over and over, and is no instant and permanent satori. Therefore, one's workaday life, even if it be filled with teaching, prayer and ritual, must in some way fall short of true freedom. Under what force then are we acting the vast majority of our lives? – which question leads us to the other half of the schism, a freedom of capriciousness bereft of nobler purpose.

The answer is, disturbingly, that our normal capricious activity is an expression of our unique unity. But as I have reiterated, our unity may have two aspects – one which transcends being, and one which falls short of it. If one can imagine the soul giving expression to this lower aspect, it would follow that the expression would be of an illusion, a powerless defi-

ciency. So it could be that what is produced is simply the chattering and shadow-play of φαντασία, the soul's faculty of internal presentation. In other words, there are really two forms of freedom, one which is real, the other which is a shadow; one which has the leads the soul ever onwards to manifestations of greater and greater unity, the other which is can have no inherent direction, but in its directionlessness signals something of the material and low. Both aspects of freedom stem from the equally ambiguous unity which the soul encompasses.

According to this sketch of freedom, most normal language use, indeed most of life itself, is reduced to the palpitations of fantasy. Two points must be made in this regard. Firstly, such a denigration of life's activities would be in keeping with most strands of Platonism; and secondly, even in its material wobbling, its meaningless fiction, human capriciousness is in some way tied to the primal unity, and must be accorded some worth therefor.

This account also includes within it something of a warning of how little progress has been made within the limits of this paper. For the aspect of Proclus' use of symbol that prompted this investigation, its apparent caprice, links it with the lower as well as the higher exercise of will. That in itself leads to a half dozen equally plausible scenarios as to what kinds of interactions between will and imagination, illusion and truth can be sustained by the present model to describe Proclus' compositional practices. Nor have we come any closer to finding why one should act under the aegis of one kind of freedom and not another. It seems that behind freedom lies a murky proto-freedom that can decide which aspect of the soul's unity is expressed. That way leads endless regression and disaster, not the most pleasant way to wrap things up.

In the end, I suppose this has become as much an argument for an ontology of freedom as it has been a discussion of symbol. Returning to the image of the smile and its interpretation, I am aware that only a fraction of its symbolic nature has been conveyed: but until we further explore the geometry of Proclus' world and the fecundity of its order, we may find that symbol will always be remote from us. It's time we began re-appraising not so much our understanding of Proclus, as our decisions on where to enter into dialogue with him, and the power these decisions have to radically affect our understanding of his thought.

NOTE: At a certain point in this essay I use the term *béance* (cf. footnote 15) to describe the one-in-us as a kind of gap; going over all my materials I have been unable to locate the source of this idea, but am indebted to its author (who is, at least, French) for many of the ideas in this section of the article.

NOTES

- 1 *in Parm.* col. 1022.24-27; This passage is now infamous enough to have been referred to both in Dodds' *Elements of Theology*, p. xxvi, footnote 1, and Morrow's and Dillon's translation, *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, p. 330.
- 2 By analogy, I suppose I mean the kind we are familiar with from Aristotle (*Poetics* 1457b16-19), and which appear abundantly in Book IV of the *in Parmenidem*, in the criticism of various analogies for the participation of objects in the forms. This is in distinction to the radical reinterpretations of Platonic text which Proclus is indiscriminately pleased to call either analogy or symbol.
- 3 Examples of each are respectively: *in Parm.* col.744.36-745.1; *ibid.* col.1045.7; and *ibid.* col.1200.32-40.
- 4 *Ibid.* co.915.20-26.
- 5 *El. Theol.* Proposition 103, p. 148 πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἐκάστῳ cf. Proposition 195, which is a specifically psychological framing of the same principle.
- 6 *El. Theol.* Proposition 195 p. 170.
- 7 *de Anima* was one of the first books studied by Proclus upon entering the Academy as a young man, studying it under Plutarch of Athens *Marinus vita Procli* section XII.
- 8 *Enn.* IV 3.31; *de providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis*, in *Opera inedita* col. 191.39 sqq.
- 9 *El. Theol.* p. 58.
- 10 *Ibid.* Proposition 40 p. 42.
- 11 *in Parm.* col. 1082.9-10.
- 12 cf. J. Trouillard *La Mystagogie de Proclus* "Sanctuaire et abîme" pp. 119-138.
- 13 *de Prov.* pp. 191.23-192.21.
- 14 *Ibid.* p. 183.25-27, p. 177.37-41 in Cousin's *Opera Inedita*.
- 15 See endnote.
- 16 If pressed, I would say that this form of analogy is still markedly different from symbol, and does not rely on a radical application of human freedom in the way that symbol does. Such analogies as are seen at the beginning of Book IV do not differ greatly from the taxilogical series later in that book (col. 874-75 and 903) except in their tendentiousness.
- 17 *On the Hieratic Art according to the Greeks*, ed. Bidez p. 148.10-15; cf. *in Parm.* col. 903.

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PROCLUS**HYMNS**

(Translated by Tim Buckley)

HYMN TO THE LYCIAN APHRODITE

We sing the Queen of Lycia,
Aphrodite who is virgin.
Once my homeland's lords who spoke with
voices of gods set in our town
her holy form, and her power of
safe-keeping filled them.

Her statue
held symbols of noetic
marriage – the noetic
wedding of fiery Hephaestos
and Aphrodite of the skies,
she whom men have called goddess of
Olympia, and through whose strength
many times they evaded death's
ruinous arrow and set their gaze
on virtue. From her confinement–
bed was born eternal offspring,
divinely wise, and everywhere
there was peace in life, peace with its soothing gifts...

Mistress, accept this offering
of my well-made song – I too am
of Lycian blood. And once more
lift a soul from shame into beauty –
it flees the dreadful pricking of

mundane desire.

HYMN TO HELIOS

Hear, King of intellectual fire, Titan
 holding golden reins: Hear, steward of light,
 lord, who hold the key to the font of life,
 who pour out on the material world
 a reach stream of harmony from above.
 Hear! Central throne over the firmament
 is yours, yours is the bright band at the heart
 of cosmos: All things you fill with your fore-
 thought, waking within them thought.

Planets

wear as belts your perennial torches
 and send down from their ceaseless easy dance
 in season fertile rains to men on earth.
 Under your coursing, as it turns upon
 its tracks, each thing springs up by seasons' law;
 at your shining forth from ineffable
 sire the roar of elements colliding
 ceased. The band of Fates, implacable, cedes
 to you, rewinds the thread of compelling
 destiny at your wish – You are almighty,
 yours is encompassing power.

Descended

from your line sprang Phoebus, king of song that
 is swayed by god: to the accompaniment
 of guitar he sings inspired, lulling to
 sleep a great wave of generation that
 roars and booms. And Paëon grew out of
 your ecstatic revels, that put aside
 all ills – Paëon whose gift is as honey,
 who makes of well-being law, by filling
 the broad universe with order that soothes
 all pains.
 Some sing to you as Dionysus'
 famed father, some sing you in the furthest deep
 of matter, Euios Attis – others
 cried your name aloud to strains of music –
 Adonis the lovely. But terror strikes
 at demons at the threat of your swift whip:
 destroyers of our lives, vicious plotters
 against our sad souls they are, that in the
 crashing depths of life these should suffer always,

succumbing to the yoke of the body,
 where they forget the bright and vaulted court
 of their father.

But you, best of gods, fire-crowned
 blythe spirit, image of all-creating
 God, leader of souls, hear, and purify
 me forever of all imperfection,
 accept my supplication built of tears.
 Rescue me from this mournful tar, and keep
 far distant from me Vengeance and its powers,
 calm the eye of Justice as it races
 over everything, and always my soul
 commend to your holy and blessed light
 through your powers of safe-keeping.
 Cut through this poisoned air that kills us, and
 give to my frame the soundness and the health
 that are its greatest treasure. Then set me
 upon glory. Let me share in the gifts
 of the Muses, those *filles aux cheveux de lin*,
 according to the faith of our fathers.

For my besotted faith give me, o lord,
 if you please, happiness that will not crumble
 like a cloud. You can do it easily,
 perfect everything, for you have the strength
 and boundless power. And if dire end
 comes to me through those threads spun by the stars,
 through the fateful spindle's coiling strands, then
 you, Avert! – cut it with your terrible glance.

A GENERAL PRAYER

Hear, gods who hold the rudder of sacred wisdom,
 who have touched a fire that leads on the mortal souls,
 and draws them to the deathless ones (they leave their black
 pit, they are cleaned in the hymns' secret liturgy). Hear
 great rescuers, and grant to me holy light from books
 haunted by gods – and flash through the drear, so I can tell
 apart immortal god from man. But do not let
 foul imp work its evil, holding me down under

floods of oblivion forever, far distant
from the blessed ones. Do not let an icy vengeance
bind my soul with life's cables when it has sunk down
in the frozen waves of birth and death. My soul would

not wander so long. So then my gods, my captains
of dazzling know-how, Listen, and as I scurry
to that track that runs to the heights, tell me of the
mysteries and orgies behind your tales divine.

HYMN TO ATHENA OF WISDOM: A FRAGMENT

Hear me, child of Zeus, Zeus Aegis-bearer,
springing from that paternal source, of that
noblest lineage. Manhearted, shield-bearer,
mighty, child of power, Pallas, brandisher
of spear, Tritogeneia, gold-helmed,
Hear me, and accept this hymn my lady
with kind judgement. Do not leave my story
to the vain winds, you who have opened gates
of wisdom trodden by gods, who conquered
Giants of earth, the race that fought heaven;
who shunned the lust of Hephaestos and
protected the adamantine bridle
of your chastity...

HIS EPITAPH

I was Proclus the Lycian
Whom Syrianus made
Recipient of his doctrine.

A shared tomb holds both our bodies
Would that a single place might take our souls.