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What Kind of Souls Did Proclus Discover?

Svetlana Messiats

The aim of this paper is to clarify one curious point in Proclus' doctrine of Soul, neglected so far by the most researchers of his philosophy. According to Proclus' pupil Marinus, his master was the author of many new doctrines. In particular, he was the first to assert the existence of a kind of souls capable of seeing several ideas simultaneously and existing between "the Intellect (Νοῦς) which embraces all things together by a single intuition, and the souls passing in their thoughts from one idea to another".¹ What kind of souls does Marinus talk about? Where exactly are they located within the multilevel Neoplatonic universe? Why did Proclus believe it necessary to introduce them into his metaphysical system? And does he mention these souls anywhere in his writings? All these questions have no reliable answers until now. Laurence J. Rosan in his valuable book *The Philosophy of Proclus: the final phase of ancient thought* made the first and for many years single attempt to find out what kind of souls did Proclus discover.² Rosan supposed that Proclus' original doctrine was the existence of the so-called "intelligent souls", which posses a special kind of intelligence – "purely intellectual intelligence" (νοῦς νοερός μόνον), as Proclus himself calls it.

ET §183, 13–15.

"Every intelligence which is participated but purely intellectual is participated by souls which are neither divine nor yet subject to the alternation of intelligence with unintelligence".

¹ *VP* 23, 1-8. Slightly changed translation of K.S. Guthrie (1925) 15-55. Saffrey, Segonds (2001) 27: Πολλῶν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς πατὴρ ἐγένετο δογμάτων οὐ πρότερον ἐγνωσμένων, ψυχικῶν τε καὶ νοερῶν καὶ τῶν ἐπιθειωτέρων. πρῶτος γὰρ οὗτος ἐπέστησεν ὅτι γένος ἐστὶ ψυχῶν δυναμένων πολλὰ ἅμα εἶδη θεωρεῖν, ὃ δὴ καὶ μέσον ἤδη εἰκότως ἐτέθητο τοῦ τε νοῦ τοῦ ἀθρώου καὶ κατὰ μίαν ἐπιβολὴν ἅπαντα νοοῦντος καὶ τῶν καθ' ἕν εἶδος τὴν μετάβασιν ποιουμένων ψυχῶν.

² Rosan (1949) 179, note 23.

ET §184, 21–23.

“Every soul is either divine, or subject to change from intelligence to unintelligence, or else intermediate between these orders, enjoying perpetual intellection although inferior to the divine souls.”³

Proclus postulates here three kinds of souls in respect of their participation in intelligence and intellectual activity: divine souls, those that change from intellection to unintelligence, and those that are intermediary between the first two. Souls of the highest class are called divine because of their participation in a divine intelligence and a henad: “they are gods upon the psychic level”.⁴ Souls that think from time to time and can alternate between knowledge and ignorance are souls of human beings or so-called “partial souls” (μερικαὶ ψυχαί).⁵ They don’t participate in intelligence at all and possess only a sort of intellectual illumination that comes from a partial intelligence situated right above them. Souls of the intermediate class, which are neither divine nor human, are naturally daemons. In prop. 185 Proclus refers to them as “eternal followers of gods”. Like divine souls, they exercise perpetual intellection, yet the intelligence participated by them is not divine but ‘purely intellectual’, so that it doesn’t permit them direct access to gods. According to Rosan, it was these ‘intelligent’ souls that were presumably discovered by Proclus. Yet it is hard to believe that Proclus was the first who introduced daemonic souls into Neoplatonism. So it is more probable that Rosan saw his innovation not in a discovery of the daemonic souls as such, but in the way he explained their nature, that is in an interpretation of these souls as participants of the “purely intellectual intelligence”. Unfortunately, Rosan doesn’t explain what reasons compelled him to make such a suggestion. He expressed his hypothesis in a short footnote to the main text of his book without any further discussion. So to understand why the introduction of such souls could be regarded as something new for the Athenian Neoplatonism of the 5th AD, we need to clear up some basic principles of Proclus metaphysics, including his doctrine of two kinds of procession: vertical and horizontal.

³ Dodds (1963) 160–162.

⁴ *ET* 185. See also *ET* 202: “divine souls participate both intelligence and deity”

⁵ *ET* 202.

1. Vertical and horizontal procession in Proclus' metaphysics

It is well known that cause-and-effect relation between different levels of reality in Proclus' metaphysics can be described using three basic terms: the unparticipated (*τὸ ἀμέθεκτον*), the participated (*τὸ μεθεκτόν, μετεχόμενον*) and the participant (*τὸ μετέχον*). Proclus calls unparticipated or transcendent every causative principle, which can be considered as the thing itself free from any connection with anything else. It is a radically unified and entirely self-identical characteristic, for example, One as it is, Being as it is, Life as it is, and so on.⁶ While producing a multiplicity of participated terms, it remains undivided and absolutely separate from its products and is related to them as a monad to other members of the same series. The participated term, on the contrary, becomes a property of that, by which it is participated.⁷ It is an immanent universal, which is not entirely self-identical because of existing only in connection with something other than itself. Finally, the participant is that particular thing or reality, which possesses participated term as a reflection of the transcendent principle and so becomes like to its productive cause. These definitions seem to imply that all participated terms necessarily belong to their participants. However Proclus distinguishes two classes of participated terms, which he names respectively 'substances complete in themselves' (*αὐτοτελεῖς ὑποστάσεις*) and "illuminations" (*ἐλλάμψεις*). Only the latter ones have their existence in something other than themselves and belong to their participants, while the former exist on their own and have no need in inferior beings.⁸

Every original monad gives rise to both kinds of participated terms.⁹ While generating a multitude of self-sufficient participated substances the unparticipated monad looks as if dividing itself into pieces and actualizing its hidden multiplicity. It gives rise to a number of related terms, which are analogous to itself in respect of their essence (*ἕπαρξις*), yet differ from it and from one another through the addition of some specific characteristic (*ιδιότης*) indicating their connection with a lower reality. Thus the One itself proceeds into a series of 'unities' or 'henads' that share the same essence with it, yet differ from it because of their connection with Being, Life, Intellect and Soul.

⁶ MacIsaac (2011) 46.

⁷ Proclus. *ET* 23

⁸ Mesyats (2012) 152-53.

⁹ Proclus. *ET* 64.

Henads, therefore, can be seen as more particular kinds of unities, peculiar to Being, Life, Intellect, etc. Because of being self-sufficient substances all henads exist independently from their participants and form a separate level of reality, which can be named the realm of the One insofar as the supreme One is multiplied due to the participation by the plurality of its effects. As follows there are different kinds of henads: those participated by intelligible Being can be named ‘intelligible’; those that act as unifying principles of Intellect, are ‘intellective’; there are also ‘hypercosmic’, ‘separate’ (or ‘absolute’) and ‘encosmic’ henads participated respectively by Soul, Nature¹⁰ and the world body. Just the same takes place at every other level of reality. The unparticipated monad of Being proceeds into various kinds of beings, the monad of Life gives rise to different participated forms of Life; Intellect produces a manifold of intelligences, and Soul – many particular souls. This kind of procession is usually called horizontal or uniform because it generates a separate level of reality coordinate with its unparticipated transcendent cause.¹¹ It should be distinguished from another, vertical or heteroform kind of procession, when the transcendent cause gives rise to a new lower reality, for example, the One generates Being, Being produces Intellect and Intellect gives birth to Soul. In order to visualize the entire system of the horizontal-vertical procession by Proclus, we have to draw a two-dimensional table (see Table 1).¹² In the vertical it depicts all the basic levels of Neoplatonic reality and shows horizontally the inner structure of each of them, that is the coordinate series of self-complete participated hypostases proceeding from their unparticipated monadic cause.

If the number of self-complete hypostases was always equal to the number of their illuminations, then all the members of each horizontal series would be in contact with the members of the higher horizontal level that lays immediately above them. Yet according to the basic rule of Neoplatonism, the multiplicity of being increases, as it proceeds from the One. It means that at some point the number of ‘illuminations’ comes to exceed the number of self-complete participated hypostases so that the higher levels of reality have fewer

¹⁰ This order of henads was associated with Nature by Rosan (1949) 171 and Siorvanes (1996) 137–139. See a detailed discussion of the question in: Martijn (2010) 40–43 and Chlup (2012) 121.

¹¹ Lloyd (1990) 80; Ahbel-Rappe (2014) 174; Gerson and Martijn (2017) 54.

¹² The general structure of the table is taken from Dodds (1963) 282. A similar table is reproduced by Martijn (2010) 66.

members than the lower ones. So bodies are more numerous than souls, souls than intelligences, and intelligences than the divine henads.¹³ As a consequence, not every body possesses its own soul, not every soul enjoys perpetual communication with a self-sufficient intelligence and not every intelligence contemplates intelligible being, receiving through it the direct access to the realm of the divine henads. Therefore there must be intelligences which don't participate gods directly and possess only illuminations or reflections of their unity and divinity. These intelligences are the last members of the intellective series, most remote from their originative unparticipated monad. As such they don't have a coordinate divine henad standing right above them in the henadic series, and so can be appropriately called 'purely intellective ones' (νόεξ νοεροῖ μόνον, see Tabl.1). Proclus describes them as follows:

ET 181, 29–30.

“There must also be an intelligence which does not participate the divine henads but merely exercises intellection: for while the first members of any series, which are closely linked with their own monad, can participate the corresponding members of the immediately supra-adjacent order, those which are many degrees removed from their originative monad are incapable of being attached to that order. Thus there is both a divine intelligence and a kind, which is purely intellectual, the latter arising in virtue of the intellectual property which it derives from its own monad, the former in virtue of the unity imposed by the henad which it participates”.¹⁴

Now we can get a clearer idea of the difference between the divine, daemonic and partial souls in Proclus' philosophy. Souls that participate directly in the self-sufficient divine intelligences are called divine; souls attached to the “purely intellectual” intelligences are daemonic. Both exercise perpetual intellection with the only difference, that the former ones can rise to the contemplation of intelligible beings, while the later ones have access only to the reflections of intelligible forms in the participated intellectual intelligence. As for the lowest, or partial souls, they are entirely devoid of direct access to intellectual reality. Instead of intelligence, they

¹³ *ET* 62.

¹⁴ Dodds (1963) 158–160.

possess only an intellectual property or an illuminated state, bestowed on them by purely intellectual intelligences. Thus the way Proclus explains the nature of three traditional kinds of souls – divine, human and daemonic – looks indeed very original and innovative. In any case, we don't know anyone before him who spoke about different kinds of participated terms and made a distinction between different kind of souls on the basis of whether they possess only reflections of the intellectual reality or have direct access to it. That's why Rosan's suggestion that Proclus discovered the intellectual daemonic souls, could seem reasonable and attractive.

2. Soul and her mode of thinking. Is it possible to contemplate many ideas simultaneously?

Although Rosan's hypothesis was recognized by some prominent scholars,¹⁵ it cannot be correct. If one carefully reads Marinus' report, one can see that the souls presumably discovered by Proclus, are situated not between the divine and human ones, but between the Intellect which “embraces all things together by a single intuition” (ἀθρόως καὶ κατὰ μίαν ἐπιβολὴν ἅπαντα νοοῦντος), and souls “passing in their thoughts from one idea to another” (κἀθ' ἓν εἶδος τὴν μετὰβασιν ποιουμένων). Rosan supposed the latter to be souls of human beings. This assumption seems to him so obvious, that he doesn't check whether this way of thinking does exclusively belong to particular souls. The second thing overlooked by Rosan is the fact, that the new kind of souls is capable of seeing several ideas simultaneously (πολλὰ ἅμα εἶδη θεωρεῖν), and that it is precisely this mode of thinking that makes them intermediate between the Intellect seeing all at once and souls thinking one idea after another (κἀθ' ἓν εἶδος). One can suppose, that while taking care about continuity of procession from Intellect to Soul Proclus considered it necessary to introduce before souls that think every idea individually, those that contemplate many ideas at once, for souls that think *a group* of ideas as a unity, appear to be closer to Intellect that thinks *all* ideas at once. But are there such souls in Proclus' system? And where exactly are they located?

According to Proclus, every participated soul, be it divine, daemonic or human, has an eternal existence and a temporal activity.¹⁶ And since

¹⁵ For example, by R. Beutler and R. Masullo. See Beutler (1957) 233, Masullo (1985) 139.

¹⁶ Proclus. *ET* 191.

the main activity of the rational soul is thinking, all participated souls exercise their thought in time. To think in time means to think discursively, that is to distinguish one intelligible object from another and to contemplate them one by one in consecutive order. Discursive thinking is what distinguishes soul from Intellect and makes it the image of the later. Whereas Intellect holds all its objects as simultaneously present in the unchangeable now, soul “moves around Intellect as in a dance and as she shifts her attention from point to point, she divides the undivided mass of Ideas, looking separately at the Idea of Beauty, and separately at the Idea of Justice, and separately at each of the other ideas, thinking them one after another (καθ’ ἕν πάντα) and not all together”.¹⁷ Thus discursive reason is the type of cognition most proper to Soul. Every soul divides the undivided content of Intellect into separate ideas and passes in her thought from one to another – not our soul only, but the divine soul too, including the soul of the world, which, according to Proclus, “first begins to think one idea after another, which is exactly what has made it encosmic”.¹⁸ So if there were indeed such souls as those reported by Marinus, souls that could contemplate a group of ideas simultaneously, they would have to be located not between divine and partial souls, as Rosan thought, but between the divine Intellect, that thinks all ideas together, and the world soul that thinks them one after another.

In Tim. II 289,23–290,6.

“Now since the world soul is the first of those temporal souls that think one idea after another, it is perhaps necessary that it receives the entire measure of time... Therefore hypercosmic souls, if indeed there are such things, and if they cognize discursively – for every soul cognizes in this manner, and in virtue of this there is a difference between soul and intellect – nonetheless these hypercosmic souls produce for themselves the grasp of the objects of thought many at a time, for it is necessary for such souls to think several ideas simultaneously since they are closer to Intellect that thinks all things simultaneously. But the world soul is the first of those that think things one at a time,

¹⁷ Proclus. *In Parm.* 807,29–808,24. Transl. by Morrow and Dillon (1987) 173–174.

¹⁸ Proclus. *In Tim.* II 289,23: ἡ πρώτη τῶν καθ’ ἕν ἐστι νοουσῶν εἶδος ἢ τοῦ παντός ἐστί; *In Tim.* II, 290,6: ἡ δὲ τοῦ παντός πρώτη τῶν καθ’ ἕν ἐστι νοουσῶν.

which is exactly what made it encosmic. In any case, it is by this that all encosmic souls have been set apart from hypercosmic ones”.¹⁹

It is easy to see that this passage contains a direct reference to the kind of souls presumably discovered by Proclus. If we compare the passage cited above with the report of Marinus in *Vita Procli* 23, we will see that the souls mentioned in both texts are described almost in the same terms. While Proclus says that hypercosmic souls “*think* several things simultaneously” (πλείω ἅμα νοεῖν), Marinus tells us that they “*contemplate* many things simultaneously” (πολλὰ ἅμα ... θεωρεῖν). If in Proclus’ text hypercosmic souls are immediately followed by souls, that “*think* one thing after another” (καθ’ ἓν νοουσῶν), then Marinus says that the new kind of souls is contiguous to souls “*passing* in their thoughts from one idea to another” (καθ’ ἓν εἶδος τὴν μετάβασιν ποιουμένων). Proclus says that hypercosmic souls are close to Intellect, “*that think* all things simultaneously” (ἅμα πάντα νοούντος). And in Marinus’ testimony also the new kind of souls is contiguous to the Intellect, “*which embraces* all things together by a single intuition” (ἀθρόως ... ἅπαντα νοούντος). Obvious parallels between these two texts leave almost no doubts that the souls discovered by Proclus are hypercosmic ones.

This hypothesis was first proposed by H.-D. Saffrey and A.-Ph. Segonds in their edition of Marinus’ *Vita Procli* (2001).²⁰ In support of their supposition they cited another relevant passage from the *Commentary on Timaeus*, where Proclus once again describes hypercosmic souls as a mean term between the divine Intellect and the souls within the cosmos and puts forward the impossibility of the direct transition from thinking all things simultaneously to thinking them one by one as the main argument for the existence of this kind of souls. Yet this time he makes it clear that the doctrine of hypercosmic souls doesn’t belong to him, and that he himself strongly doubts that Plato ever mentions these souls explicitly. Yet he finds it a worthy question to pursue, whether or not he knew about hypercosmic souls.

¹⁹ Slightly changed translation of D. Baltzly (2009) 284-285.

²⁰ Saffrey, Segonds (2001) 143. Although they are right about the matter of Proclus’ discovery, Saffrey and Segonds erroneously follow Rosan in placing hypercosmic souls not between Intellect and the World Soul, but between Intellect and particular or human souls.

In Tim. III, 251, 29–252, 21.

“It is necessary to investigate the question of whether Plato knew or didn’t know about hypercosmic souls. This is really a worthy problem to study, since Plato nowhere explicitly says that such souls exist. Those who posit the existence of such unparticipated souls, suppose them, on the one hand, to think discursively and in this respect differ from intellect, but, on the other hand, to do this in a more holistic way, not looking at one single idea, and in this respect to be superior to encosmic souls. (For the procession does not go at once from thinking all things simultaneously to thinking one idea after another, but happens because of thinking more than one – although not all things simultaneously). Those who for these reasons posit such hypercosmic souls prior to the cosmos should say how the former are intermediate between the divisible and indivisible kinds of Being”.²¹

However obvious might be these parallels between Marinus’ report and the passages cited above, it seems that neither the translators of the *Commentary on Timaeus* nor other Proclus scholars noticed them.²² D. Baltzly in the recent English translation of Proclus’ commentary considers *In Tim.* II, 289, 29–290,6 to contain an objection to the very idea of hypercosmic souls than arguments in their favor. Baltzly argues that by thinking many things simultaneously hypercosmic souls would have an ability that is less unified than that of the world soul, which thinks one thing at a time because plurality is in any way inferior to unity. Therefore this mode of thinking would make these souls inferior to the encosmic ones, so that they couldn’t be an intermediate between Intellect and the world soul.²³ This argument can hardly be correct since it relies on a false assumption that the cognition of many ideas simultaneously is less unified than a cognition of one single idea. One would say just the opposite: the ability to embrace a plurality of things at once, that is in a single grasp of intuition, seems to be more akin to

²¹ Proclus. *In Tim.* III 251, 29–252, 9. Based on the transl. of Baltzly (2009) 38–39.

²² The only exception known to me is J. Opsomer (2006) 198–199. However the author does not see Proclus’ innovation not in the discovery of hypercosmic souls as such, but in the division of the one and undivided Plotinus’ hypostasis of Soul into a number of separate kinds of souls, including the Soul as it is (unparticipated monad of Soul), hypercosmic and encosmic souls.

²³ Baltzly (2009) 38–39.

the Intellect's way of thinking than to the reasoning of the world soul. For if Intellect thinks "all as one", hypercosmic souls think "many as one", which means that they see the whole mass of ideas in a more undivided and holistic way than souls that look at each idea separately and so divide the intelligible content of the Intellect into its most atomic elements. According to Proclus' own words, hypercosmic souls exercise their thinking "in a more holistic, assembled way" (ἄθρούτερον) than souls looking at one single idea at a time.²⁴ So he obviously considers their mode of thinking to be more like intellectual contemplation than the ordinary reasoning of the souls within the world. That the ability of hypercosmic souls to think many ideas simultaneously is not an objection but rather an argument for their existence becomes quite clear from the fact that the argument in question was put forward neither by Proclus nor by his teacher Syrianus, as D. Baltzly supposed, but by the very proponents of this theory. For, as Proclus says in the passage cited just above, some anonymous philosophers posit souls prior to the cosmos "for the reasons"²⁵ that the procession from thinking all ideas at once to thinking them one by one could happen only through the thinking of many ideas simultaneously so that souls that exercise such a mode of thinking must constitute a middle term between Intellect and the souls within cosmos.

However as D. Baltzly rightly notes, Proclus' view of the matter is not easy to discern. As we have seen, in his *Commentary on Timaeus* he is not certain about the existence of hypercosmic souls and doubts that Plato ever mentioned them in his dialogs. And above all, Proclus doesn't give us the slightest possibility to attribute the invention of this kind of souls to himself. Speaking of souls that go beyond cosmos, he constantly refers to some previous philosophers who posited their existence. So in the following sections I will try to answer two

²⁴ See passage cited just above: *In Tim.* III, 251, 34. D. Baltzly regularly translates ἄθροον, ἄθροως as "all at the one time". So it looks strange that he renders the same word in *In Tim.* III, 251, 34 as "more composite", which is definitely wrong. See Baltzly (2009) 38.

²⁵ τοῖς δ' οὖν θεμένοις διὰ ταῦτα καὶ πρὸ τοῦ κόσμου ψυχὰς ἔπεται λέγειν. D. Baltzly's translation "For these reasons, it is therefore incumbent upon those who posit such souls prior to the World soul" seems to me not correct, because διὰ ταῦτα must be referred not to ἔπεται λέγειν, but to τοῖς θεμένοις. D. Baltzly (2009) 39.

questions: are there hypercosmic souls in Proclus' system and why did Marinus attribute his master the invention of them?

3. Hypercosmic souls in Proclus' system.

Proclus' commitment to the idea of hypercosmic souls is not only confirmed by a great number of his texts,²⁶ but, more importantly, follows from his general metaphysical principles. Let us remember that in Proclus' system every order of reality has its beginning in a single monad that transcends all those members of the lower order that participate in it.²⁷ In the case of the unparticipated monad of soul, this means that it is free from any relation to the corporeal world and hence can be properly named hypercosmic. In the *Elements of Theology* Proclus twice calls the unparticipated soul hypercosmic: once when discussing participated intellects that “illuminate the hypercosmic and unparticipated soul”, and another time – when he says that this soul “occupies the next station above the world order”.²⁸ Is it possible to conclude thereof that every time Proclus mentions the difference between hypercosmic and encosmic souls he has in mind the distinction between unparticipated and participated souls,²⁹ which might imply that there is only one hypercosmic soul in his system, that is, the transcendent monad of the psychic series? Yet there are many texts where Proclus speaks about hypercosmic souls in the plural. Does it mean that he places many unparticipated souls at the beginning of the psychic series so that the later proceeds not from the monad, but the plurality of monads?³⁰ Or perhaps he thinks that hypercosmic souls, though standing above the material world are nevertheless participated by bodies? The first question must be answered in the negative because the assumption that a coordinate series is preceded by many unparticipated terms contradicts the basic principle of Proclus' metaphysics, which requires that “all that exists primitively and

²⁶ Proclus. *In Tim.* II 102, 7–11; 115, 27–30; III 248,24 – 249,21; *TP* VI 22, p. 99, 6–22; *ET* 164; 166; *In Crat.* 168,14.

²⁷ Proclus. *ET* 21–23.

²⁸ *ET* 166, 164: ἡ ἀμέθεκτος ψυχή πρώτως ὑπὲρ τὸν κόσμον ἐστί.

²⁹ This is the view of D.G. MacIsaac. Cf. MacIsaac (2001) 7.

³⁰ D.G. MacIsaac seems to incline to this solution: “there are texts which seem to suggest that Proclus thought that the first members of the coordinate series of souls were also unparticipated”. MacIsaac (2001) 7. See also MacIsaac (2007) 145.

originally in each order is one and not two or more than two, but unique".³¹ As for the second assumption, it seems even more impossible, since it suggests that there are souls that transcend the corporeal world, being at the same time participated by bodies. However since it is the only alternative left, it deserves more careful examination.

If the only bodies animated by souls were those within the sensible cosmos, then indeed all participated souls would be encosmic. But according to Proclus, there is at least one body which can be referred to as 'supra-celestial' or even 'hypercosmic'. It is a sort of pure immaterial light which is neither light of the Sun nor of the stars but is *other* than and *prior* to all celestial things and the heavens as a whole.³² Proclus believes that this light penetrates the whole world, binds together all things within it and embraces the world body from the outside, forming its luminous outer surface.³³ As such it must be regarded as superior to the heavens and in some respect going beyond them. Proclus imagines it as a luminous sphere in which the whole material cosmos is implanted as in its 'seat' (ἔδρα) or 'place' (τόπος). According to Simplicius, this theory of place as supra-celestial light was original to Proclus, because "he was the only one who chose to call place a body".³⁴ For our purposes, it is more important however that Proclus believed the supra-celestial light to be a substance of luminous vehicles (ὀχήματα) or "first bodies" of the souls. And since this light surrounds the cosmos beyond the limits of the heavens and in this respect transcends it, so also the luminous vehicles of the souls don't belong by nature to the sensible world, but in some sense go beyond it into the supra-celestial realm.³⁵ Thus if there were souls participated only by their luminous vehicles and not by subordinate material bodies, then such souls would be hypercosmic. As such they would mediate between the unparticipated hypercosmic monad of Soul, which is free from any corporeal tie, and the multitude of participated encosmic souls, that besides their immaterial vehicles

³¹ Proclus. *ET* 22. Transl. Dodds (1963) 27.

³² Proclus. *In Remp.* II, 196, 11: τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κρεῖττον. 196, 23: τοῦτο τὸ φῶς ἄλλο τι τῶν οὐρανίων ἐστί.

³³ Proclus. *In Remp.* II, 196, 5–8; *In Tim.* II, 10–20.

³⁴ Simplicius. *In Phys.* 611, 12–14. Transl. by Sambursky (1982) 65.

³⁵ As M. Griffin shows, even encosmic soul, as far as its luminous vehicle consists of light that surrounds the world, can rise beyond the limits of the sensible universe. M. Griffin (2012) 181.

animate also material bodies within the cosmos. So it is not necessary to suppose that the psychic series of reality begins from many unparticipated terms, nor to treat hypercosmic souls as independent entities constituting the internal arrangement of the transcendent monad of Soul (Soul-hypostasis).³⁶ As we have shown, the logic of Proclus' system admits the existence of souls that transcend the sensible world and at the same time are participated by bodies.

Now let us try to determine the exact position of hypercosmic souls in the psychic order of reality. It is clear that we have to place them among the highest members of the series, located just after the unparticipated monad of Soul and before the soul of the world. As follows these souls should be divine and enjoy perpetual communication with intellects and gods right above them.³⁷ But what order of gods do they participate? In other words, what class of divine henads bestows on them its specific characteristic (ιδιότης)? To answer this question we have to look once more at the familiar scheme of the horizontal-vertical procession by Proclus (Table 1). We see that if the transcendent monad of the psychic series participates hypercosmic henads, and the souls within the world participate encosmic gods, then the hypercosmic class of souls, because of mediating between the first two, must belong to the vertical series preceded by the so called 'absolute' (ἀπόλυτοι) or 'separate' gods.

Proclus describes these gods in Book VI of his *Platonic Theology*. They are said to mediate between the hypercosmic gods that extend their dominance down to the unparticipated monad of Soul and the encosmic gods, whose activity stretches until the world body. As such they are "both above and within the world". Their distinctive characteristic is the ability "to touch and not to touch" (ἄπτεσθαι καὶ οὐχ ἄπτεσθαι) things within cosmos, that is, both to act upon them and to remain above.³⁸ Proclus portrays these gods as dwelling on the outer surface of the universe and rotating the heavens from the outside with their hands.³⁹ The same characteristic is obviously mirrored in the hypercosmic souls, insofar as they ride on their luminous vehicles in the realm of supra-celestial light, which both coincides with the

³⁶ As for example, Luc Brisson does. See: Brisson (2004) 209. See also Opsomer (2006) 198–199 and note 33.

³⁷ Proclus. *ET* 139.

³⁸ Proclus. *TP* VI 24, 110, 2–111,13; 112,3–10.

³⁹ Proclus. *TP* VI 23, 101,22–102,2; 102,23–103,4.

universe and surpasses it. But if the distinctive property of a certain divine order can be found in the members of the lower reality, it means that the later ones are dependent on these gods and belong to their vertical orders. That the hypercosmic souls should be regarded as participants of the absolute gods can be confirmed by Proclus' own words. In one passage he enumerates different kinds of beings that are attached to the absolute gods in the subordinate vertical series and says that in addition to Being, Life and Intellect these gods "manifest in themselves Soul and the nature of supra-celestial souls".⁴⁰ Elsewhere he relates absolute gods to the *Phaedrus* myth and identifies them with the twelve Olympians who ride in the heavens on their winged chariots or 'vehicles' (ὄχηματα), followed by a number of daemons and pure souls.⁴¹ According to him, the vehicles of the absolute gods must be understood as hypercosmic souls:

"What else could these vehicles be, if not the hypercosmic souls, on which they [the absolute gods] ride? Though being intellectual, these souls give rise to the distinction and division that furnish substance to the souls within the cosmos."⁴²

Proclus' interpretation of hypercosmic souls as 'vehicles' (ὄχηματα) clearly shows that they attached to the absolute gods by that specific mode of participation, which Proclus usually calls "participation without loss of separateness" (χωριστῶς μετεχόμενον).⁴³ This kind of participation can be best demonstrated on the example of soul-body relationship since it implies interaction of two separate substances, one of which is dominant and active and the other subordinate and serving the first as an instrument for its action.⁴⁴ So by comparing hypercosmic souls with ὄχηματα, that is, 'luminous bodies' of the absolute gods, Proclus wants to indicate that the former are participants of the later so that both belong to the same vertical series. Thus if Marinus is right and Proclus really discovered some new kind of souls, then it must have been hypercosmic souls of the absolute gods.

⁴⁰ Proclus. *TP* VI 16, 81,29–82,2: προφαίνεται δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ ἡ φύσις τῶν ὑπερουρανίων ψυχῶν.

⁴¹ Plato. *Phaedrus* 247a.

⁴² Proclus. *TP* VI 9–10.

⁴³ Proclus. *ET* 81.

⁴⁴ Chlup (2012) 108.

4. Who was the genuine inventor of hypercosmic souls?

Proclus doesn't pretend anywhere to be an inventor of the doctrine of hypercosmic souls. While discussing this kind of souls in his *Commentary on Timaeus* he usually mentions some anonymous philosophers who "posit such souls prior to the cosmos".⁴⁵ The most scholars⁴⁶ agree that he could have in mind Iamblichus and his pupil Theodore of Asine who interpreted some passages in Plato's *Timaeus* as concerned with the soul that transcends the cosmos. According to Iamblichus' reading of the *Tim.* 34b, for example, it is the transcendent hypercosmic monad of Soul that was set by the Demiurge in the middle of the Universe and then stretched through the whole of its body and wrapped around it. For 'the middle', as Iamblichus argues, refers to the nature of the first Soul "inasmuch as it is similarly present to all things by virtue of the fact that it is not the soul of any body, nor has it come to have any kind of relation in any manner."⁴⁷ Proclus, however, rejects Iamblichus' interpretation as wrong and sides with his master Syrianus who argues that the soul Plato speaks of here is the soul of the world. This reading seems him to be more suitable with the words of Plato, insofar as the latter speaks in this passage not about the procession of the Soul-hypostasis from its higher divine causes, but rather about the ensoulment (ψύχωσις) of the world body. Proclus points out that the discussion of the soul in *Timaeus* falls in two parts, one of which concerns the essence of the soul and the other involves its communion with the body. In *Tim.* 34b Plato doubtless distinguishes the second of these, so the soul he speaks of here must be the soul closely associated with the body, that is, the soul of the world. Yet, as becomes clear from Proclus' commentary on the generation of the soul's essence in *Tim.* 35a, he regards this part of Plato's treatment of the soul as concerned with the world soul as well.

The reason for this could be his conviction that *Timaeus* has as its goal or 'skopos' the physical inquiry, so that the whole dialog teaches us not about the intelligible, but the sense-perceptible reality, and not about the immaterial orders of being, but the creation of the physical cosmos. Hence proceeding from the assumption of the single 'skopos',

⁴⁵ Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 252,4.

⁴⁶ Dillon (1973) 326, 335; D. Baltzly (2009) 15, 37; Festugière (1967) 120; S.K. Wear (2011) 128-129; Saffrey, Segonds (2001) 143.

⁴⁷ Proclus. *In Tim.* II, 105, 21-23. Transl. by D. Baltzly (2009) 61. See also: S.K. Wear (2011) 127.

to which all parts of the dialog ought to be related, Proclus could come to the conclusion that Plato's *Timaeus* should be concerned with the soul, insofar as the later takes part in the creation and perfection of the sensible world. So whatever part of the discussion we take, including the account of the soul's essence in *Tim.* 35a, we should refer it rather to the world soul than to the transcendent Soul-hypostasis. It doesn't mean, of course, that Proclus rejects the very idea of the hypercosmic monad of Soul. From various fragments in the *Commentary on Timaeus*, we can infer that he believes in the existence of the single and separate soul, which is "prior to all the other souls" and from which the soul of the world together with all other souls proceeds as from a center.⁴⁸ Proclus only denies that Plato in *Timaeus* has this very soul in mind. That's why he sides with his master Syrianus and criticizes Iamblichus' reading of Plato as too exalted and dealing with higher matters as it were.⁴⁹ Elsewhere in his commentary, he calls up the divine Iamblichus to read the words of Plato carefully and to assume from them that "Plato constitutes the soul of the world, and not the supra-celestial soul, from the mixture of the middle genera. For how, as his design was to create the universe, could he opportunely (εἰς καιρόν) make mention of such a soul, since when he mentions time, which is allotted a hypercosmic order, he co-arranges it with the universe? For he says that time was generated together with the heaven."⁵⁰

But no matter how much Proclus wants to share his master's point of view, he apparently likes the idea that at least the account of the soul generation in *Tim.* 35a could relate to the souls beyond the cosmos. In fact, how else could these souls have arisen, if not through the Demiurge who created them in the mixing bowl in the manner described in the dialog? Should we not regard the essence of every soul, be it encosmic or hypercosmic, as a composition of different genera, which mediates between Being and not-Being, the divisible and the indivisible? But if the hypercosmic souls have the same essence as all the other souls, then they must be created together with the soul of the world. Syrianus' interpretation of Plato's text, however, doesn't take into account this possibility, so that Proclus seems to be

⁴⁸ Proclus. *In Tim.* II, 106, 3; 115, 27–30. See Festugière (1967), 142: τῆς μονάδος ταύτης scil. I' Ame hypercosmique.

⁴⁹ Proclus. *In Tim.* I, 19, 10; II, 240, 4.

⁵⁰ Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 251, 21 – 29. Slightly changed translation of Th. Taylor (1820) 374.

not completely satisfied with it. He recognizes that Plato “nowhere speaks about hypercosmic souls explicitly”, but still admits that he could mention them indirectly. That’s why he thinks it worthy to investigate the question, whether or not Plato knew about hypercosmic souls.

Proclus realizes that in order to ‘fit’ these souls into Platonic philosophy and to discover their latent presence in *Timaeus* it is necessary to find out how they could be intermediate between the divisible and the indivisible kinds of Being. According to his “own insight” (τῆ ἐμῆ μαντείᾳ),⁵¹ the indivisible element in their essence is the intelligence in which they directly participate, whereas the divisible is present in them not simply, but insofar as each of these souls is set over the multitude of the encosmic ones.⁵² The general nature of Proclus’ argument is quite clear. Since hypercosmic souls are not souls of any body, they obviously cannot contain “the divisible Being, that comes to be in the realm of bodies”.⁵³ So they should contain divisible Being that becomes in the subordinate encosmic souls, which they proximately transcend. As a result, the essence of hypercosmic souls should be more indivisible than divisible, because if someone mixes the indivisible intelligible Being with the divisibility inherent in the encosmic souls, then the initial nature of the divisible will be considerably diluted with the indivisible ingredient, so that the final composite will contain it in a less degree. Hence, during the preparation of psychic composition the Demiurge could mix the divisible and indivisible ingredients in three different ways: (1) so that the indivisible prevails over the divisible; (2) so that both ingredients are present in equal proportions and (3) so that the divisible prevails over the indivisible. In the first case there would arise the unparticipated monad of soul “which is hypercosmic and always remains on high”, in the second – souls that are both hypercosmic and encosmic, that is, intermediate between the monad of soul and the plurality of its encosmic products; and in the third – souls that animate bodies within the cosmos.⁵⁴ This is the first argument that should convince us that Plato could have had in mind hypercosmic souls while describing the soul generation in *Timaeus*.

⁵¹ Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 252, 9.

⁵² Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 251, 10–13.

⁵³ Plato. *Tim.* 35a.

⁵⁴ Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 252, 13–21.

Another argument in favor of the presence of hypercosmic souls in Plato's *Timaeus* is the division of the soul mixture into harmonic intervals.⁵⁵ What could Plato mean by saying that the Demiurge divides the resulting psychic substance in accordance with the linear, square and cubic numbers (2, 4, 8 and 3, 9, 27)? In Proclus' view, he could have in mind different stages of soul's procession from the divine Intellect, so that the different numbers in psychic composition could indicate how far this or that kind of souls moved away from the demiurgic cause. Souls that emerged from those parts of the psychic substance that were cut off in accordance with the cubic numbers 8 and 27 should be the most remote ones. Since cubic numbers are related to the three dimensional bodies, then the souls that have them in their composition should be encosmic. Souls that advance only to the linear numbers 2 and 3, should be free from any corporeal tie and thereby transcend the sensible cosmos. Finally, souls that have been originated in accordance with the square numbers (4 and 9) should be intermediate between the first two. In other words, they should be both above and within the sensible cosmos, both in touch with it and beyond its limits or, as Proclus says, "both hypercosmic and encosmic". It is easy to recognize in these intermediate souls those presumably discovered by Proclus, which we have mentioned above as the souls of the absolute gods, situated on the psychic level of reality between the unparticipated monad of soul and the souls within the cosmos.

These and many other similar speculations could convince Proclus as well as his students that the account of the soul's generation in *Timaeus* could contain references to the hypercosmic souls so that Plato could really know about them, though nowhere mentioned these souls explicitly. Thus Proclus' innovation could consist not in the discovery of the hypercosmic souls as such, but in that he was the first to discover them in Plato's philosophy. According to Proclus' own words, he takes credit for drawing the existence of these souls neither from his own notions, nor from some sacred texts such as *Chaldean Oracles*, as the previous proponents of the theory presumably did, but "from the very words of Plato".⁵⁶ And so far as he succeeded in his demonstrations, Marinus could see him as a genuine inventor of this kind souls.

⁵⁵ Proclus. *In Tim.* III, 252, 21–31.

⁵⁶ Proclus. *In Tim.* II, 144, 25-30: καὶ ταῦτά φαμεν πρὸς πάντα βλέποντες τὰ πρόσθεν, δι' ὧν ταῦτα δεδείχαμεν, ἀπ' αὐτῶν εἰλημμένα τῶν Πλάτωνος ῥημάτων καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἡμετέρων ἐπινοιῶν.

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