

## The metaphysical “monistic” approach of the Platonic *Timaeus* by the Neo-Platonist Proclus

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In this article, we focus on Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Timaeus* (30a3-6) about how the divine Demiurge intervenes in matter. It is an interesting extract due to the fact that Proclus manages to combine philosophical perspective with theological interpretation and scientific analysis. In the six chapters of the article, we present the theory on dualism established by the representatives of Middle Platonism, we approach the question of the production of the corporeal hypostases, we examine limit and unlimited as productive powers, we explain production in the sense of co-production as well as why matter without qualities is excluded from the entire procedure, and we discuss the principle of the supremacy of the supreme Principle. The most important conclusion drawn according to Proclus, who adopts moderate skepticism, is that, although in his early dialogues Plato tends to dualism, he does this for methodological purposes, for Plato’s views are actually connected with ontological monism.

### *Introduction*

One of the main characteristics of Neoplatonism was the effort to re-establish – under the new terms and conditions which emerged in the meantime as a result of the development of the history of thought and investigation– the Platonic –and everything that was meanwhile formed: that is the Aristotelian– philosophy in the field of Cosmology. As it was inevitable, the revival would be affected by the middle philosophical tradition and the new tendencies that were gradually formed by the representatives of this School. For example, the metaphysical orientation that had dominated since the second century BC had

an impact on the questions about the creation, structure, and function of the natural world.<sup>1</sup> Philosophical reflection, despite the fact that it kept strong rational elements, was orientated towards theology as well, leading to a growth of the teleological interpretative models.<sup>2</sup> As expected, the relevant conceptual systems were enriched and any former concept received a new meaning. This was a different world from that of the classical or first post-classical antiquity. The difference was obvious on interpretation and scientific investigation, which during the Hellenistic period was fascinating, mostly in the fields of Physics and Mathematics. So, personalities like Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus a) had already composed the past tradition, b) had reconstructed it in some critical points, and c) had suggested new methods for approaching it. For instance, the leader of Neoplatonism, Plotinus, had devoted his second Ennead in cosmological questions, while the fifth and the sixth in metaphysical topics, which however defined the cosmological. Although in these works Plato and Aristotle are extensively utilized, his direction can be more or less placed in a new theoretical spirit. He contends that the supreme ontological reality is the One-Good, which defines in an extreme structural accuracy both the metaphysical and physical procedures. Its emanation gradually causes the Intellect, the direct product of which is the archetypal Platonic Ideas, and the Soul, which is divided into two parts, the superior and the inferior, and constitutes the middle between the metaphysical and natural world. It is the direct productive cause of matter, which is not self-produced but a product. So, according to the leader of Neoplatonism, all sensible beings receive their being from the fact that they participate in Ideas, namely the products of the Intellect. In a more analytical perspective, this participation is due to the projection of the Ideas in the Soul of the world, as seminal reasons. These reasons are divided into superior and inferior ones. The superior reasons are

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<sup>1</sup> A particularly interesting collection of studies recently published on this, with an emphasis on Proclus, is the following: Butorac, David & Layne, Danielle, *Proclus and his Legacy* (Berlin-Boston 2017).

<sup>2</sup> For a general approach of the new tendencies, cf. Saffrey, Henri-Dominique. *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris 1990). In the concentric chapters of this study, there is an excellent combination of the historical with the systematic perspective, which allows to explore how the conceptual schemata and the explanations are formed, at least from Iamblichus to Damascius, in the context of a Greek cultural environment that was in close communication with Eastern religious-philosophical Schools and had proposed new compositions, which actually appeared in the sense of how they could be applied in both the cult procedures and the daily moral actions, which mostly rely on Theoretical Reason.

part of the best part of the Soul, that is to say, that which faces the Intellect and the One. The inferior seminal reasons are placed in Nature –through the inferior part of the Soul– and particularize the original supreme emanation of the One. But, Plotinus considers this particularization as a completely opposite condition to the One, as its radical otherness, since the natural universe has not originally assimilated the illuminations of the One. Regardless of this –at least first– axiological relegation of the natural world, the One is the primary cause, which means that we can from now on refer to what is defined as monism.

Under these circumstances, Proclus the Neoplatonist (412-485) attempted to comment and interpret the Platonic dialogues.<sup>3</sup> In fact, he synthesized philosophical perspective with theological explanation and scientific analysis, in a way that, despite the epistemological difficulties he had to face, was impressive and could be easily described as a sort of research modernism. He presented this synthetic –but not paratactic– approach mostly –comparing with the rest of his works– in his major treatise entitled *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*.<sup>4</sup> This treatise can be easily considered as the most important work –not only of the Neoplatonic School– on Cosmology or metaphysics of immanence –as well as on Natural Science and Mathematics. It is to be mentioned that in his view matter and the natural world are positive things, since they are the products of the good volition of gods and they are explicitly approached in a teleological way. In this article, we will analyze his comments on the following extract of the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*, where there is a description of how the divine Demiurge intervenes in matter, a question which is approached by Proclus in the three perspectives mentioned before –as a part of his theory about the progression from metaphysics of transcendence to metaphysics of immanence: οὕτω δὴ πᾶν ὅσον ἦν ὀρατὸν παραλαβὼν οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἄγον ἀλλὰ κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως, εἰς τάξιν αὐτὸ ἤγαγεν ἐκ τῆς ἀταξίας, ἡγησάμενος ἐκεῖνο τούτου πάντως

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<sup>3</sup> Proclus has also commented on Plato's *Alc. I*, *Cra.*, *Prm.*, *R.*, *Ti*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bastid, Paul. *Proclus et le crépuscule de la pensée grecque* (Paris 1969), pp. 119-207. This study presents the main points of Proclus' commentary on the extract, while, in some cases, it also stresses the basic details of his particular subject matters, which are actually best known for their originality in relation to the Neoplatonic past. An extensive monograph on the whole Commentary on *Timaeus* remains a desideratum, in order his epistemological foundations and research goals to be scientifically presented. André-Jean Festugière's as well as David Theunis Runia's and Michael Share's comments included in the relevant translations of this great text are quite important, for they provide great historical and systematic information for a better understanding. Note that both the translations, in French and English, are important for understanding the text.

ἄμεινον.<sup>5</sup> “He found everything visible in a state of turmoil, moving in a discordant and chaotic manner, so he led it from chaos to order, which he regarded as in all ways better”.<sup>6</sup> The most important point of this comment is that Proclus intends to prove that approaching this Platonic extract under the terms and conditions of ontological dualism does not correspond to its true content.

### 1. *The theoretical perspective on dualism of Middle Platonism*

Proclus begins his comments with Plutarch’s and Atticus’ positions<sup>7</sup> on that unordered matter pre-exists prior to the ordered, regular and formed structure of it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Timaeus*, 30a.3-6.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Waterfield, Robin (trans.) and Gregory, Alex (intr.-notes), *Plato: Timaeus and Critias* (Oxford-New York 2008), p. 18. Gregory contends that according to Plato “prior to the intervention of the Demiurge, there is chaos. The Demiurge will not only establish order, but will also generate harmony in the cosmos”, as well as that “a basic assumption throughout *Timaeus* is that order is better than chaos” (ibid., 127), both ontologically and axiologically. Cf. Festugière, André-Jean. *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, (Paris 1990), pp.106-108. From the cosmological point of view, this is a very interesting passage. The crucial part is «ὄσον ἦν ὄρατόν». It is the process to render sensible, which relates only with what God is able to conceive, for humans had not yet been produced. Note that the word «ὄρατόν» describes what is potentially sensible. But, is it possible this view to reduce God’s gnoseological capacity? Now, new questions arise. For instance: a) why past continuous («ἦν») and not present continuous («ἐστίν»)? β) Is it possible to relate sensory perception with the divine, which for Plato is constantly intelligible (both ontologically and gnoseologically), i.e., as being independent from any physical-natural procedures? We should also keep in mind that the founder of the Academy uses metaphorical language and that is why it is necessary to decode it both scientifically and philosophically.

<sup>7</sup> It is not clear here whether Proclus implies just the theories of these two thinkers or a circle which supported them. There was possibly a tradition that was based on the ontological dualism, which gradually and mainly after Middle Platonism changes. It should be also mentioned that the temporal priority of the unordered matter over the ordered one does not necessarily result in dualism, for it is quite possible that there are two different levels in which either the Demiurge intervenes or the divine properties are assimilated. In fact, this is probably the distinction from which Proclus’ elaboration that we will analyze begins. About Philo, cf. the extremely analytical description of A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, pp. 521-605.

<sup>8</sup> In the ancient text, we find the phrase “ἀπὸ χρόνου”, obviously because according to Proclus time comes into existence together with cosmos, although in the second book of his comments on *Timaeus* the philosopher gives little priority to time, which is presented as a spiritual power of the natural world. Or, in more technical terms, he considers time as the cosmological factor that makes able nature to manifest and utilize its capabilities, in the developmental sense of teleology, which is not an automatic procedure. However, this expression causes some problems, both textual and systematic, such as a) it does not explicitly appear in Plutarch’s text and b) it is not clear whether it indicates a starting point of a pre-existing time. This pre-existence appears even if we translate the

Intending to give also emphasis to the entire axiological question related to the nature of the cosmological procedures with respect to their starting points and successions, he also says that according to Plutarch it is important to keep in mind the distinction arisen from the Platonic *Laws*<sup>9</sup> between the “maleficent” and the “boniform” Souls.<sup>10</sup> Either way, Plato proves throughout the entire reasoning (to 899d) that boniform Soul (including its separations) is the ontological factor that regulates the natural world and its movements<sup>11</sup>, a

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expression as “one moment in time”. The question here is as follows: did time pre-exist while there was disorder?

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Plato, *Leges*, X, 897b. According to Plato’s text: «...καὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ψυχὴ χρωμένη, νοῦν μὲν προσλαβοῦσα ἀεὶ θεὸν ὀρθῶς θεοῖς, ὀρθὰ καὶ εὐδαίμονα παιδαγωγεῖ πάντα, ἀνοία δὲ συγγενομένη πάντα αὖ τάναντία τούτοις ἀπεργάζεται». In a broader sense, Plato seems to recognize that Soul not only has cosmological capabilities but also personal-intentional properties, with actually educational foundations; a metaphorical meaning, here too, is a fact. Proclus explains: «εἴρηται γοῦν ἐν *Νόμοις* τὴν μὲν ἀγαθοειδῆ ψυχὴν ὀρθὰ καὶ ἔμφορα παιδαγωγεῖν, τὴν δὲ κακεργετὴν ἀτάκτως τε κινεῖσθαι καὶ τὸ ὑπ’ αὐτῆς διοικούμενον πλημμελῶς ἄγειν». It is quite interesting that the Neoplatonic scholar uses the term “ἔμφορα” instead of “εὐδαίμονα”, which, as Runia and Share point out, is something that he also does in *De mal. subs*, 27.12 [cf. *Proclus: Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus, II, Book 2: Proclus on the Causes of the Cosmos and its Creation*, Runia, David Theunia – Share, Michael (trans.-intr.-notes), New York 2008, p. 250]. It could be said that “εὐδαιμονία” is for him a more general term than the condition of “ἔμφορα”, which basically owns exclusively logical features, that is, it is a logical structure of ranks and procedures for reaching eventually “εὐδαιμονία”, in the sense of the most important “ὁμοίωσις” of the sensible world with God. It should be also mentioned that the distinction between the two souls in Plato could be considered as the basis of how the Soul appears in Plotinus, which we briefly presented in our introduction.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, II, 381.26-382.7. In fact, Plutarch says that this (maleficent) Soul will later participate in the Intellect, Reason and Prudence and will receive these properties, so that god will turn it into the leading power of the natural world. It is the moment at which matter will be also transformed into something new, so that to contribute to the production of the world. Now, this new state has nothing to do with its original state, which was in a complete disorder. Proclus makes matter able for particular actions, which though do not explicitly appear in Plutarch’s text. We shall present more systematically these positions in the main text.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. for instance, A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, pp. 123-128. It is important to keep in mind Proclus’ comment that here Plato does not mean matter; he actually refers to a more developed cosmological condition. On this: “Si la matière si meut d’elle-même, s’il n’est de mouvement que par une âme, ne faut-il par concevoir une Ame de la matière, et, nécessairement, puisque les mouvements de la matière sont désordonnés, une Ame mauvaise? Ainsi raisonne Wilamowitz (1). Le malheur est que notre morceau des *Lois* (896 c 6- 898 c 8) ne fait aucune mention de la matière, bien que cette mention paraisse absolument indispensable si l’on maintient la coexistence des deux principes: dans ce case en effet, le seul moyen d’expliquer l’Ame mauvaise est de l’identifier à la matière (2). Platon ne devait-il pas le dire, ou au moins l’insinuer?” (p. 127). Therefore, maleficent Soul is not excluded, for it explains the original disorder of matter. On the other hand, is it possible this negative –as Festugière’s remarks support this meaning– term to depend on the procedures of the natural world, which has not yet completely assimilated what the Soul, which carries the whole metaphysical planning, has provided? In other words, is there a

point that is attempted to be proved by direct sensory observation as well. The Neoplatonic philosopher, however, will attempt to elaborate these views or, at least, to put them in a broader perspective, despite the fact that Plutarch's and Atticus' suggestions do not seem to be at a first glance different from what is written in the Platonic text. His main principle will obviously be that matter does not exist on its own, but it is produced by metaphysical powers or divine beings which are gathered together in order to perform production by following a particular plan. So, he explicitly and by definition tends to ontological monism and his different position from the Platonic dualistic example appears to be crucial, although later he will clearly follow a different analysis and different arguments compared to those which he believes that Plato follows.

It is interesting that the reasoning process to be followed by Proclus to reconstruct the positions of the philosophers to whom he refers, is, as in all of his treatises, typical of his great methodological accuracy.<sup>12</sup> In order to establish even more the systematic way in which he organizes his reasoning, he uses relevant topics of the History of Philosophy. So, following the structures of his argumentation, we could contend that they are coherent arguments, which leads us in that he is a consistent scientist. He applies these instruments quite consistently to support the theory of monism. The preceding Neoplatonic philosophers and especially his teacher Syrianus were also supporters of this theory. But, Proclus broadens the foundations of monism, by introducing new philosophical bases or renewing the former ones. By following the preceding philosophers, he presents a metaphysical world which is the only productive cause of the natural world. He organizes the metaphysical world in an extremely accurate way, mostly according to the theory on

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transition of a property or state from the effect to its cause? Or, is Soul a negative reality due to the fact that it did not originally intervene in a crucial way? There could be many other questions with no appropriate or valid answers. This multi-potentiality is quite obvious, which proves that a deep inquiry that is attempted. Note that Plutarch in a following comment –to which Proclus will refer immediately after– says once again that the Soul pre-existed in an unordered and unconceivable condition and that after the intervention of the divine Demiurge was put in order and received great productive capabilities. We should mention though that how the maleficent Soul will be explained is necessarily also defined by what is the example adopted, monism or dualism.

<sup>12</sup> This methodology not only is strictly part of Proclus' theory but also reveals the leading exponents of formal Logic, such as Aristotle, Speusippus and Porphyry. About how Proclus utilizes these thinkers and mostly Porphyry, cf. the following study: Smith, Andrew. "Porphyre and the *Platonic Theology*", in: A. Ph. Segonds and C. Steel, *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne* (Paris 2000), pp.177-188.

henads, which gives him the opportunity to preserve the ontological distinction between Metaphysics of transcendence and Metaphysics of immanence. He presents henads as the productive energies and powers of the first Cause, that is, the One-Good, through which he organizes the entire metaphysical system, which does not directly communicate with this Principle, for it communicates with it only through henads.<sup>13</sup>

## 2. *The question of the production of the corporeal hypostases*

At the beginning of his analysis Proclus describes the way in which the Platonic point of view is presented by Plutarch and Atticus. Proclus explains that according to them matter, during being ordered by the Demiurge himself, starts to follow a specific procedure –obviously for the formation of the cosmos. Extending this, we could say that they actually admit that matter is gradually activated so as to contribute, as far as this is possible, to the production and form exemplification of the sensible world. Thus, according to their dualistic example they adopt, matter is not considered as a passive condition, at least from one point onwards, but as possessing intention and active acceptability. On the other hand, they make a comment about the improvement of the products that an originally negative ontological condition causes. According to them, a maleficent Soul, certainly not in its original state or while being unordered, becomes able to appear in a positive way. Specifically, since it participates in the Intellect, it can be included in a new positive state after the interventions that it accepts by the Demiurge, which are utilized in an opposite to its nature way. By extension, it makes the movement of the natural world rational and ordered. Therefore, the fact that matter is ordered is due to its participation in Form, while the fact that the Soul is ordered, regardless of how it is evaluated, is due to the fact that it is full of the presence of Intellect.<sup>14</sup> That is to say, these two realities, which are considered to be essential factors for the formation of the natural world, are not on their own capable of adjusting, organizing and forming themselves. They need a superior reality to interfere or

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<sup>13</sup> Proclus elaborates the topic of henads in *Inst.*, props. 113-165 and in the first six chapters of the third book of *Theol. Pl.* For a thorough and systematic approach, cf. the Introduction of this book by Saffrey, Henri-Dominique and Westerink, Leendert Gerrit (Paris 1978, IX-CXIV).

<sup>14</sup> Concerning Atticus' positions cf. fragm.23; concerning Plutarch's positions, cf. his treatise *De an. Proc.*, 1014 B – 1016 C.

give assistance to them. In addition, exactly by participating in superior to them realities, they eliminate any negative or unordered characteristic they would possibly possess as a result of their original unordered state. Proclus' view is initially quite clear: both the unordered matter and the maleficent Soul are prior to the ordering and, therefore, we could argue that according to his view dualism is taken for granted. From this point onwards, however, his goal is to use the appropriate argumentation to disprove it.

Although he does not state clearly his agreement or disagreement on this –and despite the fact that he obviously does not adopt the dualistic example, so there is actually an indirect answer– the Neoplatonic philosopher mentions that he could never accept the idea of a special kind of priorities or developments in the sense that suggested by Plutarch and Atticus. He actually stresses that those who follow Porphyry and Iamblichus<sup>15</sup>, who are

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<sup>15</sup> These views are mentioned in the passage 382.7-12. Information about Porphyry's worldview can be found in Philoponus *Aet.*, where he says the following: «οὐ γὰρ ἴδιον τοῦτο τοῦ παντός πρόβλημα, καθὸ πᾶν ἐστίν, λέγω δὴ τοῦ κόσμου, εἰ ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἶδους ἔχει τὴν σύστασιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ τυχόντος καὶ μερικοῦ σώματος γενητοῦ τε καὶ φθαρτοῦ, οἷον τοῦδε τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ τῆσδε τῆς γῆς. Ὅτι δὲ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἀληθές, μάρτυς καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Πορφύριος· καίτοι γὰρ εἰπὼν γενητὸν λέγεσθαι τὸν κόσμον ὡς σύνθετον ἐξ ὕλης καὶ εἶδους προελθὼν καὶ ἐξηγούμενος τὸ 'παραλαβὼν ὁ θεὸς ὅσον ἦν ὁρατὸν οὐχ ἡσυχίαν ἄγον ἀλλὰ πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως κινούμενον' φησὶν ἐπὶ λέξεως ταῦτα 'οὐκ ἔστιν ταῦτὸν κόσμος ποιήσις καὶ σώματος ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ αἱ αὐταὶ ἀρχαὶ σώματός τε καὶ κόσμου, ἀλλ' ἵνα μὲν κόσμος γένηται, δεῖ σώματα εἶναι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι, ἵνα δὲ σώματα, δεῖ ὕλην εἶναι καὶ θεὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιγινόμενον ἄλλο μὲν, ἵνα σωματωθῇ ὕλη, ἄλλο δέ, ἵνα τὰ σωματωθέντα ταχθῆ» (164.8-23). [“And why does he conduct his investigation as though it relates [only] to the universe as a whole? The problem as to whether it is constructed of matter and form is not one that is peculiar to the universe (that is, the world) qua universe but one that arises in relation to any and every individual corporeal object that is generated and perishable, as for instance a particular volume of water or earth. Porphyry himself is a witness that this is true. Although he has previously stated that the world is said to be generated in that it is composed of matter and form, later, when commenting on the words ‘the god, taking over all that was visible, not at rest but moving in a discordant and disorderly manner’, he, to quote his exact words, writes this: The making of the world and the creation of body are not the same thing, nor are the beginnings of body and of the world the same. For the world to come to be, both bodies and God must exist, for bodies to, there must be matter, God, and supervening [form] (one lot so that the matter may become body, and another to give order to the things that have become body)”. (*Philoponus: Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World* 6-8, v.2, trans. by M. Share, London-New York 2005, pp. 39-40)] The main point here is the difference between the integrity of macrocosm and the corruption of microcosm, which would be interesting for modern natural scholars, for it raises the question about the incorruptibility of matter. From Philoponus' point of view, we draw the following as well: the cosmological process as a demiurgic development requires the original existence of both god and the bodies, which are formed by the way in which god encounters matter, since he provides it with qualities-properties-laws-functions, which possibly contain energy. The next phase is how the expressed through the bodies matter will gain order in a holistic sense. Particularly interesting is that the emerging forms of matter are placed in an ordered structure, in order macrocosmic ordered reality to come into existence. For the time being, two are the questions: a) what is the relation



between god and the Forms, both per se and with respect to their ordering interference? b) What is the difference between a hypostasis (which is associated with a body) and production (which is associated with the cosmos)? According to the context, the order in which the bodies are set – obviously by the divine planning – is the state of production, which is supervenient and serves a particular set of goals and objectives. The main, however, question, which has not been yet solved, is the following: does matter pre-exist or not? In another passage, Philoponus says about Proclus the following: «ὅθεν κινεῖσθαι μὲν φησιν τὴν ὕλην ὡς ἤδη τὰ ἴχνη τῶν εἰδῶν δεξαμένην, πλημμελῶς δὲ καὶ ἀτάκτως, κινεῖσθαι δ' αὐτὸ τὸ ἀτελὲς τῆς εἰδοποιίας καὶ ἀδιάρθρωτον· εἰ γὰρ τῷ τεταγμένῳ τὸ ἄτακτον ἀντίκειται καὶ τῷ τελείῳ τε καὶ διηρθρωμένῳ τὸ ἀτελὲς τε καὶ ἀδιάρθρωτον, τὰ δὲ τέλεια εἶδη τῆς τεταγμένης κινήσεως ἐστὶν αἷτια, καὶ τὰ ἀδιάρθρωτα ἄρα καὶ ἀτελεῖ καὶ οἰοῦναι ἴχνη τῶν τελείων τῆς ἀτάκτου κινήσεως αἷτια ἔσται. Ταύτας οὖν τὰς ὑποθέσεις λαβὼν ὁ Πρόκλος ὁ καὶ πρὸ τούτων δείξας ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ λόγου, ὡς καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ὕλην ὁ τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργὸς καὶ τεχνίτης ἐποίησεν, ἐπεὶ καὶ πᾶς τεχνίτης αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ τὴν οἰκείαν ὕλην παρασκευάζει, καὶ ὅτι καὶ τὰ πρόδρομα πάλιν τῶν εἰδῶν ἴχνη, ἐξ ὧν πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως κινουμένη γέγονεν ἡ ὕλη, αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῇ ὁ τῆς ὕλης δημιουργὸς ὑπέστησεν, συλλογίζεται ἐφεξῆς, ὡς οὐχ οἷόν τε ἐστὶν κατὰ χρόνον ταῦτα ἀλλήλων διακεκρίσθαι, ὡς πρώτην μὲν τὴν ἀνείδεον ὕλην ὑφίστασθαι, εἶτα ἐφεξῆς αὐτῇ τὰ ἴχνη τῶν εἰδῶν ἐντίθεσθαι καὶ τρίτον τὸ ἄτακτον κοσμεῖσθαι τε καὶ τάττεσθαι, χωρὶς εἰ μὴ τῆς ἐπινοίας, φησὶν, ταῦτά τις ἀπ' ἀλλήλων χωρίζοι» (542.25-543.20). [“Hence, on the one hand, he says that matter moves in a discordant and disorderly manner since it has already received the traces of the forms, but, on the other hand, he says that what moves is the incomplete and inarticulate precursor of the production of forms. For if what is disordered is opposed to what is ordered and what is incomplete and inarticulate to what is complete and articulated, and if the complete forms are causes of ordered motion, then the inarticulate and incomplete forms – traces, as it were, of the complete forms – are causes of incomplete motion. By making these assumptions, then, Proclus, who even before, at the start of his argument, had shown both that the creator and craftsman of the cosmos also made the matter itself (since every craftsman prepares his own appropriate matter for himself), and that the creator of the matter Himself caused the precursors of the forms, i.e. the traces from which matter came to be moving in a discordant and disorderly manner, next infers that it is impossible for these states to be temporally distinguished from one another so that the matter without form would exist first, and next the traces of the forms would then be placed in it, and thirdly what is disordered [viz. the matter plus the traces] would be ordered and arranged – unless, he says, one separates them from one another in thought” (*Philoponus: Against Proclus on the Eternity of the World 12-18*, v.3, trans. by J. Wilberding, London-New York 2006, 57)]. The second text reveals the procedure during which the Demiurge produces both matter and the traces of the Forms as prior states of their complete presence, that is, not capable yet of forming with productive-paradigmatic automatic procedures the perfect order, which will come in a following phase, which though is not a later provision, as a metaphysical bestowment, than the traces. Or, to be more accurate, this is a divine specification which gradually leads matter to its perfection. It should be also said that matter gradually assimilates what has received from the Forms. Therefore, the question is whether Proclus makes this distinction exclusively for theoretical-analytical reasons. A crucial ontological point in the distinction between monism and dualism is how “πᾶς τεχνίτης αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ τὴν οἰκείαν ὕλην παρασκευάζει” will be explained, where the terms “ἑαυτῷ” and “οἰκείαν” raise questions about the co-existence of the Demiurge with matter. If co-existence was accepted, matter would not originally be subject to time, but only in a later phase at which modulation begins. This question needs further discussion and will investigate it by following Proclus’ passage. A strong possibility is also that Philoponus exercises a sort of strict criticism in Proclus, so that he derives some conclusions which do not come from the texts. The fact that he is a Christian leads him probably to do so. Another thing to be investigated is whether the judgments of those who follow Porphyry and Iamblichus correspond to what Proclus says, as well as whether the three

not named here, are clearly opposed to this view, namely to that the disordered comes before the ordered –temporarily speaking, although time is not literally meant here, for it is considered that it goes together with the order of the world–, the incomplete comes before the complete and the unintelligent comes before the intelligent.<sup>16</sup> At this point, he suggests indirectly but also clearly ontological monism, in the sense of a developmental process that aims at something better. He also stresses that the philosophers who are criticized attempt to apply their position not only on what takes place in the natural world but also on the productive procedures that the Demiurge himself performs. So the question here is why the Demiurge would decide to perform this procedure suggested by Plutarch and Atticus? Having in mind some of the remarks presented by Philoponus in some of his extracts mentioned in a previous note the answer could be that the Demiurge originally produces matter as an instrument to form later the natural world according to that complete cosmological manner which is required. The important thing to stress here is that this development does not introduce a sort of transitivity within the Demiurge who is eternal, but it is associated with what takes place in the new level which will fall under the terms of time-becoming, in the sense of a gradually improving modulation. It is highly possible that matter also participates in the process of its world formation, which results in that teleology turns into a complex process in which the recipient of the divine energies participates. What is the degree of the actual initiative and responsibility of matter in a monistic system is a question.

Coming back to the text, it is to be said that Proclus' criticism, which has historical foundations, is explicit and relies on the Demiurge's ontological nature and how he considers him as an eternal divine-metaphysical being free from any ad extra necessities.

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philosophers, who follow the same tradition, as it is mentioned for strengthening the whole argument, follow the same direction on the topic discussed as well.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeus commentaria*, II, 382.12-16: Οἱ δὲ περὶ Πορφύριον καὶ Ἰάμβλιχον ταύτην μὲν ἐπιρραπίζουσι τὴν δόξαν ὡς τὸ ἄτακτον πρὸ τοῦ τεταγμένου καὶ τὸ ἀτελὲς πρὸ τοῦ τελείου καὶ πρὸ τοῦ νοεροῦ τὸ ἀνόητον ἐν τοῖς ὅλοις ἀποτιθεμένην». “Those around Porphyry and Iamblichus castigate this position on the grounds that it puts the disordered before the ordered, the incomplete before the complete and the unintelligent before the intelligent in the universe” (Runia – Share, p. 250). Special attention should be given in the phrase “ἐν τοῖς ὅλοις”, which can have two meanings: a) all things and beings which constitute together universe, b) all those beings each of which is a whole, that is, its nature is hypostatically complete and it possesses the characteristics of macrocosm. The second option could not be confirmed; for, otherwise, it would result in unexplainable separations of the natural world.

Specifically, according to him, the thinkers with whom he disagrees do not accept or, at least, put some restrictions to the Demiurge's boniform will and productive power, which are considered by him as completely independent of any external intervention. As he further explains, if those two factors coincide as they project together, what unavoidably arises is that the natural world is eternally created by the Demiurge, for this is an appropriate function to his ontological nature as a god. Now, the question is whether the term 'eternally' shows a way of manifestation with particular features defined by its very nature or a co-existence of the cause with the effect. For the time being, there is no answer according to the text; however, do keep in mind that the second case can result in pantheism, which Proclus totally rejects. Otherwise, there would be no significant difference between the metaphysical and the natural world, at the same time as the former would absorb, at least to some extent, the latter.<sup>17</sup>

In this extract, Proclus puts under consideration or expresses skepticism about the idea of an original incomplete creation. His rationale is clear and comes from the ontological-axiological meaning that he attributes to the metaphysical world. Thus, if incompleteness was accepted, the divine creation would need additional interventions. The result would be inevitable: the quality of the Demiurge would be also considered as incomplete, at least in the sense of him being a cause, or even worse with respect to his self-founding condition. Or, else, the Neoplatonic philosopher directly exercises his criticism to show through successive arguments that it is not possible the Demiurge as a god or as a metaphysical being to act in incomplete ways. His energy, as well as both its projection and, eventually, its effects, is exactly what his substance is. By extension, it

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, B, 382.17-20. In Plato's *Laws*, 897a-c, one can identify some similarities with Aristotle's Ontology. Plato seems that he adds a sort of active intention to matter, which makes it able to receive the formative interference by the Demiurge and to utilize it. He does not consider it to be something unresponsive, since he says that it participates to the interventions of the Soul, at least in a later point of time, in the context of the dominant dualism. And participation is no more something passive, as it was in his first dialogues. Cf. also A. J. Festugière, *La Révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste*, v. II, p. 124: "Ce à quoi l'Étranger répond lui-même: Si l'ensemble de la course du Ciel et son mouvement de translation ainsi que celui de tous les êtres célestes manifeste une ressemblance de nature avec le mouvement, la révolution et les calculs raisonnés de l'intellect et s'y apparente dans sa marche, c'est évidemment de l'Âme la meilleure qu'il faut dire qu'elle prend soin du monde entier et qu'elle le mène par une semblance voie. Si au contraire la marche du monde est folle et sans ordre, c'est l'Âme mauvaise qui le mène (897 c 4 - d 1)".

could be actually argued that Syrianus' student does not define the quality of the Demiurge by relying on how the effects of his activity temporarily appear. The developing effect is not a safe criterion for describing the ontological nature of the cause and the principle of analogy is also not sufficient, for initially it necessarily remains in general conclusions.

Another question is whether the Demiurge produces the natural world eternally or he starts from a particular moment of time. The answer to this is actually related to the answer to the former question about whether the two factors associated causally exist eternally together and in what terms. Pantheism appears as a strong possibility. That is to say, if we accepted that the natural world pre-exists since the beginning in the form of seeds within the Demiurge, we would be led on that it holds original divine properties, which would put it higher to the ontological-axiological scale. However, regardless of the final conclusions to be drawn by Proclus' explanations, we have to explain that the adverb "eternally", which suggests great ontological features in Proclus' texts, means, at least, that the creation is defined by powers of an unchangeable completeness, which do not change. They are always the same either per se or after their manifestation, regardless of how they appear or how they are activated by a particular body through a receptive participation.

Following Porphyry's and Iamblichus' critical approaches, Proclus then presents another judgement about these two thinkers, which, by excluding the ontological and rational impasses, works as an argument for revealing what the actual condition of matter would be if it was approached independently of the divine interventions. Specifically, they first of all contend that Plato intended to present with strong arguments both the providence that comes from the Demiurge and covers the whole world and the bounties which are provided by the Intellect and the Soul. Although this position is clearly a theory of Plato, it does not actually explain the relation between the Intellect and the Demiurge. According to Proclus, the valid criteria appear if we extend this discussion. To give emphasis to the metaphysical properties, Porphyry and Iamblichus contend that according to Plato those found in the natural world as causes that hold the property of goodness, could, theoretically, be removed, which would make possible to investigate the corporeal formation in its absolute integrity. Both of them appear as making their evaluations relying on the effect that is caused by the metaphysical interventions, which, due to its origin, is considered to be perfect. They actually believe that the axiological priority of the divine gifts over a

possible pure corporeality becomes clear the moment at which its formation is completed. Then, it will be possible to understand the inferiority of the discordant and unordered, which are considered as impermanent conditions.<sup>18</sup> We could also argue that their purpose is to define the successive improving levels of the production process, provided that the divine creative gifts, as energy fields, are constantly manifested and successively contribute to the emergence of new corporeal conditions with ordered qualities. We could also add that this manifestation was provided only once and that it was successively received and projected in an ontological and evaluative good manner, which is strengthened mostly by the immanence of the divine goods. What is described here obviously gives assistance to Proclus to continue his criticism of Plutarch and Atticus.

Specifically, as these theories are re-approached, Proclus stresses that according to their rationale, Porphyry and Iamblichus think that it is important to explain the nature of the corporeal in its hypothetical original state and what organization it originally received from the creative process. Two are the requirements for this investigation: a) the first one relates with the answer of whether the natural world exists eternally as potentiality before to appear through improving ascents as a reality and b) the second one is based on whether human mind, how and from what point, separates the creator from his effect. Another question is whether by this separation, he actually introduces production in time together with everything that exists as seeds and expresses a new produced thing. These distinctions come from the fact that anything generated is composite<sup>19</sup>, while the Demiurge, as a metaphysical being, is simple. It is important here to explain the meaning of this co-existence of the factors that potentially contribute to the production process at the same time as we need to define the ontological point after which it takes place. Indirectly, it arises that in monism time must have been produced in the first place in relation to the space of the natural world, since ordering is not a subsequent action but a revelation of a primary capability.

Provided that what has been already elaborated is true, Proclus mentions that another important thing to be added is that, from the cosmological point of view, demiurgic

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 382.21-383.1.

<sup>19</sup> It is to be mentioned that exactly because a generated is originally composite, it is divisible into its components only in a theoretical-notional (or even mathematical) sense but not in a physical one, which was not feasible for the capabilities of that period of time.

productive activity takes place in two phases; namely, there is that which produces bodies and the a second one which orders them. On this basis, he considers that Plato assumes that the corporeal constantly exists and that it originally moves in a discordant and disorderly manner.<sup>20</sup> This condition is due to the fact that, as long as the corporeal remains in itself, it exists in a disorganized manner. However, it is explained that it has movement, since it receives it by the “Nature”, which will be approached in another part of his work. But, this is a disorderly movement, since corporeal is responsible for not having yet received or utilized rational-logical features. In fact, it will never exist independently; it has not originally utilized what it has received but remains in an unconscious condition, which however performs its first actions. When the entire corporeality will utilize those metaphysical bounties derived from the Intellect and the intellectual Soul, it would then be able to participate in active and conscious terms in the transcendent powers; therefore, it will have orderliness.<sup>21</sup> But, if it is just moving and receives nothing from the Intellect or the intellectual Soul, from which order comes directly, it will then keep necessarily its disorderly movement.<sup>22</sup>

The methodology followed in this description –which is formed in successive logical steps–, makes clear how according to Proclus the process from the most imperfect

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<sup>20</sup> These are no processes which, concerning their requirements, take place in time, although the position on its priority over the production of the world is still a possibility.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 383.9-10: «ὅταν γὰρ τοιοῦτον (sc. ἔννοον) γένηται τὸ πᾶν, τότε τῶν ὑπερφῶν μετέχει δυνάμεων». “When the universe does become such, it [is because it] then participates powers which transcend [its own] nature” (p. 251). The word «ὑπερφῶς» here means the transcendent nature that is due to the property of divinity, which is directly connected to the simplicity of God. This meaning is also found in the Christian thinkers. For instance, cf. Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus*, PG 3, 592 B, where the self-founding state of God is quite clear: «καὶ τὴν ὑπερυφῆ καὶ ἀσημάτιστον ἀπλότητα τῆ ποικιλία τῶν μεριστῶν συμβόλων πληθυνούσης τε καὶ διαπλαττούσης». However, the important thing to keep in mind when approaching the above is the general and absolute difference that the Christian model is a monotheistic one.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 383.11-13: «εἰ δὲ κινητὸν μὲν ὡς φύσει κινητὸν, μὴ ὑπὸ νοῦ δὲ μηδὲ ὑπὸ ἔμφρονος ψυχῆς, ἀφ’ ἧς ἢ τάξις, ἄτακτον ποιήσει τὴν κίνησιν ». “But if it is moved as a result of being moved by nature and not through the agency of intellect or rational soul, from which order [derives], it will produce disorderly movement” (251). Although Proclus makes just a description, his intention is quite clear. It is important to investigate whether the corporeal is a necessary cause for the production and what the consequences of such a version would be considering the true origin of and the degree in which the metaphysical powers interfere. Cf. P. Bastid, *Proclus et le crépuscule de la pensée grecque*, p. 143.

to the most perfect takes place, provided that it is true. That is to say, for the time being we should be skeptical about whether he accepts this process. He is consistent with the position that in every ontological process priority should be defined, considering the hypostases, their projections, and the methodology in which they are approached. His reference to applicable principles, which appear to be mandatory for any kind of transition to a new state, is obvious. In addition, the Neoplatonist philosopher's critical judgements are stressed from the beginning, either explicitly or implicitly; it remains to clarify whether they are general or exemplified. Undoubtedly, he presents the necessary logical steps of the other philosophers being under his critique that successively form their theories. An indirect question could be as follows: is it possible that they are trapped in arguments and theories aiming at forming their own coherent system of knowledge? Is their reasoning confined by their interpretative goals? Considering that Syrianus' student defends metaphysical realism, it comes that one of his main principles is his suggestion to overcome the very first thoughts so as to discover what truly exists and takes action in an ontological level that is beyond the sensible experience and obviously prior to it. The question is: how is this priority expressed or how is it explained in practice? It is to be mentioned that it is likely that the critique of Plutarch and Atticus does not rely on arbitrary decisions of them but on that they had misunderstood the true information of the Platonic passage.

Proclus next stresses that Plato describes how the divine providence is manifested by means of the property which produces a body.<sup>23</sup> According to his theory, the Demiurge produces all the corporeal hypostases with this property that he possesses –and obviously operates–, on the basis that he is the creator, the imposer of order, the artificer and the manufacturer.<sup>24</sup> That is, having in mind the ad extra projection of the divine, the Demiurge

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<sup>23</sup> Concerning the Platonic extract to which Proclus refers here, A. J. Festugière and H. Diehl relate it with 31b and 36d. However, D. T. Runia and M. Share think that it makes better sense if it is related to the 53b.1-3, as it also results from the next sentence (cf. *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, 251).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 383.14-17: «πλάττει γὰρ αὐτῷ πᾶν τὸ σωματικὸν ὁ δημιουργός, ὃ νῦν παραλαβεῖν αὐτὸν φησιν, αὐτὸν ὄντα τὸν ποιητὴν, αὐτὸν τὸν κοσμητὴν, αὐτὸν τὸν τεχνίτην, αὐτὸν <τὸν> χειρουργόν». “For in his view the Demiurge [himself] moulds all the corporeal [element] which he here says he takes over –‘he’ being the creator, the imposer of order, the artificer, the manufacturer” (p. 251). According to D. T. Runia and M. Share the word «αὐτῷ» strikes as rather awkward. Perhaps, Proclus wrote «αὐτός» or «αὐτῷ», with both the words referring to the Demiurge. Or, perhaps he wrote «αὐτοῦ», in the sense of “there”, that is, a place. Grammatically, however, the next phrase «αὐτόν τὸν κοσμητὴν...χειρουργόν» is connected with

owns universal productive capabilities, which involve aesthetics as well. So, if he brings into existence the first bodies, it becomes clear that the generation of the corporeal –as a tool which constitutes a general original state from which the requirements for particular corporeal formations are derived– is part of the creation. The whole idea is based on that each condition that could be perceived by man has received some intervention by the archetypal “Forms”, which are the ontological requirements for the formation of the first bodies.<sup>25</sup> So, it is highly possible that the “Forms”, after being combined, turn the property of producing body, which probably is the common substrate of the natural eternality, into a direct original producing power. It should be also mentioned that there is no clue about which are the first bodies. One could suppose that these are the first formations which constitute the basis for the productive evolution-development-expansion, in the sense of an improved repetition of the sensible beings, as somehow a sort of heredity.<sup>26</sup> They could be also considered to be the unconceivable by man original natural cores, not however in the expanded sense of the body, which is explicitly presented as something sensible or something that is about to become sensible.<sup>27</sup>

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«αὐτόν» (cf. *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, n.238, p. 251). Our suggestion is to translate “within him” in the sense of the appropriate requirements –or archetypes– that are formed to contribute to the formation of the body.

<sup>25</sup> On this, cf. *Timaeus*, 53a.7-b.5, where we read: «ὅτε δ' ἐπεχειρεῖτο κοσμεῖσθαι τὸ πᾶν, πῦρ πρῶτον καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ γῆν καὶ ἀέρα, ἴχνη μὲν ἔχοντα αὐτῶν ἅττα, παντάπασί γε μὴν διακεῖμενα ὥσπερ εἰκὸς ἔχειν ἅπαν ὅταν ἀπῆ τινοῦ θεός...». “But even when the organization of the universe was first taken in hand, fire, water, earth, and air, despite displaying certain hints of their true natures, were still wholly in the kind of state you’d expect anything to be with no god present” (R. Waterfield, 46). For Plato and Proclus, these are the natural elements, which come from special combinations of the metaphysical archetypes and of which the property of making a body is consisted.

<sup>26</sup> Following the former note, we need to mention that according to D. T. Runia and M. Share, these are the four elements and the bodies fashioned by their combinations (cf. *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, p. 251). It should be also noted that the Neoplatonic School till Damascius [cf. *De principiis*, II, 174-1-176.7 (*Traité des premiers principes: De la triade et de l'unifié*, v.II, Westerink Leendert Gerrit – Combès, Joshua, Paris 1989)] is closely related with the theories of the Pre-Socratic philosophers about the elements and the relevant tradition that was formed on this basis.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 383.17-22: «Εἰ οὖν καὶ σώματα παράγει τὰ πρῶτα, δῆλον δὴ, ὅτι μέρος ἐστὶ τῆς δημιουργίας καὶ ἡ ἐκείνου γένεσις, τοῦ ὁρατοῦ δεξαμένου τινὰ τῶν εἰδῶν ἴχνη πρόδρομα τῆς διαρθρώσεως αὐτῶν, ἧς γενομένης ἕκαστον κεκόσμηται τελέως καὶ ἔχει θέσιν ἐν τῷ παντὶ καὶ τάξιν τὴν πρέπουσαν». “So, if he also brings the first bodies into existence, it is quite clear that the generation of [the corporeal] too is part of the creation, the visible having received certain traces of the [immanent] forms which were precursors of their [full] differentiation, with the advent of which each [of the bodies] is fully (*teleôs*) ordered and has its appropriate place



So, the conclusions to this point are the following: after the structure described before, each of the bodies is fully ordered –in the appropriate degree– and has received a proper place and rank within the natural universe. In this sense, the providence is specialized –and, by extension, it is infinite–, for first of all it puts an end to the disorder of those that are with no form. And everything is without form, since originally they have not been gone under a formation process. Subsequently, the providence classifies the bodies in individual levels, which are defined by how the cosmos is generally structured and how it functions. However, at this point Proclus’ reasoning has gone beyond the general theory about providence. Now he intends to investigate the starting point of providence as well as under what laws did it start to manifest, so that individual levels to be formed in the universe, which show an infinite and developing pluralistically cosmological monism.

Proclus then stresses that Plato explicitly stated that the divine Demiurge fabricates the corporeal inside the Soul (36d). He says however that during this process there was no substrate –namely, a receptive base– of the Soul, and that is why god did not introduce exclusively order into it. It is also clear that first of all he made the being of the soul, as well as the “same” and the “other”, the elements of which are its constituents, which contribute with their synthesis to its functions. It is important here to mention that the categories “same” and “other” have originally an ontological meaning which is related to both general and (gradually) exemplified implementations. In addition, they are not considered as just descriptions of states or relations or comparisons.<sup>28</sup> On this basis, the

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and rank in the universe” (pp. 251-252). The participle «δεξάμενου» is in past tense and strengthens the former remarks on universal generation of the natural by the metaphysical world, at the same time as the specifications of ordering and orderliness, at least as procedures, are clear. The participle «πρέπουσαν» is also particularly interesting, for it describes the appropriate regulative principles, which brings us to the skill-method of measurement. So, we could structure Proclus’ theory as follows: through the manifestation of the Forms a universal corporeal state is formed, which included the elements, which gradually manifests in the formed natural bodies. It is to be stressed that the expressions «ἵχνη πρόδρομα» and «ἤς γενομένης» show the somehow historical development of the corporeal, which is part of a cohesive process and purpose, which both give support to the gradually developing monism.

<sup>28</sup> According to Festugière the terms “ταυτόν” and “ἕτερον” are expegetic of “οὐσίαν”. According to Runia and Share, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, n.241, p. 252, the reference is clearly to *Timaeus* 35a.1-6, where it is said that «τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ αἰὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ ἐχούσης οὐσίας καὶ τῆς αὖ περὶ τὰ σώματα γιγνομένης μεριστῆς τρίτον ἐξ ἀμοιβῶν ἐν μέσῳ συνεκεράσατο οὐσίας εἶδος, τῆς τε ταυτοῦ φύσεως [αὖ περὶ] καὶ τῆς τοῦ ἕτερου, καὶ κατὰ ταῦτὰ συνέστησεν ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ τε ἀμεροῦς αὐτῶν καὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὰ σώματα μεριστοῦ». “He combined the two kinds of substance – the one indivisible and never changing, and the other the divided and created substance of the

Neoplatonic philosopher draws the following conclusion which relies on monism: if this god produced both the elements of the soul and the synthesis that results from their combination, he originally produced the whole of it. This means that he did not receive a part of it already in existence, to which he would add another part to complete it. This is an approach which through its generalization can constitute a general theory about the world. What is more, it can be applied on every case that explicitly involves monism.

Attempting to be more specific about how a substance is formed, Proclus says that, if there is reference to the Soul, which is incorporeal, the entire discussion holds true and, therefore, there is nothing to question. In the case of body –which comes from the combination of the Forms with matter– things are almost the same, as discussed in former parts of the work. Speaking of the Forms, he contends that God is undoubtedly their cause. We need to clarify here that according to the general polytheistic orientation, mostly derived from his treatise entitled *Theologia Platonica*, this god is not the Demiurge but another superior to him. Considering matter, the question for him is whether it is ungenerated by a cause, as Plutarch and Atticus claim, or generated, and if so, from what cause.<sup>29</sup> Proclus’s great eclecticism-encyclopedism is here obvious. So, he recalls that Aristotle proved from a different theoretical path –that is, not speaking of first causes– that matter is ungenerated, contending that it is incomposite and that it does not come into existence out of other matter nor is it resolved back into other matter, after being separated.<sup>30</sup>

These theories –including Aristotle’s– suggest –at least temporarily– that matter is ontologically everlasting, a property which puts it in a prior level to that of the forms that is

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physical world– into an intermediate, third kind of substance, and then again, in the case of both identity and difference, he likewise formed intermediates between, in each case, that aspect of them which is undivided and that aspect of them which is divided in the physical realm” (Waterfield, p. 23). At this point, the Demiurge produces identity and otherness as middle beings, as the first stage for the production of the Soul, which can be considered as the synthesis of two opposites and, possibly, as the possibility for any cosmic condition that will participate in these two categories.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 383.31-384.6. Cf. Atticus, fragm. 24.

<sup>30</sup> According to Festugière, these are the chapters 6-9 of Aristotle’s *Physics*, where the “ὑποκείμενον” is referred to as “ὕλη” (cf. 192a.31). That matter is incomposite results from that it is determined by a “ἄρχή”. That it does not come into existence out of other matter, cf. 189a.27-32, and that it is not resolved back into other matter, cf. 192a.28-34. For a general approach, cf. Aristotle, *De Caelo*, I, 3, 270.24-27.

about to receive or is about to reveal. Proclus also investigates whether it is ungenerated by a cause and whether, by extension, according to Plato one should posit in the cosmological procedures two principles of the universe<sup>31</sup>, matter<sup>32</sup> and God. In addition, if we accept this co-operation, one factor excludes the other, that is to say, God does not produce matter and matter does not produce God. The final purpose is to show, by using confuting or negative adjectives, that matter is completely everlasting and without God<sup>33</sup>, while God is totally without matter and simple.<sup>34</sup> So, how completely opposites could actually combine to each

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<sup>31</sup> This is a reference to the two-principle doctrine of the early Platonism, at least till Antiochus of Ascalon.

<sup>32</sup> According to Runia and Share, Proclus here fails to distinguish between the “receptacle” of the *Timaeus* and the matter of Aristotle (cf. *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, n.247, p. 253). Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, III, 10.8-10, where he says: «διὸ καὶ τοῦ παντὸς ὑποδοχὴν αὐτὴν (sc. τὴν ὕλην) ἐρεῖ [49 A 51 A] προελθόν». “For this reason Plato goes on to call matter receptacle of the universe in what follows” (Baltzly, Dirk. *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus: Proclus on the World Body*, v.3, b.3 Cambridge 2007, p. 50). Baltzly in his comments says that Proclus identifies matter with the “μεταληπτικόν” of Aristotle (cf. *Physica*, 4.1, 209b.11-12). And while modern scholars have questioned this identification (cf. for instance, Cherniss, Harold Fredrik. *Aristotle's Criticism of Plato and the Academy*, Baltimore 1944, pp. 121-122, who also stresses that it is possible Aristotle to have misunderstood the Platonic unwritten doctrine, for he identified “the great and the small” with the Platonic notions “χώρα” and “τόπος”). Ancient Platonists seem to have been less hesitant to accept it. It should be mentioned that it is probably an identification that goes back to Antiochus of Ascalon. It is very likely –and we should mention it– that this assimilation of the receptacle to matter results from the tendency of middle Platonists to read the *Timaeus* through Stoicism. And one way to approach the two principles of the physics of the Stoics (that is, god and matter) lies on *Timaeus*. The Stoic god as a principle corresponds to Plato's three distinct principles: the paradigm, the Demiurge and the World Soul (cf. Moreau, Joseph. *L'âme du monde de Platon aux Stoïciens*, Hildesheim 1965, pp. 160 ff.). Note also that Proclus' matter includes what Aristotle's matter does, although there are clear differences between monism and dualism. One could read Kojève, Alexandre. *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne*, vol.III (Paris 1973), who analyses how Proclus synthesizes, in an eclectic manner, Platonism, Aristotelianism, and Stoicism. Through this combination, he actually succeeds in showing how Proclus makes a distinction of metaphysics of transcendence from metaphysics of immanence, presenting the latter as resulting from the initiative of the former.

<sup>33</sup> On this topic, cf. extract 368.5: «ἡ μὲν γὰρ ὕλη διὰ τὸ ἀνείδεον καὶ ἄμορφον ἄθεος ἤδη τισὶν ἔδοξεν εἶναι». “For while matter, on account of its formlessness and shapelessness, has seemed to some to be ipso facto divorced from god (atheos)” (Runia and Share, p. 230).

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, 2, 383.23-384.12. According to Runia and Share, Festugière's comment “ἀπλοῦς ἔτῳνη” seems even in the most moderate sense unnecessary. Probably, it is present just to balance ἄϊδιος, which, taking into account Proclus statement on that matter is ἄϊδιος, is itself a reference with no meaning (cf. *Proclus. Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, n. 249, p. 253). It is to be mentioned that the fact that Proclus has related ἄϊδιον with both the natural world and time, describing the constant and consistent evolution for the actualization of teleology, since the beginning of the second book of this treatise, should not escape attention. After having mentioned the difference between ἄϊδιον and αἰώνιον he explains that two are the kinds of

other? It is to be said that eternity is a challenge not only considering duration but mostly regarding the possibility of the ontological and categorical transformations.

Commenting on this, one could say that the question on creation follows a different direction from the original one. Ontological and by extension cosmological dualism appears as a strong possibility in this chapter. In fact, there is a question about which substance, the soul's or the body's, is actually related to –or at least is related mostly to– the ontological predicates of the “same” and “other”. The answer will define what predicates can be added to these two factors, which appear as parts of the creation of the sensible world, in the sense that they necessarily co-operate. According to the style and general context of Proclus' commentary, we could say that the idea of this kind of co-operation for the production process has to do only with the theoretical needs of this or any other related to this subject matter. According to the concepts used and their grammatical approach, it does not negate dualism; it just includes it, in almost an explicitly manner, among issues related with evaluation or priorities. For the time being, the question is what substance is superior with respect to quality. The entire discussion, however, leads to new perspectives and the goals will follow a different direction, at least after the original Neoplatonic solutions will be exposed, which methodologically are flexible. In the Platonic Academy, the epistemological efforts have already formed their integral perspectives and are constantly renewed and expanded. Proclus is completely aware of this dynamic spirit and follows it consistently.

### *3. Limit and unlimited as productive powers*

Analyzing the subject matter mentioned before, Proclus contends that the fact that according to Plato the Demiurge does not originally bring matter into existence results from the *Timaeus* 52d. He also stresses that the factors that pre-exist as necessary requirements

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ἀίδιότης. One of them is associated to the metaphysical world, while the second one is related to the natural world. In our view, Proclus definitely considers matter as ἀίδιος throughout the entire treatise on the basis of teleology, which will be completed when the natural developments will be completed. Note also that the natural world never receives the property of aeon, despite the fact that time, which provides the substrate for cosmic developments and completeness, is considered to be the sensible and movable image of aeon. Change of substance, that is, a total differentiation of the ontological field, is out of the question.

for the production of the natural world are three, “being”, “place” and “generation”.<sup>35</sup> Taking into account how they combine, he points out that generation is the effect, place is the mother, the source from which an effect comes and a procedure derives the terms and conditions to be accomplished. In this sense, Plato gives the impression that he separates or excludes a direct communication between matter and the Demiurge regarding the nature of their productive intervention for everything that will come into existence or will be formed. On the other hand, he seems that he contends that generation results from both these ontological factors, the Demiurge and matter. In conclusion, it seems, at least for the time being, that there is no prior reality to the Demiurge, from which generation would result. However, the inconsistency is obvious, for generation is part of two levels. To overcome this, Syrianus’ student contends that in his dialogue *Philebus* (23c) the founder of the Academy placed in the world of the authentic beings “limit” and “unlimited”, from the combination of which arose the constitution of the entire natural world and the particular bodies, as both a general production and exemplified formation-function. His syllogism at this point is as follows: if bodies were made of limit and unlimitedness, the –nominalist– question raised would be what limit and unlimitedness are, which are found in a particular form in a body, including their special co-operation? Taking into account that they inhere universally – and in endless ways–, the answer –following Plato– is generally that matter is the unlimitedness while Form is the limit. By extension, if God produces every unlimitedness, it arises that he also produces matter, the first negative or, to be more accurate, the most inferior unlimitedness, for he intervenes universally. By rejecting in this way any possibility of dualism, the Neoplatonic philosopher claims that unlimitedness – and, indirectly, the Demiurge, namely, god– is the very first and ineffable cause of matter, which shows that in this theory he adds ontologically and axiologically extra value to it.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, attempting to show that the *Philebus* completes and explains the *Timaeus*, he draws the conclusion that matter does not pre-exist. And although he removes from matter

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<sup>35</sup> This view is rendered to Plutarch and Atticus and is also found in *Timaeus* 52d.3-5.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 384.13-385.3. Cf. Trouillard, Jean. «Procession Néoplatonicienne et création judeochrétienne», *Néoplatonisme* (Paris 1981), pp. 1-30. These approaches of Proclus could be associated with what he says about the “enmattered Forms” in other parts of his work.

the self-constitute property, he attributes to it superior ontological characteristics, since he considers it coming from a transcendent principle.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, Proclus uses the principle of analogy, both by combining transcendence with immanence and by setting clear limits between them. So, he says that in each level of the cosmos the –productive and structural– elements that exist in sensible things are analogous to their intelligible causes. Having in mind these causes, Plato describes the production of the world. For instance, god produces the cosmic equal from the Equal-itself, the same from the Sameness-itself and all living creatures and plants here below in an appropriate archetypical way in each case. The important thing here is that he does not only describe properties, but formed beings, although he does not give any further explanation. It is necessary first of all the universal ontological powers that ensure the general principles of being and its function to take action and, subsequently, those particular powers that determine exemplified forms of being and function to be activated, namely, those of the particular beings. What is here meant is that probably in the metaphysical world there are both individual archetypes in the form of reasons (ontological planning cores) and combinations for the formation of the elements, as they are expected to appear in many forms within the sensible things as both their components and the sources of their functions. Generalizing, the philosopher contends that the Demiurge similarly produces cosmic unlimitedness from the very first Unlimitedness and cosmic limit from the very first Limit.<sup>38</sup> So, the world of becoming –and obviously the entire visible level– is a reflection of being, probably in the sense of a structural parallelism, not though in an absolute sense. This reflection is related, at least according to the above reasoning, with the production of what exists here below by what exists there above.

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<sup>37</sup> For a historical and systematic approach of how Proclus utilizes the Platonic works in relation to the topic under discussion here, cf. *Theologia Platonica*, III, 28-23-52.11. In this long text, which is subdivided in eight chapters, Proclus analyzes how he approaches monism through the Platonic dialogue *Philebus*. He also associates *Philebus* with the dialogues *Parmenides*, *Sophista*, and *Timaeus*.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 385.3-9. Considering the concepts “limit-unlimited” in Proclus’ work cf. for instance *Theologia Platonica*, III, 30.15-34.19. In the text elaborated here, Proclus, by utilizing a kind of circularity, which is also defined by the “reversion” to the sources, claims that the immanent presence of these ontological realities depends upon the transcendent Form.

Proclus then mentions that in other parts of his work he has also proved that the first Unlimitedness, which is prior to the mixed, was produced by the very first Cause –the One-Good– found at the summit of the intelligible gods, who, according to the Ontotheology that he structures, correspond to the category of “Being”. So, the first Unlimitedness extends its productive illuminations from the higher reaches of being of the metaphysical world to the lowest visible beings. In his view, according to Plato, matter proceeds both from the One and Unlimitedness, which is obviously received as power or energy of the productive “procession”. And this is actually a kind of Unlimitedness which is prior to the “One-Being”, which determines the universal structures of the productive plans, in the sense that it is the supreme ontological category. More specifically, it could be said that matter also proceeds from the One-Being, for it is a potential being, the purpose of which is to complete its unity. It arises that matter is somehow good and without limit, in the sense that it is a being without complete ontological idioms and without form, although in a monistic system this approach does not fit with the general principles. On the other hand, taking into account the ontological, demiurgic, and productive priorities, Proclus explains that the One, the first Unlimitedness and the One-Being are prior to the archetypal Forms and, by extension, to their exemplified interventions. It should be mentioned that this priority-hierarchy reflects a sort of ontological necessity, so as the requirements for the completeness of the production to be ensured. So, once again it is necessary the universal ontological powers which ensure the general principles of both being and the laws of their function to take action and, then, those which contribute to the manifestation of the exemplified ones.<sup>39</sup>

Syrianus’ student mentions that Orpheus teaches exactly the same doctrine, utilizing his own ontological and cosmological model. So, as Plato derived two causes from the One,

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 385.9-17: «...ἀγαθόν πῆ ἔστι καὶ ἄπειρον, καὶ ἀμυδρότατον ὄν καὶ ἀνείδειον (sc. τὴν ὕλην). “... it is a good of a kind, a thing without limit, and the most indistinct [grade of] being’ (pp. 254-255). On the new tendency of Proclus compared to that of Plotinus, Trouillard says: “Proclus fait un pas de plus que Plotin. Comme lui, mais plus clairement, il affirme que la matière procède de l’Un. Comme lui, il la fait dériver par la médiation d’une infinité génératrice de l’intelligible, que les *Ennéades* appellant “matière intelligible”, alors que Proclus n’emploie pas ce mot dans ce sens. Mais le Lycien tire la dernière conséquence de cette thèse. La matière ne peut être le mal pur ni l’origine de tout mal. Elle a une certaine bonté, celle qui évoque l’Un par son indétermination inépuisable. Ainsi est éliminé du néoplatonisme le dernier préjugé défavorable envers le corps” (*L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus*, Paris 1972, p. 71). By excluding evil from matter, Proclus suggests an optimist cosmological example.

that is, Limit and Unlimitedness, this theologian also brought Aether and Chaos into existence from Time. He considered Aether as the cause –or the ontological counterpart– of limit no matter where it is found, and Chaos as the cause –or the ontological counterpart– of unlimitedness.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, it could be said that the ontological factor which arises is the state of co-production or multiple causes, in the sense that production starts from the superior metaphysical levels and comes through the inferiors, so that matter to come into existence and to receive specific forms. Through this polyvalent way of interference, ontological monism, which is not simplistic, is reinstated. It should be also mentioned, that Proclus, by stressing the pluralistic nature of causality, remains consistent with the basic principles of his system, where the middle factors hold the most important role, in the form of necessity. They are interferences which preserve the unparticipated (“remaining”) while at the same time cause the procedures for participation (“procession”), which constitute the source of the principle of analogy that leads to more than one meaning.

#### 4. *Production as co-production*

Attempting to be more specific on the question about the middles, the Neoplatonic philosopher –by utilizing ontological predicates with which he is familiar– stresses that matter proceeds from the principles mentioned before and their hierarchy. He also mentions that the intelligible and intellectual causes of the second and third metaphysical level as well as both the supercelestial and the encosmic ones, which for his Ontotheology correspond to the inferior gods which hold intentional qualities, successively participate in the process of production. Moreover, he contends that “Nature” also produces matter, for it

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 385.17-22. Cf. Orpheus, fr.52. Also, Trouillard, Jean. “Les degrés du ποιῆν chez Proclus”, *Dionysius* 1 (1977), p. 72; Moutsopoulos, Evangelos. “La structure de l’espace chez Proclus”, *Revue Philosophique* 107 (1982), pp. 419-433, especially p. 430. According to Festugière this passage is associated with the 176.6-15 of the same treatise and the 138.8 ff. of his commentary on *Respublica*. It is to be mentioned that Proclus also elaborates Orpheus’ positions and stresses that this poet considers that everything permanent and found in an identity state comes from this supreme Principle, while everything that is subject to distinctions, such as Nature and the inferior unlimitedness, constitute the ontological factors that define matter. After synthesizing Orpheus’ positions, he stresses –following the new terminology formed by the Neo-Platonists– that matter comes from the first hypostasis of the Intelligibles. Finally, he contends that in Hermes Trismegistus’ texts materiality appears as produced by being and possibly Plato was influenced by this position.



is present at the point in which this new ontological factor comes into “being”. This is an important remark for it provides a good support to his explanation, since “Nature is a crucial factor for the transition from the metaphysical to the natural world and works as a direct cause. Concluding Proclus’ views about the ontological meaning of “Nature”, it could be said that it is prior over the entire sensible world and determines the way in which it works. By extension, it will produce matter as well, as long as it is a part of the procedure during which this cosmic factor which is about to become sensible comes gradually into the formed existence. So, it should be contended that Nature is a universal ontological reality, which includes in seeds or in reasons what is to become sensible, that is, matter and its exemplified forms. Within it all the metaphysical original procedures of production are completed and the energy of metaphysical archetypes turns into natural reasons, which are the sources of a specialized development or growth in any field of the sensible world, although it is not known how this transformation takes place. For instance, the natural reason of a human being, a tree and an animal exist within the Nature.<sup>41</sup> So, in these terms, Nature forms the requirements that are necessary so that in another level matter to participate in the very first cause (obviously by means of “procession” and “reversion”, which follow successive interferences).<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> About the concept and the function of Nature in Proclus’ system, cf. for instance *In Platonis Parmenidem*, 793b-796.13. Cf. Rosán, Laurence Jay. *The philosophy of Proclus. The Final phase of Ancient Thought* (New York 1949), pp. 115-117.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, II, 386.16-18: «καὶ τί λέγω περὶ τῶν θεῶν αὐτῶν; ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ τοῦ παντός φύσις παράγει τὴν ὕλην καθόσον ἔστι καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς ὑπαρξιν». “But why am I talking of the gods alone (autoi)? Universal nature (hê tou pantos phusis) also produces matter –with the proviso that it exists in accordance with its own mode of existence as well; for with regard to this last it participates the very first cause” (Runia –Share, p. 256). There are many explanations of this extract. Runia and Share, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, n. 280, pp. 256-257, contend the following: “Thomas Taylor assumed a lacuna before ἔστι in line 17 and supplied θεός, which would make good sense in itself but is, I think, ruled out by καὶ τί λέγω περὶ τῶν θεῶν; A. J. Fêstugiere, who followed Taylor in assuming a lacuna before ἔστι, supplied αἴτιον (though, as he says, only *exempli gratia*), and translated, ‘c’est aussi la Nature universelle qui fait venir à l’être la Matière, pour autant qu’elle est une <cause> et selon son propre mode d’être: car c’est en vertu de la nature que la Matière participe à La Cause toute première’. This makes tolerable sense (although there are still difficulties), but only by having ταύτην refer back to ἡ τοῦ παντός φύσις and making ὕλη the subject of μετέχει when the obvious referent of ταύτην would be τὴν ἑαυτῆς ὑπαρξιν and the obvious subject for μετέχει would be ἡ τοῦ παντός φύσις. I have retained Diehl’s text (which is that of C and M), but (1) regarded ἀλλὰ καὶ... ὕλην (16-17) as parenthetical, and (2) accented ἔστι in line 17. The words καθόσον ἔστι καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς ὑπαρξιν· κατὰ γὰρ ταύτην μετέχει τῆς πρωτίστης αἰτίας will then serve to define the terms on which the range of causes between the Intelligibles and Nature can be said to produce matter. (Cf. the words καθόσον ἔστι δυνάμει ὄν at

Subsequently, Proclus says that the Demiurge, with respect to the henad within him, in virtue of which he is also a god, is responsible for even the lowest grade of matter. However, he is not the cause of matter in the sense in which the Being is, which produces it primarily or provides it with the capability to exist, which is a necessary requirement for the various forms. Literally, he is responsible for the bodies, as long as they are bodies, and the corporeal qualities. This is a general expression of causality that indicates that generation is originally also the offspring of the Being, for generation cannot exist without being. It is clear that being comes before generation, which is associated with particular forms or bodies. Attempting to be more specific, he says, with respect to the life within him, that the Demiurge produces the animation which pervades with its own property all things and, with respect to the Intellect within him, that he produces –or, more accurately, provides– the quality of the intellect to the universe, which is assigned with exactly the same task. Every production, according to the context, is considered as an exemplification of the supreme realities in the form of powers or inherent properties. And with respect to the principles of the middles, everything that the Demiurge creates by virtue of his inferior powers, he produces it with his superior powers as well; so, multi-causality and co-causality are dominant. For Proclus, this is due to the fact that everything with intellect also participates to “life”, “being”, and “unity”. A “living thing” has being and is one; and a thing that has “being” is exclusively sustained by the supreme unity, which is the most appropriate for it in relation to other categories. Since this is a hierarchical system, the opposite is excluded. In short: the One, in its productive presence –that is, when it is considered as a second One– pervades with its superior powers his providence in more areas of the world than any other productive cause and that is why it is a universal cause. So, the second One exists in every metaphysical and natural being as the very first cause,

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385.14, which similarly explain how τὸ ἕν ὄν can be said to produce matter.) I don't see this as a wholly satisfactory solution, but I think it is probably on the right track”. Either way, the emanation process of the metaphysical world and the production of the natural level come from the manifestation of the “one-being”, which, according to the Neoplatonic theory, reveals itself in successive phases through the ontological categories of the second hypothesis of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, which indicate ways to exist.

regardless of what is their nature or what is their position in hierarchy.<sup>43</sup> Unity is the absolute regulative source that is exemplified through the rest ontological categories.

Accordingly, Proclus, by using predicates that describe the quality, depends ontologically the natural world –which is defined also as ordering– on the goodness of the Demiurge, the divinity that is responsible for the production process, which is performed in virtue of its superior, compared to all the others, idiom. Repeating what Plato has said, he points out that the sensible world as a whole is not left bereft of the divine providence, in the sense of both a particular space and development. He also says that this realm is the corporeal universe, since the incorporeal and with no qualities would be invisible and, thus, it would not express an intervening providence in that which has no body or quality. By extension, the corporeal is not identical to matter without qualities or the second substrate<sup>44</sup>, that is, the Platonic “place”; instead, it is the reality that participates in the Forms, and contains certain traces and reflections of them, despite the fact that it originally moves in a discordant and disorderly manner. The ghostly –not authentic– and disjointed presences of the Forms create various movements in this visible mass, which however are not in the first

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, II, 386.13-29. The distinction between the gift of being and generation is interesting. Basically, generation does not include this gift, but requires it. Cf. J. Trouillard, J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, Paris 1982, 89-90, who also says the following: «Platon ne dit mot dans le *Timée* d’une procession de la substance indivisible ni de la divisée. Pourtant Proclus, dans deux pages intrépides de son Commentaire sur le *Timée* (I, 385 et 386), affirme que Platon enseigne l’une et l’autre procession, et même que le Demiurge, en tant qu’il est dieu, est cause de la matière elle-même» (p. 129). On these, cf. *Philebus*, 30d. In addition, according to Festugière, the above are explained in props. 56 and 57 of *Institutio Theologica*: “All that is produced by secondary beings is in a greater measure produced from those prior and more determinative principles from which the secondary were themselves derived” (Dodds, Eric Robertson. *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, Oxford 1933, p. 55); “Every case both operates prior to its consequent and gives rise to a greater number of posterior terms” (Dodds, 55).

<sup>44</sup> This is Proclus’ only reference to the “δεύτερον ὑποκείμενον”. About the “πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον”, cf. his comments on *Parmenides*, 971.9, where, once again, he does not define it in precision. About the latter term, cf. *Physica*, 1.9, 192a.31 and *Metaphysica* Z3, 1029a.2, where Aristotle identifies it with matter. According to Runia and Share, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, n. 287, p. 258, in the commentary tradition from Ammonius onwards (which should be a reasonable guide to Proclus’ use of the terms), the “πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον” is the prime matter while the “δεύτερον ὑποκείμενον” is body with bulk and extension but without qualities (ἄποιον σῶμα). Note that here Proclus identifies “ὕλη” with the “δεύτερον ὑποκείμενον”. The passage which best illustrates the usage of the commentators is probably Philoponus’ comments on Aristotle’s *Categories*, 65.8-27, where the Alexandrian thinker uses the term “πρώτη ὕλη” to refer to the “πρῶτον ὑποκείμενον”. For the term “δεύτερον ὑποκείμενον”, cf. also Ammonius’ comments on *Categories*, 54.4-6, as well as Philoponus’ comments on *Categories*, 83.14-18, and on *Metaphysica*, 156.12-17, 225.11-16, 579.3-6. Cf. Simplicius’ comments on *De caelo*, 564.29-565.6, 576.6-10.

place in order, at least not completely.<sup>45</sup> It is to be mentioned that this temporal disorder is not due to an imperfect interference of the Forms

In this productive context –and in order its formation to be appropriately corrected– all of the orders of gods which are prior to the Demiurge feed the interventions of the Forms and by means of them the entire regulatory movements, both ontologically and with respect to the quality of the procedures undertaken. The Paradigm irradiates them the most, just by its own being. The entire process is believed that it takes place before the creation, that is, before the productive procedures to become sensible. It should be mentioned however that this “before” needs further investigation, for the possibility the presence of “being” to be complete during the production by other ontological factors as well is very strong. Obviously, these would be factors that exemplify it, for the sensible world is not known for the idiom of being but for the endless variety of its forms, which include functions and define constantly relationships. Utilizing his common schemas, the Neoplatonic philosopher stresses that the higher causes are active before the inferiors. For instance, he mentions that the Demiurge creates conjointly with the Paradigm, while the Paradigm makes similar actions before the Demiurge to take action and penetrates in those beings which the activity of the demiurgic providence does not reach. What is indirectly here stated is that if there is no Paradigm –whose ontotheological content is not defined here, although it could be considered as the synthesis of the productive projections of the divine beings–, the productive-creative function of the Demiurge is not possible. The conclusion is in accordance with Proclus’ general principles on co-causality and hierarchy of the causes. This is actually a typical application of the somehow multi-principle production system.<sup>46</sup>

Proclus then summarizes what he has said about the pluralism of the divine causes. So, he contends that if we wish to distinguish the different metaphysical causes as well as

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. also *Timaeus*, 52a.4-53b.4. Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 387.6-23.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 387.23-28. Moutsopoloulos, Evangelos describing the theory of the cause hierarchy, mentions the following: «L’idée de hiérarchie des causes, des modèles et des fondements des formes sensibles, privées d’énergie et de mouvement, est empruntée à Platon (*Πολιτεία*, 597e). La notion d’immobilité des images se trouve en contradiction apparente avec celle de mouvement des structures inférieures, lié non seulement à leur altérabilité et à leur mutabilité, mais aussi aux mouvements qu’elles provoquent dans l’âme» (*Les structures de l’imaginaire dans la philosophie de Proclus*, Paris 1985, pp. 50-51). Moutsopoloulos refers mostly to the extract II, 324.24-34 of the same commentary.

the effect of their productive projection, we will draw the following conclusion about the “Good”: a) It is the cause of all things, and it is the cause of matter. This is a kind of causality –actually the greatest one– that turns matter into a necessary thing, in order the production of the sensible world to take place. b) It is the cause of projection –and apparently– the way in which Forms intervene, which is also a measure of what is provided for the production. It could be said here that measure is considered to be a kind of necessity, in the sense that individual beings are strictly defined to each other, so that their exemplified presences to be clearly distinguished from one another. c) It is the cause of order, which ensures the logical coherence of those which are produced, so that the entire ontological system to be functionally articulated. So, the Good is the universal cause, which provides in the first place being and functionality to all things. And this universality of it establishes the undeniable ontological and productive monism that Proclus adopts.<sup>47</sup> It should be mentioned however that this monism is not static or simplistic, for it is exemplified with the manifold of the individual causes, which derive from the very First Cause and reveal its infinite richness, regarding the quality and quantity.

He then stressed that the Paradigm is not the causal source of matter, but it functions in a more exemplified manner: it provides the capability of the form and order found in Forms, which are to become the structural factor for the formation of matter. Furthermore, the productive property is the strictly exemplified –but not exclusive– cause of order. That is why it intervened in matter, while it was to participate in Forms and receive a form. It is to be mentioned however that the capability of matter to receive order is a gift given by the Good. But, it is a capability without the necessary exemplifications and the analogous activations. When it is about to acquire these exemplifications, it accepts the assistance of the demiurgic cause, which has undertaken this responsibility. Proclus actually thinks that the result of the demiurgic intervention is that the disordered, having been configured to some degree, is to some extent superior to something without shape and form. That is, disorder does not exclude a being from being part of a broader cosmological system, even in the sense that it will receive a form in future.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 387.23-28. Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, II, 3.5-14.6

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 387.28-388.1. Cf. *Theologia Platonica*, III, 53.1-15.

The conclusions that the Neoplatonist philosopher draws are the following: a) all the metaphysical realities mentioned before are causes as well. b) Their products are put in a hierarchy according to the extent to which every produced being possess the divine gifts which necessarily every one of them holds. c) A Paradigm receives matter from the Good and forms it, since it is the ontological reality that systematically activates Forms. d) The Demiurge takes over the Forms from the Paradigm and defines his identity and functions by the Good, after the necessary middle procedures have taken place, so that to manifest in a demiurgic manner after the Forms have been established to the new reality that is formed. Therefore, a) Forms, as long as they are Forms, are exemplifications of the projections of the Paradigm. On its part, b) the demiurgic idiom, after having received Forms from the Paradigm, regulates by means of numbers and imposes order by means of proportions, that is, the coherent-functional ontological cores. By extension, Proclus explains: if one distinguishes the causes in this fashion and considers that the Demiurge alone is the direct cause of all natural things, he will draw the conclusion that he creates in special ways. That is to say, he creates in one way in relation to his goodness, in another in relation to the Paradigm in him and in another in relation to his own character of creator and artisan. And although the Demiurge creates all things at once and eternally, different things proceed from the different causes that lie originally and eternally within him. More specifically, under the terms of the immanent presences within the Demiurge, the following take place: owing to the Good, matter, form and order come into existence, owing to the Paradigm just form and owing to his character of artisan, order, where hierarchy dominates. So, this reality, which has received form from the Paradigm, which is intelligible in its ontological sources, has received the reflections of the Forms before order, which is provided by the Demiurge. From this order derives not pure matter but ‘polymorphous matter’.<sup>49</sup> It is clear that the Neoplatonic philosopher does not mean matter without qualities, but matter along with qualities, which come from all of its causes. Every cause has made a part of it, that is, that which ontologically is for it the demiurgic one, comprehensible up to a point by human mind. Moreover, the exclusion of matter without qualities makes impossible any pre-

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 388.2-20. Cf. *In Platonis Parmenidem*, 701.12-14. The sixth book of *Theologia Platonica* is important for a broader understanding of these, since there Proclus elaborates what he believes that it takes place in the last level of the metaphysical world.

existence and, by extension, any suspicion of ontological dualism. Any reference related to it is just theoretical. From the context however, results that the inherent qualities in matter appear gradually, so order increases in an analogous manner. What follows will provide a better explanation.

##### 5. *To a further exclusion of matter without qualities*

According to Proclus, matter is not the first ontological reality which presents a broad variety. By extension, generation does not take place, in its literal sense, just in order matter to receive a particular hypostasis. This is a crucial remark, for it excludes the possibility of simplistic monism. He stresses that the property of polymorphism belongs originally and basically to the ontological factor which contains precursory traces of the Forms.<sup>50</sup> This could be either the “Nature” in general or any formed body, which, as products of superior emanations, are composite. Regardless of what this reality is, according to the general principles being applied, it necessarily has been fed by a supreme variety. By this transfer of variety to the metaphysical level, it is proved that the Paradigm is something different from the Demiurge; so, despite the fact that the final goal is the same, their tasks are different. The requirement for these to take place is the following: matter has to participate in the Paradigm before the process of its ordering, when, in a sense, there was no Demiurge in this participation. On the other hand, matter appears participating to the Demiurge, from whom it takes over order and form, which both show that this divine cause from a point onwards clearly co-operates with the Paradigm.<sup>51</sup>

So, according to the Lycian philosopher, the verb “takes over” of the Platonic text would also describe, at least to a point, the transcendent paradigmatic cause of the demiurgic providence. The material substrate, which is already diversified, takes also over certain traces of Forms. It could be also said that Proclus describes a variety of actions that correspond to a variety of powers which co-operate to achieve the final ordering, provided that all of the powers involved lie, under the necessary transformations, within the

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Timaeus*, 52b.2.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 388.2-28: «Οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ πρώτη πολυποίκιλος (sc. ἡ ὕλη) οὐδὲ γένεσις αὐτῆς ἐστὶν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἔχοντος ἵχνη πρόδρομα τῶν εἰδῶν».

Demiurge. In this case, the Demiurge would be the same being who took things over and passed them on, in special in each case conditions and powers. That is to say, he takes over demiurgic properties and passes on the substantial existence and the ordering to things. Note that this dual state eventually results to self-production, which in Proclus' system is an idiom possessed exclusively by self-constituted beings, namely, the metaphysical ones. And a metaphysical being possess this property in the sense that by taking part in its own production, it actually proves its authentic ontological identity and the appropriate for it hypostatic unity. Furthermore, its self-reference is also completed by the fact that it sets the foundations for the emanation of an inferior being, which somehow shows the development of otherness or at least dissimilarity.<sup>52</sup>

Proclus then contends that Plato's expression "not in a state or rest but moving" indicates that the Demiurge assigned first and foremost to "Nature" the task to provide matter with movement. This can primarily lead to that if "Nature" was irrational and without guidance from the interference of a divine being, it would be doubtful whether it could hold and provide a particular order. As he mentions, this view is presented by Plato in *Politicus*.<sup>53</sup> In this treatise, after the Athenian philosopher has distinguished the Demiurge from the natural world, he says that this world moves by itself by a kind of destiny and connatural desire. So, whatever mentioned there that actually exists in the natural world after the creation, Plato postulates in *Timaeus* that also exists before creation. Furthermore, he argued that in the movement of the visible a disorder arises without the involvement of the intellect.<sup>54</sup> One could here confirm a moderate determinism, which includes two details: a) the divine volition needs to manifest, so that the necessary functions for the formation process to take place, and b) within the metaphysical world necessarily all the elements pre-exist which are found in the natural beings which appear successively in certain qualities; this is how the connection between the two worlds is proved in the monistic sense. This communication would be obviously not feasible if the natural world

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<sup>52</sup> Βλ. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 388.29-389.5. About the concept of self-constituted in Proclus' metaphysical system, cf. *Institutio theologica*, props.40-51, 42.8-50.6, with Dodds' comments composing a thorough approach.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. 272e.5-6, where there is the word "σύμφορος", which appears to have a direct relevance to the concept of "φύσις".

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 389.6-15.



would remain a kind of pre-existing matter without qualities and would hold only the property of being without that of generation.

Explaining further the Platonic texts, Proclus contends that the expression “bringing of it from order to disorder” means that the whole process here is taking place through the participation of matter in both the Intellect and intellectual life. Moreover, the verbal type “having judged” shows the thought of the Demiurge, which is in conformity with his will and power. Or, else, the conditions of the divine “providence” participate as a whole in the production process. Generalizing the discussion, it is stressed that goodness is the first factor in the process of causality, power is the second one, and Intellect is the third one. This hierarchy does not imply that they do not communicate to each other or that they do not complete each other.<sup>55</sup> It is actually declared that the Demiurge took care of the obvious disorder according to the order found within him. Proclus here quotes Aristotle, stressing that this is not about the order in the Demiurge, but that one found in his products. Furthermore, he actually located the good in both levels, so that the Intellect –as causing qualitative activity– to be an object of desire for secondary beings, but not the only and original source and creative cause of them.<sup>56</sup>

As an opposing view, Proclus uses one of Plato’s positions, according to which both the order and the whole before the *pars* lie in the first place in the Demiurge. Although, however, order and the whole exist in the intellectual mode, the Demiurge intended to present them in the sensible mode as well, that is, to make them natural without taking of them their metaphysical content. The question is: how were they transformed? Following Proclus, one could say the following: if the Demiurge creates just by being, he would either create by self-fragmentation and diminution of his powers, as fire, or, remaining as he is in

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<sup>55</sup> Concerning this triad, cf. also *Institutio Theologica*, prop.121, 106.10-12: «πᾶν τὸ θεῖον ὕπαρξιν μὲν ἔχει τὴν ἀγαθότητα, δύναμιν δὲ ἐνιαίαν καὶ γνῶσιν κρυφίον καὶ ἄληπτον πᾶσιν ὁμοῦ τοῖς δευτέροις» [“All that is divine has a substance which is goodness, a potency which has the character of unity, and a mode of knowledge which is secret and incomprehensible to all secondary beings alike” (Dodds, p. 107)]; *Theologia Platonica*, I, ch. 15. In both cases, the references are from the *Laws* and *Respublica*. Regarding the triad “πατήρ-δύναμις-νοῦς”, which Proclus also mentions in his comments in *Alcibiades I*, 84.16-17 and *Theologia Platonica*, I, 42.10-11, it seems that is probably derived from the Chaldean Oracles.

<sup>56</sup> On this, cf. Steel, Carlos. “Proclus et Aristote sur la causalité efficiente de l’intellect divin”, in J. Pépin and H. D. Saffrey (eds.), *Proclus, lecteur et interprète des anciens* (Paris 1987), pp. 213-225. On the other hand, according to Festugière, here there is no meeting of minds with Aristotle. Cf. *Metaphysica*, Λ 10, 1075a.11-1075b.38.

the exact same ontological state. The case of diminution, however, would be extraordinary, for it would abolish the metaphysical nature of him and, by successive diminutions, the Demiurge would come to an end somewhere in future, so, the natural world would necessarily come to an end as well. The most important argument according to him is Nature, which is not diminished, when it produces hair or teeth or anything else related to the composition of the body of the visible things. It is an eternal source, which keeps its energy unchanged and undiminished. It should be also mentioned that both the Demiurge and the Nature manifest in an intentional way, which follows –actually not in an accident function– their ontological nature and does not act independently of every superior former reality that provides more general properties.

By extension, it is more appropriate to say that the Demiurge’s transcendent being does not diminish, for it is the factor which creates itself, that is to say, it is self-substantiating. So, if he creates things with his own elements without any ontological change, he probably creates things like himself. This is actually a stable particular hypostatic property, which activates its ability to produce according to itself. The situation is validated also inversely, for that which is not diminished is not creating with its whole being.<sup>57</sup> So, all things are in the first instance in the Demiurge, that is, before they turn into something inferior by means of emanation. Everything, however, which is out of the Demiurge are images of his all-ness, of the integral way in which he includes all things, both what he receives and manifests. Combining these two, it is to be mentioned that everything that is out of the Demiurge are those that existed within him in a former phase, so, they are two special modes of existence. On the other hand, order is present in products in one way and in paradigms in another. This paradigmatic order is interwoven with disordered elements, without losing its archetypical nature. That is to say, it exists in and of itself, so that it can order disordered things, since it is superior to them. Furthermore, it also keeps its essence removed from disorder.<sup>58</sup> According to the general context, any provision

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<sup>57</sup> The creative activity of the Demiurge described at this point concerns all the productive causes. For instance, cf. *Institutio theologica*, props.26-29, 30.10-34.11.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 389.16-390.26. Trouillard mentions the following: “Proclos semble avoir prévu ou rencontré les contresens qu’on commet fréquemment au sujet de “l’émulation” néoplatonicienne. Il les exclut et particulièrement celui qui s’appuie sur la nécessité de la procession. Une nécessité de surabondance coïncide avec une souveraine liberté, n’entraîne

to the inferior beings is not through the essence but through the energy. The energy diffuses productive capabilities, which derive from the substance, but they do not change at all its ontological nature. This is actually an everlasting energy which comes from a super-sufficient substance. Thus, the dangers of “pantheism” or substantial absorption are avoided.

Seeking the causes of the problem about the dualism arisen by Plutarch and Atticus, Proclus assumes that Plato, copying some theologians, believed that the discordant and unordered were prior to the production of the cosmos. That is why he introduced a functional dualism –or, to be more moderate, a dualism of the modes of existence–, with two opposite starting points, the unorganized and that which produces organization, so that the former to be organized and participate in order.<sup>59</sup> From the historical point of view, Proclus mentions Porphyry, bringing actually back the first question. So, he recalls that this important philosopher criticized those around Atticus, who: a) hypothesized many principles, which connect the Demiurge with the Forms, b) claimed that matter is being moved by an ungenerated Soul, which is both irrational and maleficent, and, consequently, appears in a discordant and disorderly manner in its functions, and c) believed that according to the chorological succession matter is prior to the sensible, irrationality is prior to reason and disorder is prior to order.<sup>60</sup>

On these bases, Proclus seems to follow Porphyry’s theories to structure his own thoughts, which are the following: let it be assumed that both matter and God are two independent and autonomous ontological realities, that is to say, ungenerated by any cause. Being ungenerated is a primary common property to both of them, though in a different way, for each reality is ontologically unique. Therefore, it must be some other property by which they differ from one another, which could not be ungenerated. Thinking logically and simply, this is generated. However, it seems impossible for ungenerated things to differ by the property of generated, for this would result to ontological and logical contradictions

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aucune dialectique descendante et donc aucune relation réciproque” (*La mystagogie de Proclus*, p. 84).

<sup>59</sup> Proclus’ remarks at this point could be included into the field that could be described as Ontotheology, a characteristic of which is to attribute personal features to the ontological presences-functions.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 390.27-391.12.

and reversal of the entire argumentation. Moreover, another question which arises is what the cause of this differentiation of their properties and their function is. Is it then possible one of them to be preservative while the other to be destructive? If we considered the property of ungenerated, we would be absurd. The case here is as follows: everything ungenerated either would provide completeness or would result in destruction. And more specifically, the first state would arise from the ungenerated of God while the second one from the ungenerated of matter, with the common concept however leading to two radically different functions.

More questions could be raised at this point. So, in what way a cause with particular properties would be ontologically different from its product? Is it enough the fact that causality relates in a special way with two different beings? If there is a different cause for differentiation, it is necessary to find its own property, that is, whether it is ungenerated or generated. If the cause of the ungenerated things is generated, this is a completely extraordinary function of causality. On the other hand, if the cause is ungenerated, there are still problems. So, the question is: in what way there is an ungenerated reality as a cause prior to some others which are also ingenerated, which would be responsible for analogous functions? It should be mentioned that here Proclus is basically making logical exercises, since in the metaphysical level of his system all beings are ungenerated, but because of the hierarchical way in which this system is organized, each one of them comes through “procession” from a superior cause and all of them come from the One. Hierarchy provides the requirements for expressing questions, the answers of which result from logical procedures. It is to be mentioned that these questions serve his theoretical purpose to draw conclusions and exclude some other possibilities.

The epistemological question that needs to be answered in a complex system is constantly the following: what is the difference between God and matter. Proclus is clear: there is no reality that could be the cause of their difference, for it is contradictory to the property of ungenerated, which has no cause and is hypostatically self-sufficient. The property of ungenerated is a first principle and works as a primary source. However, new questions arise at this point, not only with respect to the interpretation. That is to say, if causation was eliminated from the realities under discussion, so that to justify why one of them is completed while another is corrupted, the result would be that randomness

dominates among principles. Actually, if the logical cause was eliminated, this sort of principles, that is, the ungenerated ones, would function without intellect and logic.<sup>61</sup> These invalid propositions show more clearly Proclus' intention. He attempts to prove that the pluralism of the causes is necessary and that the fact of production is not exclusively justified by the combination of the Demiurge with matter. In a more general context, we could argue that this combination is the final phase of a long process, which starts from the superior metaphysical levels and comes through various transformations, within which the genera, the properties and the functions of the visible world are specified. He also attempts to prove indirectly that it must be ruled out that matter is ungenerated and without cause, that is, he intends to exclude the possibility that it could be self-sufficient. His final purpose is clear: to underpin monism.

#### *6. The universal productivity of the supreme Principle*

As detailed below by the Neoplatonist philosopher, the ontological value of the highest Principle is not just the fact that it is independent of any other principles, but also that all things depend on its manifestations. That is, the way in which we approach its complete integrity –regardless of any apophatic or negative expression about it– does not indicate lacks, for it is a positive approach. Considering this direction, the conclusion is that there are no other principles than the superior one, so, ontological –or, to be more accurate, henological– monism is actually confirmed. If there was a causal pluralism, the supreme god would not be the cause of all things but only of some. Thus, if god is the principle of matter as well, monism is completely confirmed. Anything else would disprove this monistic approach. For instance, if the principle consists exactly in this, namely, in being a principle of some things and in organizing the unordered, it will be within its effects, so, if it would be eliminated, the effects would be eliminated as well. On the other hand, if there would be no effects, it would be eliminated as both principle and hypostasis. The relation to be emphasized here is obvious: the immanent nature of the cause, regardless of its transcendence over its products, essentially makes it non-cause or, at least, connatural with them. The cause-effect relationship becomes possible only if priority and superiority of the

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 391.12-392.19. Cf. Plato, *Leges*, I, 891c.

former upon the latter is accepted.<sup>62</sup> One could find here even a sort of anti-Aristotelianism, since what is actually attempted is to eliminate immanence.

The reason why Proclus investigates this is because it has been often argued that the “being”, the original ontological idiom, of the principle as a principle lies in the fact that it is manifested in the process of creating. If causality is defined in this way, it is not possible for the principle to exist if the natural world does not exist. He also says by reversing the whole reasoning that the supreme god exists even without the act of creating. However, he stresses that those who support this idea do not know that the genuine divine powers act through being and that, by proportion, the powers of growth and the nutritive powers nourish the body and make it grow just by existing.<sup>63</sup> So, if god permanently creates, the creative power is connatural with its being. Otherwise, the power is acquired, that is, it is by accident. In this case, two are the questions: how after being imperfect, does he become perfect and how, after not being an artisan, does he become an artisan?<sup>64</sup> What Proclus here intends to prove is that the concept of cause simultaneously and always should include the transcendence over its effects as well as its immanence within their hypostases. That is to say, it has to be a superior coherent being which is capable of producing. It should be always separated from them at the same time as it will be in relation with them. This is a twofold presence which expresses its super-self-sufficiency from every point of view.

Subsequently, the Neoplatonist philosopher, after quoting some Platonic extracts<sup>65</sup>, stresses that metaphysical and cosmological questions should begin neither from the multitude of beings nor from the “one-being”, but from the One itself. Furthermore, he contends that neither the concept of creator, who is considered by some thinkers as a principle, is appropriate for Plato’s views. His basis is the composite nature of causality,

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 392.20-28. Concerning the question of priority in relation to causality, Moutsopoulos says: «Le concept de priorité intervient pour expliquer la présence respective des êtres. Il ne s’agit certes pas d’une application rupeusement ontologique, mais seulement d’une application référentielle du principe post hoc, ergo propter hoc. La causalité assure un lien entre les êtres intelligible, en préservant l’unité et le fonctionnement inférieurs» (*Les structures de l’imaginaire...*, p. 43).

<sup>63</sup> The reference here is to Atticus. Cf. frag.27.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 392.28-393.13

<sup>65</sup> Cf. *Respublica*, 508b.9-509b.10; *Epistula II*, 312e.102; *Philebus*, 23c.9-27c.1; *Sophista*, 242c.4-e.5

according to which, for instance, the Forms do not exist on their own separately from the “Intellect”, but the “Intellect”, by turning towards itself, sees all the Forms in the sense of a sort of self-reference, before it begins, by means of their exemplified implementations-presences, its productive manifestation.<sup>66</sup> However, he then says that neither the Demiurge is the very first god. Having in mind the way in which his ontological system is structured, he argues that the very first god is superior to all intellective –or any other metaphysical– being.<sup>67</sup> And by coming back to his former argument, he stresses that there is no irrational soul which intervenes to what exists in a discordant and chaotic mode. For, every soul is produced by gods, so it cannot be irrational. By extension, nor does the universe become orderly after being disorderly. Two conclusions can be drawn from the above. Firstly, the production of the visible world is rational and not random. Secondly, even if we accepted the pre-cosmological disorder, we would have to accept that it contains seeds of order that are to be manifested. So, particularly complex syllogisms have eliminated the possibility of a maleficent soul.

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<sup>66</sup> Proclus’ view about Forms here can go back to Plotinus (cf. *Enneades*, 6.7) or even Antiochus. About the relation of the Intellect with the Ideas in Neoplatonism, cf. Gersh, Stephen. *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden 1978), pp. 82-106, who says the following: “That the multiplicity which constitutes the nature of intellect is one of ‘Forms’ (εἶδη) is indicated by the later Neoplatonists in two types of argument. The first postulates that form is a normal characteristic of the third term in any triadic emanation, and Proclus provides a typical example of this when he argues that ‘the first term was the most unified, the second that which gives birth to plurality and is the source of distinction, and the third that which is complete and manifests intelligible plurality and form within itself’ (...) The other type of argument concerns itself explicitly with intellect, and in these the relation between the hypostasis as a whole and the plurality which it contains is expressed in various ways. Syrianus maintains that intellect ‘established Forms within itself which are never other than itself and its essence’ (...), Proclus that intellect ‘embraces’ (περιέχει) the Forms and that the hypostasis and its intelligible contents are ‘conjoined to each other’ (συνεζεύκται ἄρα ἀλλήλοις), and Damascius that intellect is the ‘producer of Forms’ (εἰδοποιός). All these notions, of course, represent philosophical elaborations of the doctrine that intellect is a totality, and this is actually stated in various other texts” (86-87). Also, Beierwaltes, Werner. *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main 1979), pp. 39-48.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 394.12-25. Approaching this remark in relation to the former discussion, a universal proposal arises. Breton, Stanislas says that Proclus’ world is a system of relationships, where everything communicates with everything else. This obvious in his system priority that is given in relationship is not enough to completely describe it. In order to understand the middle beings or powers the concept of relationship has to be combined with those of order and series (*Philosophie et Mathématique chez Proclus*, Paris 1969, p. 138)

Under these, somehow, epistemological terms and conditions, Proclus raises the following question: if the demiurgic god wishes to bring all things into an orderly condition, what is the point at which he began to actualize this condition which is based on his intention? Is it since ever or at a particular time? If it is at a particular time, this restriction of his intentional interference is due to his own hypostasis or matter, obviously considering its receptiveness. The second case indicates an indirect Aristotelianism and does not seem satisfactory to him. If it is due to the Demiurge himself, it would be extraordinary, for he is always good. And the good is always productive, in an actually good way, aesthetically speaking. If it is due to matter, the question is how has it been ordered? The Neoplatonist philosopher brings forward the view that matter has become ready to receive the demiurgic reason, implying obviously here the Aristotelian tradition. Furthermore, according to this, god actually watches its readiness in an analogous-appropriate manner. On this basis, it becomes necessary to be brought into order not when it is in a disordered condition –for in that case it would not be ready (that is, capable) –, but when it has stopped being in this condition –at least gradually. Its unreadiness is its disordered movement. So, matter is not the cause of disorder. Nor is the will of the demiurge god, for he is originally and always good. Thus, the developing world was being set in order and the Demiurge was constantly ordering the discordant and disorderly element.<sup>68</sup> So, we could say that the specifications of the creation are transferred to the very interior of the metaphysical level, in the sense of an eternal possibility that at some point will manifest in a sensible mode. In this way, the pre-existence of a sort of matter without qualities is excluded. Moreover, this is an answer to the question that we raised at the beginning of our study about the meaning of “eternally”.

However, the question which ontological factor, or what reasoning revealed disorderly matter remains. Proclus contends that in order to understand that generation of the bodies is something different from their arrangement once they have come into being, one should hypothesize that they are undoubtedly beings, despite the fact that they move in a disorderly manner. Their second idiom is necessary, for it makes clear that it is impossible bodies to move on their own. So, intending to show that the order of the bodies comes from another ontological level, Plato said that disorder is intrinsic to their

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 394.12-25.



movements, when the divine cause is absent –obviously, we could say, in an active or assimilable condition. Proclus continues as follows: if Aristotle criticized those thinkers who claimed that disorder exists before cosmos, saying that this sort of distinctions are not like the hypotheses of geometry –since those, as authentic theoretical schemata, exist on their own<sup>69</sup>, one should say that it is not just hypothetically argued in the Platonic text that disorder necessarily pre-exists. This priority concerns the way in which it is said that formlessness is prior to the Forms, even though it never exists separately from them. Similarly, the ontological reality which is informed but has not yet been completely articulated is said to be prior to order, even though this is not true since it has coexisted along with it.<sup>70</sup> It is obvious that Proclus here raises the question of distinction of the ontological states, following however the theoretical needs or restrictions in which human thought is subject to, not the true data. Both the order and the Forms are originally immanent in matter and at some point will manifest themselves or matter will manifest by coming along with them and their energy and capability of forming. Therefore, the Neoplatonic philosopher says that we should not regard these distinctions suggested by him to be true but only necessary for science. In this way, he reveals the temporary human incapability.

At the last part of the extract under discussion, Proclus, following Porphyry, describes the mode of creation of the divine Intellect which is performed “just by being” or “by thought”. First of all, repeating his predecessor’s theory and having in mind an empirical example, he mentions that even artisans need some tools for their manifestation and the appliance of their energy, because they are not able to master on their own over all that matter which is necessary for their work. So, they use some tools to get material active for receiving forms. However, the actual conformation of the artisan supervenes upon the material substrate instantaneously from the art, once all inhibiting factors and plans have been firstly removed.<sup>71</sup> And if there were no inhibiting factors in this substrate for

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. *De Caelo*, 1.10, 279b.32-280a.10.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 394.26-395.10. Cf. Aristotle, *De mundo*, 6, 399a. Obviously, Proclus does not investigate whether this work is an original one or not.

<sup>71</sup> About that the form or the plan of a work of art resides somehow in the art, Runia and Share, *Proclus. Commentary on Plato’s Timaeus*, n. 356, p. 269, refer to Proclus’ commentary on the first book of Euclides’ *Elements*, 137.4-8. They also refer to Syrianus comments on *Metaphysica*, 149.4-

prevailing the completion of the plans –the producer or the artisan– would add the form to the area under his responsibility all at once and would not have any need of tools. In his view, it is not something strange that the Demiurge manages to bring into existence perceptible reality by its own “being” or “thought”, generating the material immaterially, the tangible intangibly and partlessly extending the extended. He also adds that this procedure of the ontologically opposing is not surprising, that is, if something which is incorporeal and unextended is the cause of existence of all corporeal developing things. For instance, human semen, even though it is very small in bulk, contains within itself all the seminal reasons and gives rise to a new developing human being with many organic and corporeal differences. That is to say, he creates all things from no bulk at all. And generalizing, the philosopher says that the reasons produce all things, even though they are without bulk everywhere they take action. So, any effect which will come from semen, it could be said that exists within it in a small portion. Much more, the demiurgic reason is able to bring all things in existence without needing at all matter. As the creative cause of the visible world is eternally fixed in itself and, preserving the state of “remaining”, has brought into existence all things by utilizing his productive capacity, which contributes to the “procreation” as the source of production, which, metaphorically speaking, are considered to be his tools.<sup>72</sup>

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8: «Τῶν τε γὰρ φύσει πρώτων τὰ εἶδη οὐσιώδη καὶ ἐν νῷ, τῶν τε ἐσχάτων καὶ ἀνουσιῶν οὐδὲν ὅτι μὴ κατὰ λόγους ἐπιτελεῖται φυσικούς, τὰ τε τεχνητὰ κατὰ τὰ ἐν τῇ τέχνῃ εἶδη καὶ αὐτὸς συγχωρεῖς δημιουργεῖσθαι, ὡς πολλαχοῦ μὲν, σαφέστατα δὲ ἐν τῷ Ζ τῆσδε τῆς πραγματείας συγκεχώρηται». [“For of those things which are primary in nature the Forms are substantial and inherent in Intellect, while of the ultimate and insubstantial there is nothing that is not brought about in accordance with natural reason-principles, and as for manufactured objects (tekhnêta), you yourself admit that they are created in accordance with the forms inherent in the soul, as is admitted in many places, but most clearly in Book 7 of the present work” (cf. Dillon, John – O’Meara, Dominique. *Syrianus: On Aristotle Metaphysics 13-14*, London – New York 2006, p. 121).

<sup>72</sup> Cf. *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, II, 395.10-396.26: «...εἰ τοίνυν καὶ τέχναι ἀνθρώπινα καὶ ψυχῶν μερικῶν φαντασίαι καὶ δαιμόνων ἐνέργειαι τοιαῦτα δρῶσι, τὶ θαυμαστὸν τὸν δημιουργὸν αὐτῷ τῷ νοεῖν τὸ πᾶν ὑπόστασιν παρέχεσθαι τῷ αἰσθητῷ, ἀλλῶς μὲν παράγοντα τὸ ἔνυλον, ἀναφῶς δὲ ἀπογεννῶντα τὸ ἀπτὸν, ἀμερῶς δὲ ἐκτείνοντα τὸ διαστατόν;» [“...if, then, human arts and the imaginations of individual (human) souls and the operations of demons achieve such results, is it surprising that the Demiurge should bring perceptible (reality) into existence just by thinking the universe, generating the material immaterially and the tangible intangibly, and partlessly extending the extended” (Runia-Share, p. 270)]. Regardless of the explicit ontological otherness, Proclus does not consider this contradictory. He believes that the divine, as the absolute metaphysical integrity, is capable of manifesting in many ways. Cf. *Timaeus*, 42e.5, where: «Καὶ ὁ μὲν δὴ ἅπαντα ταῦτα διατάξας ἔμενεν ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ τρόπον ἦθει» [“with these arrangements in place, he resumed

## *Conclusions*

According to what has been investigated, we draw the following conclusions:

1. In order for Proclus to support the ontological monism that he puts forth in a quite reliable manner, he selects very carefully those Platonic texts which serve his theoretical purpose, thinking that this is his responsibility. He basically intends to show that in his first steps the founder of the Academy tends to dualism only because this is methodologically necessary; so, it is his duty to shed light on the true intention of his inspirer, even after nine centuries. This is an illumination constantly stressed and presented in a particular methodological model of his inspiration. As we attempted to demonstrate, Proclus proved through his argumentation that he is impressive in how he makes his theoretical reconstructions.

2. In our view, it would be interesting to examine the analyzed text in comparison to some texts of the Eastern Christian tradition, the main exponents of which on this metaphysical and cosmological topic are Basil of Caesarea (the Great) and Gregory of Nyssa and their commentaries on the biblical *Hexaemeron*. We believe that the similarities are impressive. For instance, in both the worldviews the production of matter by the divine Demiurge, or, in other words, the production of the corporeal by the incorporeal, in terms of a primary complete interference of the divine transcendence, which goes together with its “personal” intention, is a fundamental issue. In these two worldviews there is no neutral metaphysics and Cosmology.

As a direct extension on what we have discussed, we could contend the following: As Proclus criticizes Atticus and Plutarch is like he stresses that they remained in their own approaches without giving priority to the metaphysical and natural reality. He appears like suggesting them to follow a consistent skepticism<sup>73</sup>, by which they could have made the

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his life in his proper abode” (Waterfield, 32)] and Proclus’ comments on this dialogue, III, 315.11-12: «ἡ δὲ ἕδρα αὐτῆ διαώνιος ἐστὶ καὶ ἀεὶ ὡσαύτως ἐστῶσα».

<sup>73</sup> The fact that one of Proclus’ main goals is apophatism is a proof for us to consider him as a great supporter of skepticism, not though regarding the objective existence of the metaphysical world but regarding human capability of approaching it in a precise gnoseological mode. For an approach of Proclus’ skeptical tendency, cf. for instance Siorvanes, Lucas. *Proclus, Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science* (Edinburgh 1996), pp. 289-293.

appropriate adjustments. But, extending even more this, we could actually argue that the comments of both these thinkers were not a theoretical obstacle. In a next historical phase and in the context of the same School which was under the Neoplatonic influence new suggestions were presented and new syllogisms were formed. And this is a characteristic of the Platonic Academy, which basically avoided dogmatism.

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