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Reading Proclus and the *Book of Causes*, Volume 3

Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition

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Reading Proclus
and the *Book of Causes*,
Volume 3

On Causes and the Noetic Triad

Edited by

Dragos Calma



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Notes On Causes and the Noetic Triad

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Dublin

This third and final volume gathers the Proceedings of the conference dedicated to the history of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* and of the *Book of Causes*, which was co-organised (within the framework of the project LIBER ANR-13-PDOC-0018-01) with the much-regretted Marc Geoffroy in Paris, on 14, 15 and 16 April 2016. I am most grateful to the collaborators of this volume, and of the others as well, who manifested patience and understanding, waiting, in this case, for five years to see their contributions published. I am most grateful to those who accepted to join the volume, although they did not (could not) deliver them in person: Levan Gigineishvili, Jonathan Greig, Ezequiel Ludueña, Bethany Somma, Ilaria Ramelli. The final preparation for the publication was accomplished as part of the larger ERC project NeoplAT ERC_CoG_771640.

It is my renewed pleasure to thank the institutions that served as the venue for this conference, hosting over sixty scholars for seven days, all devoted to study the reception of Proclus and the *Book of Causes*: École pratique des hautes études, Équipe “philosophie arabe” of the Centre “Jean Pépin”—CNRS (UMR 8230), Laboratoire d'études sur les monothéismes—CNRS (UMR 8584), Labex haStec (Laboratoire européen d'histoire et anthropologie des savoirs, des techniques et des croyances), Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes—CNRS, Centre “Pierre Abélard”—Université Paris Sorbonne. The ANR project LIBER which I directed between 2013 and 2016 at the École pratique des hautes études enabled me not only to learn from the extraordinary colleagues and masters that accompanied this project, but also to gather energy, resources and ideas until this day—and even for a longer period. The same ANR project and the warm reception from Brill, notably through Jennifer Pavelko, enabled me to publish the three volumes through Open Access, and assure their wide diffusion as an act of gratitude for the publicly funded research projects by the French Government.

May Liz Curry, who helped me considerably in preparing this volume, find here my most sincere and renewed gratitude, and Robert Berchman and John F. Finamore for accepting the publication of the three volumes in their series.

Marc and I invited our colleagues to study two major doctrinal topics, causality (notably on One and participation, and on causality and free will) and the triad being-life-intellect, but each author freely chose their research theme. In

our eyes, these were the most relevant themes around which the fortunes of the *Elements of Theology* and the *Book of Causes* evolved.

Jan Opsomer studies Proclus' *Elements of Theology* from the point of view of its literary genre and emphasizes two characteristics: the impersonal style and the lack of appeal to authority. "Στοιχειώσεις do not narrate the discovery of truths, they rather secure results" (p. 21), consisting in assumptions, theorems and proofs. They are equally self-contained inasmuch as they do not appeal to knowledge previously acquired in another discipline such as, for instance, the fruits of exegesis. As Opsomer shows, the reader of the *Elements of Theology* gradually discovers the One, that it is and what it is (e.g. it is the Good). The knowledge derived from the Στοιχειώσις is a form of science (ἐπιστήμη), superior to *doxa* yet inferior to intellectual contemplation of Forms and to the unitary grasp of the Good (through the most divine capacity of the soul). And dialectic, which is a mental preparation or training, is the highest of sciences and the truest science. Opsomer argues that the *Elements of Theology* seems to indicate that for Proclus dialectic is "a supreme science that provides principles to the other sciences, but there is no superordinate science that can do the same for dialectic" (p. 32).

Carlos Steel examines the original Proclean theme of the self-constitution of beings (αὐθυπόστατα), and challenges the claim that the author of *Book of Causes* transformed it into a monotheist and creationist metaphysics. Proclus' theorems 40–45 argue that the procession of incorporeal substances, such as intellect and the rational soul, are not simply the product of a creative action, but also, unlike corporeal substances, are the result of their own constitution into being. This thesis, which contradicts any monotheist creationism, is not only present but is developed in propositions XXIII(XXIV)–XXVIII(XXIX) of the *Book of Causes*. These propositions, and two additional interventions in the Arabic manuscripts, show that the author wanted to emphasize that a self-constituting substance is both its own cause *and* its own effect: in this particular case, causes *are* the effects, and as such the self-constituting substance is always connected to its cause because its being *is* its cause (without thereby becoming a creative cause). The Latin translation significantly changed the initial content of the proposition. Indeed, where Proclus' intends to establish an intimate and indissoluble connexion between self-constituted substances with their own cause, i.e. their own being, through which they constitute themselves, the Latin *Book of Causes* establishes a relationship between the self-constituted substances with their *superior* cause, i.e. the first cause, through which they come into being (through which they are created).

Anca Vasiliu compares, in a rich contribution, Victorinus, Sallust and Proclus (together with Plotinus and Porphyry) on causality. Vasiliu argues that the concept of first and unique cause presupposes a totality understood as a hierarchical structure of causes deriving one from another according to an ontological (not topological) distinction. Totality supposes on the one hand a unity in respect to the One, and on the other hand a structure composed of degrees of perfection (the *henads*) where each distinguishes from the One. According to Vasiliu, it is precisely through this double meaning of totality, as unity or as assembly of beings, that one can understand the One as cause (i.e. presupposing a certain form of action) and not principle (i.e. presupposing immobility and impassibility). Vasiliu claims that the first cause is responsible only for the return of the effects that derive from it, because while proceeding from the cause, the effect always remained in the first cause. The first cause is not responsible for the procession or the production of the effects, and it is called cause only because it is known through the effect. Victorinus, within the same general lines of thought, elaborates a Trinitarian theory of reciprocal causality, and introduces the idea of God as forecause (*praecausa autem Pater*). The first cause is neither essential nor formal (it is beyond essence, and it is not a form), yet it is knowable or intelligible through a non-discursive form of knowledge, it is knowable through vision.

Marilena Vlad, providing an interpretation of the notion of the divine gift, focuses on a comparison between the first being in the *Elements of Theology* and in the *Divine Names*. Vlad isolates a certain number of doctrinal similarities, but equally shows the radical differences between these two texts, notably with respect to being. Closely analyzing the relationship between the One and being according to the *Elements*, with particular attention to the non-unity of being that becomes one, by analogy with the henads, through participation, Vlad argues that specific Proclean doctrinal tensions (present when describing the process enabling the connection between the One, the henads, the first being and the determinate being) could have invited Dionysius to explore different exegetical paths. And yet, Dionysius borrows Proclus' idea of the superessential properties, although he modifies the complex Proclean structure of reality. Indeed, Dionysius refuses to explain the passage from the One to the plurality of beings through intermediary causes, and proposes a concept of being that comprises at once the diversity of beings, being as such and the primordial source of being. It seems to me that more attentive understanding of the similitudes between the doctrinal alterations of Proclus' metaphysics operated by Dionysius and by the author of the *Book of Causes* would be of great interest.

Jonathan Greig provides a survey of the doctrine of *logoi* in the Platonic tradition, with particular emphasis on Maximus the Confessor's *Ambiguum*

7. Without denying other possible influences already recognised in the scholarship, Greig argues that the *logoi* recall the role of the Proclean henads as mediators of the unparticipated first cause. Firstly, Greig reconstructs the context of the doctrine presented in *Ambiguum* 7, and recalls St. Gregory of Nyssa's argument that human souls have their pre-existence in God. Maximus' interpretation of the three stages (generation, motion, rest) of the soul's procession into bodies from God at creation rejects the idea of creatures' continuity with God, but upholds Gregory's claim that souls (or rather we, as embodied souls) are a portion of God (μοῖραν θεοῦ). Relying on the *Book of Wisdom* 9:1–2 where it is said that God created all things "in [by] His word and His wisdom", Maximus claims that the same transcendent *Logos* is "both manifested and pluralized in all things (...) and all things are summed up into the same [Logos]". The manifested plurality of *logoi* produces every kind of created beings. Greig claims that Maximus' distinction between God in Himself and God manifested in the *logoi* echoes (by the mediation of Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite and John Philoponus) Proclus' distinction between the One as unparticipated and the One as participated through the henads. Proclus, although modified and adapted, becomes an unexpected help in Maximus' anti-Origenist critique.

Levan Gigineishvili discusses the ontological and epistemological significance of light in the 12th-century Georgian author, Ioane Petritsi. Gigineishvili shows that Petritsi reshaped (both in his translation and in his commentary) some of the most representative Proclean themes, such as the henads, in Christian terms. In Petritsi's reading, the henads became the very center of human beings: they are the inner *logos*, the inner principle of cognition or inner light, present in every human individual, which in certain ways recalls the teaching of Plotinus, as Gigineishvili indicates. The henads, in their 'new' function or role, have lost their capacity to self-constitute or be self-sufficient, and instead require illumination from the divine *Logos*, explicitly identified with the Proclean Limit of the highest henad. They are the rays of the One, participable entities and equally participants in the One (i.e., the Uni-Trinitarian God). It is through the henads that each individual possesses what Petritsi describes as the possibility to participate directly in the highest of henads, the *Logos* of the Father. Petritsi, as Gigineishvili suggests, might have had in mind the peculiar participation to divinity through the Eucharist during the Liturgy. Christ is called by Petritsi "the Daylight of philosophers"¹ and "life-giver of philosophical theories".

1 Ioane Petritsi, *Commentaria*, vol. II, p. 78.

Lela Alexidze continues the reflection on Petritsi, discussing the concept of causality from three perspectives: (1) the One as cause in respect to the other Trinitarian hypostases; (2) the creation of the prime matter; (3) the One's absolute transcendence with respect to its causal powers. Petritsi argues that matter is caused by the One, at the lowest level of procession, the level of formlessness and non-being, and it is the product of a creative power. Alexidze argues that the relationship between first Limit / first Infinity and matter is one of the major tensions in Petritsi, who claims both that matter depends on the first Infinity (inasmuch as it is limitless), and that it depends on the supreme One. Alexidze suggests that by interpreting matter in an Aristotelian manner (as privation and as substrate), but equally in Proclean terms as non-being, it may be possible to solve Petritsi's tension when considering matter as privation depending on the One, and as substrate depending on the first Infinity. Yet, the question of the relationship between the One and the prime matter remains partially unsettled, as Alexidze argues, because Petritsi, on the one hand, seems inclined to identify the One with the creator, but, on the other hand, he raises its position above any type of activity, including creation. In order to reduce this sharp contradiction, Petritsi introduces a second One, which is like the mode or the aspect of the supreme One, the cause of participation for all participants, and which seems to be assimilated to the Christian Logos or the Son.

Ezequiel Ludueña deepens the recently revived interest for Berthold of Moosburg's metaphysics with a study on one of the most problematic Neoplatonic concepts for a Christian: the henads. Berthold distinguishes, following Proclus, between superior unities (*unitates*). The first, in a strict sense, "is not unity but excess of unity" (p. 200). The second unity, created by or from the first, holds a relation with multiplicity which participates to the first unity through the second unity; this second unity is also multiple in itself inasmuch as within it one can identify a certain number of causes that seem to correspond to Proclus' henads. The third unity is *ab alio sive per aliud*. Within the realm of the second unity, each *unitas* or *bonitas* is a pure unity in regard to its essence (*per essentiam*), but also a principle of diversity in regard to multiplicity. Berthold distinguishes exactly six henads or principles of determination that he identifies with Eriugena's primordial causes (but limited in number), that are made by the Father in the Son (*quas Pater in Filio fecit*). Ludueña analyzes in detail some of Berthold's major and diverse sources, isolating both the changes he introduces to Proclus' metaphysics and the adjustments that he brings to the sources. He concludes that Berthold's alterations are the result of a thoughtful reading of his sources, both pagan and Christian.

Olga Lizzini expands the research on the links between the *Book of Causes* and Avicenna. The corpus of texts (based on translations from Greek) known

today as *Plotiniana Arabica* and *Procleana Arabica* stands at the origin of philosophy in Arabic, inspiring numerous metaphysical themes and a specific vocabulary that was coined by these texts. Lizzini, unlike some scholars (e.g. Alain de Libera), does not exclude the possibility of a direct influence of the *Kalām fī maḥd al-ḥayr* (the *Book of Causes*) on Avicenna, but she prefers to talk about conceptual and doctrinal similarities. Lizzini recalls some of the similitudes that scholars (e.g. A. Badawi, H.A. Davidson, C. D'Ancona, R. Wisnovsky, A. Bertolacci) observed between the *Book of Causes* and Avicenna's *Metaphysics*. To these she adds the notions (i.e. one, being, good) designating the first cause and the thesis about the unicity of a flux (*fayḍ*) depending on or deriving from being (*annīyya*), better known as *ex uno non fit nisi unum*. Among the dissimilarities between Avicenna and the *Book of Causes*, Lizzini shows that Avicenna does not discuss the noetic triad (being-life-intellect), and has distinct understandings of the First Cause's absolute unity (as a consequence of its necessity), and of the concept of potency (*qudra* for Avicenna; *quwwa* for the *Book of Causes*, a central term which translates *dynamis* and was translated by *potentia*).

Amos Bertolacci continues the reflection on the possible links between the *Book of Causes* and Avicenna's *Metaphysics*, notably the chapter VIII.4, which presents the First Cause or God as not having an essence (according to some interpreters) and only as being. The *Book of Causes* expresses the same thesis in proposition VIII(IX), marking a departure from the original Proclean and Plotinian thesis of God's transcendent and unspeakable nature. Bertolacci argues that the significant presence of the term *annīyya* in chapter VIII.4 represents a sign of Avicenna's attention to the texts usually referred to as *Procleana Arabica*. However, considering the manuscript tradition of the *Ilāhiyyāt*, Bertolacci maintains a certain prudence about the effective reliance of Avicenna on the *Book of Causes* (at least in this chapter VIII.4). He equally stresses that scholarship is divided about Avicenna's position on God's essence (echoing in fact the Arabic reception of this chapter): some scholars argue that being or thatness (*annīyya*) is His quiddity (an idea which seems to have been altered by latter manuscript additions), while others claim the absence of God's quiddity. Considering both the Cairo edition of the text and some manuscripts (overlooked by the Cairo edition), Bertolacci notes a certain number of unusual aspects of the composition of the text that have a major impact on the doctrinal content, that might be the result of early stages of exegesis on Avicenna's work.

Bethany Somma argues, against a certain tendency in scholarship, that both in *Plotiniana Arabica* and *Procleana Arabica* nature is regarded as an active, autonomous cause, although there are significant differences between the accounts in these two traditions. The prologue of the *Theology of Aristotle* indi-

cates that nature is an image (*şanam*) of soul. These ideas appear in the *Sayings of the Greek Sage* and in the manuscript Marsh 539 (edited by Elvira Wakelnig) where nature is called changeable in contrast with the soul, which is fixed and enduring; it is also described as deprived of will, “acting without knowing what it does” (*Sayings of the Greek Sage* II.61). However, in the same *Sayings of the Greek Sage* it is stressed that the soul enlivens body only by nature’s mediation and that nature is the *preparation* for soul (divergent interpretations of this sentence are possible). The *Theology of Aristotle* (VII.17–18) equally indicates that nature is last in the line of intellectual things and is identified as the beginning of generation. The *Sayings of the Greek Sage* (II.66–70) adds that although it receives powers from the soul, nature “acts and is acted upon by itself”. Turning to the *Procleana Arabica*, Somma discusses notably the passage in the *Liber de causis*, inspired by Prop. 201 of the *Elements of Theology*, about the relationship between soul and nature, while describing the three operations of the soul (psychical, intellectual and divine), a theme that one can find in other texts issuing from the same milieu. In a certain number of these texts, nature it is said to govern the things under it, exercising a form of governance distinct from than soul.

Jean-Luc Solère analyses Aquinas’ theory of instrumental causality, showing the relevance of the first proposition (indeed of the first chapter) of the *Book of Causes*. Examining several relevant fragments in Aquinas’ works, Solère observes that their main premise does not postulate God as first cause in a causal chain but as the immediate and ever-present cause of each being: at every instant, He produces everything that comes into being, from substances to accidents and actions. However, the secondary causes participate in the same, single and unique causal action through which God gives being, although none of the causes duplicates the action of the other and each is hierarchically disposed toward the effect, and accomplishes a complete causal action (each cause accomplishes a full or total effect). Solère distinguishes (with Aquinas) four meanings and six conditions of instrumental causality, and concludes that the strong meaning (the sole that corresponds to the gift of being as informative creation) requires two simultaneous operations: one corresponds to the nature of the second cause, and one is imposed to it by the first or primary cause. The actions of the first and of the second (instrumental) cause are different, exerted in one, unique causal and intentional operation, but the first cause acts more powerfully than the second (which could not produce any effect without the first, like the knife of the carpenter without the carpenter).

Olivier Boulnois examines the most significant contributions of the *Book of Causes* to the history of Western philosophy, i.e. the concepts of ‘first cause’ and ‘secondary cause’, in the light of Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus and William

of Ockham. Boulnois distinguishes three principles defining the relationship between the first and the secondary cause. [P₁] The first operates more powerfully than the secondary. From this principle, two corollaries are deduced: [P₂] the first cause can operate without and [P₃] operates before the secondary cause. For Aquinas, the *Book of Causes* upholds the heretical (*quod pro haeresi condemnatur*) idea that the first cause is not the first creative principle inasmuch as the latter communicates its creative power to secondary causes. However, he insists (like Scotus and Ockham) on the second principle [P₂] in order to emphasize God's omnipotence and to justify the miracle of the Eucharist. Scotus retains mainly the second principle [P₂], and in fact criticizes the cosmological structure of the *Book of Causes*. He replaces the third principle [P₃] with the idea of causal simultaneity (*concursum*), and thus operates a remarkable and rarely noticed redefinition of causality through which he can argue that free will is not submitted to the relationship established by the first principle. Ockham holds that God creates *with* the secondary causes not *through* them, each being responsible for one part of the final effect. Boulnois shows that the consequence of this theory is that if either of the two causes (first or second) does not wish to operate, the effect will not come to be. The human's free will does not depend on God, despite His omnipotence. On the level of free will, the human equals God.

Isabelle Moulin argues that the *Book of Causes* is one of the most important texts for determining the concord between necessitarian emanation and the freedom of creation. Referring to the freedom of action elaborated in *Ennead* VI.8 [39], Moulin's study shows that the *Book of Causes* is closer to Plotinus ("des proximités argumentatives troublantes") than to Proclus, and is much more than the pinnacle of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. To the question concerning the original contribution of the *Book of Causes* in respect to its Greek Neoplatonic sources, Moulin emphasizes two ideas: (1) Proclean monism is transformed into monotheism by unifying the diversity of theophanies; (2) the concept of creation rearticulates the relationship between the first principle and its effects, which ultimately defines the first principle's transcendence and freedom. Moulin stresses, almost in a dialogue with Marilena Vlad's remarks on Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite, that in the *Book of Causes* the effect is not simply a gift of the first cause, but the result of a continuous action and of a permanent relationship between causes. Albert the Great develops in his *De causis et processu universitatis a prima causa*, without knowing the *Enneads*, Plotinus' solution, which seems to be the solution from the *Book of Causes*: God's will accomplishes the intellection of His act and agreement, inasmuch as everything that emanates from Him emanates from His being (identical with his essence and operation). From this point of view, emanation is compatible with the idea

of creation as a free choice of acting. Aquinas' solution is different, because he interprets *De causis* through Proclus' metaphysics which presupposes intermediaries.

John Dillon investigates the origins of the noetic triad (Being, Life, Intellect) and confirms the idea, commonly shared by scholars, that it originated in 2nd-century Gnostic texts (such as *Allogenes*, *The Gospel of the Egyptians* and *Zostrianos*, but also the *Chaldean Oracles*). However, Dillon claims that Platonists did not borrow it from such sources, and ultimately identifies a passage in the *Sophist* (248e–249a) which seems to have stimulated creative exegesis. There is no evidence of any development of a similar development in the work of any “mainline Platonist or Pythagorean”. Plotinus seems to ignore the noetic triad, as he also does not seem to be inclined to adopt it into his philosophical system. Yet it receives a clear metaphysical formulation in Porphyry who, according to Damascius, and confirmed by Syrianus and Proclus in his commentary on the *Parmenides*, held that “the single first principle of all things [is] Father of the noetic triad (τὸν πατέρα τῆς νοητῆς τριάδος).” Considering these textual references, Dillon argues that Porphyry (in the *Parmenides Commentary* attributed to him by Pierre Hadot) forged and transmitted this doctrine to Syrianus and Proclus, although the latter do not agree with the former about the status of the lowest element of the henadic realm (i.e. the product of Limit and Unlimitedness). Dillon ends with a survey of the reception of the triad in Marius Victorinus and Gregory of Nazianzus.

Ilaria Ramelli provides an investigation into some aspects of the sources of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, beginning with the sources of his noetic triad. While Plotinus and Porphyry are his main sources (Plotinus for the protological triad and Porphyry for the noetic triad), Origen also seems to have been known to Proclus and to have inspired his thought. Remarkable thematic and terminological similarities indeed appear between Proclus and Origen (and Christian Neoplatonism). These include, among other things, the doctrine of apokatastasis, its relation to ἐπιστροφή and to the noetic triad, the notion of God's being “all in all,” the issue of the “permanent” first body, and the rejection of the relation of evil to matter. Such overlooked points in Proclus, as well as in Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite, indicate the depth of the interrelation (in terms of both interdependence and polemic) between pagan and Christian Neoplatonism.

Julie Brumberg-Chaumont provides a comprehensive and dense study of 13th-c. medieval commentaries on the triad of being-life-intellect, which occupies a significant part of the *Book of Causes* (first presented in propositions 1–5, then discussed in propositions 6–12 of the first theorem). Brumberg-Chaumont distinguishes between a ‘complete’ and a ‘narrow exegetical mode’ of the triad. The ‘complete exegetical mode’ defines the author's intention to validate the

relationship between causes under the three principles (equally discussed by Oliver Boulnois in his paper): superiority, suppression and anteriority. The ‘narrow exegetical mode’ defines the author’s intention to validate only two principles: suppression and anteriority. According to Brumberg-Chaumont, the difference in adopting one or the other exegetical method consists in the understanding of the efficiency of the formal cause. The authors adopting the former interpretation (such as Roger Bacon, Albert the Great, Giles of Rome, John of Mallinges, Siger of Brabant), accept that the first proposition on influence is legitimately applicable to the formal causes, whereas the authors of the narrow exegesis (such as Ps. Henry of Ghent, Thomas Aquinas, Peter of Auvergne, the Anonymous *Sectator philosophiae*) adopt a strict meaning of *fluxus* which they apply to the natural order of causes. The arguments of suppression and anteriority are considered by the medieval authors in relation to Porphyry’s *Isagogè*—which Brumberg-Chaumont studies in detail (distinguishing between the ontological and logical approach)—, and to the *De Generatione animalium* (II, 3, 736b2–3) and the *Topica* (IV, 121a28–29). Brumberg-Chaumont’s analysis confirms the central, yet rarely acknowledged, place of Siger of Brabant’s commentary within this exegetical tradition and establishes with clarity the diverse Western reception of the *Book of Causes*.

Julie Casteigt studies the unity of the cause and of its effect in terms of reciprocal interiority, guided by a close reading of Albert the Great’s commentary on the *Book of Causes*, notably on the chapter XI(XII). Considering the differences between the Arabic and the Latin version of the text, but equally some variations observed within the Latin tradition of manuscripts, Casteigt explains the manner in which Albert chooses to interpret the relationship of mutual insertion of the cause and the effect: the effect is in the cause according to the mode of the cause inasmuch as the latter is its subject (although the effect can have a causal operation on its subject, such as the senses on the soul), and the cause is in the effect according to the mode of the effect inasmuch as the latter is the end of its operation. However, Casteigt argues that being, life and intellect do not belong to the same order of realities, hence there is no possible mixture between them; therefore, the precedent exists inchoatively, in potency, in the subsequent. They are actualized in the substantial unity of what is being-living-intelligent. This tension of reciprocal causality exists in the Latin version of the *Book of Causes*, but it is absent in the Arabic version.

Thérèse Scarpelli Cory examines the theme of the complete return (*reditio completa*) in the commentaries on the *Book of Causes* by Roger Bacon and Ps. Henry of Ghent, comparing them to other medieval texts on self-knowledge. Cory claims that, in respect to the question of reflexive knowledge, the 13th-century texts shifted “from the first, more metaphysically-oriented, concern,

to the second, more phenomenologically-oriented, concern” (p. 575). The early treatment of self-knowledge, originated in Avicenna, is described by Cory as the “Self-Presence Thesis” stating that “I always know myself in some fundamental sense, whether I realize it or not” (p. 576), which is an intellection *per essentiam suam* or *per praesentiam suam*. Cory equally introduces the «Higher-Order Thesis», distinguishing between the act of understanding an essence and the act of being aware of an essence. Roger Bacon accepts the Self-Presence Thesis, and Ps. Henry of Ghent endorses the Higher-Order Thesis. Cory’s comparative reading of the treatments provided by these 13th-century masters aims to demonstrate that Bacon discusses the theme of *reditio completa* from proposition XIV(XV) in relation with the embodied intellective soul or *anima coniuncta*, whereas Ps. Henry discusses it in relation to the separate intelligences.

Denis J.-J. Robichaud indicates a certain number of texts (from Plato to the *Book of Causes*) discussing the triad being-life-intellect before opposing Aquinas’ understanding to Ficino’s informed and detailed interpretation. Ficino reads Proclus carefully, enlarging his study of the *Elements of Theology* with the *Platonic Theology*, the *Commentary on the Republic*, the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, *On Providence*, *On Fate* and *On the Existence of Evil*. A certain number of Ficino’s personal notes on the *Platonic Theology* survive, which he entitled *Ordo divinorum apud Platonem secundum Proclum*, where he details the series of Greek gods according to the noetic triad. Robichaud argues that Ficino “discovered that being, life, and intellect are divine names of specific individual Gods” (p. 616) and distinguished between different levels of demiurgy. However, Ficino became interested in finding the Platonic Demiurge of the *Timaeus* in the Neoplatonic tradition that he knew (Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus and Proclus). Robichaud studies and partially (re)edits Ficino’s marginal notes on his manuscript (Paris, BnF, gr. 1816) of the *Enneads* and observes that he explicitly opposes Plotinus to Proclus and refers explicitly to Porphyry. In his running commentary of the *Enneads*, Ficino reads Plotinus through Proclus’ commentary of the *Timaeus* and seems to have been influenced by Porphyry’s organisation of the Plotinian text. Robichaud concludes that Ficino finds a closer affiliation with the Plotinian / Porphyrian than with a Iamblichean understanding of demiurgy, and that he uses Plotinus to defend Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite’s choice to collapse the triad being-life-intellect as divine names for one God.



This third volume, like the preceding two, and indeed the entire conference, was not meant to constitute neither an introduction to nor an exhaustive synthesis on Proclean metaphysics and its diverse receptions. The main goal was to celebrate around an exceptional and enduring episode of the history of thought the dialogue between scholars from disciplines unjustly disaggregated in publications and conferences. Indeed, Marc and I sought to gather studies that because of their diversity and despite of their divergencies positions could nurture the research on the entangled conceptual history of the *Elements of Theology* and the *Book of Causes*.

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