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ASTROLOGY IS TO THEURGY
WHAT ASTRONOMY IS TO THEOLOGY
IN LATE ANTIQUE PLATONISM

Remarks on Proclus's theurgy

It is necessary that I speak astrologically about the rising and the setting of the Sun and the stars ... to exhibit publicly all the constellations of the zodiacal wheel ... whose names are this: Ram, Bull, Twins, Crab, Lion, Virgin...

Proclus, *Ouranodromou*, f. 11.

the wisdom of the Chaldeans, a polytheist and singular human group, they are full of piety and practice astrology more than anyone

M. Psellus, *Scripta minora I*, 446, 8-10.

Chapter XI, book 1, of Lynn Thorndike's monumental study *A history of magic and experimental science* (1923) is dedicated to "Neoplatonism and its relations to Astrology and Theurgy". In this brief chapter of his groundbreaking work, Thorndike highlights what is now fully recognized, that is, the intense interest of Platonists of Late Antiquity regarding the *sacred arts*, which, however, are labeled by Thorndike as "the occult" ("the Neo-Platonists were much given to the occult"¹). This is a serious distortion, which, while it has been corrected, it is still present today. Platonists are presented as intellectual dabblers; philosophers with an exotic interest in superstitious techniques.

Of course, things have changed a lot in academic research regarding platonic theurgy, one hundred years after Thorndike's work. No longer seen as an aberration unworthy of philosophers, theurgy is now

1 Lynn Thorndike, *A history of magic and experimental science*, p. 298.

understood as a complex and sophisticated philosophical conception that brings together metaphysics, ethics, cosmology, psychology, epistemology, and more.² Nonetheless, when it comes to astrology, the Platonist's notions about it are usually ignored, research focusing on a far narrower conception of astrology, as that practiced by the professional astrologers of the time, limited to being a technique. This seems to be reflected by the histories of ancient astrology where, while in some cases -if mentioned at all- they mention the Platonist's interest in the discipline and the heavy criticisms they throw at professional astrologers, they are not considered seriously as astrologers themselves, as experienced practitioners.³ To put it succinctly, it seems that astrology's place in Platonism has not

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- 2 Knippe affirms that a “deadly blow” has been dealt to the notion that Platonists interests in rituals was an escapist degeneration on their part, falling into the irrationality of occultism: “the major changes that have taken place in the scholarly approach to theurgy since 1963 might be summarized as follows: theurgy, and the committed embrace of ritual in entails, is now seen as deriving from articulate philosophical positions, consequently, the place of theurgy as a genuine expression of Platonist thought has been re-evaluated; in turn, this has led to a treatment of theurgy as a specific phenomenon to be understood in its own terms rather than as another manifestation of late-antique ‘occultism’; theurgy is now generally studied separately from the nebulous underworld of ‘magic’: *pace* Agustine, few scholars today would contend that to describe ‘theurgy’ as another form of *goeteia* is helpful in anyway”. Knippe, “Recycling the Refuse-Heap of Magic: Scholarly Approaches to Theurgy since 1963”, 343. For “occultism” as a cultural category, see Micea Eliade, *Ocultismo, brujería y modas culturales*. For theurgy as an esoteric practice of Late Antiquity, root of “western esoterism”, see Karen-Claire Voss & Antoine Faivre, “Western Esotericism and the Science of Religions”. Regarding the notion of esoterism in the study of ancient religions, see also García Bazán Francisco, *Aspectos inusuales de lo sagrado*, 103 ff.
- 3 Something similar seems to happen around the figure of Ptolemy, an astronomer/astrologer very much appreciated by the late Platonists. Since he was not a professional astrologer, then he is considered by some, only a theoretical astrologer, as if he could not be a practicing astrologer only because he did not dedicate professionally as an astrological consultant and teacher like his contemporary Vettius Valens, for example.

been fully appreciated up to this day.⁴ However, considering the central role astronomy has in platonic theology, we may appreciate the central role astrology has in theurgy, thus, in Late Antiquity Platonism; both a mystical or soteriological, contemplative role and a practical one since the astrological correspondences (between stars and diverse substances) articulate the whole of theurgical activities, as it happens in the *Greek Magical Papyri* material. All of this is more specifically clear or accentuated in Proclus, whose theurgy, we may say, is the most *Chaldean*, that is, astrological (Proclus himself associates the Chaldeans with astrology⁵). But things get even more complicated when we confront the fact that some scholars today, not only find it very hard to see the Platonists as astrologers, but they are seen as contrary to astrology; that is, as rejecting not only the practices of the commercial astrologers, their rigid fatalism and the poor comprehension they show about their art, but as also rejecting astrology itself, this being thought of particularly in the case of Plotinus.⁶

So, contrary to a wide assumption still made by many scholars today, based, for example, on the apparent rejection expressed in the *Chaldean Oracles* against astrology (frag. 107) -rejection

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- 4 See the provocative article by Francisco Lisi, “Astrología, astronomía y filosofía de los principios de Platón”. There is very important recent work done by scholars like Crystal Addey, Dorian Gieseler Greenbaum, Marylenn Lawrence, A. Kaniamos and Guisepppe Muscolino, which has resulted in very stimulating contributions and advancements in this regard.
- 5 As we will see, there are examples of this in *De Prov.*, in *In Tim.* and in *In Remp.* Tanaseanu-Döbler also underlines how Proclus himself favors the synthesis of mathematics with theurgy in questions astronomical and astrological, in relation to which he considers the Chaldeans as authorities. However, in her thorough study she does not pay much attention to astrology regarding theurgy. See *Theurgy in Late Antiquity*, pp. 203-204. The only comprehensive effort that I am aware of that touches specifically on the relationship of theurgy and astrology, is the very interesting article by Marilynn Lawrence, “Astral symbolism in theurgic rites”, which presents a clear and concise panoramic discussion about the place of astrology in late platonic theurgy; also showing how, in the end, this varies from author to author.
- 6 See, for example, Peter Adamson, “Plotinus on Astrology”.

which, in turn, is assumed to be shared unequivocally by the platonic theurgists-⁷ this paper attempts to address the problem of the place of astrology in late platonic theurgy, specifically, in Proclus's. In a rather brief sketch, it will be argued that it is a place that is far more important and central than usually acknowledged. The reason why astrology is thus understood to have such prominence is its ultimate metaphysical ground, which allows for an understanding of astrology, as an ethical instrument, as a contemplative tool of self-knowledge. The whole celestial ascent motive present in Platonism provides an ethical framework for the integration of astrology. According to platonic metaphysics, astrology maybe be understood as something far more complex and profound than as a technique to interpret celestial configurations; it is seen as the very dynamic nature of sensible reality itself, this way conceived as the paradigm of ritual practice (theurgy follows demiurgy⁸) and the reason why theurgical activities have to be done at the appropriate astrological time. This being the foundation of the correspondences used by the theurgists, as mentioned above, but also an understanding of astrology as a meta-philosophical language: it is the metaphysical language of reality itself and at the same time, practical metaphysics and theology that applies this analogical language.

Part of the context of Proclus's astrological theurgy is Iamblichus criticism of technical astrology, instead approving a theurgical astrology.⁹ In a similar fashion, Proclus will criticize the technical astrology of Ptolemy and Porphyry, following instead

7 For example, this is the view of Lewy, Saffrey, Majercik and Jhonston. None of them acknowledges a link between the *Chaldean Oracles* and astrology; some of them even deny it.

8 See *In Tim.*, III, 5 and III, 69. In *In Remp.* II, 118, Proclus refers to the true hieratic science, that which has its existence in the higher worlds, paradigm of the practice of the hieratic art by the human beings.

9 See the insightful study by Crystal Addey, *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the gods*; particularly ch. 7 (Divination and theurgy in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*); also by Addey, "Oracles, dreams and Astrology in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*". See also Gregory Shaw, 'Astrology as divination: Iamblichean theory and its contemporary practice'. See also M. Lawrence observations on Iamblichus'

the astronomy/astrology of the Chaldeans. The astrological technique to discover the planetary ruler of the astral chart of birth used by Platonists as a means to discover the *daímōn*, the tutelary deity leader of the soul, is one of the most important illustrations of the eminent place astrology has in platonic theurgy (at least from Porphyry and Iamblichus on);¹⁰ such a technique is taken by the theurgists beyond the conception and practice of astrology in a technical and discursive manner only.¹¹ However, in a wider sense, also part of the context is the actual recognition of the inseparability, in antiquity, of divination and magic, as it happens in the *PGM* (where the link between astrology and magic

astrological theurgy, in ‘Astral symbolism in theurgic rites’, pages 277-278.

- 10 Regarding the question of the *oikodespotés* or ruler of the astral figure, see “Porphyrii Philosophi, Introductio in Tetrabibulum Ptolemaei” ch. 30; Iamblichus’s *D.M.* IX; Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* III, 10; *Scholia* chaps. 2, 6 and chap. 36 of the *Elementa apotelesmatica* of Paulus of Alexandria, as well as ch. 40 of the *Commentary* of Olimpiodorus on Paulus (*Heliodori, ut dicitur, in Paulum Alexandrinum commentarium*). See also Rhetorius (a younger contemporary of Proclus), paragraph 33 of his *Compendium (Compendium astrologicum secundum epitomen in Cod. Paris. Gr. 2425 servatam)*, and Antiochus of Athens, *Thesaurus*, also paragraph 33. Cf. with the passages by Teucer of Babylon (influential in Porphyry), preserved by Rhetorius, on the interpretation of each of the planets as ruler of the geniture or astral chart; *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum* VII, pp. 213-224 (*Rhetorius de planetarum natura*). See also the notable, in depth study by Greenbaum, *The Daimon in Hellenistic astrology*.
- 11 That is, there seems to be a correlation between the criticism of technical divination and the criticism of the reductive exercise of philosophy as only an analytical activity of discursive rationality (*diánoia*), taking it beyond by Platonists, integrating it into intuition and inspiration (*nóesis; manía*).

is clear)¹², but which we can trace all the way back to Plato,¹³ as a directive for later Platonists. Again, that was also sanctioned by Iamblichus, for whom theurgy and divination (*mantikḗ*) overlap or identify in a sense.¹⁴ However, beyond Plato, the essential link between magical-religious practice and astrology can be traced to the Mesopotamian cultures. In Proclus's fifth century, we still find a living tradition of Hellenized Babylonian astrological ritual practice, as is the case of Hephaestion of Thebes, for example, an astrologer contemporary to the philosopher.¹⁵

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- 12 Recently, Sarah Iles Johnston has recalled to our attention that magic has always been related to divination in a fundamental way, a fact ignored by academic research of the xx century. Iles Johnston speaks of the PGM and theurgy as *divinatory magic*. See *Ancient Greek Divination*, c. 5, “*The Mantis and the Magician*”; specially pp. 13; 114 and 166-169. J. L. Calvo, comparing theurgic practices with those in the PGM, underlines that in the case of the last it is evident the intimate relationship between magic and astrology: “las operaciones mágicas están en todos los casos condicionadas por la posición de los astros, tal como las determina la astrología” (Calvo Martínez, ‘La Astrología como elemento del sincretismo religioso del helenismo tardío’, pp. 82 ss).
- 13 See *Leg.* XI 932e - 933d, where the true priest is the *mantis*.
- 14 *D. M.* III. Cf. Proclus, *Th. Pl.*, I, 25, 113, 6-10: τῆς θεωρητικῆς δυνάμεως, ἢ κρείττων ἐστὶν ἀπάσης ἀνθρωπίνης σωφροσύνης καὶ ἐπιστήμης, συλλαβοῦσα τὰ τε τῆς μαντικῆς ἀγαθὰ καὶ τὰς τῆς τελεσιουργικῆς καθαρτικὰς δυνάμεις καὶ πάντα ἀπλῶς τὰ τῆς ἐνθέου κατακοχῆς ἐνεργήματα (“the theurgic potency, which is higher than all temperance and human science, and it comprehends the good of divination, the purifying powers in the realization of the rites, and, in short, all those things as are the effects of divine possession”); my translation). See also Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 155, 15-25 for the relationship of interdependence between theurgy (*telestikḗ*) and divination; and *De Prov.* 39.
- 15 Erica Reiner refers to Hephaestion, a Greco-Egyptian astrologer roughly a contemporary of Proclus, as evidence of the continued vitality of Mesopotamian divinatory traditions, somehow influencing or still present in the development of late antique astrology; see *Astral Magic in Babylonia*, p. 79. See book III, 6-7 of his *Apotelesmatikḗ*, where Hephaestion gives different astrological indications about the propitious times for divination with the entrails of sacrificed animals, as well as instructions about the astrological conditions propitious for the founding of temples, the consecration of divine statues and ritual petitions in general.

The case will be made that Proclus astrological theurgy corresponds with his binary metaphysical model (henadology-ontology), which has an astronomical ground, where the planets are sort of sensible henads, a sensible expression of the gods or divine unities; so, astrology would be for Proclus something like applied henadology. The fragments *On the hieratic art of the Greeks* are illustrative in this case as well as regarding the celestial-terrestrial correspondences, central for theurgical practices. It is a text which has received rather little attention in proclean studies, somewhat strange considering the all-pervading presence of theurgy in Proclus, the philosopher whose death was signaled in the skies by a couple of solar eclipses.¹⁶

Proclus's hieratic astronomy: the government of the gods.

prior to them [Ptolemy and Hipparchus] the Egyptians made use of observations too, and prior by far even to them, the Chaldeans, and prior to their observations, they were instructed by the gods

Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 124.

Proclus's interest in astrology matches his vast and complex theological, metaphysical and scientific interests in astronomy.¹⁷ Unlike the astronomy of Aristarchus, Hipparchus, and Ptolemy, Proclus follows the astronomy developed by Plato in the *Timaeus*, but previously affirmed by the "Chaldaeans and Egyptians", which considers the divine intelligible causes of the heavenly movements.¹⁸

16 *Vita Procli* 37.

17 Cf. Plato's "astral theology", *Leg.* X. For Proclus's work as an astronomer, see the summary by Siorvanes Lucas, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, 262 ff.

18 Cf. *Hyp.* I, 1–3; Proclus, *In Remp.* II, 227, 23–235, 3 and Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 124–126. Several works on astronomy and astrology are attributed to Proclus, in some cases the attribution being considered dubious. See Rosán Laurence Jay, *The Philosophy of Proclus: The Final Phase of Ancient Thought*. 44–47. Both him and Siorvanes believe that the works on Ptolemy attributed to Proclus positively belong to him.

Like the Platonists that preceded him, Proclus sees the celestial ambit as a medium (*mésos*) between generated beings (*genētōn*) and the intelligible (*noētōn*).¹⁹ The celestial, in its turn, it is assimilated to the mathematical and related to the psychological; there, where the intelligible exists as images (*eikonikós*) and the sensible as paradigms or exemplars.²⁰ For Proclus, the planets are the cause of change in the corporal world, being also the causes of change of the seasons and the weather.²¹ According to the philosopher, the seven planets are living divine beings, whom he calls leaders (*hēgemónes*):²² “we shall say that each of the planetary spheres is a whole cosmos which includes many kinds of gods that are invisible to us, but in all this cases, the visible star has a leadership role.”²³ Planets are conceived by Proclus as the cosmic governors or rulers (*kosmokrátōres*, an astrological term), to whom a total but specific power has been assigned, each planet being the leader of an appropriate group of beings.²⁴ The planets as gods are called by Proclus protectors (*prostátais*) of the realm of generation in its totality.²⁵ They procure its fulfilment: “For the heavenly revolutions fulfill somethings for somethings, others for others, and they bring to completion one fabric from all entities, which contributes to the fulfilment of the universe”²⁶ Besides, their aspects and apparitions produce signs (*sēmeía*) of future events, comments the philosopher following Plato’s *Timaeus* 40c-d, where there seems to be a reference to Chaldean celestial divination -at least- according to Proclus.²⁷

So, for each planetary sphere there is a multitude of beings coordinated with the same while belonging to different levels and

19 See Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 150, 23-28.

20 Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 8, 15-20.

21 The astrological Aristotelian physics of Ptolemy, notes Siorvanes; *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, 267-268. Here Siorvanes refers to Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 122, 6-10; 119, 23-30; 124, 14-18 & 79, 15-19.

22 See Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 129, 9-14.

23 Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 131, 1-3.

24 Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 58.

25 See Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 34.

26 Proclus, *In Crat.*, LV (24, 14-16).

27 Proclus, *In Tim.* III 150, 21-151,9.

kinds.²⁸ As Siorvanes explains, we can appreciate how each planet, in virtue of its own existence, has or belongs to a henad while also participating of a true being; it has its own means of movement or soul, determined by a form while also having a body. In terms of notions, we may divide into two what for Proclus is the celestial compound object: a corporeal part and an incorporeal part, which includes the self-substantive unity, the intellect and the soul of the celestial. The corporeal and visible part constitutes the physical aspect of the planet; the incorporeal part constitutes its metaphysical aspect, that responsible for its action.²⁹ The celestial divine unity is the ultimate source of the power of the planet. It is in virtue of this unity that the celestial has the volition and potency to act; an activity channeled by the mediation of the non-physical levels. This is the way that the celestials are said to affect people, exercising providence over them as gods. Proclus calls their power “sovereign” (*archikḗ*) and “controller” (*kratikḗ*).³⁰ Thus, the planets, the cosmic gods, are like visible henads.³¹ Though theurgy in Proclus may be said to be astrological in a technical, secondary sense, primarily it is astrological in a metaphysical sense, the way it may be said that sensible, corporeal experience is the astrological phenomenology of the soul of the cosmos composed by the celestial spheres. Bodies

28 See Proclus, *In Tim.* III 58, 8-13; 151, 32-152, 2; 131, 10-18. See also Proclus, *In Remp.*, II 220, 11-221, 10.

29 Lucas Siorvanes, *Proclus: Neo-Platonic Philosophy and Science*, 271-272. Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* III 72, 19-21.

30 This concepts underlie Proclus’s observations regarding the moving divinity (*kinētikḗ theótēs*) found in each planet. Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 57, 17-20. Cf. *El. Th.* 120-122.

31 Being visible henads, visible gods, in this manner, we may say, they are a key aspect of Proclus’s henadology, which reverses or complements the top-down ontology that seems to place the henads far above in the metaphysical structure, since, in the divine unities the ontological distinction between the intelligible and the sensible collapses, the divine presence permeating it all, even the lowest substances like herbs and stones, on which ritual practice is founded. Therefore, the planets are like self-visible gods that unite everything in our world, unity being the central notion in this regard. For Proclus’s henadology, see Redondo, “Henadología y ontología, o los dioses y las formas: la metafísica binaria y erótica de Proclo”, and the precursor eminent work of Edward Butler.

are the results or effects (*apotelésmaton*) of soul's self-creative contemplation and portrayal in the astral dynamics which, according to a *Lógos*, mediates between the intelligible and the sensible; an analogical language, we mentioned above.³² Physical, natural reality, is the result of the astral cycles, hence astrology was known as ἀποτελεσματική (*apotelesmatikḗ*),³³ the science of the effects. Astrology affords a way in which a rite imitates the divine intelligible order expressed by the order of the celestial gods, integrating thus the ritual display into the cosmic harmony as an organic expression of it. Theurgists reciprocate natural entities whose living being is imagined or seen with thought as a natural hymn (ὕμνος φυσικός), like the lotus opening his petals like lips singing (ὕμνεῖν) to the rising sun³⁴. Proclus, with his presentation of the chains of orders that extend from the first to the very last beings, all bounded by the henads or gods who express their will through a heavenly *Logos* or celestial writing,³⁵ seems to echo very ancient Babylonian traditions, where the gods have in their hands ropes that bind under their command everything in the lower world.³⁶ Proclus employs

32 For Proclus, then, astrology as a technique employs an analogical language, derivative of its ontological reality as the metaphysical language that structures reality itself. In Proclus thought, the notion of analogy is central and quite complex. On the other hand, for him, astrological language, in both senses, metaphysical and technical, besides being analogical, following Iamblichus, is also symbolic and imaginative, poetic.

33 See Porphyry, "Porphyrii Philosophi, Introductio in Tetrabibulum Ptolemaei", 1.

34 The loose terms and sentences in Greek that appear in the text from here on belong to Proclus's *On the hieratic art of the Greeks*; translations are mine.

35 Like Plotinus before, Proclus conceives the stars as letters. See Plotinus, *Enn.* II, 3, 7, 1-15; III, 1, 6, 20.

36 It is interesting in this regard that the dictionary gives for σείρα: rope, chain, noose, bind. Regarding Babylonian celestial divination, see Francesca Rochberg, 'Heaven and earth. Divine – human relations in Mesopotamia celestial divination' and *The Heavenly Writing. Divination, horoscopy, and astronomy in Mesopotamian culture*. See also Erica Reiner, *Astral Magic in Babylonia*; also "Babylonian celestial divination", as well as N. Campion, *The dawn of Astrology*, chaps. 3 and 4.

the Homeric image of the golden chain that binds the totality of the cosmos together, to designate this way the diverse divine series, so that “the government of the gods extends from heaven as far as to the last of things”.³⁷

For the Platonists, the cosmos is the divine temple, adorned with an extraordinary altar, the celestial vault wherein are found the stars, statues of the gods whose eternal act of the creation of the cosmos is a ritual, led by the demiurgic hierophant; a theurgical act dedicated to the God of gods. The whole cosmos is an eternal liturgical activity; a universal ritual: astrology reveals this way its deepest dimension as a political project, as it adumbrates the practical possibility of a universal religion where different gods relate to different planets/henads, as in Proclus’s complex theological hermeneutics.³⁸ A cosmic religious law to be followed by the individual (ethics) and the community (politics: *the government of the gods*).³⁹ The whole of Late Antiquity’s Hellenic culture shares an astrological view of the world as permeated by a divine fire, by the potencies radiated from the Sun and the stars.⁴⁰ A common participation of all things in a celestial fire: an erotic principle of being, life and consciousness. Generalizing, we can say that during this age, astrological symbolism becomes a common cosmic vocabulary and a central motive of Hellenic culture, of its politics, science, art and religions as well as in magic and the mysteries. This expression of astral piety has been

37 See Proclus, *In Tim.* III 162, 1-20. Cf. with *Iamblichus, D. M.*, I 19. For Homer, see *Ill.* VIII 17-27.

38 See for example *In Tim.* III, 131-132. Here Proclus mentions that the books of the theologians and the theurgists are full of this god: planet correspondances.

39 See *In Tim.* 1, 4, 20-25, for “Socrates’s politics” assimilated to the celestial order (cf. *Rep.* 592b).

40 We find very similar visions regarding the celestial divine fire expressed in the *Chaldean Oracles*, the *Hermetica*, the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, the astrological literature (*Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*; Firmicus Maternus’s *Mathesis*), the Clarian oracle (Oenanda scription) and the *Theos Hypsistos* cult, for example.

called by some “astral religion”, to differentiate it from astrology, understood in the narrow, technical sense.⁴¹

Divination and theurgy: the negotiation of fate

All the hieratic works are based on the celestial-terrestrial correspondences, a theme that permeates the fragments *On the hieratic art of the Greeks*. As a symbol charged with divine presence, every terrestrial substance used in theurgical practice is the counterpart of a celestial element, which is in turn an intelligible expression originating with the gods. “In heaven are found the terrestrial celestially, according to cause and, reciprocally, in the earth are the celestial [things] in a terrestrial manner” (ἐν οὐρανῷ μὲν τὰ χθόνια κατ’ αἰτίαν καὶ οὐρανίως, ἐν τε γῆ τὰ οὐράνια γηϊνῶς).⁴² The palm tree resembles the sun in the same way that the sunflower and the rooster converge or are dynamically compatible (συμπεριπολοῦντα) with the luminary; the sun, the sunflower and the rooster moving together coordinately (συγκινεῖται); their lives being connected. It is sympathy that binds together all the orders of the cosmos (τάξιτιν, σειρῶν) which, presided over by the gods as their guides, stretch from the very first beings to the very last. *Sympátheia* as the bond between all things, articulates the correspondences among the

41 For José Luis Calvo, the “Astrolatría, Astrología, Magia y Religiones Místicas son, pues, los elementos básicos del sistema de creencias de la llamada época del sincretismo”, epoch which would extend from Hellenistic to Late Antiquity times. Calvo Martínez, “La Astrología como elemento del sincretismo religioso del helenismo tardío”, 60-61. Comparing astrology to Christian ecumenism, Otto Neugebauer affirms that “with the exception of some typical Mesopotamian relics the doctrine was changed in Greek hands to a universal system in which form alone it could spread all over the world. Hence astrology in the modern sense of the term, with its vastly expanded set of ‘methods’ is a truly Greek creation, in many respects parallel to the development of Christian theology a few centuries later.” Neugebauer, Otto, *A history of ancient mathematical astronomy*, 613. Cf. Mace Hannah, “Astrology and Religion in Late Antiquity”.

42 Proclus, “Peri tes hieratikes teknes” 148, 9-10,

different cosmic levels and the gods, applied by the theurgists in their activities; sympathy also expressed poetically as the bonds of Eros.⁴³ Angels, demons, souls, animals, plants, minerals, all share certain similar living properties, full of the breath (ἐμπνέοντας) emanating from the stars (φωστήρων ἀπορροίαις); properties which, while being analogously displayed in multiple forms, simultaneously through all the orders of the cosmos, have their unity in a god, all participating in the divine whose presence (παρουσία) embraces it all. “Thus all is full of gods” (Οὕτω μεστὰ πάντα θεῶν), repeats Proclus, after the sage Thales.⁴⁴

Notwithstanding this extraordinary vision of the cosmos where everything is united in harmony by a single bond, there is freedom for the human being to act in life:

Therefore one must not refer all events only to the order in the universe, as we neither attribute them all to our impulses, nor again deprive the soul of the power of choice, since it has its very being precisely in this, in choosing, avoiding this, running after that, even though, as regards events, our choice is not master of the universe.⁴⁵

We already pointed to the dynamic relationship conceived between theurgy and divination.⁴⁶ One necessarily implies the other, and this, in flexible ways, given a conception of fate as conditional:⁴⁷ for a negative forecast, theurgy may have a preventive value (*De Prov.* 10, 37-39). Divine providence integrates our free choices and actions. In

43 See Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 68-69, 10; also, *Orac. Chald.* f. 39. For *sympátheia* in Proclus, see *El. Th.* 97 y 123, 125 y 128.

44 Proclus, “*Peri tes hieratikēs teknes*”, 149, 28. Thales, A 22. For a fuller exposition by Proclus about the different chains, see Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 11, 9 ff. and III, 271, 1.

45 *De Prov.* 36; translation by C. Steel.

46 See above note 46. See also *In Alc. I*, 314, 15 ff. for a precise definition of the *mantis* and his activities, which imply the possession of knowledge (*epistēmē*) and something beyond it.

47 For the platonic notion of conditional fate, see J. Opsomer, “The middle Platonic doctrine of conditional fate”. As M. Lawrence rightly indicates, “The close relationship between providence and fate in Middle Platonism continues in the theurgic Neoplatonism of Iamblichus and Proclus”; see “Astral symbolism in theurgic rites”, n. 16, p. 285.

the case of the monography *On providence, fate and what depends on us*, it is clear that for Proclus there is a fluid and continuous relationship between astrology and theurgy; a dialogical relationship of interdependence, like that between diagnose and remedy, since the planets do not produce inexorable results, but their patterns symbolize tendencies, inclinations, which, being foreseeable, then they can be anticipated:

The application of theurgy may dissolve the influxes that come down from harmful agents, using as co-operative powers the influxes of the agents that are beneficial to us, and the examination of the future plays an important role in the effects.⁴⁸

In this manner, theurgy has a practical advantage over philosophy:

The philosophic life, indeed, as he says [Plato], contributes; but in my opinion, the telestic art is most efficacious for this purpose; through divine fire obliterating all the stains arising from generation, as the Oracles teach us, and likewise everything foreign, which the spirit and the irrational nature of the soul have attracted to themselves.⁴⁹

Associating astrology with the *hieratiké téchnē*, gives Proclus a method to seek the most propitious moments to realize the different rituals like sacrifices and prayers using the divine names.⁵⁰ For example, Proclus indicates that in the same way that the gods assign to the souls, according to the cosmic order, the remedies to their faults in the right moment, for their benefit, “so also godlike (*theoprepeís*) men subordinately aim (*stocházontai*) at the right moment (*toú*

48 *De Prov.* 39. C. Steel adds a note to this passage of his translation, referring to Psellus about the possible effect of theurgy to protect from sickness indicated by the stars. Psellus, *Philosophica Minora*, I, 3, 150-5 (Proclus, *On Providence*, 85 note 178). There is another interesting passage there, where Psellus also indicates that for “the Chaldean”: “the soul may also be purified by the use of stones, herbs and incantations” (CXXII 1131d-1132a. See pp. 134; 138, *Oráculos Caldeos*). In *De Prov.* 7, the experts on things divine referred seem to be the Chaldean astrologers, according to Proclus, *On Providence*, 75, note 37.

49 Proclus, *In Tim.* III, 300; translation by T. Taylor. Cf. *Orac. Chald.* f. 196.

50 See Proclus, *In Remp.* II, 344 ff.

kairou)". The discernment of the correct time is fundamental for the communion (*synousía*) with the good daimons, affirms Proclus; "different portions of time are suited to different activities", says the philosopher alluding to the appropriate cosmic cycles (*kósmou períodoi*).⁵¹

The theurgist as a cosmic human being: to light the heart as the Demiurge lights the Sun.

Hearken, you gods holding the helm of holy wisdom, who, having kindled an upward-leading fire, draw to the immortals human souls, who leave the dark hole behind, purified by the secret initiations of hymns.

Hymn common to the gods.⁵²

The totality of the experiences of the human beings are connected to the stars:

For individual souls that are being settled within it [the cosmos] are enlisted in the company of their guiding gods, and become worldly via their own vehicles, imitating their leaders, and the mortal creatures are fashioned and given life by the gods of the heavens... the human being is a miniature cosmos that contains partially all those things that the cosmos contains divinely and completely. For we are in possession of active intelligence, and rational soul that proceeds from the same father and the same life-giving goddess as the universe, and a vehicle of aether that has the same role [for us] as the heaven does [for the universe],

51 The complete passage is Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 121-122, 10; trans. O'Neill. See also Proclus, *In Tim. I*, 214, 7-11 and 215, 1-20, for the division of the times for prayer, corresponding to different astronomical cycles. These temporal cycles are seen as themselves divine. See Proclus, *In Tim. III*, 40-41 y 43, where we are told that given the divinity of the day and the night, the months and the years, the theurgist then have left for us congresses, invocations and telestic sacred laws to celebrate this.

52 Trans. Van der Berg R.M., *Proclus' Hymns*, IV, 1-7.

and an earthly body composed of the four elements – to these it is also *coordinate*.⁵³

By the end of his *Commentary on the Timaeus*, in another important passage where he develops on the theme of the human being as a microcosm, the philosopher makes an explicit link between the planets and the faculties of the particular souls of which the human beings participate:

Hence, also, some are accustomed to say, that his intellectual part is arranged analogous to the sphere of the fixed stars; but that of reason, that which is theoretic, is analogous to Saturn, and that which is political, to Jupiter. Of the irrational part likewise, the irascible nature is analogous to Mars; that which is endowed with the faculty of speech, to Mercury; that which is epithymetic, to Venus; that which is sensitive, to the Sun; and that which is vegetative, to the Moon. The luciform vehicle likewise, is analogous to the heavens; but this mortal body, to the sublunary region.⁵⁴

It is within the astral matrix of the cosmic soul that the human being develops, from being a new-born baby to reaching old age, all of his life is seen as a cosmic initiation that progresses in seven stages that correspond to the seven classical planets that conform the soul of the cosmos. “This is consonant (*sýmphōnon*) with the order of the universe (*táxei tou pantós*)”, says Proclus, while explaining the so-called *planetary ages* of the human being, an astrological notion that he presents in his *Commentary on the Alcibiades I*.⁵⁵ Our

53 *In Tim.* I, 5; trans. Tarrant.

54 *In Tim.* III, 355; trans. Taylor.

55 Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 196. The ascending order of the planetary spheres is the same as that that the soul traverses after death according to the narrative of the *Poimandres*, the first dialogue of the *Corpus Hermeticum*; see *C. H.* I, 25-26. In his commentary on the myth of Er, Proclus interprets astrologically the whole *Moirai* mythologem. See also Proclus, *In Remp.* II, 343, 4-5 y 318, 12 ff. where Proclus refers to the Chaldean and Egyptian astrologers who make predictions from genitures (*genéseis*) or natal charts. Also, in *In Tim.* III, 151, 1-5 Proclus talks about Theophrastus referring to the Chaldean astrologers who made admirable predictions of particular events.

birth situates us in the complex cosmic order, according to an end, which is envisioned as the return to the star from where we came.⁵⁶ For this, we have to deploy its particular trace, which we find in our very being, since souls, explains Proclus, “some are of the sphere of the Sun, some of the sphere of Hermes, some of the sphere of the Moon”.⁵⁷ Every soul, “even if (it) is full of the same reason-principles, possesses only one Form that differentiates it from others; for example, the solar Form characterizes the solar soul and, another (Form), another (type of soul)”⁵⁸: the planetary symbol of the henad to which it belongs. This is the reason of the conversion of the souls to the gods according to a union that is unique and indissoluble, like the celestial gods returning to the supercelestials, this, in turn, to the intellective gods and this to the intelligible gods, all of them in direct continuity, encompassing all in a ineffable, invisible way.⁵⁹ Chains of whole series where the conversion of the soul to the gods is guided by the daimon, the particular custodian of the soul. This guardians, says Proclus, “they rejoice in being called ‘Apollos’ and ‘Zeus’ and ‘Hermes’ because they represent the peculiar characteristics (*idiótēta tōn oikeiōn*) of their own gods”.⁶⁰ The relationship of the daimon with the planetary symbol of the henad to which it belongs, it is obviously connected with the astrological techniques to determine the daimon in the astrological chart of birth, the planetary tutelary deity.⁶¹ It is the daimon that moves, controls and ordains all of our experiences, guiding the whole of our life. It is a guide that we have the responsibility to be able to follow, since:

56 Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 41d-42b.

57 Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 113, 5-10. Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.*, III, 276, 22-30 and I, 111, 3-9.

58 *Chal. Phil.* V (14-16); trans Spanu. See *Th. Pl.* I 3, 15 ff. and III 18, 64.; cf. Proclus, *In. Parm.* 948, 12-30 and Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 68-69, 10. Cf. *El. Th.* 139.

59 See Proclus, *In Tim.* III 162, 1-20.

60 Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 69.

61 See above note 10 for the astrological technique to determine the daimon. For Proclus on the cosmic notion of the *despotés*, see *In Tim.* II, 118, 10-119, 5.

The life according to the daimon is blessed and happy (*tò katà daimona zēn makárion einai kai eúdaimon*). For the class of daimons exists near the gods and is of the utmost service to souls for the divine life; through it lies the ascent to and union with the gods (*ánodos kai he synaphē*).⁶²

To refer to the experience of union with the divine, Proclus uses the image of the ignition of light, of fire, similar to the ones found in the *Chaldean Oracles*. Divinization resembles to lighting; to being inflamed and illuminated by the divine fire.⁶³ Inspiration is envisioned like sparks that seek to ignite us. Like when Proclus, with his heart ignited by the gods, out of nowhere –says Marinus–, uttered in a loud voice an inspired poetic improvisation: “My soul has come, breathing the might of fire, and, opening the mind, to the aether in a fiery whirl, it rises, and clamours immortally for the starry orbits.”⁶⁴ In the same way that the demiurge has lighted the fire of the Sun (*Tim.* 39b), for theurgists and astrologers analogue to the heart,⁶⁵ so do the gods light the divine fire in the heart of the theurgist that burns in the flames of the *mania*, the fire of divine love.⁶⁶ All the different orders and series of the astral chains revel themselves as orders of eros: it is love that moves the stars, the whole cosmos, as well as the soul’s aspiration for the fountain of that love, for the beloved. He by whom the solar fire “was established at the site of the heart”. This way, “existing as a radiant fire”, “taking wing, the soul of mortals

62 Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 93, 20; trans O’Neill. See also Proclus, *In Alc. I*, 77-78 ff.

63 Cf. Proclus, “Peri tes hieratikēs teknes”, 149, 1-149. Here, union with the divine is preceded by a warming or preparation of a material capable of being ignited by the loving gods when their fire is transmitted (*πυρρὸς διάδοσις*). For the image of the ignition, see Proclus, *In Alc.* 33, 11- 16 and Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 104. Cf. *Orac. Chald.* 57-58, 60.

64 *Vita Procli* 28; trans. Edwards.

65 For the correspondence Sun: heart, see Vettius Valens, *The Anthology* I, 1, and Ptolemy, *Tetrabiblos* III, 12. See also Van der Berg R.M., *Proclus’ Hymns*, “Hymn to Helios” (5-6): “Hearken: for you, being above the middlemost seat of aether and in possession of the very brilliant disk, the heart of the cosmos”; cf. *Orac. Chald.* 58.

66 For the equation of fire with love, see *Orac. Chald.* 39, 42-43; *In Alc. I*, 30-31, 10 and 31, 15-32, 12.

will press God into itself. And possessing nothing mortal, the soul is completely intoxicated by God. Therefore boast of the harmony under which the mortal body exists.”⁶⁷

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67 *Orac.Chald.* 58, 96 and 97; trans. Majercik.

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