

THE DIVINE ‘PROCESSIONS’ IN DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE AND THE ‘HENADS’ IN PROCLUS: AS TWO EXPRESSIONS OF THE TRANSITION FROM THE DIVINE TRANSCENDENCE TO THE DIVINE IMMANENCE

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In this article, bearing in mind the impressive relations between the Neoplatonist Proclus and the Christian Dionysius the Areopagite in all the theoretical philosophical branches, we focus on one of their central points in common, which is found in Proclus’s theory of divine henads and Dionysius’s theory of the divine ‘processions’. Specifically, based on the third book of Proclus’ treatise *Theologia Platonica* and Dionysius’ *De divinis nominibus*, we attempt to investigate the way in which they interpret the transition from the metaphysics of transcendence to the metaphysics of immanence. In this path, the explanation of the concept of ‘multitude’ is important. Hence, based on their common acceptance that the supreme Principle does not remain in the transcendent state but also manifests productively, the major question that concerns us is what each of the two philosopher-theologians means by ‘multitude’ and, by extension, how they define the relationship of the One-Good with this ‘multitude’ in order to prove on an objective basis the way of manifestation and the products of Henology. The theoretical approach of the relevant texts of both leads us to the concept and function of the intermediate realities. Therefore, we discuss how we could explain and interpret these intermediate realities, under the explicit term that Dionysius supports monotheistic monism while Proclus adopts polytheistic monism.

Introduction

In the fifth century AD, genuine philosophical reflection, under the criterion that was formed mainly during the fourth century BC, is in a dialectical reciprocity with the treatment of theological and metaphysical issues, or in other words, rationality with religiosity respectively. So, it has undergone transformations internally and in terms of its expressions. It is about an era in which religious acts, secret ceremonies and theurgies are quite widespread, in order for man to express through them his inner selfhood, existential directions, and initiating penetration, though in a different way from the dominant spiritual currents, that is, Neoplatonism and Christianity. At this particular historical moment, man seeks spiritual redemption in the metaphysical world and attempts, within an atmosphere of social introversion, so to speak, to be united with the divine, without however ignoring the principles of rationality. Both Proclus and Dionysius the Areopagite express these tendencies from their points of view and in this way they define and describe—if not form—the cultural spirit of the fifth century.¹ The reference of international research to these two thinkers is not accidental, since they both have a special place in the history of philosophy, despite the exhaustive theological foundations of their teaching. Proclus is one of the last great exponents of ancient Greek Philosophy while Dionysius is placed in the Christian world, which in that era had been already shown new performances, and his writings have such expressive directions, so that they have raised critical historical and systematic questions to scholars since the nineteenth century. However, the major question of the relevant investigation, which moves through the thorough study of their topics and the clarification of their terminology, details the commonalities and differences between these two thinkers. The answer to this question, in fact quite impressively, leads us also to investigate,

¹ For a highly systematic reading of the above atmosphere in relation to the Neoplatonic School and in fact under the historical-philosophical-theological contexts which shaped it during the previous centuries, see the emblematic, for its investigative and hermeneutical suggestions and not only for its systematic categorizations, study of Pierre Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1968). Regarding Christianity, see Basil. N. Tatakis, *Christian Philosophy in the Patristic and Byzantine Tradition*, D. Calmas (ed.) (Rollinsford: Orthodox Research Institute, 2007), 65–107. For a synthetic reading of Neoplatonism-Christianity, see Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An investigation of the prehistory and evolution of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978). This is a study which delineated with impressive precision the Neoplatonic and the Christian concepts, with the consequence that it is a permanent field of reference for the relevant research.

as far as possible, the limits of the specific content of the Neoplatonic and Christian theories during that crucial historical period for the development of spiritual life and, as it has been proven, for a further formation of research structures in a number of fields.²

We would note in the first place that the relations between the two thinkers are impressively extensive and cover almost all the theoretical philosophical branches, in a theological sense, which is also extended—under the strict principles set by both—to the fields of practice. Thus, we find common points between them in the disciplines of metaphysics, cosmology, epistemology, aesthetics and ethics. At this point, a critical clarification is necessary: focusing mostly on the theological direction without ignoring the philosophical support that they both have chosen regarding the ontological model that they adopt—which is in fact a worldview, in the broader sense of the term—, we would emphasize with no skepticism that they are monists. In other words, they shape their metaphysical and cosmological theories, relying on the basic principle that the One-Good is the source of all that exists. But, despite this common point, there is also a major difference between them, as the Neoplatonic philosopher-theologian embraces polytheism while the Christian embraces monotheism.³ Both, however, accept Henology or, else, the radical theological Metaphysics as the foundation of all

² The relevant bibliography on the subject in question maintains its intensity from 1895 to the modern era. For instance, we refer to some of the most representative studies, which throughout time determined the research 'adventure'. See Henrik Koch, 'Proclus als Quelle des Pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Bösen', *Philologus* 54 (1895): 438–54; Joseph Stiglismayr, 'Der Neoplatoniker Procklus als Vorlage des sogen. Dionysius Areopagita in der Lehre vom Übel', *Historisches Jahrbuch* 16 (1985): 253–73; René Roques, *L'univers dionysien* (Paris: Cerf, 1983), which is perhaps the most accurate analytical presentation and interpretive detection of the hermeneutical elaboration of Dionysius the Areopagite's thought up to modern times. See also, Eugenio Corsini, *Il trattato "De divinis nominibus" dello Pseudo-Dionigi e i commenti neoplatonici al Parmenide* (Torino: Giappichelli, 1962). Endre von Ivanka, *Plato Christianus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1964), 228–42, 254–61, 262–89, 352–63. This is a highly original study on how the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* is updated by the Neoplatonic and Christian theological and philosophical approaches.

³ Proclus' six-volume treatise *Theologia Platonica* is perhaps the most systematic work for monistic polytheism. It has been published by 'Les Belles Lettres' with extensive introductions and exhaustive comments by Henri Dominique Saffrey and Leendert Gerit Westerink, whose contribution to relevant research is catalytic. For his part, Dionysius defends monistic monotheism in all of his treatises, under a particular perspective and theoretical approach. We refer in this regard to the highly thorough study of Bernhard Brons, *Gott und die Seienden: Untersuchungen zum Verhältnis von neuplatonischer Metaphysik und christlicher tradition bei Dionysius Areopagita* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1976). This study has exhaustively utilized the texts of Dionysius and has placed them in highly specialized individual chapters with respect to their topics.

ontological processes, which has been systematically composed since the third century AD in Alexandria. In other words, they accept, apart from the transcendent side of the One-Good, its emanating manifestation or, else, its productive nature, for which they even argue, Dionysius to a greater extent, that it is manifested personally and intentionally. This position leads them to elaborate the concept of 'multitude' as an emanating development, which they do not approach as a neutral but as a chosen ontological act, with teleology holding clear responsibilities to an exhaustive degree.⁴

But what does each of the two philosopher-theologians mean when using the concept of 'multitude' and, by extension, how do they define the relationship of the One-Good with this 'multitude', in order to prove on an objective basis the manifestation of Henology and its products? A theoretical approach of the relevant texts leads us to the concept and function of intermediate realities. But how could we explain and interpret these intermediate realities and how could we prove their archetypal character on everything resulted as an image? It is a question that illuminates similarity and analogy between holistic models and individual products, with their context being established by each thinker in a special way: relational states that update Plato and to a certain extent Aristotle.⁵ So, having in mind these approaches of Proclus and Dionysius, we can identify, despite the differences, one of their main points in common.

However, in order to specify the type and extent of the correlations between Proclus and Dionysius in terms of their theories of intermediates and their archetypal character, it is necessary to identify

⁴ The terms One and Good are used by both philosopher-theologians indiscriminately and refer to the same reality, with the following semantic difference: the One captures the self-founding divine unity, whose energetic intentional and personal manifestation is reflected by the Good. At the same time, the Good defines the supreme Principle as productive and final cause, which functions under the terms of a multiplicative unity, which is present in the entire created world, despite the differences with which it appears and functions. For Proclus, we refer mainly to the second book of his treatise *Theologia Platonica* and for Dionysius mainly to his treatise *De divinis nominibus* (mostly from the fourth chapter onwards). Maximus the Confessor's and George Pachymeres' commentaries discuss how these concepts are utilized in the Christian tradition.

⁵ On the concept of analogy in Plato, cr. *Respublica*, VI, 505a2–509b10. On Aristotle, see Pierre Aubenque, *Le problème de l'être chez Aristote* (Paris: P.U.F., 1962), 202–6 and 400–3. Let us note that the analogy is both an ontological and epistemological method and is articulated both with ambiguities and with polysemy, that is, it describes the variety of possession of a state by realities of a different ontological level. In fact, both in Proclus and in Dionysius, the analogy is also defined in terms of the degree of participation in the gifts deriving from the One-Good.

the general framework of principles that they adopt in all of their texts. Thus, we will be able to provide, up to a certain point, answers to these questions with respect to what is the initial ontological texture (a priori beginning), what are the ad extra functions (productive plan), and what is the kind of range (eternal or not immanent presence) of the archetypal character of the intermediate realities in Proclus and Dionysius? At this point, however, some more questions can be raised: What is the meaning of the triadic processes and relationships in the works of the two thinkers? On which cognitive and methodological schemes do they base the foundation and operation of their theories? The first question refers to the structural articulation that they choose regarding the procedures and the second to the general principles with respect to their purpose that they adopt. We will attempt to answer these questions based mainly on what Proclus discusses in the third book, and mostly in chapters 1–6, of his treatise entitled *Theologia Platonica* and Dionysius in his treatise entitled *De divinis nominibus*, and especially in the fifth chapter, having as our purpose to discuss some of the commonalities and differences between Neoplatonism and Christianity.

*The theory of the intermediate realities
and a hermeneutical reading*

When we refer to intermediates in Christianity and Neoplatonism, we mean the ontological realities and the divine powers that mediate for the accomplishment of certain functions and for the definition of specific processes. They intervene between the supreme ontological Principle and Cause, that is, the One-Good, and the multitude of the sensible beings, and since they are numerous under a particular ontological rationale, they contribute to the articulated rational organization and function of the produced world.

In the *Theologia Platonica*, Proclus connects, from a meta-interpretive point of view, his theories on intermediates-archetypes with the content of the ontological categories of the second hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*. The intermediates in Proclus' system are divine realities—with each one corresponding to a category of the Platonic dialogue—that express with their presence and their function the pre-existing

exodus of the One-Good from itself and the gradual specialization of its emanating-productive function, through specific theogonic and substance-creating triadic processes, with the specialization of causality being dominant. But this is a specialization that captures emanation modes of the divine being in a separate state from natural reality, which will appear at a next level of ontological projections.

These procedures follow the principles of the triadic (and dialectical) forming in the structural integrities production scheme ‘remaining-procession-reversion’. Proclus puts the intermediates in a hierarchy according to the ontological and evaluative priority of their essence, in the sense of course in which he understands it. This hierarchy also determines their archetypal nature-range. Thus, the divine intermediates are not only the archetypes of sensible entities, but they also function archotypically in the relationships between them. The hierarchically superior are the archetypes of the hierarchically inferior, with the principle of analogy—as defining or reflecting the mode in which a property appears in every divine being in particular—being pervasive at all levels. In their highest expression, these intermediates are the henads, which reveal the divine or the absolutely uniform multitude and are a priori (self-founding) integral plans. This means that the transcendence of the divine henads is ontologically of this kind so that to be manifested in a strictly specific way and not in another one.

It should be noted that, despite the fact that we are in a polytheistic frame and despite the fact that the henads are considered to be gods, they are actually the energy modes in which the One-Good appears due to the modes in which they manifest and as results they cause. Or, in other words, for the Neoplatonic thinker, this transcendent reality is the supreme divine essence that exceeds its per se status through its energy richness, the henads, but, since Proclus adopts polytheism, he calls them gods, for they specify the absolute God, who, in terms of his presence per se remains eternally unmanifested.⁶

⁶ See *Theologia Platonica*, III, 14.1–9: «Πολλῶ ἄρα μειζόνως ἡ πηγὴ τῶν ὅλων ἀγαθῶν τὰς ἐαυτῇ κατὰ φύσιν ἡνωμένας ἀγαθότητας παράγει καὶ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐφίστησιν. Θεὸς οὖν εἷς καὶ θεοὶ πολλοί· καὶ ἕνας μία καὶ πολλαὶ πρὸ τῶν ὄντων ἐνάδες· καὶ ἀγαθότης μία καὶ πολλαὶ μετὰ τὴν μίαν ἀγαθότητες, δι’ ἧς καὶ ὁ νοῦς <ἀγαθός> ὁ δημιουργικὸς καὶ πᾶς νοῦς θεῖός ἐστιν, εἴτ’ οὖν νοερός εἴτ’ οὖν νοητός· καὶ τὸ πρῶτως ὑπερούσιον ἓν καὶ πολλὰ τὰ ὑπερούσια μετὰ τὸ ἓν». As it appears, in the perspective of an explicit monism, the ‘multitude’ as an ontological category that meets its privileged field in the natural universe also becomes a mode of existence and function of the metaphysical.

In Dionysius, the intermediates do not follow triadic productive processes in strict norms, but they simply possess or receive and transmit ontogenetic and anthropological functions. More specifically, in his writings there are two systems of intermediate, that of the hyper-essential 'processions' of the One-Good and that of the celestial angelic beings. The first is ontological, constitutes the productive and archetypal-paradigmatic condition of the second—but also of any other reality that will come into being—and expresses the quality and range of the ontological gifts that the One-Good provides to all beings with no exception. The second one is formed in a hierarchical mode, but under this condition: with respect to its internal structure and purpose is functional and is considered that it expresses the pre-existing transmission from being to being of the divine somehow orders received from the 'processions' of the One-Good. Focusing on the divine 'processions', we could also contend here that it is about the energies of the One-Good or, in other words, about the completely integral expression of its productive side. But since the Christian thinker adopts monotheism, the divine 'processions', although they are God's energies, are not considered particular gods, as in Proclus, but the productive divine way in which the entire created world is produced; either it is about the angelic entities or about the beings that fall under sensory experience. That is to say, according to this, the transcendence of these divine 'processions' is ontologically of the kind to be manifested in a particular way, not however in terms of necessity, which would anyway impose ontological determinations and limit the absoluteness of the divine. There is not a single internal necessity to which the divine would necessarily respond.⁷

The common point, so far, between the two thinkers in their theory of the intermediates is that, on the one hand, they attempt to explain and interpret the transition from the indivisible One-Good to the multitude of the existent and, on the other hand, they consider in this course—Proclus the henads and Dionysius the 'processions'—as divine

⁷ This detail about divine intentionality is found in all the treatises of both thinkers as an application of their position that the supreme Principle has the quality of goodness. See for example, Jean Trouillard, 'Procession Néoplatonicienne et création judeochrétienne', *Néoplatonisme* (Mélanges offerts à Jean Trouillard) (Paris: Institut catholique, 1981), 1–30. Let us note that it becomes obvious from the texts that this personification of the Principle moves programmatically within the theological-mystical atmosphere that was prevalent at the first Byzantine period. And here it must be repeated that this is not a strictly philosophical metaphysics and cosmology.

powers or energies of this first Principle. In both cases the One-Good is manifested intentionally, since it is independent of any mechanistic process. It defines the plans with absolute freedom and realizes them, prescribing in a regulative way an analogous behavior for its products. However, we should note that we do not only face the choices of two thinkers, but also a more general historical and cultural period that opens a wide field of presence to the creative interiority of both God and man.⁸ But in both theoretical models man undoubtedly is defined by God and shows from a particular perspective the modes of behavior that, when they will be realized, will generally lead the cosmic universe into completeness.

The triadic processes and relations in the two thinkers

Regarding the content and meaning of the triadic processes and relationships, we have to mention that there are clear differences between Proclus and Dionysius. In Proclus' system, the triadic developments include all the first of all ontological and subsequently functional processes and relationships in the level of the divine mode of being. More specifically, the One-Good provides the ontological hypostasis to the divine entities in a triadic way and these are produced, self-produced, and produced in a triadic way following the dialectic model 'remaining-procession-reversion', which appears in a particular way in each productive relationship. The triadic structure model of all that is produced allows us to identify among Proclus' beings the variety of their associations, as well as their ontological, functional, and evaluative gradation and specialization, which, according to his descriptions, could be characterized hierarchical as well, mainly with the criterion of the degree of possession of unity, that is, the basic and self-founding property of the supreme Principle.⁹

⁸ See for instance, Pierre Bouancé, 'Théurgie et téléstique néoplatoniciennes', *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 147 (1955): 189–209. André-Jean Festugière, *La révélation d'Hermès Trismégiste* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954). Lodewijk Herman Grondijs, 'Sur la terminologie dionysienne', *Bulletin de l'Association G. Budé* 3 (1959): 438–47. René Roques, 'Symbolisme et théologie négative chez le Pseudo-Denys', *Bulletin de l'Association Guillaune G. Budé* 1 (1957): 97–112.

⁹ On the schema 'remaining-procession-reversion' in Proclus, see Proclus, *Institutio theologica*, props. 25–38, 38.21–42.7. Eric Robertson Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 212–23. Jean Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1972), 78–106 and *La mystagogie de Proclus* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1982), 53–91. Werner Beierwaltes, *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1979), 118–63. S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 45–57.

In Dionysius' writings there is not an analogous triadic model of ontogenetic process coming through various divine levels. All that exists is produced once and as a whole—without this general manifestation excluding following special ones—by the 'processions' or powers of the One-Good. But under this condition: between the produced beings there are no ontological relationships but only functional ones. Specifically, the special position of the celestial angelic hierarchies is not defined according to the differences of their substance or their ontological priority, but exclusively by their degree of participation in the gifts of the 'processions' of the One-Good and by the analogous difference in their responsibilities and functions.

So, having in mind the functions, we do find triadic processes in the following order: a) the plans of their manifestation are developed within the divine 'processions'-energies ('remaining'), which refer with specialization to all the beings that will be produced (ontological 'procession'); b) this manifestation with respect to the rational resumable processes that it defines is received by the angelic orders and is spread over all the produced beings (functional 'procession'); c) through the active and conscious reception and application of this manifestation by the angels and the human beings, their 'reversion' to the divine takes place. So, attention is required to the fact that the functional processes do have an ontological source—that is to say, they are not idealistic schemata—but project modes of being as an applied response to its contents in many ways. The purely ontological belongs to the divine 'processions'-energies, which add creative qualities, which are assimilated by the created beings in terms of their reduction to being. On a second level the conscious approach to the divine gifts leads beings to 'reverse' to their source through epistemological, ethical and aesthetic activities. In this ontological and functional process there is no worldly mediation.

Finally, regarding the intratheistic relationships between the 'processions' of the One-Good, we cannot find any form of triadic process, since they do not relate with each other and they do not relate with any reality coming from outside to create all that exists.¹⁰ On the

¹⁰ In addition to the *De divinis nominibus*, Dionysius deals with these topics in his treatise *De coelesti hierarchia*. See the critical edition of René Roques, *Denys l'Aréopagite, La Hierarchie celeste* (Paris: Sources chrétiennes, 1970), with the introduction and comments reflecting a

contrary, we see this cooperation in Proclus, who gradually connects the henads ontogenetically and first of all in a triadic way with the true beings that derive from them and subsequently these transcendent beings one another, so that each of them appears each time, in order for the requirements for the formation of the produced natural world to develop. So, we see that there is that there is not only a difference in methodology but also in worldview.

The cognitive and methodological principles of the two thinkers

Quite important are the differences between Proclus and Dionysius regarding the cognitive-methodological principles on which the two thinkers found and develop their theories—with apophatism, however, being a given when it comes to divine transcendence.¹¹

More specifically, Proclus attempts to build his worldview using a perfect conceptual framework, a solid sequence of associations and unchangeable methodological principles. These choices make him, in the historical course of Neoplatonism, the greatest systematic philosopher, the incomparable geometer of the ontological processes and their epistemological expression. Proclus also bases his work on scientific hypotheses, at least in the way in which he conceives them. He chooses a general scientific method and uses the same scientific invariants, which he adjusts in the special ontological cases that he discusses each time and which he approaches through a special worldview. In particular, he uses direct propositions or the principles and syllogistic models proved according to those propositions every time under the special content of the topic in question. Direct propositions are unprovable; that is, they are acceptable in a self-evident and with no mediations for their truth and accuracy. They exist by nature (a priori) and unconditionally in the human soul, they are not originally composite but become so in

sophisticated historic-grammatical and systematic approach of Christian angelology, which goes together with theophanies and teleology-eschatology. See also, S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 217–29.

¹¹ The apophatic theology of Proclus is found mainly in the second book of his treatise *Theologia Platonica*, while that of Dionysius in his treatise *De mystica theologia*, which also formed a tradition in both Eastern and Western Christianity. For Proclus, see for instance Christian Guérard, 'Le danger du néant et la negation selon Proclus,' *Revue philosophique de Louvain* 97 (1985): 343–53 and for Dionysius, see Otto Semmelroth, 'Gottes überwesentliche Einheit. Zur Gotteslehre des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagita,' *Scholastik* 25 (1950): 209–34.

a next stage of the development of the human consciousness and they constitute the foundations for apodictic reasoning.¹² Proclus develops his metaphysical theories based strictly on these principles. Moreover, the science of principles is for him theology, which, in his view, is Platonic philosophy, to which he adds a mystical character, as he combines it with the theology of Orpheus, Pythagoras, and the Chaldean Words.¹³ In this polyprismatic theoretical model, he contends that the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* stands at the top, which, epistemologically, he defines as the starting point for particular theoretical processes in his work, a detail which is found, more or less, in all the other Neoplatonist philosophers as well. This dialogue is generally characterized as the 'gospel' of the Neoplatonic School, so it can receive various explanations and interpretations that form a fascinating tradition.¹⁴

In Dionysius, the issue of the methodological principles is remarkably simplified, or at least this is what he attempts to show. The Christian thinker does not apply, at least regarding the precise announcement of his intentions, an explicitly founded scientific method; he does not originally rely on scientific data and the only source for the truth is for him the Logia—that is to say, the Christian texts through which God's words are given to human beings. So, Proclus' methodological principles and, to some degree, the epistemological premises of Plato's *Parmenides*

¹² See for instance, Proclus, *In primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii*, 200.22–201.3: «Τῆς ἐπιστήμης πάσης διττῆς οὐσης καὶ τῆς μὲν περὶ τὰς ἀμέσους προτάσεις ἀσχολουμένης, τῆς δὲ περὶ τὰ ἐξ ἐκείνων δεικνύμενα καὶ πορίζόμενα καὶ ὅλως περὶ τὰ ἀκόλουθα ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ἐξελιττούσης τὴν ἐαυτῆς πραγματείαν», and *ibid.*, 138.15–17: «Ταῦτ' ἐστὶ τὰ κατὰ πάντας ἀναπόδεικτα καλούμενα ἀξιώματα, καθόσον ὑπὸ πάντων οὕτως ἔχειν ἀξιοῦται, καὶ διαμφισβητεῖ καὶ πρὸς ταῦτα οὐδεὶς». *Theologia Platonica*, I, 110.24–25: «Καὶ γὰρ ταῖς κοιναῖς ἐννοίαις (sc. ταῖς ἀρχαῖς) πρὸ παντὸς λόγου πιστεύομεν». It is obvious that by common concepts the philosopher does not mean those that have a conventional use nor that they constitute expressive ways of public opinion. It should be noted that in the commentary of the Platonic dialogue *Alcibiades I* he defines the common concepts as existing in the human mind with the theory of recollection, which—like his teacher Syrianus—he defends.

¹³ See mostly the third chapter (12.11–17.7) of the first book of *Theologia Platonica*. See Henri Dominique Saffrey, *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1990), 63–94. Let us note that two chapters of this study refer to points in common between Dionysius and Proclus (227–48). Luc Brisson, 'La place des Oracles Chaldaïques dans la *Théologie Platonicienne*', *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne* (Paris-Leuven: Les Belles Lettres- Leuven University Press, 2000), 109–62.

¹⁴ Proclus has dedicated his treatises *In Parmenidem* and *Theologia Platonica* to show the key position in his view that *Parmenides* holds for the development of the History of Philosophy. See for instance, Carlos Steel, 'Le Parménide es-il le fondement de la *Théologie Platonicienne*?', *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, 373–98. The issue is also exhaustively discussed by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink in their introductions to the six books of the treatise *Theologia Platonica*.

are not so obvious or clearly theoretically defined in his treatises. It is characteristic that in the first chapter of *De divinis nominibus*, in which he states his investigative and interpretive principles for dealing with his subjects, he radically denies any autonomous apodictic process of human thought for expressing and even more giving meaning to anything that has to do with the transcendent God.¹⁵ We could even argue that Dionysius in some cases keeps a conscious quasi anti-philosophical attitude, a choice that is due to his special approach to the term 'theology'. For the Areopagite, 'theology' is not Platonic philosophy but exclusively the word of God to man, regardless of the fact that the way in which it is expressed is secularized and can vary depending of the specific theoretical elaboration.¹⁶ Finally, we have to mention that in Dionysius there is not a scientific perspective with structured reflections, since he does not precisely define as a goal to construct and present a perfect theological science, despite the fact that he completely accepts its inner justifications. Therefore, we cannot

¹⁵ See *De divinis nominibus*, (*Corpus Dionysiacum*, I, *De divinis nominibus* (Berlin-New York: Walter de Greyter, 1990), 586a–587a: «Ἐστω δὲ καὶ τῶν ἡμῖν ὁ τῶν λογίων θεσμός, προσδιωρισμένος, τὸ τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἡμᾶς καταδήσασθαι τῶν περὶ Θεοῦ λεγομένων, οὐκ ἐν πειθοῖς σοφίας ἀνθρωπίνης λόγοις, ἀλλ' ἐν ἀποδείξει τῆς πνευματοκινήτου τῶν θεολόγων δυνάμεως... Καθόλου τοιγαρὺν οὐ τολμητέον εἰπεῖν, οὔτε μὴν ἐννοῆσαι τι περὶ τῆς ὑπερουσίου καὶ κρυφίας θεότητος, παρὰ τὰ θεωδῶς ἡμῖν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν λογίων ἐκπεφασμένα». Lambros Couloubaritis, in his article 'Le sens de la notion "démonstration" chez le pseudo-Denys', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 75 (1982): 317–35, examines the way in which the dialectic and the apodictic method appear in the Dionysian work, emphasizing at the same time their dependence on the epistemological premises of the Scriptures. See R. Roques, *L'univers dionysien*, 209–25. This is an issue that is encountered throughout the Dionysian tradition up to Gregory Palamas.

¹⁶ See *De divinis nominibus*, 640b: «Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ τις ὅλως ὁ τοῖς λόγοις ἀντανιστάμενος, πόρρω που πάντως ἔσται καὶ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφίας, καὶ εἰ μὴ τῆς ἐκ τῶν λογίων αὐτῶ θεοσοφίας μέλει, πῶς ἂν ἡμῖν μελήσῃ τῆς ἐπὶ τὴν θεολογικὴν ἐπιστήμην αὐτοῦ χειραγωγίας; Εἰ δὲ εἰς τὴν τῶν λογίων ἀλήθειαν ἀποσκοπεῖ, τούτῳ καὶ ἡμεῖς κανόνι καὶ φωτὶ χρώμενοι πρὸς τὴν ἀπολογία, ὡς οἱοί τε ἔσμεν, ἀκλινῶς βαδιούμεθα φάσκοντες, ὡς ἡ θεολογία τὰ μὲν ἡνωμένως παραδίδωσι, τὰ δὲ διακεκριμένως, καὶ οὔτε τὰ ἡνωμένα διαιρεῖν θεμιτὸν οὔτε τὰ διακεκριμένα συγχεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐπομένους αὐτῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐπὶ τὰς θείας μαρμαρυγὰς ἀνανεῦν. Καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖθεν τὰς θείας ἐκφαντορίας παραλαβόντες ὥσπερ τινα κανόνα κάλλιστον ἀληθείας τὰ ἐκεῖ κείμενα φρουρεῖν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἀπλήθυντα καὶ ἀμείωτα καὶ ἀπαράτρεπτα σπεύδομεν ἐν τῇ φρουρᾷ τῶν λογίων φρουρούμενοι καὶ πρὸς αὐτῶν εἰς τὸ φρουροῦντας αὐτὰ φρουρεῖσθαι δυνατούμενοι». Only under these conditions of the theological science can we accept the position of Gerhard Podskalsky, *Theologie und Philosophie in Byzanz*, München: Beck, 1977), 97, that Dionysius is to a certain extent a systematic theologian. However, we must not omit that in the *Epistola IX*, P.G.3, 1104d–1108c he presents his virtues with regard to the evidential method, while in the *De coelesti hierarchia*, I, 1, 120b–121a, he shows that he possesses in depth the triune scheme 'remaining-procession-reversion'. For a systematic approach of the term 'theology' in the Dionysian corpus, in its wider relevance to the Christian teaching, see René Roques, *Structures théologiques de la Gnose à Richard de Saint-Victor* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 61–240. Finally, let us note that in the present text of Dionysius we find an impressive combination between the expressive narrative mode and following of research normativity.

consider his work, in the first place, as a scientific production with the systematic requirements of organization and formal logic. In only two cases does Dionysius announce that he will deal with his subjects in a systematic way: first, when he presents the functional processes that define the type of the relationships between the beings of his angelic and ecclesiastical hierarchies (in his treatises *The celestial hierarchy* and *The ecclesiastical hierarchy*),¹⁷ and second, when he specifies the details on the question of the 'processions' of the One-Good.¹⁸ However, in both cases he originally founds his evidence on the divine Words. However, his differences from Proclus do not raise their common rationale in the distinction between the transcendent One-Good and its energy projections, that is, the One-Being, which was one of the theoretical foundations of Neoplatonism, on the occasion, here as well, of Plato's *Parmenides*.¹⁹

¹⁷ See *De coelesti hierarchia*, P.G.3, 328a–c, από όπου παραθέτουμε τα ακόλουθα: «Εἰ μὲν γὰρ ἱεραρχεῖσθαι τινὰς ὑπὸ τῶν προτέρων λέγομεν, εἴτα τῶν αὐτῶν ἱεραρχούσας, καὶ τὰς προτέρας αὐτῆς ἱεραρχούσας τῶν τελευταίων ἱεραρχεῖσθαι πρὸς αὐτῶν ἐκείνων· τῶν ἱεραρχουμένων, ὄντως ἀτοπία τὸ πρᾶγμα, καὶ συγχύσεως πολλῆς ἀνάμεστον». The «ἀτοπία» has both ontological and formalistic content and refers to deviations from what might be defined as theological realism in the ways in which it defines ontological monism. See Hermann Goltz, *Hiera Mesiteia: Zur Theorie der hierarchischen Sozietät im Corpus aeropagiticum* (Erlangen, 1974).

¹⁸ See *De divinis nominibus*, 816a–825c, από όπου παραθέτουμε τα ακόλουθα: «Καὶ γοῦν αἱ ἀρχαὶ τῶν ὄντων πᾶσαι τοῦ εἶναι μετέχουσαι καὶ εἰσὶ καὶ ἀρχαὶ εἰσὶ καὶ πρῶτον εἰσὶν, ἔπειτα ἀρχαὶ εἰσὶν. Καὶ εἰ βούλει τῶν ζώντων ὡς ζώντων ἀρχὴν φάναι τὴν αὐτοζωὴν καὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ὡς ὁμοίων τὴν αὐτοομοιότητα καὶ τῶν ἡνωμένων ὡς ἡνωμένων τὴν αὐτοένωσιν καὶ τῶν τεταγμένων ὡς τεταγμένων τὴν αὐτόταξιν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, ὅσα τοῦδε ἢ τοῦδε ἢ ἀμφοτέρων ἢ πολλῶν μετέχοντα τόδε ἢ τόδε ἢ ἀμφοτέρα ἢ πολλὰ ἐστί, τὰς αὐτομετοχὰς εὐρήσεις τοῦ εἶναι πρῶτον αὐτὰς μετεχούσας καὶ τῷ εἶναι πρῶτον μὲν οὐσας, ἔπειτα τοῦδε ἢ τοῦδε ἀρχὰς οὐσας καὶ τῷ μετέχειν τοῦ εἶναι καὶ οὐσας καὶ μετεχομένας. Εἰ δὲ ταῦτα τῇ μετοχῇ τοῦ εἶναι ἔστι, πολλῶ γε μᾶλλον τὰ αὐτῶν μετέχοντα» (820b–c). This passage is of capital importance regarding the distinction between ontological integrity and its manifestation as causality. The distinction in question states that metaphysical (or theological) realism precedes any projection of it that sets initial conditions for immanence. Let us clarify, however, that under the literal meaning of the term, the principle does not participate in being, but constitutes first its active state and, subsequently, its manifestation. Thus, what is produced does not participate in being directly, but only through the mediation of the principle, a detail which, too, poses deterrent antibodies to pantheism. Let us add that the prepositional pronoun «αὐτο-» refers to the presence of the divine energies as archetypes and brings to our memory, at least expressively, the Platonic tradition.

¹⁹ See for instance, the first book of Proclus' commentary of Plato's *Parmenides*, where he discusses the One-Being as the theological-philosophical expression of the indefinite dyad, that is, of that unlimitedly manifested reality under the conditions set by the multiplying unity as self-referential and as self-expanding. In other words, he refers to the henads. For a highly historical and systematic view of the issue, see P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, 255–344. This study is quite important for the way in which one should elaborate the issues we are working on regarding their broader foundation during the period from the late Hellenistic times to the early Christian ones. Its intertextuality is such, in fact, that we can argue that it also shows the spiritual history of an entire cultural period. In fact, P. Hadot places with impressive precision the inclusion of the Platonic *Parmenides* in the meta-interpretive schemes of the Neoplatonists and the Christians.

Special approaches to Proclus' theory on the divine henads

Focusing on Proclus' general ontological foundations, we could contend that his theory of the henads expresses the conclusions that he reached after the systematic critical reconstruction of the positions of the earlier Neoplatonic philosophers—with the exception of his teacher Syrianus—regarding the ontological question of the philosophical-theological interpretation of the content and the relationships between the first two hypotheses of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*. This question deals with the ontologically possible and logically acceptable relations of the One-Good of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* with the multitude of the produced divine beings of the second hypothesis, according to his own meta-interpretation. For the Neoplatonic philosopher, the solutions to the question are found exclusively in the principles of the theory of the henads, the origin of which he places in Syrianus.²⁰ More specifically, Proclus places the theory of the henads in the stage of the apophatic first hypothesis of *Parmenides*, in which he has developed in a seminal and energetic way, in the sense of a somehow transcendent synthesis, the forms of the productive manifestation of the One-Good. In this way, he contrives to transform, using realities that he places in the henological-metaphysical framework of his system, the apophatic-theological content of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* into the affirmative-philosophical content of the second hypothesis—without however these predicates of the two hypotheses being applied with only one meaning. In his view, the second hypothesis remains initially theological. With this transformation, the Neoplatonic thinker has the intention—which is dominant in every attempt he makes—to define the philosophical classical ontology through his theological metaphysics-henology, a goal which is connected, here as well, with the mystical-cult characteristics of his religiosity.²¹

His intention is specified by his insistence on elaborating in a strictly structured way the emanating-archetypal character of the henads in their relationship with the true beings. This elaboration gives him the opportunity to finally succeed in building the hierarchical system of

²⁰ See the introduction by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink to the third book of the treatise *Theologia Platonica* (XI–LII), where Proclus' relevant remarks are presented intertextually.

²¹ See the introduction and comments of H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink in the sixth book of the treatise *Theologia Platonica*, which is the book of the religious and theological foundations. See J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, 33–51 and 119–42.

the divine intermediate entities according to the norms of paces and structures, as inviolable requirements, defined by the state and position of the henads, which define the frame for the a priori plan and model for the development, function and meaning of the true beings. So, he presents the henads not only as the necessary intermediates between the One-Good and the true beings, but also as the self-founding and complete precise causes that intervene with the true beings that produce and compose the dialectical association of the 'one-multitude' in the form of the 'one being' of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*, categorical schemata which he has exhaustively elaborated in his relevant commentary. And by this perspective regarding the functionality of his theory about the divine henads, with justified terms and with no contradictions with respect to the ontological relationships, Proclus finally aims to bring into communication the theological-metaphysical content of the first hypothesis of *Parmenides* with the corresponding philosophical-ontological content of the second hypothesis, having in mind not to violate monism, which is not however inflexible but with multiplication projections.²²

Focusing further on how the divine henads are presented, we would also contend that in Proclus they are not so much divine hypostases, as they are the divine productive powers or energies of the One-Good, while they also express the function of the supreme ontological principles: πέρας-ἄπειρον (limit-infinity). With this property, they constitute the participated side of it as the supreme Principle. In addition, as we have already mentioned, they function archetypically with regard to the true beings and follow a hierarchical—or maybe successive—order, which is completely associated with the hierarchical—or perhaps successive, as a descending state compared to that of the henads—order of the true beings, so as the, according to the new interpretation, relation one-multitude of the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* to be articulated. In the hierarchical order of the intermediates-archetypes, the henads are placed at the beginning and define in completely strict ontological,

²² The following concise passage constitutes a key parameter for the foundation of monism: «Ὁ δὲ πρῶτιστος ἀριθμὸς (sc. αἱ ἐνάδες) καὶ τῷ ἐνὶ συμφυόμενος ἐνοειδὴς καὶ ἄρρητος καὶ ὑπερούσιος καὶ πάντῃ τῷ αἰτίῳ προσόμοιος» (*Theologia Platonica*, III, 12.21–23. See *ibid.*, I, 31.16–18). Attention is also required to the fact that apophatism covers the henads.

exclusively energy, principles what follows as completely defined realities.²³

With the term ‘henad’ being particularly frequent in his work, we identify intelligible, intellectual, supercosmic, intracosmic henads, as

²³ See for instance, the props. 125, 131, 140 and 150 of the *Institutio theologica*: «Πᾶς θεός, ἀφ’ ἧς ἂν ἄρξηται τάξεως εκφαίνειν ἑαυτόν, πρόεισι δὲ διὰ πάντων τῶν δευτέρων, αἰεὶ μὲν πληθύνων τὰς ἑαυτὰς μεταδόσεις καὶ μερίζων φυλάττων δὲ τὴν ιδιότητα τῆς οἰκείας ὑποστάσεως» (prop. 125, 110.29–112.13). “From that station wherein he first reveals himself every god proceeds through all the secondary orders, continually multiply and particularizing his bestowals, yet preserving the distinctive character of his proper nature” (E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 111). «Πᾶς θεὸς ἀφ’ ἑαυτοῦ τῆς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας ἄρχεται» (prop. 131, 116.15). ‘Every god begins his characteristic activity with himself’ (117). «Πᾶσαι τῶν θεῶν αἱ δυνάμεις ἄνωθεν ἀρχόμεναι καὶ διὰ τῶν οἰκείων προϊούσαι μεσοτήτων μέχρι τῶν ἐσχάτων καθήκουσι καὶ τῶν περὶ γῆν τόπων» (prop. 140, 124.1–3). ‘All the powers of the gods, taking their origin above and proceeding through the appropriate intermediaries, descend even to the last existents and the terrestrial regions’ (125). «Πᾶν τὸ προϊόν ἐν ταῖς θείαις τάξεσι πάσας ὑποδέχεσθαι τὰς τοῦ παράγοντος δυνάμεις οὐ πέφυκεν, οὐδὲ ὅλως τὰ δεύτερα πάσας τὰς τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν, ἀλλ’ ἔχει τινὰς ἐκεῖνα τῶν καταδεεστέρων ἐξηρημένας δυνάμεις καὶ ἀπεριλήπτους τοῖς μετ’ αὐτά» (prop. 150, 132.1–4). ‘Any processive term in the divine orders is incapable of receiving all the potencies of its producer, as are secondary principles in general of receiving all the potencies of their priors; the prior principles possess certain powers which transcend their inferiors and are incomprehensible to subsequent grades of deity’ (133). S. Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, 155–7, referring to passages from *De divinis nominibus* (817c, 820b), argues that in their content the Christian God of Dionysius is presented both as the cause of ‘procession’ and as equal to their content, stressing that these two versions are mutually exclusive. According to the scholar, the God of the Areopagite writings goes beyond the ‘processions’ and coincides with them in terms of their productive-archetypal references. Then, pointing out the presence in the Areopagite work of the theory of ‘unparticipated-participated-participating’ and discussing the identity of God with his ‘processions’, he contends that Dionysius hints at a structural analogy between God and the scala naturae or a penetration of the levels of the produced reality in the divine nature itself. Since according to S. Gersh each level of creation is defined by the possession of a special predicate (as expressive of a ‘procession’), God himself includes a similar hierarchy of terms. Next, S. Gersh argues that we should reject the distinction between the divine essence and the divine energies. And this, because such a distinction does not exist in Athenian Neoplatonism, which is, in his opinion, the source of Dionysius. According to what we have examined, we believe that S. Gersh’s views on God’s causal relationship with his ‘processions’ and above all on expressing an intense skepticism about the distinction between divine essence and divine ‘processions’-energies in the Areopagite texts requires a new approach of the topic. In both *De divinis nominibus* and *De mystica theologia* Dionysius clearly distinguishes the essence of the One from his energies and obviously absolutely from the products of their productive manifestation. Besides, we do not consider that the argument that this distinction is absent from Athenian Neoplatonism is sufficient, in which the above distinction is not absent, with the above-quoted passages of Proclus validating this position. Why should we not take into account that in the Christian tradition from the Cappadocian Fathers up to the fifth century the essence-energy distinction is indisputable? And it is beyond any doubt that Dionysius moves strictly in the line of his tradition and elaborates more thoroughly the essence-energy distinction, to emphasize, among other things, his explicit opposition to Neoplatonism. However, we should not overlook that Gersh, in the wider relevance of the above references, has carried out an examination of the issue in question with exhaustive historical and systematic approaches, both based on the texts of Neoplatonism and those of Eastern and Western Christianity. Our assessment is that what is included on pp. 152–190 offers multiple challenges for further research discussions, which must include the linguistic analysis of the relevant sources. Finally, on the analogy between God and the scala naturae, see the study of Vladimir Lossky, ‘La notion des “Analogies” chez Denys le Pseudo-Aréopagite’, *Archives d’Histoire Doctrinale Et Littéraire du Moyen Âge* 5 (1930): 279–309.

well as henads with other predicates and names. In short, in each order of all that exists in a hierarchy, there is a leading henad, which, due to the results it causes, may internally be (self-) doubled. In addition, the term is attributed to the One-Good, the source of the henads, which is characterized as «ένάς ένάδων» (the henad of the henads).²⁴ In order to avoid the danger of removing the ontological principles of unity and continuity and, by extension, dualism, Proclus never ceases to highlight the henads as the uniform intermediates between the transcendent-unmixed One-Good and the produced entities. Multiplication does not replace unity but it specifies it and reveals the infinite richness of the supreme Principle. At this point, actually, Proclus, in order to further confirm all these, introduces the principle of similarity, which determines the operating conditions of the descending process of 'procession' and the corresponding ascending process of 'reversion'. In the context of a general extension, since each productive cause of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides* produces, according to 'procession', the multitude of its effects by similarity, the One-Good, as the original cause, must analogously, and of course to the highest degree, produce a multitude most akin to nature with its special nature, that is to say, uniform. This position is also in accordance with the principle of the metaphysical ontogenetic process that the production of the similar precedes the production of the dissimilar. So, the One-Good, according to the type of this emanating necessity, cannot directly produce anything

²⁴ See for instance *Theologia Platonica*, I, 3, 15.5–6. We believe that the passage 1047.24–1049.37 from his commentary in Plato's *Parmenides* is particularly enlightening for this term, from where we quote the following: «Ταυτόν ἐστιν εἰπεῖν ἐνάδα καὶ ἀρχήν, εἴπερ ἡ ἀρχὴ πανταχοῦ τὸ ἐνικώτατον· ὥστε ὁ περὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς παντὸς διαλεγόμενος περὶ ἀρχῶν ἂν ποιοῖτο τὸν λόγον, καὶ οὐδὲν ταύτῃ διενήνοχε περὶ ἀρχῶν λέγειν εἶναι τὴν πρόθεσιν ἢ περὶ τοῦ ἐνός... ὥστε ὅπως ἂν λαμβάνοις τὸ ἐν, οὐκ ἐκβαίνεις τὴν τῶν ἀσωμάτων ὑποστάσεων καὶ τῶν ἀρχικῶν ἐνάδων θεωρίαν». 'It is the same to say "henad" as to say "first principle", if in fact the first principle is in all cases the most unifactory element. So anyone who is talking about the One in any respect would then be discoursing about first principles, and it would then make no difference whether one said that the thesis of the dialogue was about first principles or about the One... so that in whatever sense you took the One, you would not deviate from the contemplation of incorporeal substances and the ruling henads.' [G. Morrow (trans.) and J. Dillon (intr.-notes), *Proclus' commentary on Plato's Parmenides*, (Princeton-New Jersey: Princeton, 1987), 407]. It is also characteristic that Proclus, apart from the scattered use of the term 'henad' in his treatises, elaborates it in a particularly systematic way. We observe this elaboration mainly in props. 113 to 165 of the *Institutio theologica* and in the first six chapters of the third book of his *Theologia Platonica*, i.e. in two fundamental works of the Neoplatonic Metaphysics, without particularly important differences between them. We can argue that the above systematic elaborations work mutually complementarily and constitute a coherent and complete theory, of exactly the same texture as the realities to which it refers.

other than the henads, which Proclus presents as having a direct ontological affinity with it and similarity—but not identity, relying on how they manifest—of properties with its transcendent nature. And let us note—as it has already been shown—that in the literal sense the henads are not produced realities but direct emanations of the supreme Principle, with the strictly defined cause-effect relationship having no application here. In fact, if we approach the issue more openly and we do not accept hierarchies between the One-Good and the henads, we could contend that their relationship is reduced to the perspective of distinctions within one and the same reality, initially distinct and separated in relation to the true beings, that is, with respect to its manifestation in relation to its products.²⁵

And regarding the prospect of ontological plenitude, we could point out the following: since every produced cannot reverse, according to the process of ‘reversion’, to its previous ontologically superior level without the mediation of an entity similar to its nature, but also ontologically superior to it, the true or first beings, which do not present direct similarity to the One-Good, must reverse to it through the mediation of entities similar to their nature. In this case, the mediating function is once again exercised by the henads, which are in a mutual relationship with the true beings in terms of inviolable priority, by being the henads their direct productive-archetypal causes as well as the object of their reductive reference according to the principle of similarity, actually in its leading function. The same necessity of mediation is generalized and found in every ontological and functional communication of the transcendent One-Good with the becoming of the natural world, as it is exhaustively presented in Proclus’ commentary on the dialogue *Timaeus*.²⁶ Therefore, from every point of view, since they emanate directly from the One-Good, the henads belong in its transcendent level, while at the same time, by producing the true beings, they make

²⁵ We believe that the following passage is crucial for the question above: «ἕκαστος δὲ τῶν θεῶν ἓνας ἐστὶ καὶ ὑπαρξὶς καὶ ἀγαθότης... ἕκαστος δὲ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθότης αὐτάρκεια ἐστὶν ἢ οὕτως οὐ κατὰ μέθεξιν οὐδὲ κατ’ ἑλλαμψιν οὐδὲ καθ’ ὁμοιότητα τὸ αὐτάρκες ἔχουσα καὶ τὸ παντελές, ἀλλ’ αὐτῷ τῷ εἶναι ὃ ἐστὶ... αὐτοὶ δὲ οἱ θεοὶ δι’ ἑαυτοὺς καὶ παρ’ ἑαυτῶν αὐτάρκεις» (*Theologia Platonica*, I, 91.9–21). See the introduction (LII–LX) of H. D. Saffrey καὶ L. G. Westerink in the third book of *Theologia Platonica*. On the concept of self-sufficiency in Proclus, see J. Trouillard, *La mystagogie de Proclus*, 187–206, where intertextuality is pervasive, leading to strict conceptual categorizations.

²⁶ See the relevant table of references in the above introductory note by H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink (XV–XVII).

possible the connection of henology with ontology (both as metaphysics and cosmology). Therefore, they play a necessary epistemological role for any theoretical elaboration undertaken, which due to these relationships has the content of synthetic judgments—in our view since the beginning.

In this frame of determinations, Proclus' theory of 'unparticipated-participated-participating' plays a key role.²⁷ More specifically, Proclus' relevant references prove that one of his main goals is to preserve ontologically undiminished and unmixed the transcendent nature of the One-Good, without this meaning that this 'unnegotiable' 'separated' will not make possible its communication with the true beings. Under these terms and conditions, the reason becomes clear why the existence of a participated side of the One-Good is necessary, in which the true beings will participate and by which they will receive their immediate and complete ontological constitution, under the relevant procedures that are defined each time. So, it is absolutely right to contend that the unparticipated-unmixed One-Good, in order to accomplish, without violating the terms mentioned before, communication with the true beings, develops itself by multiplying and manifests its emanating range through the participated henads. Otherwise, not only the content of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*, but also the stage of the transcendent synthesis of the first hypothesis, which prepares the emanations in the field of the original 'remaining', would become ontologically impossible and functionally inactive.

But the following needs attention: although the noticeable difference between the One-Good and the henads is defined by the fact that the former is unparticipated while the latter are participated, this very participation is descending-giving, since the model is monistic. The henads are not participated by realities that already exist, because such a version would automatically lead to dualism, which would appear first and foremost at the metaphysical level. In other words, participation is defined first and foremost as a transition of their properties or function in new terms and then as utilization by those hypostases that are formed

²⁷ On the above theory, see *Institutio theologica*, props. 23–24, 26.22–28.20. For applications of the theory, see for instance Proclus, *In Parmenidem*, 745.41–746.39; 761.20–765.27; 1069.23–1070.15.

precisely on the basis of this gift. Exactly this utilization turns their participation into initiative.

So, regarding their ontological texture, we would say once again that the henads are not distinguished from the One-Good as different realities, but they are identified with the participated-causal presence of it as the supreme Principle. Let us note that in one case Proclus contends that the One-Good produces 'Being' having as an intermediate the power that attains to set a relationship, which is represented by the henad to which the production has been somehow assigned. This henad helps the transition from the state of 'remaining', immobility, and unchangeability to the gradual development of the multitude, as 'procession' that will bring on the metaphysical surface 'Being' (which corresponds to the intellectual gods) and the multitude of the particular—metaphysical—'beings'. The procedures are similar, though with the intervention of 'Being', in the rest of the ontological categories, for instance in the case of 'Life' (which corresponds to the intelligible-intellectual gods), which appears in the individual metaphysical 'lives', and in the case of 'Intellect' (which corresponds to the intellectual gods) and appears in the individual metaphysical 'intellects'. It should be noted that these are supreme ontological monads, each of which develops its own multitude, the parts of which participate in it or, perhaps more correctly, utilize its emanations.²⁸

Special approaches to Dionysius' theory on the divine 'processions'

In Dionysius' writings, there is no theory of henads. Here, the term 'henad', when it is used, refers to the divine unity and unifying property of the One-Good or triune God, as well as the unitary property of the angelic orders, and remains exclusively in these definitions. So, this term in none of its textual appearances expresses a specific divine reality that results from emanation. Dionysius, according to this conceptual limitation, expresses with the term 'henad' mainly the

²⁸ On the triad 'Being-Life-Intellect', see *Institutio theologica*, props. 101–103, 90.17–92.29. *Theologia Platonica*, IV, 10.21–13.18. The fact that the 'Being' corresponds to the intelligible gods, 'Life' to the intelligible-intellectual and 'Intellect' to the intellectual gods reveals a transition that can easily be characterized as a spiral. So, between the three terms there is a hierarchical gradation, but absolutely far from ontological divisions. The fourth, fifth and sixth books of the treatise *Theologia Platonica* confirm these in exhaustive detail.

manifestation of the unifying power of the divine unity—a function that is of course also present in Proclus' system— by which any differences, as further expressions of particularities, that exist in the space of the created world are transcended and lead to the states of mutual union and harmonious order. Do note here that we should not consider an ontological correspondence between Proclus' henads and Dionysius' angelic orders, except only in some cases in the external structural one. This relies on our previous discussion: Dionysius' orders, in contrast to the henads and the true beings of Proclus, are not ontologically autonomous and do not have productive capability, and certainly they are not divine realities. In other words, they lack any possibility for a self-constituted mode of existence. So, some common mediating functional properties between Dionysius' angelic orders and Proclus' henads do not mean ontological correspondences. Furthermore, these properties are possessed in a different way: the henads, which are found in the transcendent level of henology and constitute the requirements for the structure of ontology, possess their properties in a self-founding way and are related to what follows through them at the same time as they define it eternally. On the contrary, the angelic orders, as produced spiritual beings, receive the properties from the One-Good through the mediation of the productive-archetypal 'processions' and as intermediary entities pass them on exclusively as suggestions for modes of being, and exclusively under the terms of the created, to the following angelic and human orders. They just transmit values and behaviors in the sense of a whole of principles, which in the Christian context are characterized as soteriological.²⁹

²⁹ See *De divinis nominibus*, 589d: «Τὴν θεαρχίαν ὁρῶμεν ἱερῶς ὑμνουμένην, ὡς μονάδα μὲν καὶ ἐνάδα, διὰ τὴν ἀπλότητα καὶ ἐνότητα τῆς ὑπερφυοῦς ἀμερίας, ἐξ ἧς, ὡς ἐνοποιοῦ δυνάμεως ἐνιζόμεθα, καὶ τῶν μεριστῶν ἡμῶν ἑτεροτήτων ὑπερκοσμίως συμπτυσσομένων, εἰς θεοειδῆ μονάδα, συναγόμεθα καὶ θεομίμητον ἔνωσιν». Let us also note here that we cannot be led in an objective way to define the similar ontological information between Proclus and Dionysius, if we claimed that there is a relevance between the henads of the former and the angelic orders of the latter. Josef Stiglmayr, *Des heiligen Dionysus Areopagita angebliche Schriften über Gottliche Namen*, II, 2 (München, 1933), 10) has argued that such a correspondence exists. For his part, I. P. Sheldon Williams (see 'Henads and Angels: Proclus and the Ps.-Dionysius', *Studia Patristica* 11 (1972), 65–71) accepts that Proclus and Dionysius reproduced with their own changes Syrianus' theory of the henads, also emphasizing that the Christian theologian applies the ontological texture of the henads to his angels. These views, in our opinion, are incorrect, because, as we point out in the main text in general, they overlook both the specific ontological subjects and the type of functional structure of the hierarchies of Proclus and Dionysius. Having common functional properties in these two realities, such as that of illumination and purification, does not mean that a community like this could lead to their ontological correspondences. Moreover,

The term that puts divine immanence in the process of realization in Dionysius' texts is that of 'procession', which actually is used with a broader meaning with respect to the ontological interventions than that of Proclus, who mostly uses it as an expression of a methodological process with ontological support. In particular, 'procession' in the Christian thinker appears to develop on two successive levels, each of which with a clearly defined meaning: that is to say, it is first understood as the *per se* manifestation of the essence of the One-Good without a direct or necessary objective result, and then as the productive relationship of this manifestation with the created reality that emerges. In other words, its developmental manifestation as energy does not automatically mean a specific productive result, for in this case the supreme Principle would lack of its freedom. Initially it is 'separated' from the produced universe, which is not yet an ontological fact. 'Procession' is also not just a technical term, which would express only the specific function of the creative projection of the One-Good. It is a term with real content and describes the—personal in every respect—manner and kind of the energetic manifestation of God's transcendent essence, before, through that manifestation, he proceeds to create the supersensible (that is to say, the angels) and the sensible orders of the natural world. Typical of this real meaning of the term 'procession' is that Dionysius also uses its plural form, without however mentioning numbers. So, the fact that he refers to 'processions', which he characterizes with specific ontological terms, such as 'Being', 'Life', 'Intellect', 'Power', to describe the variety,

they possess these properties in a different way, the former autonomously and the latter differently determined. H. D. Saffrey is also moving in the same research direction. The emblematic scholar is based on a passage of the *De divinis nominibus* [892d: «καὶ τὰς τοῦ παντός τάξεις καὶ εὐθυμοσύνας εἰς τὸ οἰκεῖον ἀγαθὸν διασώζει (sc. ἡ ἀπειροδύναμος τοῦ θεοῦ διάδοσις), καὶ τὰς ἀθανάτους τῶν ἀγγελικῶν ἐνάδων ζωῆς ἀλωβήτους διαφυλάττει»] and is led to the conclusion that the Christian theologian identifies the angels with the henads or at least places them on the same theoretical line, but without stating on which specific worldview data he bases his version (see *Recherches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin*, 246–7). Apart from the rest of the arguments we have mentioned, we have to observe that the syntactic form of the Areopagite expression «ἀγγελικῶν ἐνάδων», invoked by H. D. Saffrey, cannot lead us to identify the angels with the henads. It should be noted, finally, that Maximus the Confessor (*Comments on the De divinis nominibus*, P.G.4, 360a) and George Pachymeres (*Paraphrasis on the De divinis nominibus*, P.G.3, 904a) in their interpretative notes on the Areopagite passage do not identify in the term 'henads' some specific divine entities. On the contrary, they consider it exclusively as a predicate attributed by Dionysius to the incorporeal and supersensible substances of the angels, who in the area of creation reflect further than the rest of the beings the divine unity, which also defines the greatest goal to be realized of the entire cosmic reality. However, we should note that E. von Ivanka in his texts referring to Dionysius the Areopagite in *Plato Christianus* is clearly more moderate with respect to the Neoplatonic influences that the Christian thinker has received

quality, and range of the creative function of the One-Good shows that there is no static monism. Its essence is manifested exclusively through these revelations—distinct with respect to its per se condition—which are constantly found in the state of the self-founding unity.³⁰

In Dionysius' writings the theory of 'processions' relies on the particularly emphasized ontological distinction between the 'unions' and the 'distinctions' of the One-Good. More specifically, it relies on the distinction between its fixed permanence in its transcendent unmixed essence and its external manifestations, which do not affect this permanence. In fact, on an epistemological level, we could argue that the distinction between 'unions' and 'distinctions' leads to both ways of knowing God, the apophatic and the affirmative Theology, with the latter, as describable after specific predicates, having specific limits with respect to the human capacity. But Dionysius does not remain in a simple initial distinction between 'unions' and 'distinctions'. He proceeds to a second distinction within each concept. The result has the following general order: 1) Unions: a. unions and b. distinctions and 2) Distinctions: a. unions and b. distinctions. It is, however, a structure with individual specializations in Dionysius' texts. As for our particular research objective, we will focus on what Dionysius defines as 'unions', in the area of unions, the transcendent level of 'remaining' and, in the area of distinctions, the productive level of 'procession'.³¹

³⁰ See for instance, *De divinis nominibus*, II, 5, 644a–b: «αἱ οὐσιώσεις, αἱ ζωώσεις, αἱ σοφοποιήσεις, αἱ ἄλλαι δωρεαὶ τῆς πάντων αἰτίας ἀγαθότητος, καθ' ἃς ἐκ τῶν μετοχῶν καὶ τῶν μετεχόντων ὑμνεῖται τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα... Ὑπέρκειται δὲ καὶ τούτων ἡ τῆς παναγίου θεότητος ἀμεθεξία τῷ μῆτε ἐπαφῇ αὐτῆς μείναι ἢ μῆτε ἄλλην τινὰ πρὸς τὰ μετέχοντα συμμιγῇ κοινωνίαν». This is a passage that can be placed in Proclus' theory of 'unparticipated-participated-participating', obviously without ignoring the worldview differences we point out between the two philosopher-theologians. With the exclusion of the «συμμιγοῦς» in fact, any possibility of pantheism is excluded. We should note that Dionysius, in contrast to his earlier and later tradition, does not particularly use the term 'energy' to characterize the divine 'processions'.

³¹ See the second chapter of the *De divinis nominibus*. On the topic about the divine unions and distinctions in Christian thought, see Melchisedek Töröner, *Union and Distinction in the Thought of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). This study covers the subject both historically and systematically and constructs with due precision how the transition from divine transcendence to creation takes place. Of course, the starting point of the study is Maximus the Confessor, but all the topics that belong to this theory throughout Christianity are illuminated. See also, Gregory Palamas, «Ποσαχῶς ἡ θεία ἔνωσις καὶ διάκρισις», in P. Christou, G. Mantzaridis, N. Matsoukas, B. Pseutogas (eds.), *Γρηγορίου του Παλαμά Συγγράμματα (Writings of Gregory Palamas)*, v. B' (Thessaloniki: Kiromanos, 1994). See Christos Terezis - Lydia Petridou, 'Ontological and gnoseological questions in Gregory Palamas according to the Christian theory on unions and distinctions', *Philotheos: International journal of philosophy and theology* 16 (2016): 85–98; Christos Terezis - Lydia Petridou, 'The theory on 'unions – distinctions' as a paradigm of Gr. Palamas' methodology', *ΣΧΟΛΗ: Ancient Philosophy and the Classical Tradition* 11/ 1 (2017): 117–32.

The distinction between the unions of the unions and the unions of the distinctions of the One-Good, between its 'remaining' and 'procession', corresponds to the distinction that exists between its transcendent and productive level. These distinctions inevitably follow the principle that the first term of each pair has ontological priority over the second—exclusively as a source and regardless of any temporal or causal succession. And this, because, according to the theological-monistic intentions of Dionysius, in his work what dominates is the projection of the unchangeability of the transcendent unity and simplicity of the One-Good, with production being an action of decision of the three divine Persons, which, even though it works in terms of eternity, it follows the transcendence mentioned above.³² Therefore, this sequence does not define a hierarchy—since the divine intention exists in a self-founding way—but a non-chronological succession, for it refers to the emergence of a new reality that does not exist in a self-founding way.

So, in his insistence on setting a clear limit between the ontological levels, which are respectively expressed by the unions of unions and the unions of the distinctions of the One-Good, we find Dionysius' intention to distinguish the essence of the supreme Principle from its 'processions' really and not conceptually or nominalistically. In particular, Dionysius aims with this distinction not only to define the causal scheme of the starting point, the way and the content of the productive movement of the One-Good towards the multitude of beings, but also—and above all—to keep its essence ontologically undiminished and unmixed. So, he places the 'processions' between the super-essential One-Good and the beings under production, in this way avoiding pantheism, or a pyramidal and uniform development of the ontological system. Having in mind exactly this intention, we see in his texts that he characterizes the 'processions' as wills or distinctions or energies of the essence of the One-Good, each of which with its intermediate function also expresses the type of its externalization and productive movement towards everything that is subject under the creative prospect. In fact, by having a volitional character, that is, by expressing and not by constituting

³² See *De divinis nominibus*, 640b–644b. See also, Otto Semmelroth, 'Gottes geeinte Vielheit. Zur Gotteslehre des Ps.-Dionysius Areopagite', *Scholastik* 25 (1950): 389–403. Piero Scazzoso, 'La teologia antinomica dello pseudo-Dionigi', *Aevum*, 49, 1/2 (1975): 1–35. In both articles, the Christian teaching on the divine is precisely delineated against national readings.

the essence of the One-Good, what Dionysius points out is that the 'processions' do not mix it with its productive results.

However, although the 'processions' are the productive powers of the One-Good and only these are participated by the produced beings, this does not indicate that they mix themselves with their products. Do note that the term mixture appears only in dualistic systems, where participation means two kinds of acts, the ascending and the descending, which require participating according to the ontological facts of the two contracting factors. With this position, Dionysius totally rejects any version of production as a direct manifestation of the essence of the One-Good, as an emanation of the divine being. Without actually ignoring the fact that Dionysius places the possibility and function of the productive and final cause exclusively to the completely hyper-being, we have to accept the 'processions' in order to understand how the states of 'separated' and 'unseparated' of the transcendent world are defined, a distinction that we also see in Plato.³³ Dionysius adds to this distinction a clear Christian meaning. So, the 'processions' being the volitional productive powers of the One-Good—which contribute, as a somehow divine multitude, to the ontological foundation of all that exists and constitute the terms and the way for the transition from the uniqueness and simplicity of the transcendent to the articulated in distinctions multitude and in the infinite in number variety of the produced beings—adds a strictly personal orientation to the terms of causality. In this way, it forms a world a becoming that is totally defined by teleology, which not only justifies but also gives meaning to the manifestation of the productive and paradigmatic cause.³⁴

³³ For instance, we should note that Plato deals with the subject in question in the dialogues of *Phaedo*, *Timaeus*, *Parmenides*, and *Philebus*, with special perspectives in each topic. However, his main goal is to highlight the encounter of the metaphysical world with matter in dialectical terms, which he believes manifests itself through formative incarnations. But it needs to be pointed out that in no reference does he move away from dualism.

³⁴ For a highly systematic discussion of this topic with strict thematic categorizations, see B. Brons, *Gott und die Seienden...*, 175–210. In these pages we find an impressive intersubjectivity and intertextuality. In fact, special attention has been paid to the distinction between divine causality, which is not accompanied by its providence and that which operates under such an accompaniment. Also, the scholar, after pointing out certain difficulties regarding the precise understanding of the positions of Dionysius, introduces into the discussion the issues of apophatic and affirmative theology. In our opinion, however, in these pages one can find one of the most thorough approaches to Dionysius' theory of causality, and in fact with a very precise definition of the relevant concepts. Let us clarify that this teleological perspective is presented by Proclus in his related commentary to the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*. For his part, Dionysius has been clearly influenced by the theological School of Alexandria (headed by Athanasios the Great) and by the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory the Theologian).

To summarize: the 'processions' of the One-Good do not belong to the ontic created space and have not been produced out of nothing as new ontological realities, since, unlike the totality of the created world, they derive eternally from its transcendent essence and have an uncreated character. Even though we could characterize them as non-produced powers or energies of the essence of the One-Good, we should not ignore that they are distinguished from this essence. Furthermore, since they constitute its externalization without causing its ontological alteration, 'processions' belong to the area of Henology and constitute the productive-archetypal requirement of the content of Ontology. So, they are distinct in an indiscriminate way, while they are clearly distinct from their products. The fact that the divine essence does not diffuse into the created world, since the 'processions' are the providential or volitional manifestations of the One-Good, indicates that between the two worlds there is also the ontological category of otherness, not in the sense that God is other than the world but that the world is other than God. However, nothing similar happens within the divine relationships: although the divine essence is ontologically prior to the divine powers or energies exclusively as their immediate source, it does not relate with them in terms of otherness. So, these divine states-projections do not introduce an ontological category into the divine essence, since they are placed in its productivity and in this way they are identified, not inflexibly, with it. And of course, the 'processions' or 'powers' or 'energies' of the One-Good should not be confused with Proclus' self-constituted, which are gods that have great ontological initiatives.³⁵ In other words, they utilize with their own

³⁵ On the concept of 'self-constituted' in Proclus, see *Institutio theologica*, props. 40–51, 42.8–50.6. See E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The Elements of Theology*, 223–7. J. Trouillard, *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus*, 76–7. According to the Neoplatonic schoolmaster, the self-constituted are the divine entities that correspond to the categories of the second hypothesis of *Parmenides*. It should be noted that the most systematic Christian refutation of the theory in question has been undertaken by Nicholas of Methone (?–1165) in his treatise *Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology* and the props. 40–51, 48.22–55.26 [Athanasios D. Angelou (ed.), *Nicholas of Methone: Refutation of Proclus' Elements of Theology: A critical edition with an introduction on Nicholas' Life and works* (Athens-Leiden: The Academy of Athens-E. J. Brill, 1984)]. See Christos Terezis, 'Le libre arbitre chez Nicolas de Méthone', *Byzantion* LXVII (1997): 565–9, where some anthropological and ethical positions of Nicholas strictly consistent with the Byzantine teaching are examined and the following conclusions are drawn: a) Empirical beings are ranked among themselves according to the degree of their participation in the rational powers provided by God. b) The human conscience has the logical responsibility of the actions it chooses. c) Human freedom is the starting point of a personal dramatic adventure and constitutes the basis for the salvation or loss of the possibilities of life under their qualitative dimension.

ontological initiatives what is given to them by their causes, with the result that they also acquire autonomy of hypostatic function.

As a final remark, we could present the following relationship, which reflects divine successions not subject to time: the 'processions' constitute the natural manifestations of the One-Good without a necessary first productive result, and then they become the productive sources of beings. In this sense, they have a role in the emergence of a dynamocratic henological realism, without, however, being related to the One-Good under the terms of the pairs 'one-multitude', 'whole-parts' and 'genus-species'. So, by not being subject to a nominalist frame, they clearly are not the ontological determinations of the essence of the One-Good but exist in it in a self-founding way and, subsequently, they derive from it, in the sense of an unchangeable henological field, as its volitional manifestations. They describe not 'what the essence is'—this remains completely unutterable—but 'how it is manifested' through them that are scaled from the most general to the most partial, having as a criterion for this distinction only their immanent presence and their results, since in the field of Christian henology there is no hierarchy.

Conclusions

Based on what we have elaborated, we could first and foremost contend that, although both the thinkers support without negotiations the system of monism—that is, matter in both of them does not exist by itself, as for example happens in the Platonic dialogues, and especially *Timaeus*, but it is produced. We clearly face two different worldviews, each of which with a particular structural foundation. The fact that Proclus chooses to construct his theory of the intermediates in a polytheistic system with individual autonomies and self-actualizations, while Dionysius in a strictly monotheistic one, where autonomy is self-founding and self-actualization has no place, is the factor that reveals two systems that are, at least, in some structures—not negligible ontologically and theoretically—explicitly incompatible. This detail is quite important and highlights the major difference between them: for Proclus the henological multitude is inexhaustible in determinations and autonomies, with the hierarchical structure being pervasive in all

the fields of metaphysical evolution, while for Dionysius it is structured in terms of non-hierarchical presence from the beginning, which will establish hierarchies only with the development of the natural world. However, we can summarize some common points as follows:

- i. The self-founding unity of the supreme Principle is preserved in both, despite the introduction of the concept of 'multitude' into the metaphysical or henological level, for Proclus with the henads and for Dionysius with the 'processions'. In a way, a dialectic synthesis between parmenidism and heraclitism is found in both of them. This is a composition that for the system of Proclus has been exhaustively highlighted by Alexandre Kojève in his great study *Essai d'une histoire raisonnée de la philosophie païenne III La philosophie hellénistique les néo-platoniciens* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).
- ii. Both the henads and the 'processions' capture the inner ontological richness of the One-Good and are characterized for their unity, which, however, in Proclus becomes particularly complicated in terms of the specialization it will manifest.
- iii. Both the henads and the 'processions' shape the conditions for the production of the natural world and each one takes a leading role in this process with the special ontological property that it receives from the One-Good.
- iv. Both the henads and the 'processions' express the emanating-productive side of the One-Good and therefore they are the only ones that are participated regarding their immanently functioning properties by the produced beings, with participation referring first of all to the way in which a world not initially existing is created.
- v. Both the henads and the 'processions' preserve their transcendence but are also considered, from a point onwards, to be the productive and final causes of the natural world. We need to mention as well that the natural world is considered to be the realization of beauty, which is also granted from above, which means that a discussion for an artistic-aesthetic approach of Ontology is possible but not of a neutral formation of it. Proclus discusses this view in his commentary on the Platonic dialogue

Timaeus, while Dionysius covers this in the fourth chapter of his treatise *De divinis nominibus*.

vi. Both the henads and the 'processions' receive names that describe how they are manifested, at a difference to the essence of the One-Good, which is not directly manifested and receives no predicate. It should be noted that we could discuss the ontological relevance of the One-Being of the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides* in a special way for each thinker. With the clarification that Being is not only a procession or an ontological category, but that reality which makes possible, functioning as mandatory, the manifestation of the rest. Under the permanent condition, of course, that Dionysius speaks of a direct creation of the natural world, while Proclus speaks of a world mediated by divine entities or by a multifactorial metaphysical world. From an open point of view, we could assume that both with the "processions" of Dionysius and with the henads of Proclus, the pair 'one-indefinite dyad' of Plato's unwritten teaching comes to the fore, with the two terms showing the dialectics between the one and the multitude before the natural universe was even constituted, and indeed completely far from any perspective of otherness between them.³⁶

³⁶ For a quite thorough approach of this teaching, see the really historically important monograph of Léon Robin, *La Théorie Platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d'après Aristote* (Hildesheim: Edité par Olms, 1963). It is a study which penetrates the "marrow" of the Platonic Academy and the Aristotelian Lyceum and highlights the truly cosmogonic philosophical and scientific (and to some extent theological) upheavals which arose during the 4th century BC. and sealed the later developments, whose first exponents were the representatives of Middle Platonism and Plotinus. Proclus deals with this issue in terms of its foundations mainly in his commentary on the Platonic dialogue *Parmenides*, while in Dionysius we do not find a similar theoretical concentration.