

EXCURSUS VII

PROCLUS' EXPOSITION OF THE CHALDÆAN SYSTEM OF THE NOETIC ENTITIES

Proclus based his interpretation of the Chaldæan Oracles upon the axiom that the theology of the Theurgists concords both with that of Plato and of the Orphics. This rule of "harmony" was systematically elaborated by him in three works : the *Platonic theology*, the *Orphic theology* and the *Commentary on the Chaldæan Oracles*. Whereas his work on the Platonic system is preserved¹, his expositions of the Chaldæan system and of that of the Orphics have, owing to the loss of the two other works mentioned, to be reconstituted. Thanks to the excerpts from his commentary on the Chaldæan Oracles delivered by Psellus, the establishment of the main tenets of his Chaldæan System does not, however, afford special difficulties. For it has been overlooked that Psellus arranges, both in his *Hypothesis* and his *Expositio*², the doctrines of the Chaldæans according to a deliberate order³ which con-

¹ The exposition of the system of Proclus as presented by ZELLER, III, 2^o, p. 851 ff. rests essentially upon the "Platonic Theology" of Proclus. In this work Proclus makes lavish use of Orphic nomenclature, while only seldom mentioning the Chaldæan equivalents. The difference in the treatment of the *Orphica* and *Chaldaica* in the "Platonic Theology" may be explained by Proclus' belief that Plato indirectly depends on Orpheus, the first theologian of the Greeks, whereas the Chaldæans owe their wisdom to the gods (cf. *Th. Pl.*, 13, 3 f.).

² See Excursus VI, 1 b and c.

³ Cf. *Expos.*, Psellus, 1 : ἐν ; 2 : νοητὴ τάξις ; 3-5 : νοητὴ καὶ νοερὰ τάξις ; 6-10 : πνευματὰ ἐξδομάς ; 11-13 : πνευματὰ ; 14-16 : ἀρχαί ; 17 : ἀρχιγγελοὶ ; 18 : ἄζωοι ; 19 : ζῶναι ; 20-28 : τὰ ὑπὸ σελήνην. The technical arrangement of this treatise concords with the summary of the Platonic system given by OLYMPIODOR., *Proleg. in Plat. philos.*, c. 12, p. 207, 18 f.

cords with that applied throughout by Proclus for his interpretation of the Chaldæan Oracles. It follows that the order adopted by Psellus is identical with the Chaldæan system as it was presupposed by Proclus. This contention is confirmed by the fact that the sequence of the system delivered by Psellus has its exact counterpart in the Platonic system of Proclus. Less completely known is the Orphic system of Proclus, but the numerous interpretations of Orphic texts to be found in his preserved writings allow at least the reconstitution of the major instances of his nomenclature⁴. Besides, Proclus' arrangement of the *νοητὸς διδασμος* as presupposed in the three theological systems harmonized by him, is set forth by Damascius⁵.

We may add for practical purposes a schematic synopsis of the three systems. Such a synopsis seems to be indispensable for the reconstitution of the original teachings of the Chaldæans; for Proclus, the main transmitter of the Chaldæan texts, in view of his axiom concerning the identity of the Platonic, Orphic and Chaldæan systems frequently interchanges the basic notions of the three doctrines or employs Chaldæan (*viz.* Orphic) notions with a meaning conforming to his Platonic system.

⁴ Cf. in particular the summary given in the scholia to PROCL., *Tim.*, printed I, p. 474, ed. Diehl.

⁵ DAM., I, 284, 22-317, 14 (as to the passage dealing with the Orphics see KERN, *Orph. Fragm.*, No. 60). The Orphic equivalents have been identified (apart from the passages quoted n. 4 and 5) with the help of the following quotations collected by KERN, *Orph. Fragm.* : *τρεῖς φύκτες*, Fr. 99; *Οὐρανός*, Fr. 107; *Ἐκαστὸς χεῖρες*, Fr. 40; *Τετάρτες*, DAM., II, 134, 18 ff.

SYNOPSIS OF THE THREE THEOLOGICAL SYSTEMS OF PROCLUS

THE PLATONIC SYSTEM	ORPHIC SYSTEM	THE CHALDEAN SYSTEM
Τὸ ἓν (ἄρρητον καὶ ἄγνωστον)	ΧΡΟΝΟΣ	Τὸ ἄρρητον ἓν
ἑνάδες ὑπεροῦςιοι	?	?
Τὸ νοητόν (τὸ ἐν ὧν. ὁ πρῶτος διάκοσμος) τρὶς τριάδες	Ὁ κρύφιος διάκοσμος	Ὁ πατρικὸς βυθὸς
1. ἡ πρώτη νοητὴ τριάς :	αἰθήρ-χάος- ὦόν	1. πατήρ (vel) α. πατήρ πατρικὸς διδ- β. δύναμις κυσμός) : γ. νοῦς
<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> α. πέρασ μονή β. ἀπειρον πρόσδος γ. μικτόν ἐπι- στροφή </div>		
(= ἡ μονή, ἡ οὐσίη, τὸ πέρασ, ὕπαρ- ξις, ἀγαθόν)		
2. ἡ δευτέρα νοητὴ τριάς :	τὸ κύον (?) - ἀργὴς χι- τών - νεφέ- λη	2. αἰὼν vel δύν- (α) ν. σ. (β) ν. σ. ναμις } (γ) ν. σ.
<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> νοητὴ ζωὴ vel αἰὼν (α) ν. σ. (β) ν. σ. (γ) ν. σ. </div>		
(= ἡ πρόσδος, ὁλότης, κέντρον τῶν νοητῶν, ἀπειρον, σοφόν)		
3. ἡ τρίτη νοητὴ τριάς :	Φάνης Φάνης - Ἡρι- κεπαῖος - Μῆτις	3. ὁ νοῦς (α) ν. σ. (β) ν. σ. (γ) ν. σ.
<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> αὐτοζῶον vel νοῦς νοητός (α) ν. σ. (β) ν. σ. (γ) ν. σ. </div>		
(= ἐπιστροφή, πέρασ τῶν νοητῶν, μικτόν, καλόν)		
Τὸ νοητόν καὶ νοερὸν (ὁ δεύτερος διάκοσμος) τρὶς τριάδες		Ἡ νοητὴ καὶ νοερὰ ἵτις
1. ἡ πρώτη ὑπερουράνιος τό- τριάς πως, ἑνωσις	αἱ τρεῖς Νύκ- τες	1. τρεῖς ἱυγ- (α) ἐμπύριος (β) γες αἰθέριος (γ) ὑ- λαῖος
2. δευτέρα τρι- άς	Οὐρανός	2. τρεῖς συνο- (α) ν. σ. (β) ν. σ. χεῖς } (γ) ν. σ.
<div style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle;"> οὐρανία περι- φορά, οἱ συν- εκτικὸί θεοί </div>		

3. <i>τρίτη τριὰς</i> } <i>ὕπουράνιος ἀψίς,</i> <i>οἱ τελεσιουργοὶ</i> <i>τελ φρουρητικοὶ θεοὶ</i>	<i>οἱ ἑκατόγχειρες</i>	3. <i>τρεῖς τελε-τάρχαι</i> } (a) v. κ. (b) v. σ. (c) v. σ.
Τὸ ΝΟΕΡὸΝ (ὁ τρίτος διάκσμος) <i>ἐπὶ νο ραὶ ἐβδομάδες</i>		Ἡ ΠΗΓΑΙΑ ἙΒΔΟΜΑΣ
1. <i>καθαρός, ἀκήρατος, πρῶτος</i> <i>νοῦς. αὐτόνοος.</i>	1. <i>Κρόνος</i>	1. <i>ὁ ἀπαξ ἐπέκεινα</i> <i>vel νοῦς πατρι-κός vel ὁ πρῶτος</i> <i>πατήρ</i> } <i>τρεῖς</i> <i>πηγαῖοι</i>
2. <i>ἡ ζωογόνος θεά.</i>	2. <i>Ῥέα</i>	2. <i>Ἑκάτη vel ζωογόνος</i> <i>πηγή vel ὁ δεύτερος πατήρ</i> <i>vel κέντρον τῶν πατέρων</i> } <i>πατέρες</i> <i>vel</i> <i>κοσμογονοὶ</i>
3. <i>νοῦς δημιουργός. ἀπλῶς νοῦς.</i>	3. <i>Ζεὺς</i>	3. <i>ὁ δις ἐπέκεινα vel ὁ τίτος</i> <i>πατήρ</i>
4. <i>οἱ τρεῖς</i>	4. <i>οἱ τρεῖς</i>	4. <i>οἱ τρεῖς ἀμείλικτοι</i>
5. <i>ἀχραντοί</i>	5. <i>Κούρητες</i>	5. <i>οἱ τρεῖς ἀμείλικτοι</i>
6. <i>θεοὶ</i>	6. <i>οἱ Τιτᾶνες</i>	6. <i>ὁ ὑπεζωκός (*)</i>
7. <i>ἡ διακρίσεως πηγὴ vel</i> <i>ἡ ἑτερότης</i>		

(*) From the *πηγαία ἐβδομάς* as a whole issue : (2) *πηγαί*, (3) *ἀρχαί*, (4) *ἀρχάγγελοι*, (5) *ἄγγελοι*, (6) *ἄζωνοι*, (7) *ζῶναι*. After them comes the *ἀπλανὴς κόσμος* and *αἱ ἐπὶ σφαῖραι*.

If we compare the exposition of this Chaldaean system of Proclus with the results of our analysis of the original testimonies, it appears that Proclus often employs synonymic notions of the Chaldaean Oracles as designations of diverse noetic orders : *e. g.* *ἐν, πατήρ ἀπαξ ἐπέκεινα. Ἑκάτη, ὑπεζωκός. ἀρχαί, συνοχεῖς. πατέρες, τελετάρχαι*. These artificial differentiations are not due to a lack of understanding on the part of the interpreter, but to the necessity with which he was faced to find Chaldaean equivalents for his own system of Platonic entities (which in truth was the alone "preexistent"). The way in which Proclus

interpretation forces the meaning of the Chaldæan texts, has been demonstrated in the respective notes of the precedent investigation⁶.

* We may add a list of the notes in which the various orders of the Chaldæan system of Proclus, together with their Platonic and Orphic equivalents, are discussed. All the numbers refer to the notes of ch. II of this work. *ἐν* and *ἀγαθόν* : 5. *πατρικὸς βυθός* : 350. *πατήρ, δύναμις, νοῦς* : 47. *τρεις τριάδες τοῦ νοητοῦ* : 163, 170. *αἰών* : 138. *λυγγες* : 248, 252. *συνοχεῖς* : 245, 332. *τελετάρχαι* : 245, 270, 301, 332. *νοερὰ ἐξδυμάς* : 205. *τρεις πηγαῖοι πατέρες* : 270 ff., 282. *ἡπαξ ἐπέκεινα* : 42, 208. *ζωογόνος Θεά* : 65, 282, 285. *δις ἐπέκεινα* : 187. *τρεις ἀμειλικτοί* : 200. *ὁ ὑπεζωκός* : 101. *πηγαί, ἀρχαί*, etc. : 65, 152, 192, 308. *ἄζωνοι, ζῶναι* : 266.