

KNOWING THE INEFFABLE ONE: THE MYSTICAL PHILOSOPHY OF PROCLUS

DANIEL JUGRIN*

Abstract Proclus insists on the fact that the One cannot be named and that it cannot be talked about. Proclus does not emphasize the poverty of language, but rather the transcendence of the One. The human discourse concerning the One can be generally validated as a reflection “of the natural striving of the soul towards the One”. The goal of the soul is thus not to obtain “scientific knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη) but to achieve resemblance to the One, for only thus can the soul know the One. Unification is what brings us closer to the One, and this unity is another type of knowledge: it is knowledge inspired by divinity, higher than the “scientific knowledge”.

Keywords Proclus, the Ineffable One, mystical knowledge, transcendence, negation.

From a strictly philosophical point of view, the late Neoplatonist Proclus (A.D. 412–485) is a rationalist in the classical, Platonic sense. As in Plato’s works, purification produced by discursive reasoning (διάνοια) leads to contemplation, established at the level of the Intellect (νοῦς). At Proclus, however, contemplation perfects itself in union with the divine, accomplished in the highest part of the Intellect, called the “flower of the Intellect” (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ).¹ Contemplative philosophy seeks detachment from the multiplicity and the ascension towards the primordial unity. Beyond this level, the one seeking the purification of the soul from materiality – and, thus, coming into contact with the gods² – is *theurgy*.³ The close

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University of Bucharest. jugrindaniel@gmail.com.

¹ Phrase originating in *The Chaldean Oracles*. Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1047.2, ed. V. Cousin, *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, pt. 3 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961); *In Platonis Alcibiadem* I, 248.3, ed. L.G. Westerink, Proclus Diadochus, *Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954).

² On the religious aspect of Proclus’ thinking, see A.-J. Festugière, “Proclus et la religion traditionnelle,” in *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire offerts à André Piganiol*, ed. R. Chevallier (Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1966), 1581–1590; T. Lankila, “Aphrodite in Proclus’ Theology,” *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 3 (2009): 21–43.

relation between theurgy and intellection leads to important developments in Proclus' theory of knowledge.⁴

Proclus' philosophy tends to integrate at a theoretical level all previous philosophical doctrines (Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism), to compose a single philosophy, a single theoretical body. Proclus enhances the idea of a possible agreement between philosophy (Platonic and Aristotelian), theology (Orphic and Pythagorean) and the revelation of the *Chaldean Oracles*.⁵ He transposes this agreement⁶ in a fundamental condition of philosophy and its task: for the Neoplatonic philosopher, all theologies (including the texts of Plato, read in a theological manner) are under the sign of the same single truth, and philosophy has to enhance this agreement.⁷

“The One beyond all”

O thou beyond all. How else is it meet for me to sing of Thee?
 What words can make thy hymn? For no word can describe Thee.
 What mind perceives Thee? For no mind can grasp Thee.
 Thou alone art unspeakable, though creator of all that is spoken of,
 Thou alone art unknowable, though creator of all that is known.
 Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα τί γὰρ θέμις ἄλλο σε μέλπειν;
 Πῶς λόγος ὑμνήσει σε; σὺ γὰρ λόγῳ οὐδενὶ ῥητόν.
 Πῶς νόος ἀθρήσει σε; σὺ γὰρ νόῳ οὐδενὶ ληπτός.
 Μοῦνος ἔων ἀφραστός· ἐπεὶ τέκες ὅσα λαλεῖται.
 Μοῦνος ἔων ἄγνωστός· ἐπεὶ τέκες ὅσα νοεῖται.⁸

³ *Theurgy* – religious magic practiced by Late Neoplatonists – was usually regarded as the point in which Neoplatonism degenerated into magic, superstition and irrationalism. On the relation between theurgy, philosophy and mystics in Proclus, see Anne Sheppard, “Proclus’ Attitude to Theurgy,” *The Classical Quarterly* 32/ 1 (1982): 212–224; J. Trouillard, *L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 171–191; E.R. Dodds, “Theurgy and Its Relationship to Neoplatonism,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 37/ 1–2 (1947): 55–69; A. Smith, *Porphyry’s place in the Neoplatonic tradition* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1974), 111 sq.; Robbert M. van den Berg, “Theurgy in the Context of Proclus’ Philosophy,” in *All from One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d’Hoine and Marije Martijn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 223–239.

⁴ See St. Gersh, *Being Different. More Neoplatonism after Derrida* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 52–60.

⁵ It is about a writing in the late 2nd century, whose author is, by tradition, Julian the Chaldean or his son, Julian the Theurgist, the latter being a contemporary of Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 121–180). Influenced by Iamblichus, whom he often calls “the divine”, Proclus systematically integrated theurgic doctrines into his philosophy, being himself a *connoisseur* of theurgy.

⁶ See H.-D. Saffrey, “Accorder entre elles les traditions théologiques: Une caractéristique du néoplatonisme athénien,” in *On Proclus and His Influence on Medieval Philosophy*, eds. E.P. Bos and P.A. Meijer (Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1992), 35–50.

⁷ See Marilena Vlad, “Introduction,” in Damascius, *Difficulties and Solutions of First Principles*, vol. I (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2006), 16–17.

⁸ Cf. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, Series Graeca, ed. J.-P. Migne, vol. 37, 507.6–10 (trans. R. Mortley, in Idem, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1986), 98).

This is the way in which the hymn dedicated by Proclus to the first principle unfolds itself, “a litany of negation”⁹ which gathers in itself the whole concept of “the One beyond all” – ὧ πάντων ἐπέκεινα.¹⁰

Werner Beierwaltes¹¹ places on the same level this hymn and a remark that Proclus makes regarding Plato’s *Parmenides*, stating that the negations in the *Parmenides* 139e are nothing more than “eine theologische Hymnus auf das Eine durch die Negationen (ἀποφάσεων).”¹² In that section, Plato proclaimed that the One “will be neither like nor unlike anything, either itself or another,”¹³ and Proclus reads in this text a statement regarding the transcendence of the One in relation to the ten categories, the negations being arranged in the form of a hymn.¹⁴

The transcendent terminology of the One revealed in the writings of Proclus is perhaps the most comprehensive compared to any other Neoplatonic philosopher and marks the climax in the development of the *apophasis* in Greek thinking.¹⁵ Linking his conception of the One with the negations of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, Proclus repeatedly consolidates the idea that “the One is transcendent over all things.”¹⁶ He invokes the *Republic* VI (509b) as a source for the discussion of the One in the negative terms of the First

⁹ Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1995), 162.

¹⁰ The ineffable and unknowable principle beyond all is hymned (ἀνυμνέται). *Theologia Platonica* I.10, 42.1–2, ed. H.-D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, livre I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968); II.11, 65.5–7, ed. H.-D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, Proclus, *Théologie platonicienne*, livre II (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974), without saying *what* it is who made heaven and earth. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 162–163, n. 29.

¹¹ See W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 353.

¹² Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1191.34–35, ed. V. Cousin, *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, pt. 3 (Paris: Durand, 1864): ὕμνον διὰ τῶν ἀποφάσεων τοῦ τῶν ἕνα θεολογικὸν ἀναπέμπων (trans. G.R. Morrow and J.M. Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 539: “raising up to the One a single theological hymn by means of all these negations”).

¹³ Plato, *Parmenides* 139e7–8: Οὐδὲ μὴν ὁμοίον τι ἔσται οὐδ’ ἀνόμοιον οὔτε αὐτῷ οὔτε ἐτέρῳ (trans. Mary Louise Gill and P. Ryan), in Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 374.

¹⁴ The hymn written by Proclus was once attributed to St Gregory of Nazianzus but, as W. Beierwaltes (cf. *Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, 353) seems to prove, there is largely unity in terms of the thinking encountered in the hymn and the one in the Proclean philosophical works. Cf. also R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation*, 98.

¹⁵ W. Beierwaltes (*Proklos. Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, 352–353, n. 65, 67) compiles the terms on absolute transcendence: ὑπέρ, ἐξ, πρό, ἐπέκεινα.

¹⁶ *In Platonis Parmenidem* II, 763.4 Cousin: ἔστι γὰρ πάντων ἐξηρημένον (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 130.

Hypothesis,¹⁷ because here Plato “says about the first principle that it is what is beyond intellect and the intelligible and beyond existence.”¹⁸ The One is “that unity above essence, above all plurality and second to nothing at all” – ἐκεῖνο δὲ ὑπὲρ οὐσίαν, ὑπὲρ πᾶν πλῆθος, οὐδενὸς ὄλως δεύτερον.¹⁹

The fundamental statement which is centred on the Proclean vision regarding the One can be uttered as follows: “it is not a particular one, but One in the absolute sense” – οὐ γὰρ τι ἓν ἐστίν, ἀλλ’ ἀπλῶς ἓν.²⁰ For all that can be qualified is not something absolute, “so that quality is not to be applied to the One in the essential and absolute sense, in order that it may not become a particular kind of One instead of the One itself” – ὥστε καὶ τῷ αὐτῷ ἐνὶ καὶ ἀπλῶς οὐ προσακτέον τὸ ποιόν, ἵνα μὴ τοῖόνδε ἓν γένηται ἀντὶ τοῦ αὐτοενός.²¹ To ascend to “the unspeakable and incomprehensible consciousness of the One” (τοῦ ἐνὸς συναίσθησιν),²² thinking must “remove the multiplicity” (*seponere quidem anime multitudinem*).²³ Entering the way towards the authentic and absolute One – “the very One itself in the truest sense” (ἀληθῶς ἓν, ἀπλῶς ἓν, αὐτοέν)²⁴ – requires the application of a “total negation”²⁵ – by which the One is negated of every name that has its roots in the multiplicity of beings.²⁶

¹⁷ All Neoplatonists remained true to the Plotinian view that the first principle was to be described using two Platonic notions: the One as analysed in Plato’s *Parmenides* (137c–142a), and the Good, as established by Plato in the *Republic* (VI, 508e–509c). With the notion of the “One”, we enter the stage of a negative theology as founded by Plato in the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*: “If the one is one, then what can we deduce about this one?” The ultimate result is that we cannot even call this one a “One”, because this would introduce some kind of positive attribution of a name, setting apart this one from other things, and thus, introducing some kind of relation to those other things. This would compromise the uniqueness of this principle and abolish its transcendence. See Gerd Van Riel, “The One, the Henads, and the Principles,” in *All from One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d’Hoine and Marije Martijn, 73–97.

¹⁸ *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 64k (eds. R. Klibansky and C. Labowsky, *Parmenides usque ad finem primae hypothesis nec non Procli Commentarium in Parmenidem, pars ultima adhuc inedita interprete G. de Moerbeka*, Warburg Institute, London, 1953). Cf. Proclus, *Commentaire sur le Parménide de Platon*, traduction de Guillaume de Moerbeke, ed. C. Steel, tome II, Livre V–VII (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1985), 515.90–91 (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 597).

¹⁹ *In Platonis Parmenidem* II, 763.8–9 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 131). Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 163.

²⁰ *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1069.21 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 423). Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.5.13.1 sq.; 3.8.10.22 (τὸ ἀπλῶς ἓν).

²¹ *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1096.24–26 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 443).

²² *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1071.18 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 424).

²³ See *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 58k Klibansky/Labowsky (512.94–95 Steel) (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 594, modified).

²⁴ *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1071.5 sq. Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 424).

²⁵ To the Neoplatonists, the “desperate negation” of *Parmenides* (142a4–8) reflects the final recognition of the insufficient nature of any kind of determination of the absolute One. Absolute unity requires the

The basic rule of Proclus follows the Plotinian line of thinking: regarding the One, additions diminish.²⁷ He insists that nothing has to be added to the One, “for whatever you add (προσθήκη) to the One by its addition (προσθήκης) causes oneness (τὴν ἐνότητα) to vanish since it rejects the addition of everything that is alien to it.”²⁸ Therefore, the One is not any particular thing; nor should it be understood as “the summit of *the things that are*” (ἀκρότης τῶν ὄντων)²⁹ or “the entirety of the Forms” (ὁλότης τῶν εἰδῶν), because such an interpretation would only “restrict its power” (τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ συστέλλομεν).³⁰ In its absolute unity, the One is totally imparticipable (τὸ ἀμέθεκτόν ἐστιν ἓν) and transcendent.³¹

Although – like all apophatic philosophers – Proclus insists on the fact that the One cannot be named and that it cannot be talked about, yet we find in him the description of the ways by which the One can be expressed. The human discourse concerning the One can be generally validated as a reflection “of the natural striving of the soul towards the One” – τὴν

removal of all plurality and, hence, of all positive determination. Cf. Gerd Van Riel, “The One, the Henads, and the Principles,” in *All from One: A Guide to Proclus*, eds. Pieter d’Hoine and Marije Martijn, 75–76.

²⁶ *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1069.16–17 Cousin: “It is for this reason that everything is *negated* of this One” – Διὸ καὶ πάντα ἀποφάσκειται τούτου τοῦ ἐνός (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 423, modified); *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1172.37 Cousin: “by means of this removal of all – διὰ τῆς τούτων πάντων ἀναίρεσεως” (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 523; *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.2–3 Cousin: “for the orders of being are negated of the One” – αἱ γὰρ τοῦ ὄντος τάξεις ἀποφάσκονται τοῦ ἐνός (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 425, modified; *Theologia Platonica* II.10 (62.18 Saffrey/Westerink): “it is certainly necessary to take away all things similarly from the cause of all” – ἀνάγκη δήπου τοῦ τῶν πάντων αἰτίου πάντα ὁμοίως ἀφαιρεῖν (trans. Th. Taylor), in *The Platonic Theology*, vol. I (Kew Gardesn: Selene Books, 1985), 137. Cf. W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzuge seiner Metaphysik*, 341.

²⁷ Cf. C. Steel, “*Negatio negationis*. Proclus on the final lemma of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides*,” in *Traditions of Platonism. Essays in honour of John Dillon*, ed. John J. Cleary (Aldershot–Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), 363.

²⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* 1177.20–23 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 527. Cf. Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* II.10, 63.13 sq. Saffrey/Westerink; *Institutio theologica* 8, 8.29 sq., ed. E.R. Dodds, Proclus, *The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963). See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 3.8.11.12–13; 6.7.38.2–3.

²⁹ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1199.13–16 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 545.

³⁰ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* II, 763.16–20 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 131).

³¹ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1070.13 Cousin; see also Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 36k Klibansky/Labowsky (499.8–10 Steel); *Theologia Platonica* II.9, 57.22 Saffrey/Westerink. A systematic discussion on the concept of transcendent unity is found at the end of *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 46k Klibansky/Labowsky (504.65–67 Steel): *Ab omni ergo cognitione partibili et intelligentia le unum exaltatum est et ab omni contactu. Solum autem unio nos adducit uni; et hoc quidem ut melius omni ente incognitum* – “Thus the One transcends all analysable knowledge and intellection and all contact. And only unification brings us near the One, since just because it is higher than any existence, it is unknown”) (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 587. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 163–164.

αὐτοφυῆ τῆς ψυχῆς ὡδῖνα περὶ τὸ ἔν,³² even though “in fact we say nothing in the proper sense about the One” – “Ὅτι γὰρ οὐδὲν κυρίως ἐπὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς λέγομεν.³³ We cannot give a definitive shape to a definition of what is incomprehensible and beyond being, as long as we cannot even gain an understanding of simple Forms, devoid of parts. All definitions and names³⁴ are part of the composite horizon;³⁵ therefore, it is not appropriate to talk of the One

in terms of having the relation of cause to those things following upon it, nor as being greater nor smaller nor equal; for these qualities only have place in things which are subject to comparison – οὔτε κατὰ τὸν τῆς αἰτίας λόγον τῶν μετὰ τὸ ἔν, οὔτε μείζον οὔτε ἔλαττον οὔτε ἴσον· ἐν οἷς γὰρ ἐστι σύγκρισις, ταῦτα μόνον ἔχει χώραν.³⁶

Nor is it acceptable for the One to have applied to it the superlative form of some epithet (highest, greatest, best, etc.); such an exigency hides the aspiration for conceiving more about the One than it is possible to achieve by means of negations (τῶν ἀποφάσεων).³⁷ The One “is superior even to such superlatives” – τῶν τοιούτων ὑπερθέσεων ἐκεῖνο κρεῖττον ἔστι: we cannot describe something as being white in the superlative, as long as it is not white by any means.³⁸

Although it shows how far the human discourse falls from the One, there is at Proclus a continuous tension between the “vague terminology”, derived from the realm of existence – which we are forced to invoke when we refer to the One – and the validity of this language. This tension cannot be grasped especially in the context of the process of *naming*³⁹ – a topic which is extremely important for understanding the subsequent negative theology.⁴⁰

³² Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1191.8–9 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 539.

³³ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1191.5–6 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 539. See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.3.14.5–8. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 165–166.

³⁴ For the One is inexpressible by both description and name. See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* 46k Klibansky/Labowsky (505.79–82 Steel).

³⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* IV, 939.25–30 Cousin.

³⁶ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1211.26–29 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 555).

³⁷ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1211.33–38 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 555.

³⁸ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1212.1 sq. Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 556.

³⁹ See, in this respect, J. Trouillard, “L’activité onomastique selon Proclus,” in *De Jamblique à Proclus, Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique*, tome 21, ed. O. Reverdin (Genève: Fondation Hardt, 1974), 239–255.

⁴⁰ Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 167–168.

The Transcendent Negations

The term ὑπεραποφάσεις was usually translated as *hypernegations*⁴¹ – though it could also be rendered by one of the next forms: transcendent negations⁴² or “supernegations” – indicating that “some negations are superior to affirmations, as in the case of something that does not possess a characteristic because it transcends this characteristic: the negations which are applied to the One must be of this last kind.”⁴³

Proclus asserts⁴⁴ that Plato – having as a point of departure the “*genera* of being” (τοῦ ὄντος γένεσιν)⁴⁵ from the *Sophist*⁴⁶ – has shown how the One, though it is the *cause* of the so-called “transcendent negations” (*hypernegations*),⁴⁷ does not “partake of” any of them nor is it one of them, proving by this that the One transcends them, being situated “beyond” (ἐπέκεινα)⁴⁸ the intelligible zone.⁴⁹

In the *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* VII,⁵⁰ Proclus initiates a tripartite taxonomy of negation: negations must fall under the incidence of three categories, corresponding to the three stages of the relations of the One. First, we have the One in the relation “of itself to itself”; then, in relation “of itself to itself and others”; and third – “of itself to others”. These three groups of negations correspond to these three kinds of the One’s relations, and they are distributed in a descending order. On the first and highest level, there are those negations which apply to the One’s relation to itself and – in conformity with this relation – the One is negated of Motion and Rest. Concerning the relation to itself and other things, the One is negated of Sameness and Otherness; in a similar fashion, the One which is in relation to itself and the others is negated of the Like and the Unlike, the equal and the unequal, the younger

⁴¹ Ὑπεραποφάσις is a technical term that belongs to Stoic logic. See Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* VII, 69.10–12: “Of the negative proposition one species is the double negative. By double negative is meant the negation of a negation, e.g. It is not non-day. Now this presupposes that it is day” – ὑπεραποφατικὸν δ’ ἐστὶν ἀποφατικὸν ἀποφατικοῦ, οἷον οὐχὶ ἡμέρα οὐκ ἔστι· τίθησι δὲ τὸ ἡμέρα ἐστὶν (trans. R.D. Hicks), in Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* (London/New York: Heinemann/Putnam’s sons, 1925), 179. Presumably, in the case of the One, such a hypernegation would be, e.g., “It is not not at rest” or “not not the same.” For the Stoics, the double negative simply equated an affirmative, while in the case of Proclus it indicates the One’s transcendence of both sides of the opposition (cf. J.M. Dillon, n. 33, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 523).

⁴² Cf. trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 523.

⁴³ L.J. Rosán, *The Philosophy of Proclus. The Final Phase of Ancient Thought*, “Cosmos”, (New York, 1949), 122–123.

⁴⁴ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1172 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 523.

⁴⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1172.32 Cousin.

⁴⁶ Plato, *Sophista* 256a sq.

⁴⁷ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1172.33–35 Cousin: καὶ δείκνυσιν ὅπως τὸ ἐν αἴτιον μὲν αὐτὸ ἐστὶ ταῖς καλουμέναις ὑπεραποφάσεσιν.

⁴⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1172.37 Cousin.

⁴⁹ Trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 523–524. Cf. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation*, 110–111.

⁵⁰ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1176 Cousin.

and the older. Thus, by “negating (ἀποφάσκων) all these attributes of the One”, it is “deprived of substance, quality, quantity, and temporality” – ἀφαιρῶν τοῦ ἐνός τὴν οὐσίαν, τὸ ποιὸν, τὸ ποσὸν, τὸ ποτέ.⁵¹ Proclus adds further⁵² that Plato – by negating the One (ἀποφάσκει τοῦ ἐνός) of the Sameness and the Otherness – has gone further than Parmenides himself⁵³ and he is considered “to be more of a negator than Parmenides himself”. “Sameness is more akin to the One,” but Plato “removes (ἀφαιρεῖ) both the Sameness (τοῦτο) and the Otherness (ἕτερον) from the One (τοῦ ἐνός), in order to illustrate that it transcends *the one-in-being* (τοῦ ἐνός ὄντος).”⁵⁴ Here, Mortley detects “the real radicalism of Proclus, and the conservatism of his venerable predecessor, Parmenides. Proclus does not emphasize so much the poverty of language, as the transcendence of the One.”⁵⁵

For if that which partakes of (μετέχων) Sameness (ταυτότητος) and Otherness (ἑτερότητος) is not yet One in the true sense, it is necessary that the truly One (ἀληθῶς ἓν) should exist prior to these as being pure of these, or else in its participation in these it will not be solely One (οὐκ ἔσται μόνως ἓν), being filled with what is alien to the One (τῶν ἀλλοτριῶν τοῦ ἐνός), for whatever you add (προσθήκης) to the One by its addition (προσθήκης) causes oneness (τὴν ἐνότητα) to vanish, since it rejects (ἀναινομένην) the addition of everything that is alien to it.⁵⁶

Therefore, the genuine Oneness is to be found beyond the relations of Sameness and Otherness, and Proclus here reaffirms the paradox that “addition” (προσθήκης) leads to subtraction, when we speak of the One. The One is the only entity that is nothing more than its *own singleness*. Any “addition” to it contradicts its nature, spoiling what it was: the One will be completely destroyed. Proclus insists that even that which is identical with itself cannot be added to the One, its unity being obscured.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1176.34–36 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 526–527.

⁵² See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1177 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 527–528.

⁵³ See Parmenides, *Fragment 8.29–30, Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. 1, 6th edn., eds. H. Diels and W. Kranz (Berlin: Weidmann, 1951), 124: “Abiding the same in the same place it rests by itself” – ταυτόν τ’ ἐν ταύτῳ τε μένον καθ’ ἑαυτό τε κείται χούτως ἔμπεδον αὔθι μένε (trans. G.S. Kirk and J.E. Raven), in *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 276. Cf. also trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 527: “It remains same in the same, and lies on its own”.

⁵⁴ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1177.10–12 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 527.

⁵⁵ R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation*, 111.

⁵⁶ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1177.15–23 Cousin: (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 527. Cf. J. Trouillard, *L’Un et l’Âme selon Proclus*, 140.

⁵⁷ Cf. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation*, 112.

As Proclus shows in the *Commentary on the Elements of Euclid*,⁵⁸ the pair of affirmations and negations reveals the *superior* and the *inferior* from the range of beings, but the “point” is reached by negation alone. For Proclus, negation brings forward the superior situated *beyond* – the source of each being, which is the subject of affirmation. Even *hypernegations* – which elucidate the transcendence of a particular attribute, showing that it does not exist in a manner specific to an inferior attribute – are not applicable to the One, which is itself the cause of those *hypernegations*.⁵⁹

Using the same strategy, Damascius confirms that the Ineffable (τὸ ἀπόρητον), conceived “by excess”, is neither known, nor unknown: in regard to it, we are situated in a state of *hyperignorance* (ὑπεράγνοια).⁶⁰

Knowing the Ineffable One

The soul has only a fragmented view and strives for reaching a unified view.⁶¹ Proclus repeatedly insisted on the soul’s desire for the One: “a reverence for it lies in us” (ἡμῖν ἔγκειται περὶ αὐτὸ σέβας), an inborn and connatural “travail for the the supereminence of the One” (ὠδίνα τῆς ὑπεροχῆς τοῦ ἑνός).⁶²

The soul is brought up to the One by desire for the nature of the One, and it runs up to it from all sides and wishes to embrace it, and wishes with its supreme love (ἔρωτι ἀκροτάτῳ) to be present to it completely, and makes itself one as much as it is able and purges itself of all its multiplicity (καὶ πᾶν τὸ ἑαυτῆς καθαίρουσα πλήθος), so that somehow it might be perfected by the One (ἵνα πῶς τῷ ἑνὶ τελειωθῆ).⁶³

⁵⁸ Procli *Diadochi in primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1873), 94.

⁵⁹ Procli *Diadochi in primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, ed. G. Friedlein, 118. Cf. R. Mortley, *From Word to Silence*, vol. 2: *The Way of Negation*, 110, 118.

⁶⁰ *Damascii successoris dubitationes et solutiones*, I, ed. C.E. Ruelle (Paris: Klincksieck, 1899), 56–58. Cf. J. Trouillard, “Théologie négative et autoconstitution psychique chez les néoplatoniciens”, in *Savoir, faire, espérer: les limites de la raison* (Bruxelles: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis, 1976), 311.

⁶¹ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* III, 808.17–19 Cousin: “For the One is one only and precedes thought, Intellect thinks all Ideas as one, and Soul sees them all one by one” – ἐκεῖνο μὲν γὰρ ἓν μόνον ἐστὶ καὶ πρὸ νοήσεως· ὁ δὲ νοῦς ὡς ἓν πάντα νοεῖ, ἡ δὲ ψυχὴ καθ’ ἓν πάντα ὁρᾷ (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 174.

⁶² Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 42k Klibansky/Labowsky (cf. 503.171–172, 503.170, in “The Final Section of Proclus’ Commentary on the *Parmenides*: A Greek Retroversion of the Latin Translation”, eds. Carlos Steel and Friedrich Rumbach, trans. D. Gregory Maclsaac, in *Documenti e studi sulla tradizione filosofica medievale*, VIII (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997); trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 585.

⁶³ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 46k Klibansky/Labowsky (cf. 504.205–208 Steel/Rumbach; trans. D. Gregory Maclsaac, in “The Final Section of Proclus’ Commentary on the *Parmenides*: A Greek Retroversion of the Latin Translation”, 231).

Although the One is incomprehensible and unknowable (ἀπεριλήπτου ὄντος καὶ ἀγνώστου), the soul loves the One with an unquenchable love (τὸν ἔρωτα τοῦ ἐνὸς ἄσβεστον).⁶⁴ Nonetheless, Proclus manages to find a solution for breaking the deadlock marked by the incognoscibility of the One, leaning upon the fact that this “inexpressible striving” (τὴν ἔφεσιν τὴν ἄρρητον) of the soul for the One ensures a certain likeness to the One (ὁμοιοῦται ἄρα τὰ ὄντα πρὸς τὸ ἓν).⁶⁵ Thus, the soul aims not to obtain “scientific knowledge” (ἐπιστήμη), but to acquire likeness to the One, for only this way can the soul “know” the One.⁶⁶ In this circumstance, the full function of negation might be discovered: if the purpose of accessing the dialectics of negation consists of removing the multiplicity, then negation can be conceived as an instrument of intellectual purification.⁶⁷

For, if we are to approach the One by means of these negative (ταῖς ἀποφατικαῖς) conceptions and to emancipate ourselves from our accustomed ways of thought, we must *take away* (ἀφελεῖν) the variety of life and *strip off* (ἀποδύσασθαι) our multifarious concerns, and render the soul alone by itself (μόνην αὐτὴν καθ' αὐτήν), and thus expose it to the divine and to the reception of divinely inspired power (ἐνθεαστικῆς δυνάμεως). In order that having first lived in such a way as to *deny* the multiplicity within ourselves (ἀποφατικῶς τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν πλήθους), we may thus ascend to the undifferentiated intuition of the One.⁶⁸

In order to enter the vicinity of the One with the help of intuition, the soul must first purify itself,⁶⁹ so that removing the multiplicity will leave open the path towards the apprehension of the One. Since the intellectual negation itself proved incapable of grasping the One, the way left open to the soul is the one of union: the way of intellectual intuition.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁴ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 54k Klibansky/Labowsky (cf. 509.365, 509.364 Steel/Rumbach). See also Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* I.22, 102.12–14 Saffrey/Westerink.

⁶⁵ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 1199.28–31 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 546.

⁶⁶ As we already know from Plotinus, “like is known by like” (cf. *Enneads* 3.8.9.22–23). Cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* IV, 975.36–37 Cousin (“like is comprehensible by like” – τῷ ὁμοίῳ... τὸ ὁμοίον ἐστὶ ληπτόν); VI, 1081.5 Cousin (“to know like by like” – τῷ ὁμοίῳ τὸ ὁμοιον... γνῶναι); VII, 48k Klibansky/Labowsky (506.8 Steel): “like is apprehensible by like” – *simili simile sit cognoscibile*; *Institutio theologica* 32 Dodds.

⁶⁷ Cf. Deirdre Carabine, “A Thematic Investigation of the Neoplatonic Concepts of Vision and Unity,” *Hermathena* 157/ 1994, 47–48.

⁶⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* 1094.29–1095.2 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 442, modified.

⁶⁹ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* V, 990.31–37 Cousin. See also Proclus, *Theologia Platonica* I.2, 10.11 sq. Saffrey/Westerink.

⁷⁰ On intuition, or non-discursive intellection, see A.C. Lloyd, “Non-Discursive Thought: An Enigma of Greek Philosophy,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 70 (1969–1970), 261–274; John Dillon, “The One of the Soul and the ‘Flower of the Intellect’. Models of Hyper-intellection in Later Neoplatonism,” in

itineration of the soul through the various spheres of knowledge is illustrated by Proclus⁷¹ as a “journey”: from sensible perception, imagination, and opinion towards *Nous* and “intuitive intellection”⁷² – which is the only faculty capable of divination.

The ascension of the soul from a fragmented to a unified vision stands under the sign of divine inspiration.⁷³ Therefore, the fact that the soul has within itself an image of primary *causes* makes it capable of invoking the power of these entities and especially the power of the One: “how else could we get closer to the One, if we do not *awaken* the One of the soul, which is within us as a kind of image of the One...?” – “Ἡ πῶς ἐγγυτέρω τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐσόμεθα, μὴ τὸ ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀνεγείραντες, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐν ἡμῖν ὅσον εἰκῶν τοῦ ἐνὸς.”⁷⁴ There are obvious theurgic virtues in the process of “rousing up the One within us” (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ἀνεγείραντες)⁷⁵ – which lead to “warming the soul” (ἀναθάλψαντες διὰ τούτου τὴν ψυχήν)⁷⁶ and so to the possibility of “connecting ourselves to the One itself” (συνάψωμεν πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ἐν):⁷⁷

as it were find mooring, taking our stand above everything intelligible within ourselves and dispensing (ἀφελόντες) with every other one of our activities, in order that we may consort with it alone and perform a dance around it, leaving behind (ἀπολιπόντες) all the intellections of the soul which are directed to secondary things.⁷⁸

Platonism and Forms of Intelligence, eds. J. Dillon and Marie-Elise Zovko (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2008), 247–258.

⁷¹ See Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* V, 1029.34 sq. Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 376 sq.).

⁷² The genuine ways of knowledge recognized by Neoplatonic epistemology are intellectual intuition (νοῦς), discursive reason (διάνοια, λόγος), opinion (δόξα) and sensation (αἴσθησις). Proclus provides the same epistemological vision in many different formulations. See, e.g., *Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaica* 2.1, ed. É. des Places, *Oracles chaldaïques*, (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1971): “Ψυχῆς βάθος” τὰς τριπλᾶς αὐτῆς γνωστικὰς δυνάμεις φησί, νοεράς, διανοητικὰς, δοξαστικὰς, where the “soul’s depth” is represented as consisting of three levels. Proclus does not always hold the same terminology and the various distinctions depend on the different exegetical needs in his reading of Plato. Cf. T. Lankila, “Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus,” *Arctos: Acta philologica fennica* 44 (2010), 149, n. 4.

⁷³ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.3–4; 1071.37 sq. Cousin.

⁷⁴ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1071.25–29 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 424. See also Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1081.4–7, 1094.21–22 Cousin.

⁷⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.8 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 425.

⁷⁶ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.8–9 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 425. Cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 251b.

⁷⁷ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.9–10 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 425.

⁷⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1072.10–15 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 425. The ascent towards the One is eloquently described in *Theologia Platonica* II.11, 64–65 Saffrey/Westerink. The image of “dancing around” the One is found in Plotinus, *Enneads* 6 9.8.44 (cf. also *Enneads* 1.8.2.24: “soul dances round intellect outside”; trans. A.H. Armstrong, in Plotinus,

To avoid the risk that the soul should “slide” through negations into the “invisibility of the non-being” – because of the indefinite imagination –, divine inspiration is needed, which will deliver a superlative comprehension of the Non-Being:⁷⁹

I see here a great fuss being stirred up by those who think that these negations (τὰς ἀποφάσεις) lead us into the absolute non-existent or something such, since by reason of the lack of definition our imagination does not have anything definite to grasp onto, inasmuch as nothing is proposed to it, but everything absolutely is removed from the One (ἀναιρουμένων ἀπὸ τοῦ ἑνός), and for this reason they are persuaded that one must establish some nature and characteristic for the One.⁸⁰

In the ascent of the soul towards the supreme orders of existence, the intellectual and affective elements work in conjunction with the divine initiative. When Proclus takes into consideration the mystical contact of the soul with the supreme intelligibles and the One itself, he indicates a supra-rational sense of mystical knowledge which transcends the inferior faculties of the soul.⁸¹ This is “the one of the soul” (ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς),⁸² it is “the σύμβολον of the

I (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), 281) and in Proclus: *In Platonis Parmenidem* 1080.18 Cousin; *Theologia Platonica* IV.5, 21 Saffrey/Westerink. It ultimately derives, perhaps, from the dance of the planets described in Plato, *Epinomis* 982c. Cf. J.M. Dillon, n. 50, in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 425.

⁷⁹ Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 179–180.

⁸⁰ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1105.32–1106.1 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, 450–451.

⁸¹ To such a special faculty of the soul, Proclus assigns names such as “the one of the soul” (τὸ ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς), “the flower of our essence” (ἄνθος τῆς οὐσίας ἐμῶν), “the flower of the intellect” (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ), “the flower of the soul” (ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς), or (νόθος νοῦς) “spurious (bastard) intellect”. For the relevant passages in Proclus, see T. Lankila, “Hypernoetic Cognition and the Scope of Theurgy in Proclus,” 151; 151, n. 9.

⁸² Some scholars have considered ἐν τῆς ψυχῆς an alternative wording for ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ, borrowed from the *Chaldean Oracles*. See J. Bussanich, “Mystical theology and spiritual experience in Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*,” in *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne: actes du colloque international de Louvain (13–16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H.-D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink*, eds. A.-Ph. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven/Paris: Leuven University Press/Les Belles Lettres, 2000), 302. In the *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria* 32.18; 65.16, ed. G. Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908), Proclus distinguishes between that point of the intelligible god (νοητοὶ θεοὶ) where the highest god that can be named is situated, and the higher regions of the intelligible which are unknowable and unnameable. The first point can be attained through *theurgy*, while the second level can be reached by the “flower of the intellect” (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ). Cf. Anne Sheppard, “Proclus’ Attitude to Theurgy,” *The Classical Quarterly* 32/1 (1982): 221. This idea has Plotinian roots: in the *Enneads* 5.5.8.22–23 and 6.9.3.26–27, Plotinus speaks as if there were a special element within the *nous* by which we attain mystical union. See, in this respect, J.M. Rist, “Mysticism and Transcendence in

One in the soul” and it illustrates, in a non-technical way, what makes the mystical union with the One possible.⁸³ A passage in the *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* is especially helpful for enlightenment on the manner in which ἔν τῆς ψυχῆς works in Proclean mystical psychology:⁸⁴

Or how else are we to become nearer to the One, if we do not rouse up the One of the soul (τὸ ἔν τῆς ψυχῆς), which is in us as a kind of image of the One, by virtue of which the most accurate of authorities declare that divine possession most especially comes about? And how are we to make this One and flower of the soul (τὸ ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς) shine forth unless we, first of all, activate our intellect? For the activity of the intellect leads the soul towards a state and activity of calm. And how are we to achieve perfect intellectual activity if we do not travel there by means of logical conceptions, using composite intellections prior to simpler ones? So then, we need demonstrative power in our preliminary assumptions, whereas we need intellectual activity in our investigations of being (for the orders of being are denied of the One – ἀποφάσκονται τοῦ ἐνός), and we need inspired impulse in our consciousness of that which transcends all beings, in order that we may not slip unawares from our negations (ἀποφάσεων) into Not-Being (εἰς τὸ μὴ ὄν) and its invisibility by reason of our indefinite imagination, but rousing up the One within us (τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν ἀνεγείραντες) and, through this, warming (ἀναθάλλαντες) the

Later Neoplatonism,” *Hermes* 92 (1964): 213–225. Cf. also Anne Sheppard, “Proclus’ Attitude to Theurgy,” 221, n. 31.

⁸³ In the view of other researchers, this “one that is in us” – indispensable for reaching mystical union with the One – is, most likely, identical to the “flower of the soul” (ἄνθος τῆς ψυχῆς) of Proclus. Cf. *In Platonis Alcibiadem* I, 247.7–11, ed. L.G. Westerink, Proclus Diadochus, *Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato* (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954); *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 42.6–10; VI, 42.23, ed. V. Cousin, *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, pt. 3 (Hildesheim: Olms, 1961) and not, as J. Combès believes (cf. Damascius, *Traité des premiers principes*, tome II: *De la triade et de l’unifié* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1989), 227, n. 3), to the “flower of the intellect” (ἄνθος τοῦ νοῦ). Cf. also S. Lilla, “La teologia negativa dal pensiero greco classico”, *Helikon* 31–32 (1991–1992): 14, n. 879; 66, n. 1133. For other references to the “flower of intellect”, cf. Proclus, *In Platonis Cratylum commentaria* 47, 15 Pasquali; *De malorum subsistentia* 11, 23–24, ed. H. Boese, *Procli Diadochi tria opuscula* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1960); *De providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis ad Theodorum mechanicum* 32.2 Boese; *Theologia Platonica* I, 15.3–4 Saffrey/Westerink; *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* III, 14.6 Diehl. Proclus argues that, strictly speaking, the “flower of the intellect” only allows us to ascend to the level of the henads of the first intelligible triad, and that only the the “flower of the whole soul” assures ultimate union with the One (cf. *Eclogae de philosophia Chaldaeica* 4.51–52 des Places): Μήποτε οὖν οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτὸν νοῦ ἄνθος καὶ πάσης ἡμῶν τῆς ψυχῆς ἄνθος). The flower of intellect becomes a mediator between the rational and the ineffable realms rather than the embracing of the latter. Cf. S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 121, n. 200. A detailed discussion on the distinction mentioned above is to be found in Ysabel de Andia, *Henosis. L’union Dieu chez Denys l’Aréopagite* (Leiden/Köln/New York: Brill, 1996), 216–224.

⁸⁴ Cf. J. Bussanich, “Mystical Theology and Spiritual Experience in Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*,” in *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne*, eds. A.-Ph. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000), 302.

soul we may connect ourselves to the One itself (συνάψωμεν πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ἓν) and, as it were find mooring, taking our stand above everything intelligible within ourselves and dispensing (ἀφελόντες) with every other one of our activities, in order that we may consort with it alone and perform a dance around it, leaving behind (ἀπολιπόντες) all the intellections (τῆς ψυχῆς νοήσεις) of the soul which are directed to secondary things.⁸⁵

This statement gives us solid testimony for the fact that the supreme mystical states transcend not only *discursive rationality* – activity which is still a preliminary one – but also the *intuitive noetic* level. Inspiration and “erotic mania” reflect the activity of the ἓν τῆς ψυχῆς as it approaches and attains contact with the One.⁸⁶

In this process of unification, the logic of negation finally finds its place, since the statement “we know the one by the One” means that “by Non-Being we know the One”, which is to say that “it is *via negationis* that we know the One.”⁸⁷

Let us then declare it to be Not-Being, and let us cognise it by that in us which is similar to it (for there is in us a sort of seed of that Non-Being), and so let us call it “non-existent” as transcending all beings. (...) It should be clear from this, then, how negations (ἀποφάσεις) are proper to the One, and in what manner all things are denied (ἀποφάσκειται) of it, and that all knowledge of the One is through negation (ὅτι πᾶσα γνώσις τοῦ ἑνὸς δι’ ἀποφάσεώς ἐστι).⁸⁸

The soul, while ascending to the level of the Intellect, and from there, further, getting close to the One, no longer asks what the One is and what the One is not, “but everywhere closing her eyes, and contracting all its activity and being content with unity alone” – *sed omniquaque claudentem et omnem operationem contrahentem et contentam unione solum*.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1071.20–1072 Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 424–425.

⁸⁶ Cf. J. Bussanich, “Mystical Theology and Spiritual Experience in Proclus’ *Platonic Theology*,” in *Proclus et la Théologie platonicienne*, eds. A.-Ph. Segonds and C. Steel, 303.

⁸⁷ Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 180.

⁸⁸ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1082.6 sq. Cousin (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 432–433.

⁸⁹ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 74k Klibansky/Labowsky (520.39–41 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 602. Cf. Plotinus, *Enneads* I.6.8.25–27: “Shut your eyes and change to awake another way of seeing, which everyone has, but few use” – ἀλλ’ οἷον μύσαντα ὄψιν ἄλλην ἀλλάξασθαι καὶ ἀνεγεῖραι, ἦν ἔχει μὲν πᾶς, χρῶνται δὲ ὀλίγοι (trans. A.H. Armstrong, in Plotinus, I, 259).

“The One transcends all analysable knowledge and intellection and all contact. And only unification brings us near the One” – *Ab omni ergo cognitione partibili et intelligentia le unum exaltatum est et ab omni contactu. Solum autem unio nos adducit uni.*⁹⁰

This unity is another kind of knowledge: it is knowledge inspired by divinity, “better than all knowledge” (*melius cognitione*).⁹¹ This new type of knowledge reaches the soul by illumination (*illustrationem anime*),⁹² which is a sign of “our individual light” (*particulare enim et ipsa lumen*).⁹³ By the One in ourselves do we apprehend the One:⁹⁴ the transcendent One can be seen only through its own light.⁹⁵

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The Proclean influence, especially regarding negative theology, was experienced alongside certain adaptations and developments perceived in the Dionysian Corpus: the discourse on the transcendent underwent an extension, integrating affirmative, symbolic, negative and mystical theologies.⁹⁶ Although Proclus “conquered Europe” largely through his influence on the *Corpus Dionysiacum*, *Liber de causis* seems to have had a great significance – which passed in medieval

⁹⁰ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 46k Klibansky/Labowsky (504.65–66 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 587.

⁹¹ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 58k Klibansky/Labowsky (511.79 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 593. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, “A Thematic Investigation of the Neoplatonic Concepts of Vision and Unity,” 48.

⁹² Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 48k Klibansky/Labowsky (506.7 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 588: “the illumination of the soul”. Cf. Plato, *Epistulae* VII, 341c.

⁹³ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 48k Klibansky/Labowsky (506.7–8 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 588.

⁹⁴ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 48k Klibansky/Labowsky (506.9–11 Steel): *sic uno unum et claritate luminis causam omnibus entibus, per quod omnia participant uno* (trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 588.

⁹⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VII, 48k Klibansky/Labowsky (505.3–506.6 Steel; trans. Morrow/Dillon), in *Proclus Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 588: “a divine light is kindled in us through which there comes about – in such a way as is possible to us – a glimpse of it, which makes us participate in it in respect of that part of ourselves that is most divine. But the most divine thing in us is the One in us (*Diuinissimum autem eorum que in nobis le unum*).” Cf. *In Platonis Parmenidem* IV, 951.18–19 Cousin. See also Plotinus, *Enneads* 5.3.17.36–37: “It must see that light by which it is enlightened: for we do not see the sun by another light than his own” – Δι' οὗ γὰρ ἐφωτίσθη, τοῦτό ἐστιν, ὃ δεῖ θεάσασθαι· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἥλιον διὰ φωτὸς ἄλλου (trans. A.H. Armstrong), in Plotinus, V (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 135. Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 181.

⁹⁶ Cf. Deirdre Carabine, *The Unknown God. Negative Theology in the Platonic Tradition. Plato to Eriugena*, 186.

times as the work of Aristotle, although, in fact, it was a Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona after an Arabic work based on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ See E.R. Dodds, "Introduction," in Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, xxvii sq.