Ancient Commentators on Aristotle

GENERAL EDITOR: RICHARD SORABJI

PROCLUS:
Ten Problems Concerning Providence

Translated by
Jan Opsomer & Carlos Steel

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Conventions and Abbreviations

[…] Square brackets enclose words or phrases that have been added to the translation for purposes of clarity.

<…> Angle brackets enclose conjectures to the Greek and Latin text, i.e. additions to the transmitted text deriving from parallel sources and editorial conjecture, and transposition of words and phrases. Accompanying notes provide further details. The reader is moreover advised to consult the forthcoming reconstruction of the Greek, with philological notes, by Benedikt Strobel.

(…) Round brackets, besides being used for ordinary parentheses, contain transliterated Greek words.

The chapter and line number references for the *tria opuscula* (*Dub., Prov., Mal.*) are to Boese's edition. The page and line number references for the *Commentary on the Parmenides* are to Steel's OCT edition.

The page, column and line numbers for Plutarch, *De sera numinis vindicta*, correspond to the Teubner edition (Paton-Pohlenz-Sieveking 1927).

BS = Benedikt Strobel
Dub. = Decem quaestiones circa providentiam, Ten Problems Concerning Providence
ET = Elementatio theologica, Elements of Theology
Mal. = De malorum subsistentia, On the Existence of Evils
Prov. = De providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis ad Theodorum mechanicum, On Providence
SVF = Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta (ed. Arnim)
TP = Theologia platonica, Platonic Theology

For all other ancient works standard abbreviations are used.

Preface

'No subjects of discussion are perhaps more interesting or more important than those of which the present volume consists. For what can more demand our most serious attention, or what can be more essential to the well-being of our immortal part, than a scientific elucidation and defence of the mysterious ways of Providence, and a development of the nature of Evil?' This is what Proclus does 'in the following Treatises, with his usual acuteness and eloquence, by arguments which are no less admirable for their perspicuity, than invincible from their strength'. We could not come up with a better introduction for our translation of Proclus' treatises *Ten Problems Concerning Providence* than these words taken from the preface of Thomas Taylor's translation, though we may have more doubts than our predecessor about the scientific character of Proclus' arguments. With the present volume the translation of the *tria opuscula* for the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle series, edited by Richard Sorabji, has come to completion. We are grateful to have our translation published in this prestigious series, which brings the works produced in the schools of Alexandria and Athens at the end of antiquity to a contemporary audience.

Since we began work on the first volume, Richard has inspired, encouraged and helped us in many ways. Translating the three treatises was not an easy task: Proclus' *tria opuscula* have been transmitted through the Latin translation of William Moerbeke, in which Proclus' 'usual acuteness and eloquence' has become unrecognisable. We were, therefore, fortunate that as a starting point for our translation of this last volume we could use the Greek retroversion by Benedikt Strobel (University of Trier). We had the good fortune of a close collaboration with him and are greatly indebted to his superb philological achievement. We are also very much in debt to Michael Griffin who carefully read and edited the last version of our translation, was always prepared to accept last-minute corrections, and shepherded this volume to the final publication.

As Proclus says in his introduction, his arguments are not original as the questions he is dealing with in this treatise have been discussed a thousand times. Even less original are his translators, who only want to introduce an ancient text, which for centuries was

almost lost and accessible only with difficulty, to a new philosophical public. Our ambition is not just scholarly erudition, as we hope, with Proclus, that our readers will 'turn back upon themselves and, as it were, discuss with themselves the questions raised and not just take in arguments from outside'.

Jan Opsomer and Carlos Steel

Introduction

Worries about providence arise only in a specific philosophical or religious context. The main assumption is obviously the belief that there is providence at all. Epicureans, for instance, rejected this idea and were therefore free of the accompanying puzzles and fears. Actually, to be free of these *additional* worries was one of the main reasons for denying the existence of providence, so they argued. If one believes, however, that there is a divine principle that knows and cares about the world, that has the power to intervene somehow, wants do to so, and hence actually and effectively intervenes; if one further believes that the objects of its care include contingent small-scale events and things, including human lives, and that its care consists to a large extent in rewarding and punishing on the basis of merit: then a number of problems arise.

Since the providence exercised by the divinity was, by definition, seen as good, the issue arises what to think about things that are not so good, or even downright evil, and their relation to providence. Do they fall outside the scope of providence, maybe even outside of the power of the god(s)? Does the exercise of providence come with responsibility, and is god accordingly responsible for evil? In addition, divine care for animal, and especially human, souls was cast in terms of reward and punishment. This presupposes a divinity that knows about action, is able to evaluate it and to confer rewards and punishments accordingly. Since the ancient Platonists were committed to these claims they tried, throughout history, to find philosophical answers to these problems.

An obvious problem, for instance, would be that good people do not seem to be rewarded or bad people punished consistently. In fact, there seems to be a great deal of counter-evidence to the idea of just rewards and punishment consisting in providence's distributing good and bad fortune in accordance with merit and demerit. Additional problems originated with certain peculiarities of the Neoplatonic[1] philosophical system. The Neoplatonists did not just accept one divinity, but a great number of divine entities, and more than one of them were held to be engaged in providential activity. It was important to the Platonists to determine which providential agents exercised what kind of agency in what part of the world (for instance

in the realm of the celestial spheres, or in that of animal souls). Is it permitted to say, for instance, that those demons whose task it is to act as it were as 'avenging angels' (in fact, angels were held to constitute a different category of beings) are themselves evil, as popular tradition had it?

Another set of problems had to do with the mode of cognition and activity of the primary divinities, among whom the highest source of providence was to be sought. For the highest metaphysical principle and the entities in its vicinity in some way think and act in a timeless manner. Everything which is present to them, including things that have a temporal and even contingent existence, is held to be present to them in a manner that transcends time and contingency. This peculiarity would seem to bereave them of the ability to intervene and even think and know. And if one grants knowledge to an eternal being, the unchangeability of its knowledge is a problem if it is to extend to things whose outcome has not been determined beforehand, i.e. contingent things.

These issues lead to a host of problems, which were thoroughly discussed in the philosophical schools from Plato on to Boethius at the end of antiquity. We shall not attempt to provide a survey of the history of the problem.[2] Suffice it to say that of the Hellenistic schools the Stoics were known as the champions of an all-pervasive providence, and the Epicureans as the deniers of providence. The Platonists of the imperial age tried to steer a middle course between these positions (cf. p. 10).[3] Platonic discussions of providence start from the text of Plato, although Plato was not the first philosopher to have affirmed his belief in providence.[4] In the tenth book of the *Laws* Plato offers a lengthy argument for divine providence based on the idea of divine justice.[5] God is claimed to care for the whole and does so by subordinating the parts to the whole. Not even the smallest things are neglected. God installs a perfect beneficial order in the world and assigns to each soul its proper place in the order of things. In the *Timaeus* we are taught how the world is created by its demiurge as the best possible copy of the intelligible model, 'a single visible living being, complete (*teleios*) in every way' (30D2-3). The later Platonic construction of Plato's doctrine on providence is much indebted to the Stoic view, which had been for centuries the dominant paradigm for discussing the various problems concerning providence. Platonists adopted Stoic arguments and reinterpreted them in a Platonic fashion so as to combat the views of Epicureans but also of Aristotelians (for the Aristotelian position on providence, see p. 5). This Stoic influence is very evident in Plotinus' discussion, in particular in his treatise *On Providence* (3.2-3 [47-8]), which became an important point of reference for the later debates in the school. Plotinus emphasised the soul's capacity for self-determination, which constitutes an indispensable premise in his theodicy.

Proclus' *Ten Problems Concerning Providence* (*Peri tôn deka pros tên pronoian aporêmatôn*) stand in this tradition. The treatise has been handed down together with two other works dealing with related issues. Together these three works are known as the *tria opuscula*.[6] The ten essays on providence do not claim any originality. As Proclus writes in his introduction, he is well aware that these problems have been discussed 'a thousand times' in the tradition, and in particular in the Platonic school. The first five problems discuss fundamental philosophical presuppositions of the belief in providence. Problems 1 and 2 examine how providence knows the contingent and particular things and investigate whether real contingency can be reconciled with divine foreknowledge. Both problems are often discussed by Platonists in their polemics with Stoics and Peripatetics. Problem 3 focuses on the role of the principles of limit and infinity in divine providence: this pair of principles is of central importance to the later Neoplatonist system(s). In problem 4 Proclus examines how the inferior orders of being participate in diverse ways in divine providence. Problem 5 raises the most difficult question: how can the experience of evil be reconciled with the belief in providence. Proclus has devoted a separate treatise to this, arguably insoluble, problem: the third of the *tria opuscula*, i.e. *On the Existence of Evils*. The next four essays (6-9) all address various moral implications of the doctrine of providence, above all the just distribution of rewards and punishment in accordance with merit. Problem 6 raises the traditional question of the apparent inequality in the distribution of good and evil by providence. Proclus is indebted to Plotinus' treatise on providence (*Enn.* 3.2-3 [47-8]) and probably also to Iamblichus' lost treatises on the subject. More original seems to be the investigation, in problem 7, of the same kind of inequality in the lives of animals. We could not find a direct source for this discussion. In his treatment of the eighth and ninth problems – the postponement of judgment, and inherited guilt, respectively – Proclus makes extensive use of a text by Plutarch of Chaeronea that deals with the same issues, namely the dialogue *On the Delays of God's Punishment*, or, as it is often translated, *On the Delays of Divine Vengeance* (*De sera numinis vindicta*). Proclus borrows ideas, arguments, examples and expressions from this author – without naming him. Yet when he refers to his remote predecessor in other works it is usually to criticise him. We shall discuss the relation between Plutarch and Proclus in a separate section of this introduction.

With the last essay (10), finally, we return to the agency of providence. This time Proclus focuses on the role of demons, an issue often examined by Platonists, as it was an important element of popular religious belief and magical practices. Proclus had discussed the role

of these intermediaries between gods and humans already in the context of the third problem (§15-16). We have already pointed out that Proclus was well aware of his dependence on the tradition, not only in raising the problems but also in his search for a solution. Yet he gives the impression of wanting to examine these problems independently and partly for his own benefit and not just to take the arguments from authorities. In this sense, the treatise would appear to be primarily a 'philosophical exercise' written for himself, helping him to solve the many problems with which he is himself struggling: 'Let us interrogate ourselves and raise problems in the secrecy of our soul and thus attempt to exercise ourselves in solving these'. Therefore, it does not make much difference whether what he proposes 'has already been said by previous thinkers or not'. 'For as long as what we say corresponds to our own view, we may seem to say and write these views as our own' (*Dub.* 1,17-21). With these words Proclus seems almost to apologise for repeating, even quoting literally without acknowledging what others, like Plutarch, have said before. His heavy borrowing from Plutarch in essays 8 and 9, however, should not make us jump to the conclusion that there is nothing original at all in the *Ten Problems*. As we see it, Proclus is most 'on his own' where he examines the fundamental theological and metaphysical presuppositions of the doctrine of providence. This is evident, above all, in his insistence on the role of the gods in the providential order and in his understanding of the gods as henads operating in the mode of 'unity'. The fundamental supposition behind his argumentation in this treatise is excellently formulated in proposition 120 of the *Elements of Theology*:

> Every god embraces in his being the function of exercising providence towards the universe; and providence resides primarily in the gods. […] For indeed, where should an activity prior to intelligence be found, if not in the principles above being? And providence, as its name (*pronoia*) shows, is an activity prior to intelligence. In virtue, then, of their being gods and their being goodness, they exercise providence towards all things, filling all with a goodness which is prior to intelligence.[7]

Analysis of the argument, with comments

Preface

§1 Providence exists and its activity extends to the most inferior things, as is confirmed by the arguments of Plato and the testimony of the Chaldean Oracles. Following their authority Proclus intends to refute the erroneous views that prevent people from believing in providence. Even though the problems

surrounding providence have already received a great deal of attention, it is worthwhile dealing with these problems once more. It is indeed important to discuss the problems 'with oneself' and not just to take views 'from outside'.

First problem: according to what mode of knowledge does providence know the different classes of things?

Proclus' opening move is not innocent. By claiming that providence extends to corruptible things he aligns himself with Plato, according to whom 'the supervisor of the universe arranged everything with an eye to its preservation and excellence; […] the parts, down to the smallest details of their active and passive functions, have each been put under the control of ruling powers that have perfected the minutest constituents of the universe' (*Laws* 10,903B, tr. T.J. Saunders). Chrysippus famously claimed that 'some things get neglected, just as in large households some husks get lost and a certain quantity of wheat also, though affairs as a whole are well managed'.[8] Yet the Stoics were also convinced that there is providence over nations, cities, and even individual human beings, as Cicero's Stoic spokesperson affirms.[9] Providence attends individual persons, but one should not blame it for the loss of a commodity or the damage done by a hail storm: 'the gods exercise care in great matters, but neglect small ones'.[10] The Aristotelians appear to have argued against the Stoics that providence is concerned with species, not with individuals.[11]

In his treatise *On Providence* 3.2 [47] Plotinus clearly formulated the Platonic position on the matter: 'For even if someone who is intending to make something must look to the whole, yet all the same it is right for him to set the parts where they ought to be […] and providence ought to reach everything, and its task ought to be just this, to leave nothing neglected' (6,18-23, tr. A.H. Armstrong; cf. also 7,34-5). This is in essence also Proclus' view: providence must extend to all things 'down to the most particular' (*TP* I 15,70,23-5). This kind of providential care implies, however, that providence must also have knowledge about all contingent facts and individual things. In fact, there can be no providence without a just distribution of good and evil according to the principle of merit (*to kat' axian*).[12]

Therefore, providence ought to know all things. But how can god know all things, the universal and the individual, the eternal and the corruptible, the necessary and the contingent? The Aristotelians argued that the divine mind only knows the universal forms, and, therefore, they restricted providence to the preservation of the species.[13] Platonists too were tempted to defend such a view, since they identified the objects of divine thought with the paradigmatic Forms. Some raised the question whether there are ideas of accidents and individual things. If there are no such Forms, it seemed that it was

impossible for God to know the individual things and to distribute good and evil according to merit. Proclus belongs to the Platonic mainstream rejecting Forms of individuals (see *in Parm*. 824,9-825,9). On the level of the intellect and its thought there are only universal forms. The intellect *qua* intellect can never grasp the individual thing, and certainly not the particular corporeal thing. What then about providence? Platonists would seem to be compelled to limit divine knowledge to universal forms and to accept the Aristotelian conclusion that providence does not extend to the individual things. Proclus finds a solution for this problem by attributing to the gods a mode of knowledge beyond intellect. If all forms of knowledge correspond to the nature of the knowing subjects, there must also exist a form of knowledge that is characteristic of divine being. As the gods exist in virtue of being one (for they are henads) they will also know in virtue of being one.

To prepare this conclusion Proclus first distinguishes six types of knowledge under three general modes: (1) knowledge of particular things pertains to cognitive functions related to bodily organs: (1a) sense perception and (1b) imagination; (2) discursive (or 'rational') knowledge of universals: (2a) opinion and (2b) science, the first of objects in motion, the other of fixed and unchangeable objects; (3a) intellective or (3b) intuitive knowledge of the Forms, pertaining either to particular intellects or to the absolute universal intellect; the universal intellect knows all Forms at once in all aspects, while the particular knows all forms under a particular aspect.

Proclus then argues that the cognition proper to providence transcends all the 'ordinary' types of cognition, including the intellective. Hence he adds a fourth cognitive mode: (4) that of providential, unitary knowledge. The mode of existence (*hupostasis*) of the gods is characterised by their being one. As they exist beyond being and beyond intellect, their act of knowing is also before-thinking (*pronoein*). Just as a form of knowledge corresponds to each of the three other levels of being (irrational life, reason, intellect), there must also exist a form of knowledge proportionate to divine being. This must be a form of knowing according to the One, as their being also is characterised by unity. It is by virtue of 'the One' that providence knows everything. This means that it knows everything by the fact that it is beyond the difference of wholes and parts, natural and unnatural, form and formless.

Proclus explains what this unitary knowledge could be through an analogy. As there must be one cognitive criterion to discriminate between different sensible objects, such as 'white' and 'sweet', sc. the so-called common sense (see Arist. *DA* 3.2, 426b19), and one again on a higher level to discriminate between intelligible Forms (sc. the intellect), there must be one cognitive principle beyond the intellect that can discriminate between universal Forms (which fall under the

intellect) and participating particular entities (which fall under sense perception). To discriminate universals and particulars is only possible for a principle that can grasp them under a common aspect, namely the oneness which they all have in common. Indeed, all things on all levels, from the intelligible Forms until matter, only exist insofar as they partake in unity. Only a principle that is itself characterised by unity is capable of knowing all things, from the universal Forms to the individuals. Such a principle knowing all things insofar as they are one can only be the divine One, which transcends all levels of being.

§2 Providence extends from eternal things down to corruptible things, encompasses wholes and parts, and must know each of them in order to determine their worth. What is its mode of knowledge for the different classes of things?

§3 We should distinguish different types of cognition: (1) that of the irrational cognitive faculties, i.e. sensation and imagination (*aisthêsis, phantasia*), having as its objects particular things subject to change; (2) the cognition of the rational soul, i.e. opinion and scientific knowledge (*doxa, epistêmê*), cognising unchanging universals; (3) intellective cognition, of which there are two kinds, (3a) that of the universal intellect thinking all things at once in an absolute manner, and (3b) that of particular intellects, thinking all things under a specific aspect, namely each according to its own specificity.

§4 Ontologically prior to them is (4) providential knowledge. Providence knows and exists by virtue of the One. Therefore it is better than intellect, in conformity with what our common conceptions teach us, namely that the divine is better than intellect. By its being one providence imparts goodness to all things, as the One and the Good are identical, so that oneness and goodness are identical. Providence transcends the distinctions between whole and parts, between natural and unnatural, between forms and the formless. For in order for it to discern between those opposites (in its function as *kritêrion*), it must not itself belong to one member of any pair of opposites. Hence it must be prior to the Forms. For the only thing which all the things over which providence rules have in common is oneness. Everything that one can conceive of is indeed one. So it is in virtue of oneness that providence knows them, in accordance with the principle that like is known by the like.

§5 Analogous to the ontological superiority of providence, providential knowledge is superior to intellective knowledge.

> Providence knows by the One and imparts unity to all things. The One of providence is unlike the individual one – which is ranked the lowest – but also unlike the universal one, as the universal one is 'some' one and possesses the differences of the things it contains, whereas the One of providence is truly indivisible. The One of providence produces and preserves all things, transcends every form of essential being, and knows all things in the same manner. It does not only know universals, but every single individual. In the same way we say that the entire circle exists in the centre according to the mode of the centre; or that every number exists in the monad in a monadic mode. Thus everything is contained in the One. If the centre of a circle were to have knowledge, it would know the entire circle as being contained in it. Likewise the One of providence knows everything, universals and particulars, in the same way as it produces them. Yet although this knowledge is all-encompassing, it is also indivisible, i.e. unitary above all distinctions.

The cognition of providence is unitary in a way that transcends all distinctions. The 'one' of providence should not be understood as the individual one, 'this particular thing', which is the most inferior of all beings and only exists in so far as it takes part in the universal. The 'one' of providence is also beyond the universal one (*katholou*), because is not a one in the sense of a 'whole' (*holon*). The universal whole is somehow divisible in its composing parts, as also the intellect is one and multiple. Providence however knows all things without being multiplied or divided or changed together with them.

Knowledge and production are strictly parallel: providence knows everything it produces, namely all things. The only feature all of its products have in common is their unity. One can also say that what they have in common is goodness, as unity and goodness coincide, just like the One and the Good, as the first principle, are identical. Later on it will become clear that strictly speaking (see e.g. §16, §66) it is not the first principle itself that is the primary agent of providence (except in a super-eminent way, as being the cause of providence), but rather the gods or henads that express different aspects of the One. The main point made here is that providence knows in accordance with the One, viz. it knows the oneness and hence the goodness of things and will also protect this oneness/goodness. One might expect that, given the absolute simplicity of the One, providence could only have a general, undifferentiated knowledge. Yet Proclus insists that providence knows – and protects – *each* thing, including particulars. This paradoxical claim constitutes one of the core problems of the Platonic doctrine of providence. The second and third problems are devoted to this issue.

Proclus' solution of the question how God can have knowledge of

individual and contingent things was very attractive to the Christian Philoponus. In his polemical writing against Proclus *De aeternitate mundi* he quotes with approval the conclusion of this first problem. As he says, on this point he was in full agreement with Proclus.[14]

Second problem: how can providence know contingent things?

This discussion is a follow-up to the argument of the first problem. Contingent things (contingent events) pose a special problem, as their very nature seems to be incompatible with the determinate knowledge that should be that of providence. (Proclus' talk of 'contingent [things]' does not discriminate between substance-like things and events, which is typical of the ancient discussion.) However, if one grants determinate knowledge of contingent things, their contingency appears to be threatened: for would they not need to be determined – that is, not contingent – if they are to be known in a determined way? The solution adopted by Proclus consists in claiming that the determination of providential knowledge does not stem from the objects known, but rather from the knower.

§6 Contingence seems incompatible with providence. Therefore some abolish contingence, whereas others get rid of providence. Both groups have the correct intuition that a provident agent must know the objects under its sway and that it must know those in a non-ambivalent, i.e. in a determinate way. The reality of both providence and contingence is here taken as given and will not receive further discussion.

§7 Hence the problem to be solved is: how is providential knowledge of contingent things possible?[15] Knowledge is intermediate between the knower and the known. Does knowledge, then, take on the character of the knower, of the known or of neither? It is defined with respect to the knower, that is: it takes on its basic character from the knower. The objects known, too, contribute to the character of knowledge, but only so far as to distinguish cognitions the one from the other. They do so *qua* final causes of knowledge.

Since the nature of knowledge is determined essentially by the character of the knower, the knowledge of unchanging knowers will be immutable, the knowledge of rational knowers will be rational, that of intellectual knowers intellectual, and so on.

Since providence is not at a distance from the One, its knowledge is unitary. Its knowledge, even of contingent things is moreover 'necessary' (i.e. it knows contingent things as happen-

ing with necessity). Indeed, the knowledge of providence takes on the character of providence and is therefore incorporeal, timeless, unitary, unchanging, determinate, necessary.

§8 Hence providence knows contingent things not the way they are, but the way providence itself is, i.e. in a mode superior to the contingent. It does not know them while they are happening, but outside of time, at the level of the (non-contingent) causes of contingent things. It knows contingent things as things that are in themselves undetermined, yet are nonetheless determined *qua* existing in providence (i.e. causally) and *qua* being the objects of providence's knowledge (i.e. epistemically). So providence's knowledge of contingent things combines determinacy with indeterminacy. By its knowledge of causes, it anticipates the coming about of the indeterminate, i.e. it knows that something indeterminate will take place. To the extent, however, that it also causes the indeterminate to exist and does so in a determinate manner, it knows the contingent in a determinate manner.

Providence's knowledge is compared to the reason-principle in a seed:[16] the latter is itself not divided but at the same time the cause of the division that will ensue when the seed develops into a plant. The immaterial *logos* contained in the seed is, on the one hand, the cause of the ensuing division, hence should somehow possess what will be manifest in the full-grown plant. On the other, it is not yet the plant, hence it cannot possess the same characteristics in the very manner of the full-grown plant. The *logos* is itself present in a substrate, the seed. It cannot itself be divided, but bestows to the seed the possibility of division. Likewise providence contains in a determinate way the indeterminate things that will follow, both causally and epistemically. It knows them as following in the future.

Many thinkers prior to Proclus have considered the compatibility of all-encompassing providential knowledge with contingency to be highly problematic.[17] As Proclus says at the beginning of this *Problem*, there are two easy ways out: drop either the claim that there is true contingency, or the premise that providence knows beforehand what contingent events will take place in the future. According to the Platonist way of framing the history of the problem, the first position corresponds to that adopted by the Stoics, while the second is attributed to the Peripatetics, who restricted providence to the celestial spheres, where there is only necessity.[18] The positions taken are analogous to those regarding the dilemma between providence and evil.[19] In both cases Platonists regard themselves as occupying a middle position.[20]

Elsewhere too Proclus accepts, on the authority of Plato, the idea that god knows future contingents in a determinate way. For god knows everything in a determinate way, both the things that according to their own nature are indeterminate and those that are determinate:

> But Plato and whoever is his friend assert both that god knows future events in a determinate manner and that they happen according to their own nature, some in a determinate manner, others in an indeterminate manner. (*Prov*. 63,5-8, tr. C. Steel)

This claim follows a more general principle expressed also in the *Elements of Theology*:

> Every god has an undivided knowledge of things divided and a timeless knowledge of things temporal; he knows the contingent without contingency, the mutable immutably, and in general all things in a higher mode than belongs to their station. (*ET* §124, tr. E.R. Dodds)[21]

It is not clear, however, where Plato would have made the claim about determinate knowledge of indeterminate events – he certainly did not formulate it the way the later Platonists did. Probably one should think of a combination of *Tim*. 30B6-C1 and 44C6-7, where divine providence is mentioned in relation to both the structure of the world as a whole, and individual souls and bodies. It is passages such as these that allowed Proclus to make the claim, in the first sentence of our text, that Plato in the *Timaeus* literally[22] says that 'the works of creation, even down to the most inferior things, have been accomplished with accuracy, because of the providence of God' (*Dub*. 1,3-5).

According to the testimony of Ammonius it was Iamblichus who first claimed that knowledge does not necessarily have the same status as the object known, but may derive its character from the knower.[23] The thesis that providence knows indeterminate[24] and contingent things in a determinate and non-contingent manner remains obscure.[25] Insofar it amounts to the claim, apparently made here by Proclus, that it knows that something contingent will take place, it is relatively innocent.[26] In this case providence will know, for instance, that either *A* will happen or will not happen ('*A* or not-*A*'), but not whether it will be *A* or *B*. In that case '*A* or not-*A*' is necessary, while *A* remains contingent. Proclus, however, wants to make a stronger claim. The idea that providence is outside of time should make it possible for it to know the outcome of all things, including the contingent ones (this obviously constitutes a threat to our ability to make free choices,[27] as god will also know what I am going to choose).[28] So things that for us lay in the future and of which it is not

clear whether they will come about, are 'already' known by providence. Yet the future has not become fixed by being known by providence, so Proclus claims in *On Providence*:

> Therefore, it is not true that, if the gods know the future, its outcome is by necessity fixed, but one should attribute to the future an undetermined outcome from what is determined, and to the gods a determinate foreknowledge of what is undetermined. (*Prov*. 65,1-3, tr. C. Steel)

It is questionable whether this view can be made coherent. Complete knowledge of things in time by a knower outside of time amounts to knowledge of those things as already having taken place, and seems to presuppose their already having happened. Yet eternity is also conceived as in some sense prior to time, so that the knowledge would seem to precede the outcome of contingent events. This combination of priority with posteriority would seem to be impossible. Yet we cannot but introduce the categories prior and posterior if we are to explain the extent of such knowledge.

If the knowledge of providence is complete, determinate, timeless and infallible, it is impossible for anything in the world to happen, or for us to act, in such a way that it would make that which providence would seem to know to turn out false. The relation between contingency and time in this case would seem to be this: if *A* is contingent, the only way to know whether it takes place is to observe it at the time of its happening (or not-happening at the time it could have happened) or to have a recollection of such an observation. The determinateness is connected to the fact that *A* cannot be undone. This is true for events that lie in the past or that happen right now (if one understands 'happening now' in such a way as to exclude the possibility of their being prevented in their outcome, so that if X happens now, even it stops in the next second, it will still be the case that it has happened).[29] So the determinacy stems from the irrevocability of the past and of, in a sense, the present.[30] Contingent events do not become non-contingent after their occurrence: they are still 'that which could have been otherwise',[31] but they have been determined. Accordingly, a future contingent proposition is indeterminately true or false, but after the event a proposition describing the same event is determinately, i.e. definitely, true or false.[32] The only way for contingent events to be determinate would seem to consist in the fact that they are *no longer future events*. Hence the timelessness of the knower would seem to solve the problem by the fact that the contingent events *do not lie in the future* with respect to the knower. Since these events are not in the future for providence, they are definite.[33] The exclusion of the future tense might seem to lead directly to the irrevocability that is usually regarded as a

property of the past. However, such an impression would be deceptive. For contingent events to be determined for a timeless observer, one could argue, what is needed is not their being 'not in the future', but rather their being in the past or in the present (yet the timeless observer does not observe in time at all). But the believer in providence would also want to say that events that are in the future for us are *already* known by providence. It is not clear how one could make sense of that claim.

Boethius denies that god's infallible and all-encompassing knowledge can be correctly described as fore-knowledge (*praescientia*) or fore-seeing (*praevidentia*),[34] as that would entail determinism. Proclus in our text is less careful in that he speaks of providence knowing contingents as being indeterminate and lying in the future.[35] Boethius' clever remark that nothing is made necessary by being seen[36] does not solve the problem either of how god can know determinately 'that *A*', if *A* is supposed to be contingent. For 'knowing determinately that *A*' turns out to be possible only if *A* is either necessary or irrevocable. And in order for it to be the latter it would need to lie in the past or in the present (according to the sense outlined above), not just 'not in the future'. So, in spite of whatever the Platonists claim, a contingent event cannot be known in a determinate way without making it itself determinate. For *A* to be known in a determinate way, however, the determinateness has to come from somewhere: from its nature, in which case *A* is not contingent, or from its having happened, in which case it is in the past with respect to the knower. For the determinate character of a piece of knowledge just cannot come from the knower. It is a claim the Platonists make, but a claim that cannot be substantiated in a rational way. The concept of determinate knowledge implies at least that one's information about the object or event known is correct and complete (and does not leave out whether the object is real or unreal or whether the event takes place or not). If a contingent event does not lay in the past or the present relative to a cognitive act, it is always possible that it does not take place, for otherwise it would not be contingent (this claim has to be modified, as we shall shortly see, in the case of contingent events that become determined some time before their occurrence, but this modification does not affect the core of the objection). In that case the belief 'that *A*' turns out to be false, and can therefore not constitute knowledge, and *a fortiori* no determinate knowledge.

A more promising claim may be the one according to which everything can be said to be in the present for god – as that is a way of speaking that appears to be allowed.[37] Yet this now would not be a temporal instant, but a timeless now. This entails that it has the same relation to all moments in time – one would almost say: it is simultaneous with all instants, if simultaneity were not itself a

temporal relation. Yet this attempted solution too is fraught with problems. Being present to any instant indeed implies being posterior to the instants (or time spans) preceding it and being anterior to the instants (or time spans) following it.

Proclus further clarifies his position in the discussion of the third problem when he explains how even contingent things participate in determinate necessity (see §14, 9-23). In Proclus' view the determination in which a contingent event participates does not merely consist in the fact that providence knows in an atemporal way that at some time (t_1) it is either *A* or not-*A*. In such an interpretation the determination or necessity would be attached only to the whole contradiction (it is determined that 'either *A* or not-*A*'), but not to each of its parts distributively (it is determined that *A* or that –*A*).[38] This is, however, nothing special, as even human knowledge can have such a determinate knowledge of a contingent event. In fact, Proclus makes in §14 a stronger claim about providential knowledge. In case a contingent event *A* takes place, this has become necessary some time (t_2) before *A* actually takes place (and analogously for the other case, when not-*A*). Between t_1 (when it is still indeterminate that *A* or –*A*) and the actual occurrence of A at t_3 there has been at t_2 a *metaptôsis* (a tipping of the scale) of the contingent into the necessary. To give the Aristotelian example, at t_1 it is still equally possible that there will be a sea battle or not. At t_2 circumstances are such that the irreversible decision is taken to engage in battle. At t_3 the battle occurs. In Proclus' view divine providence knows in an atemporal manner that the contingent event (which before t_2 is either *A* or that –*A*) has fallen into necessity at t_2, before the sea battle actually occurred. If we take away temporality this means knowing, in all eternity, an indeterminate event in a determinate manner. In human temporal knowledge, however, it is only after the 'transition' occurring at t_2 that we may know that the contingent thing has become determinate.[39]

One may also give an example that does not appeal to human decisions: in the Platonic non-deterministic universe tomorrow's rain is contingent. Yet the day after tomorrow it will have rained or it won't have. Some time before it actually rains (analogously of course for the case in which it remains dry), the atmospheric conditions will have changed in such a way as to make the rain inevitable. This can happen either sooner or later, depending on the degree of contingency.[40]

This idea is paralleled in Ammonius' commentary on Aristotle's *On Interpretation*: some time before the event, the contingent has become unpreventable, as the conditions leading up to it and bringing it about have become determined. In that way it is possible even for us to have determinate knowledge of future contingents. This fact should help to make the divine determinate knowledge of all contingents more understandable for us:

> And the same thing is contingent in its own nature, but in the gods' knowledge it is no longer indefinite, but rather definite. It is clearly possible for the contingent sometimes to be known in a definite manner even by our own knowledge, namely when it is no longer contingent properly-speaking, but necessarily follows from the causes leading the way to (*prohêgêsamena*) its own generation: it is possible, for example, for a sphere which rests on a horizontal surface, while the surface keeps the same position, to be moved by something or not, but when the surface is tilted it is impossible for it not to be moved. Hence we also see that physicians sometimes lack the confidence to pronounce anything about whether their patients will recover or perish, thinking both are possible, while they sometimes indubitably pronounce about one or the other of these as certainly going to happen to the patient. (Amm. *in Int.* 137,1-11, tr. D. Blank)

The last remark about the predictions made by doctors corresponds to Proclus' statement about conjectural predictions. The general idea is that a contingent event becomes determined once all the conditions for its realisation are given:[41] before the plane is tilted, it is undetermined whether the sphere will move; but once it is tilted, the sphere will roll inevitably. This is an ingenious solution, because it makes possible determinate knowledge of a contingent event without reducing it to necessity. For even if the event has become determined *some time* (t_2) before its outcome, it cannot have been determined all the time, as otherwise it would not be a contingent event. Hence, for every contingent event there can be found a time (t_1) at which it was not determined at all. Divine providence purportedly knows in an atemporal way that A is an indeterminate contingent event (at t_1) and that A is determined at t_2. The idea would now be that the distinction between t_1 and t_2 does not make any difference to an atemporal knower in the sense that such a knower has the same non-temporal relation to both points in time (god has a B-series perspective: to him t_1 and t_2 are neither in the past or the future nor is the one more remote than the other), so that one can say that divine knowledge knows the indeterminate in a determinate manner, as it has both the t_1- and the t_2-perspective on the event and can thus in its cognitive act combine determination (from t_2) with indetermination (from t_1). (The complication of introducing t_2 may seem to be unnecessary, for god can also get the determination from t_3, yet the point is that a contingent fact can be known determinedly at some point before its actual happening.)

However, the objection raised above about the essential difference between future events and past or present events remains valid. Even if god can know the future in an atemporal way, one cannot understand how this knowledge can be determinate unless god

knows the future outcome as following by necessity. The price to safeguard god's determinate knowledge of future contingent events, is to understand them ultimately as following from a series of antecedents causes known by god. As Proclus observes in the argument summarised above, divine providence anticipates the coming about of the indeterminate, because it knows it in a causal manner. To the extent that it also causes the indeterminate to exist and does so in a determinate manner, it also knows the contingent in a determinate manner. Given such an overall knowledge in virtue of causative power, one wonders what is left of the contingent character of events and in particular free human choices. Contingency thus appears to be incompatible with divine foreknowledge, despite all claims to the contrary. This poses a serious problem for someone who, like Proclus, is committed to the premise that free will requires contingency.[42] The Platonic account in this case offers not more than a semblance of a solution. The answer to this conundrum that consists in saying that we humans cannot fully understand the divine mode of knowledge (the answer given in *Prov.* 65,9-12, *TP* 1,98,3-6 and 14-16) is not very satisfactory.[43] In such a case it would be better to drop one of the assumptions out of which the absurdity arose in the first place.

Third problem: is providence the cause of determinate and indeterminate things in the same way?

Having explained how providence knows in a determinate way not only what is determinate and necessary, but also what is indeterminate and contingent, Proclus raises the question how providence can produce so different classes of beings. If providence were to produce both indeterminate and determinate things in the same manner, one could not explain how providence knows and produces the indeterminate as indeterminate and the determinate as determinate. A possible solution would be to say that providence knows and produces the indeterminate with its infinite power and the determinate with the One or Limit in it. In divine providence one can indeed distinguish between *peras* and *apeiron*. For Proclus accepts that in the divine henads too there is a sort of distinction between both aspects. 'Every order of gods is derived from the two initial principles, Limit and Infinity; but some manifest predominantly the causality of Limit, others that of Infinity' (*ET* §159, tr. E.R. Dodds). One might be tempted to appeal to this distinction to explain how providence produces the two different classes of beings. Such a solution was probably defended in the Athenian school, which attributed a primordial role to the dyad of *peras* and *apeiron* among the fundamental metaphysical principles.[44] Proclus, however, does not adopt this solution, as it runs the risk of jeopardising the fundamental henadic unity of divine providence. In his view, providence as a whole, in both

its aspects of infinity and unity, produces determinate and indeterminate things alike, though with varying dominance of one or the other aspect. All beings receive both unity and infinity from providence, but in higher beings unity dominates; therefore they are determinate. In lower beings infinity is stronger, which is why they are indeterminate (contingent). Indeterminate beings too, however, share in determination. For all contingent beings become determined before their occurrence, either a shorter or a longer time before. This means that at some point the conditions leading up to a contingent event will be such that the event has become inevitable, hence 'determined' (see above, pp. 14-15). To explain this subtle solution Proclus is forced to engage in a long metaphysical digression on the respective role of *peras* and *apeiron* in the constitution of beings.

> **§9** Does providence cause determinate and indeterminate things in the same way? The question is raised by the following dilemma: if it does so in the same way, it is unclear how the things caused by it can exhibit a different character, some being determinate, others indeterminate; but if providence causes them according to different aspects, the unity of providence is jeopardised.

Proclus first explains a seeming contradiction, namely that providence has both the highest form of unity (§10) and infinite power (§11).

> **§10** Providence is established in the One. We know from our common conceptions that every form of providence amounts to a bestowal of goodness. The bestowal of goodness is identical with the bestowal of unity, as the Good (as a principle) is also the One. The One of providence has a character that is different from that of material unity, from individual unity, and even from universal unity. Unlike material unity, it is fertile and eminently productive. Unlike individual unity, the One of providence contains all, is present to all, and preserves all things. Unlike universal unity, which is called 'one-many' because it contains all things inferior to it [and caused by it] and anticipates the differences in them, the One of providence in no way anticipates the differences in the things of which it is the productive and perfective cause. Its power completely transcends its products. The latter cannot, either individually or collectively, encompass the power of the providential One.
>
> **§11** The One of providence therefore surpasses every union and yet its power is more infinite than any other power, be it finite or infinite. It is indeed possible that one infinite power is more

> infinite than another, as intelligible infinity is not quantitative,[45] but an infinity *of power*. What is infinite is so for the things inferior to it, but neither for the things superior to it, for those are the ones that impose a limit on it, nor for itself, for if it were not possible for it to limit itself it could not preserve itself.[46] The infinite power of providence is productive of all objects under its sway; it bestows both infinity and unity to these things in accordance with their own rank. Unity, too, means different things at different [ontological] levels. Both limit and unlimitedness proceed from the One and appear at each level in a different manner.[47]

This section contains the striking claim that some infinities are more infinite than others, followed by the rider that this can only be true in the case of non-quantitative infinities – boundless powers, that is. An elucidation of that notion is, however, lacking.

> **§12** Providence is thus characterised by unity and infinity. Its products share in these two features, but some are more characterised by unity, others more by infinity. The beings that are closer to the One display a stronger presence of limit, the ones that are more distant a stronger presence of the unlimited, i.e. of infinity. This corresponds to the distinction between determinate (or necessary), and indeterminate (or contingent) beings, the determinate being superior to the indeterminate.

Providence can produce determinate as well as indeterminate beings, because it has itself both unity (the source of determination or limit) and infinity (for lower beings the source of indetermination).

> All forms of determination and infinity stem from the unity and infinity of providence, with unity (i.e. limit, determination) always dominating. The relations between things down here are analogous to the relations between their causes.

> **§13** Comparison [of providence's twofold power: productive and cognitive] with intellect's twofold production and cognition of intellect and soul's twofold production and cognition. Intellect produces *logoi* of incorporeal and corporeal things, but in both cases the *logoi* are incorporeal, i.e. correspond to the mode of being of intellect; it also knows both of its products in an intellective manner. Soul analogously produces *logoi* of animate and inanimate things ('scientific' and 'technical' *logoi*, respectively), but does so, in both cases, in a manner appropriate to its own, 'vital', way of being.
>
> The principle can be generalised: everything which produces

and knows and uses different causes internal to it (in each of the previous examples: the two types of *logoi*), produces and knows them according to the superior type of cause. From the point of view of the effects, however, one class of effects is produced according to the higher, the other according to the inferior causes.

Applied to providence: through the One (internal to it), it produces determinate beings, through infinity (internal to it), it produces indeterminate beings. It knows both classes according to the higher of these causes, in a determinate way, that is. Of the products, however, some are determinate, others indeterminate (i.e. necessary and contingent, respectively). Yet both classes of products also participate in the other cause: determinate beings in infinity – because of this they are everlasting –; indeterminate beings in unity – because of that they end up being determined (once a determined event has come to pass, its outcome is fixed).

§14 All beings, corporeal and incorporeal, are constituted as a mixture of limit and unlimitedness. These three elements – limit, unlimited, mixture – stem from above, i.e. they are produced by providence. Hence providence also knows both limit and the unlimited. All things contain both elements, but one of them always dominates. If unity, i.e. limit, dominates, the resulting being is determinate, i.e. necessary; if the unlimited dominates, it is indeterminate, i.e. contingent. Yet even down here things are never fully deprived of unity. Hence contingent things somehow receive determination. For some things this happens a long time, for others a short time before their occurrence, depending on how strong the principle of determination is in their case. This means that future contingents at some time become fixed: [when they happen they have become fixed, but] the outcome has been determined already some time before the occurrence. This determination stems from another source, superior to the contingent thing itself. This is shown by conjectural divinations, which become more true the more the event approaches.

In our comments on the second problem we discuss how even contingent things come to participate of determination.

With this conclusion Proclus has found an acceptable solution for the third problem and he could have moved on to the next one. Somewhat surprisingly he continues the discussion with the examination of a subsidiary question that has only a loose connection with problem 3, namely the question of the providence exercised by demons compared to that of the gods.

In §15-16 Proclus examines how demons know indeterminate things and exercise providential care over them, and in what way their providential knowledge is different from that of the gods. That demons and other higher beings play an important role in providence regarding the details of human life is not only confirmed by the numerous magical practises in which demons are invoked but also acknowledged by Platonists since the beginning of the Empire.[48]

Proclus will come back more extensively to the problem of demonic providence in the tenth problem. The reason why he decided to broach the subject already here is because it is closely linked with the problem of the indeterminate. If the indeterminate were not known and were not the object of providential care and thus connected with the determinate, the unity of the universe would collapse. Platonists may be tempted to insist on the essential role of demons in providence for this very reason. For one might think that without demonic intervention the indeterminate would remain bereft of providence. This is not Proclus' view. Without denying the essential contribution of the demons, he nevertheless attributes to them a mere subordinate role as auxiliaries of the gods. The gods remain the primary providential agents. Providence over higher beings is exercised directly by them. Divine providence over lower beings is mediated through demons, as the recipients are of themselves not capable of receiving the providential action of the gods directly.

§15 In order for the universe to be one and governed in accordance with intellect, there must be a connection between contingent things and the realm that is always determinate. This is only possible if the beings superior to us have a knowledge of indeterminate things. Hence it should be examined *how* it is possible for them to have such a knowledge.

Of the superior beings it is either (1) only demons that have this knowledge (they are closest to the world), or (2) also the gods, who then delegate the providential governance over different things to different demons. If it is only demons, either (1a) they know the objects of their providential care and the beings superior to themselves in turn, or (1b) they know both classes of things simultaneously. In case (1a) demons would not differ from our souls and they would themselves become subject to indetermination each time they turn toward contingent reality. [*Quod non.*] In case (1b) there are two further possibilities: (1b1) they know indeterminate things either through discursive reasoning, by possessing *logoi* and forms of indeterminate things; (1b2) or by a higher form of knowledge. In case (1b1) they lack the impassivity of the higher orders and know using memory and imagination. [*Quod non.*] In case (1b2) there is no reason not to grant to the gods the same kind of knowledge.

[The demons therefore know according to (1b1), but then it is not the demons alone (1), but (2) the gods too that know contingent things.]

Determinate knowledge of contingent things exercised by …
- (1) demons alone
  - (1a) knowledge of contingent things alternating with knowledge of superior realities → no
  - (1b) knowledge of contingent things simultaneous with knowledge of superior realities
    - (1b1) merely discursive knowledge of contingent things → no
    - (1b2) higher form of knowledge of contingent things → yes, but then not (1b1), but rather (2)
- (2) demons and gods → yes

Hence [given that there is determinate knowledge of indeterminate things in superior beings], both demons and gods have determinate knowledge of indeterminate things. For if we grant it to demons, it would be absurd not to grant it to gods too.

Objection: possibly gods are capable of determinate knowledge of indeterminate things, but do not want to have this knowledge. Reply: this is highly absurd, because gods will also want to know the same things that they bring forth. Indeed all things are products of gods: some directly from the demiurge, others from the cosmic gods who act as delegates of the demiurge. Gods will not neglect what they produce.

Proclus does not here make a distinction between providence (singular) and the gods (plural), here presented as the first providential agents. The gods should be conceived as henads who each manifest a specific aspect of the One, i.e. ways in which the One is participated.[49] The term demons is here taken in the broad sense. In §25 and also in §62-6 Proclus distinguishes demons in the strict sense from angels and heroes.[50]

§16 Since the gods are willing to exercise providence over indeterminate things and are capable of doing so, they will exercise providence over indeterminate things and know them, i.e. they know their merit. The providential care of gods is transcendent, that of demons partitioned and specialised in accordance with specific objects. The gods exercise direct providence over some beings, over others through the mediation of demons, because some things are not capable of receiving the providence of the gods directly. A sign of this is that some beings

> because of their inaptitude think that the only providence is that exercised by demons; but when they regain their aptitude they become aware of the providence of the gods from which they benefited all the while. When this conversion takes place, the indeterminate becomes determinate. From the divine perspective it was determinate all the while, but before the conversion the 'indeterminate' beings were indeterminate to themselves. Yet their indeterminacy was not so great that they lacked determination completely, as that would have meant their destruction.

Proclus here appeals to the familiar principle that incomplete participation, or a failure to participate directly in the highest causes, is always due to the weakness of the participants, never to the causes.[51] The so-called indeterminate beings that are the object of the providential care exercised by demons are too weak to enjoy the unmediated providence of the gods. This can change due to a kind of conversion. It is not fully clear in what the conversion consists exactly. When Proclus says that these beings become determinate at this point, he might mean that they undergo a real change (as in §15), or merely, as the example of waking up in the sunlight suggests, that they realise that they were determined all the while. These beings were in fact determined all the time, but only from the perspective of the gods. Their receiving determination could then consist in nothing but their new awareness. But it could also mean that indeterminate things change to being determinate, and that what they witness is a real change.

How all things participate in providence, though in different ways

Proclus concludes the third problem with a comprehensive investigation of the role of providence in the world (§17-20). All things from the highest to the lowest level take part in the providential order, though in different ways. This extensive conclusion discusses fundamental issues on providence beyond the strict scope of the third problem (which was a rather technical question within the school). It would have been more opportune if Proclus had put it at the very end of this treatise.

> **§17** All that is good stems from providence, just as all understanding stems from intellect and everything pertaining to life from soul. Even non-universal beings, intermittent participants, corruptible, and indeterminate things receive what is good for them from providence, either unmediatedly or mediatedly. The intermediaries [which play a mediating role in the participation, for instance the demons mentioned in §16] make

what they receive from above adapted to the ultimate participants, and they also make the latter fit for receiving the gifts from above. The intermediaries themselves too enjoy what they receive from above. They have in fact a greater participation, as they are closer to the superior causes.

Proclus lists a number of characteristics of inferior things, without specifying how these relate to one another. Every one of these lower beings will be non-universal ('partial'). All corruptible things will be intermittent participants, but it is less certain whether all intermittent participants are corruptible. The complete answer should involve various degrees of both intermittency and corruptibility. All intermittent participants and all corruptible beings should be indeterminate, as the interruption of their participation and the moment and mode of their corruption will not be fully determined.

§18 All things are made good by providence, some directly, others through intermediaries. There has to be an order and coordination among the objects of providence, for otherwise the universe would not be one. Order distinguishes things from one another according to the way they are produced by the good; coordination brings them back to the one good. [Order and coordination thus correspond to procession and reversion.] Hence the mode of providence must be different for different things (on account of coordination). If there is providence over primary beings, then also over secondary beings, because whatever is capable of producing the higher is also capable of producing the lower. Providence produces superior, secondary, and inferior things, for the gods are not lacking in power and in their case will is always in line with power. Similarly, good people wish to achieve that of which they are capable.

§19 If there is providence over secondary beings, there is certainly providence over primary beings. Primary beings are self-sufficient, [hence one might think they do not need providence,] but this self-sufficiency itself is a gift they receive from providence. For higher beings either need something, in which case they get all they need (plenitude) from providence; or they do not need something, in which case they have received this very state of not needing anything from providence.

§20 All beings, even those that do not always exist, receive their good from providence. Some stem directly from providence, others through intermediaries. The reason is not that providence would not be capable of producing and perfecting the latter, too. It is the latter participants that are not capable of

receiving [primary] providence directly, but need intermediaries that are produced close to providence.

The good received from providence is different for different things. Sometimes the difference is related to the essence of the thing (corresponding to the ontological rank of each being, as e.g. the good of souls is different from that of bodies), sometimes to its activities: for souls, for instance, activities determine merit, and merit determines what good they receive. Some souls enjoy the good they get, others suffer it with aversion.

That providence is also concerned with particular things can be understood if one considers that they too contribute to the universe and that everything in the universe is connected – even if we are not always able to see this.

Fourth problem: participation

In the fourth *quaestio* Proclus examines how inferior beings participate in divine providence. More particularly he attempts to explain why some beings participate in a deficient manner and with interruptions, others continuously, despite the fact that the gods themselves are eternally active in the same manner. The answer will be that each participant not only receives something from causes superior to it, but also contributes something of its own. The different way in which each participant receives the divine illumination explains the variety in the modes of participation. The treatment of intermittent participants provides Proclus with the opportunity to discuss once more the role of the so-called superior kinds as providential agents. This role will be discussed further in the tenth question.

§21 The problem of participation of the gods is related to the problem raised in relation to Forms. Either the gods are always active, but things down here do not always participate; but how could they have an activity if nothing is receptive of it? Or the gods are not always active. But that too is absurd, as the activity of the gods is not just perpetual, but lies even before time.

As Proclus notices, this is a problem 'that also those who love to speculate about the Forms are accustomed to investigate regarding the Forms'. The question of participation indeed belongs to the traditional list of four problems in relation to the Platonic doctrine of the Forms.[52] Interestingly, Proclus also uses the principle that is at the base of his argument in this question in his demonstration of the eternity of the world. According to Philoponus, who wrote a refutation of Proclus' lost treatise, the argument runs as follows. If the divine paradigm of the world is eternal and exercises its paradigmatic function *per se*, there must always exist an image correspond-

ing to this eternal model. Without a copy the paradigm *qua* paradigm would cease to exist. For that reason the sensible world must exist as a temporal but everlasting image of the eternal forms.[53]

Before answering the question Proclus explains in general terms how he understands participation in the divine. Participation is not the activity itself of providence, but what comes from this activity to a particular type of being. It occupies an intermediary position between the participants and the participated: it proceeds from the participated entities, but is established in the participants. All things participate in providence according to their own capacities, and thus contribute to the works of providence.

§22 Participation is intermediate between participated and participants. Like every intermediate, it has something in common with both extremes. This is comparable to the position of knowledge between knower and known (cf. §7); knowing too is a participatory relation. Providence is participated by all classes of things, by each class in accordance with its own power. Participation therefore reveals the character of providence itself but also the character proper to each class of participants. Participation bears a single, unitary character resulting from the characteristics of the participated (providence) and the participants (the objects of providential care). This mixture of characteristics may be compared to the light of the moon.

§23 The activity of providence is unitary and unchanging. The participants participate, that is, they are perfected, in accordance with their own nature: some for their existence, some for their life, some for their thinking, some for all of these three.[54] Some participate uninterruptedly and unvaryingly, others intermittently, because of their own weakness. The interruption of the participation is thus due to the participants alone. The activity of the participated remains unaffected. This can be compared with the sun that always shines, while not all beings are able to gaze at the sun all the time.

§24 The interruption of participation due to the participant does not diminish the activity of the participated. This can be compared to an unmoving face whose imprint is received by a smooth mirror, but not by things with a rough, non-reflecting surface. This feature can also be observed in oracles having periods of inactivity. The gods nonetheless send out oracular spirits without pause, i.e. they constantly 'illuminate' angels, demons and heroes, but not all regions are able to benefit from their oracular activity without interruption. Similarly with

> statues that through the power of sacred rites become animated and filled with a divine spirit for a while. The cessation of this divine animation is due to the weakness of the material recipient, not to the gods, for the inspiration that comes from them is unchanging. It is like with lunar eclipses, which should not be blamed on the sun.

Proclus here takes up another topic that was discussed by Plutarch of Chaeroneia. While his take on the issue is essentially the same as Plutarch's considered view (not to be confused with the views expressed by some interlocutors of *De defectu oraculorum*), Proclus regards the oracular spirits (*pneumata*) as straightforwardly immaterial.[55] The animation of statues is another aspect of traditional religion adopted by the Platonists.[56] The sacred rites according to Proclus create an aptitude in the material for receiving the divine spirits.

> **§25** Between providence, which is unchanging and uniform, and the participants, of which there is a great variety and which are (in many cases) impermanent, there must be 'common bonds', intermediaries more limited in number. Of these intermediaries between providence (i.e. the gods or henads: see §15) some are closer to the gods, others more remote. Three classes can be distinguished (from high to low): angels, demons, heroes. The illumination which they provide to the participants sometimes comes from them, sometimes passes through them. Some participants can indeed hardly reach the intermediaries, whereas others reach through them to the higher causes (the gods). In the latter case, the intermediaries serve as substrate for the good that comes from the gods. Analogously, some pupils merely study geometry for its own sake, whereas others are able to use geometry as a means to reach the level of intellect and practice dialectics.[57] The first merely ascend to geometry, and are perfected by it, the others ascend to a higher level and receive a higher perfection, having passed through geometry. By receiving the illumination that stems from the intermediaries the participants, however, receive in some sense the illumination from the gods themselves, as the intermediaries receive their own power from the gods.

Whereas Proclus previously mentioned only demons as intermediaries, he now lists three classes: angels, demons *sensu stricto,* and heroes. In the earlier discussion (§15) the term 'demons' as used in the broader sense, which encompasses all three superior classes.[58] Proclus distinguishes between two levels of participation, corresponding to the power of different participants (and expressed in

terms of ascent, i.e. reversion): participation of the good proper to the intermediaries and participation of the good proper to the gods but transmitted through the intermediaries. A further qualification, added afterwards, blurs this distinction: the participation of the good of the intermediaries is in some sense a participation of the good of the gods, because the intermediaries are what they are, and are capable of bestowing the goodness they have to inferior beings, because of their own participation of the gods. The difference between the two kinds of participation would then merely be that in the one case one participates of the intermediaries in accordance with their essence (corresponding to their own rank), even if what one participates in is only there in virtue of the gods; in the other case one participates in the gifts of the gods through the intermediaries. In both cases the participation is in the good that ultimately stems from the gods, but as it is present in the essence of the intermediaries; yet in the one case this higher provenance would be hidden, in the other not (the intermediaries would be either opaque or transparent, so to speak).

Fifth problem: why does evil exist?

This problem receives a fuller and much more nuanced treatment in the third of the *opuscula*, *On the Existence of Evils*.[59] The relation between providence and evil is addressed explicitly in the last part of that work (§58-61).

> **§26** Evil seems incompatible with providence (if providence is taken to be all-pervasive [and powerful]). Therefore some abolish the idea of providence that extends to all things, whereas others get rid of evil (by considering it to be just a lesser good).

The aporia is set up in a way that is very similar to that regarding contingency (cf. §6). Also in *On the Existence of Evils* the treatment of the relation between providence and evil begins with the same aporia:

> If there is evil, how will it not stand in the way of that which is providential towards the good? On the other hand, if providence fills the universe, how can there be evil in beings? Some thinkers indeed yield to one of the two lines of reasoning: either they admit that not everything comes from providence, and [acknowledge there is evil, or they] deny the existence of evil, and maintain that everything comes from providence and the good. And this indeed is a problem that fascinates the soul. But perhaps one may find a perspective from which both points of view do not conflict. (*Mal.* 58,2-7, tr. Opsomer-Steel)

> **§27** (1) By denying the existence of evil we would indeed avoid

> the problem. (2) If, however, we accept that evil exists, we have to explain its origin. Evil either (2a) stems from providence or (2b) from another cause. If (2b1) that other case stems itself from providence, evil will stem from providence ultimately; if (2b2) that other cause does not itself stem from providence, our theory is dualistic: there will be a principle of good and a principle of evil things. This second principle will inevitably constitute a threat to providence's tranquillity.
>
> We accept the existence of evil and try to find an explanation of its mode of existence that constitutes no threat to providence.
>
> Evil exists in bodies, but not in all bodies, and in souls, but not in universal souls. Evil in bodies is contrary to nature [the ruling principle of body], evil in souls is contrary to reason [the ruling principle of soul]. Let us start with evil in bodies, examining in what kinds of bodies it occurs and how contrariety to nature is reconcilable with providence.

(1) evil does not exist → no
(2) evil exists → yes
  (2a) evil stems (directly) from providence
  (2b) evil stems from another cause
    (2b1) this other cause stems from providence → evil stems from providence ultimately
    (2b2) this other cause does not stem from providence → no, as this amounts to dualism

Proclus does not tell us yet which options he will go for, though he excludes some resolutely. He affirms the existence of evil, hence rejects (1). In *Mal.* the thesis of the existence of evil is deemed worthy of a lengthy argument (§2-10); in our text, however, it is posited without further argument. Proclus rejects (2b2) the possibility of an independent principle of evil, citing what we may consider a theological reason: the first principle should be free from worry (in other texts he adds metaphysical reasons for rejecting dualism). So we seem to be left with the possibilities (2a) and (2b1). In both cases evil will stem from providence, either directly (2a) or indirectly (2b1). Proclus will certainly not want to say that providence directly causes evil. So the only option would seem to be (2b1). Yet Proclus would not want to accept this in the way it is formulated here. For he wants at all costs to avoid making providence responsible for evil, as we will see. Proclus will therefore argue that evil has a special mode of existence (*parhupostasis*) and is not the result of *per se* causation.

In order to address the issue, Proclus starts by distinguishing different types of evils by looking at the beings in which they exist. Without arguing for it he posits that evil is found only in some types of body and some types of soul (in *Mal.* he develops a long argument

that leads to that conclusion, i.e. in §11-39, which he just skips here). He also posits that evil in bodies consists in contrariety to nature, that in souls in contrariety to reason; for nature and reason are the ruling principles of body and soul, respectively (cf. *Mal.* 39; 55). The corruptible bodies that are liable to evil are ordinary, material and particular bodies. Bodies that are not corruptible are the four elements, seen as totalities, and the (relatively) immaterial bodies, such as heavenly bodies and ethereal bodies.[60] The souls susceptible to evil are the human souls (including the so-called irrational souls), not the divine souls and the universal souls.[61]

> **§28** Contrariety to nature can only occur in corruptible bodies, as everlasting bodies cannot be contrary to nature. Corruptible bodies need to exist for the sake of the plenitude of the world (with reference to *Tim.* 41C1-4). Moreover, primary beings should not be the last.[62] The completeness and perfection of the universe are intended by providence, hence the existence of corruptible bodies, and of the evil in them, is in accordance with providence. The good is thus the final cause of the evil in bodies. By their very existence they contribute to the whole. [Moreover], by their corruptibility they allow the generation of other things; in this way what is against nature (corruption) exists for the sake of what is according to nature (generation).

Proclus does not strictly distinguish what are in fact two different ways in which corruptible bodies contribute to the whole: (1) they make the world complete; (2) their corruption makes room for the generation of other things.

> **§29** The evil that exists for the sake of the good is not unmixedly evil. It is evil only for the thing corrupted, but good for that which will be generated and for the universe as a whole. Corruption is according to the nature of the corrupting agent, but appears to be contrary to nature for the patient. Yet on closer inspection the corruption is according to the nature of the patient. It belongs to the concept of contrariety that one of the contraries is corruptive, the other corruptible. And since all generation depends on contrariety, corruptibility contributes to generation. And since generation is in accordance with providence, corruption is an instrument of providence. It comes to be as a side-effect of teleological processes, i.e. it has a *parhupostasis.*

Proclus discusses generation and corruption in *Mal.* 5, as part of the dialectical argument in favour of the existence of evils. In the last part of the treatise he argues that corruption of bodies contributes to the good of the whole (*Mal.* 60-1).[63]

At the end of *Dub*. 29 Proclus introduces the notion of *parhupostasis*, translated below as 'parasitical existence' (as a matter of fact, he only uses the verbal form in §29). The concept of *parhupostasis* is crucial to Proclus' theory of evils. It is more fully explained in *On the Existence of Evils*.[64] The concept does not, as is often thought, refer to a diminished form of existence or to a kind of counter-force, but is connected rather to a causal analysis according to which that which is not the result of a *per se* causation, but accidentally arises as the side-effect of a *per se* causal process, is called *parhupostasis*:

> We must next consider what the mode of evil is and how it comes into existence from the above-mentioned causes and non-causes. Here we have to bring in the aforementioned *parhupostasis* [i.e. parasitic existence]. For there is no other way of existing for that which neither is produced, in any way whatever, from a principal cause, nor has a relation to a definite goal and a final cause, nor has received in its own right an entry into being, since anything whatever that exists properly must come from a cause in accordance with nature – indeed, without a cause it is impossible for anything to come about – and must relate the order of its coming about to some goal. (*Mal.* 50,1-7, tr. Opsomer-Steel)

> **§30** The evil in souls, i.e. contrariety to reason, is in accordance with providence. Contrariety to reason comes about as a result of the meeting of the rational soul with the so-called irrational soul.[65] Whenever the mortal, i.e. the irrational, prevails, vice [i.e. contrariety to reason] arises in the rational soul. These lower appetites – emotions – are nevertheless natural for the irrational soul itself. But they are contrary to the essence of soul, which aspires to rationality. Evil originates in the mixture of these two elements. Yet it does not have a principal existence, but rather a parasitical existence (*parhupostasis*). In a sense contrariety to reason is not evil, namely for the irrational soul that causes this state in the rational soul. This is clear from the fact that where the irrational is not coupled with a rational soul, for instance in brutes, irrationality is in no way evil.[66]
>
> Whereas irrationality is in a sense contrary to the essence of the rational soul, it is, inversely, not contrary to the nature of an irrational soul to be controlled by reason. This asymmetry is characteristic for opposites of unequal value: it is according to nature for the worse to be dominated by the better. For every being has its own good and a good that stems from what is better than itself.

The origin of contrariety to reason in souls is similar to that of

contrariety to nature in bodies: the agent acts according to nature, but for the patient (the corrupted body, the vicious soul) what happens is contrary to nature, in a sense. Yet in another sense it is not evil. Proclus elaborates the idea that the influence of the irrational soul on the rational soul is in accordance with the nature of the irrational soul. Since it only intends what is in accordance with its own being, the negative effects in the rational soul are a mere side-product. In other words, they are not as such intended by the irrational soul. The term *parhupostasis* is therefore used appropriately (see above, §29).

It should be noticed that the theory of *On the Existence of Evils* is much more sophisticated in this respect. Whereas in our text the irrationality affecting the rational soul seems to be blamed entirely upon the obtrusive presence of the irrational soul (which is nonetheless needed as a buffer between the rational soul and the body), the other treatise, in which the problem of evil is discussed much more extensively, emphasises the responsibility of the rational soul that makes the wrong choices.

§31 If one admits that the descent of the soul into the realm of becoming and the existence[67] of the irrational soul into the body are in themselves in accordance with providence – i.e. good –, then contrariety to reason too must somehow be traced back to some good. The descent of the soul is good, for it happens for the sake of the existence of rational mortal animals occupying the place between immortal animals and mortal irrational animals (in addition, there are also immortal irrational animals). The irrational soul is needed as an intermediary between the soul and the body: otherwise our 'divine' soul would be in direct contact with the body. That is, however, impossible for two reasons: the body is unable to receive the incorporeal soul immediately; and the soul would be hindered in its rationality by the body, and by the affections and desires pertaining to body. For in order to protect and take proper care of the body, it would need to be itself in possession of desires and be affected by them. The soul would also need the lower cognitive faculties, as only sense-perception can grasp particulars, e.g. threats to the body coming from particular things. Hence the soul needs the irrational soul. Thus, both the descent of the soul and the generation of the so-called irrational soul are intended by providence. [And since this inevitably entails contrariety to reason, as the irrational soul is contrary to reason, which is the governing principle of the 'divine' soul,] contrariety to reason too 'follows from the decree of providence', i.e. is intended by it. Just like in the case of bodies the counternatural exists for the sake

of the natural, in the case of souls contrariety to reason exists for the sake of reason.

In this fifth problem Proclus has not said much on the mode of being and the causation of evil. He merely points out that the evils of corruptible bodies and human souls (including irrational souls) – the only evils there are – contribute to the goodness of the universe and (some of) its parts, and are therefore also good. That is why they were intended thus by providence. Hence there is no incompatibility between providence and evil. A question that has not been addressed explicitly either, is that of the possible responsibility of providence for evil. Yet the account Proclus gives is not unrelated to theodicy, in that it shows the admixture of goodness in the really existing evils.

Sixth problem: how to reconcile the activity of providence with the inequalities in human lives

From the sixth up to the ninth problem Proclus addresses questions regarding the justice of rewards and punishments. A just distribution ought to follow the principle of merit, i.e. geometric equality, as Plato and Aristotle had taught.[68] Yet fortunes do not always seem to be distributed according to this principle. In *On Providence* §53 Proclus discusses the same problem, saying that it is often used in arguments against providence: why do good people suffer misfortune? And why do bad people achieve what they desire?[69] Goods, at least external goods, seem to be distributed, not according to the correct geometric proportion, but in inverted proportion.

§32 If providence heeds the principle of merit, why is there such inequality among humans? Some morally bad people are successful, some morally good people suffer. This poses a problem for our concept of providence: not only are people of unequal merit awarded equal fortunes, but also there sometimes is an inverse distribution of unequal fortunes, so that the meritorious are worse off, those without merit better off. Yet providence ought to distribute fortunes proportionally to merit, i.e. according to the geometrical mean.

§33 It is perfectly normal that providence gives to the virtuous the means to increase their virtue, and to the vicious that for which they care, for instance, external goods. The vicious are focused on apparent goods like money and power and do not care about real goods (like contemplation, temperance, the possession of a good soul). Inversely, the virtuous do not care about apparent goods. Both groups believe that providence is the provider of what they regard as goods. Hence providence

distributes according to merit: each group gets the kind of goods it deserves: apparent goods in the case of the morally bad, real goods in the case of the virtuous. Yet there is an important qualification to be made: whereas the real goods are lasting and self-sufficient, the apparent goods are insecure and do not lead to contentment.

In his initial answer Proclus argues that the external goods for which the morally bad people are held to be fortunate do not really further their well-being, whereas virtue contains its own reward.[70] Moreover the external goods for which the bad people are sometimes envied are easily lost and only lead to more desires, that cannot be satisfied.

§34 The shortage of apparent goods even incites good people to greater virtue; and to others it shows the greatness of virtue. For it shows virtue in its purity, without the addition of apparent goods. We indeed admire virtue more when it meets with misfortune.

§35 Providence moreover has pedagogical reasons for the way it distributes apparent and real goods. If it were the other way around, and good people got apparent goods whereas bad people would lack them, then people would want to be virtuous for the wrong reasons, i.e. because of the prestige attached to it. As it is, however, virtue is shown without any foreign adornments and is all the more admirable when it is coupled with bad luck. Consequently, immoral behaviour will be detested even when people see it accompanied by good luck. Providence thus stimulates the pursuance of virtue and the avoidance of wickedness. Virtue is seen to be its own reward, whereas viciousness makes even good fortune shameful.

§36 The immortal soul needs to use an irrational soul and a body. The latter two hinder the immortal soul in its striving for true beauty so it is good that they are kept in check, for instance by disease, poverty, lack of power (in the relation with other humans). That is the reason why some honest people even seek to live in unhealthy conditions (e.g. Plato) and poverty (e.g. Crates).

In §35-6 Proclus highlights the pedagogical value of the aforementioned distribution: by not giving apparent goods to the virtuous, the true value of virtue shines more brightly, since virtue is shown in its purity. In the next section (§37) he for the first time introduces the notion of punishment.

> **§37** Providence gives to the good exactly what they themselves want. The apparent goods given to the wicked are actually punishments. The apparent goods with which the bad are supplied are effectively instruments for vice and thus exposes their depravity. This is not even bad for them. For as long as it is not exposed the bad condition cannot be healed. As for the virtuous, they should exercise themselves. By carefully varying the goods with which providence supplies them, it incites them to become active in different domains and manners. The virtuous may thus recognise the varying circumstances in which they find themselves as opportunities given by providence.[71]

By giving external goods to the wicked, providence supplies them with instruments for vice. This is a punishment for them, but since punishment has to be understood as primarily corrective, it is in fact good for them (in some cases punishment also seems to retain a retributive dimension).[72] The virtuous too benefit from the adverse circumstances in which they find themselves. These are blessings in disguise, and should be regarded as exercises[73] for them; the changes of circumstances due to what is usually called bad luck in fact offer opportunities for becoming active in new ways.

> **§38** Providence does not give all the goods to a single person, but distributes them, just as Plato did not give all the goods to a single class in the state: for the whole city, not just a single class, needs to prosper. Therefore all the souls that descend should also experience some of the evil down here. Thus they will appreciate the good all the more. Therefore providence gives apparent evils to the virtuous and apparent goods to the wicked; thus the latter get to know, if not the real good, at least an image of it, and by getting punished [afterwards] they are directed away from this place.

The virtuous too have to experience evil, but they should not (and cannot) experience real evil, so they get confronted with apparent evils: adverse external circumstances. The vicious already experience evil, yet they should also experience some good. Yet they too are unable to experience the true opposite of their own nature, which is why they get to experience an apparent good, i.e. an image of the good in the form of external goods. This has the further advantage that this is for them an instrument for evil, which first makes them worse, but also brings the corrective punishment nearer. The idea that good people cannot be harmed by anything goes back to Socrates' provocative claim that he cannot be harmed by the Athenians, as the only thing that could harm his soul is his soul itself, by becoming unjust.[74] Virtue, he claims, is sufficient for happiness.[75] This undoubtedly

inspired the Stoics to make the claim that the good cannot be harmed, as virtue coincides with happiness.[76] The external goods according to them are indifferent (they are morally indifferent, but are nonetheless 'preferred').[77]

> **§39** Three agents determine our situation: our own actions; the actions of others; providence. We are ourselves responsible for the trouble we bring upon ourselves, not providence (Proclus adds an allusion[78] to *Resp*. 10, 617E4). It is not the aim of providence to abolish our self-determination [for instance once the consequences start to be negative], but rather to preserve it [hence providence is not to be blamed even if we choose harmful things].
>
> The same principle holds for actions by other beings that affect us: providence allows that parts of the universe act on one another. In the course of these interactions, some things [i.e. lifeless things] act by nature, others [i.e. rational beings[79]] by choice. These interactions are a constitutive part of the unity of the universe. These actions [only those of agents capable of choice, presumably] will all be judged by means of the moral distinction between good and bad. For the victims [of a harmful action] what happens to them is deserved, but the agent [of a morally bad action] will not escape [divine] justice. Between natural agents it is not a matter of mere coincidence what agent affects what patient. Similarly in the case of rational agents: it is not a matter of coincidence. Rather providence has organised these interactions in such a way that they are beneficial for the patient. But the perpetrator of a morally bad action will nonetheless be punished, even though (s)he was the instrument of the universe. For it is the [bad] inclination that makes the agent deserving of punishment.
>
> As for the things we undergo by the sole action of the universe [i.e. in accordance with providence]: we must accept that they correspond to our merit. Our merit may be determined by the present, the past or the future. When providence leads us away from human occupation [by taking external goods like money, power or prestige from us], we are encouraged to concentrate on virtue.

The argument insists on the freedom of human action, understood in a libertarian fashion (this agrees with Proclus' previous rejection of the claim that foreknowledge implies determinism: this would be fatal to his libertarian outlook). Souls are self-movers, capable of self-determination. This means that they can initiate a course of action without being determined in such a way that only that course of action was open to them. There is, then, a real choice among

alternative possibilities. Together with other (silent) assumptions,[80] this leads to the consequence that we bring about certain situations for ourselves and others. These situations may not always be beneficial or pleasant. The idea that providence has created our capacity for self-determination, and is thus responsible for its existence, does not entail that it is also responsible for what happens on account of this capacity. The nature of self-determination is indeed conceived to be such that it interrupts the chain of responsibility. With self-determining agents responsibility originates in such a way that it does not carry over to the ontological causes of self-determination. This is of course a classic idea in theodicy. In antiquity, there was indeed a strong link between libertarianism (even if it was not yet called this) and theodicy, which may well explain in part the prevalence of libertarian positions regarding moral responsibility (the important exception being of course Stoicism). Implicit in the present argument is the further idea that our freedom of choice is more important than any harm we can do by using this freedom. Thus, if providence chooses what is best, and decides to preserve our freedom of choice, then this freedom is better than all the goods that may be lost as a result of our actions.

Adverse circumstances may also be caused by other free agents. Proclus speaks in this section about both natural and rational agents, but the activities of natural agents are merely used for comparison. This is clear by the fact that he applies moral categories and argues that these actions will be judged. Proclus commits himself to the view that in the case of harm inflicted by *A* on *B*, *B* (always) deserves this, and *A* will not escape punishment for what (s)he does. *A* acts as an instrument of providence, but will nevertheless incur punishment for what (s)he did. This is a rather striking remark that, if taken seriously and literally (i.e. by making the 'always' explicit, since Proclus does not suggest this is only true for certain cases), amounts to the remarkable claim that all adverse circumstances due to other human agents are deserved. This claim is less harsh if one takes into account that here too punishment should be understood to be corrective, and not retributive. And in those cases in which misfortune is not truly a punishment (e.g. the loss of external goods for the sage), the claim amounts to the idea that likewise the benefits outweigh the suffering. Yet the problem remains of how providence can at the same time preserve the freedom of the agents and make sure that their actions affect only those who deserve to be punished. A radical solution to this problem would consist in saying that *everyone* deserves to be punished, but it is questionable whether Proclus would be willing to endorse such an unhellenic view. When he turns to the agents, Proclus again makes no restrictions or qualifications: they will be punished for what they did. Proclus thus disregards the case of an official who carries out legal and legitimate punishment.

Clearly he is thinking merely of people who out of badness inflict harm on others.

The third possible cause of adverse conditions is providence itself, i.e. the order of the universe. If adverse circumstances are neither due to ourselves, nor to others, we must accept that they were destined for us by the order of things, i.e. by providence, and that they correspond to our merit (see our introduction to the seventh problem for the relation between fate and providence). This merit may be defined by past deeds (Proclus is probably talking about past deeds in our current life; he will discuss previous incarnations later on), by our present behaviour or even by our future behaviour. The question is of course how providence can know what we will do in the future given the fact that we are free agents. Proclus does not explain this, but he would probably argue along the lines of the views he expounded in the second problem.

The argument in this section, then, is not without problems and leaves out crucial steps and premises. This may have to do with the fact that Proclus is here following Plotinus 3.2 [47] 13. From this text the phrase 'unjustly for the offender, but justly for the victim'[81] is drawn, and also the idea that providence monitors future behaviour and determines merit by it. When Plotinus refers to past deeds, he is clearly also thinking of reincarnation, as is clear from the examples of the man who murdered his mother and will be reborn as a woman in order that he (actually she) can then in turn be murdered by his/her son, or of the man who has raped a woman and will become a woman in order to be raped (l. 14-15). Although Proclus does not clearly say that in the present chapter he is talking about punishment within a single life span, it is probably that what he intends, since he comes to speak of reincarnation in §41, but more extensively in §60.

Proclus essentially asks his readers to believe that everything is for the good even when people suffer for reasons we cannot explain: we may not understand the designs of providence, but we should just trust it to act for our good and to organise all things, including the rational agents it uses as instruments, for our ultimate benefit. This will be the style of argument for many of the sections to come.

§40 A further problem consists in a distribution not based on geometric, but on arithmetic equality, namely when the same (bad) fortune befalls a group of people with unequal merit, for instance when whole cities perish and the good and the bad suffer alike. The first thing to say concerning this problem is that these people suffer the same fate insofar they have something in common, not insofar they are different. Insofar they are different they will bear the same fate in a different way, either in a shameful or in a worthy manner; after their death they will

> accordingly be received either in the abode of the bad or in that of the good. Second, the parts have to follow the whole and the less important parts share the fate of the more important beings with which they are linked (i.e. the cosmic cycles). Since what happens to the latter corresponds to providential design, so do the sufferings of less important parts. **§41** Thirdly, the commonality of souls may be hidden, so that we regard as unequal what is actually quite equal. So do souls that are attached to the same god have a greater commonality. Sometimes they have things in common if their actions in previous lives are included. If one takes this hidden commonality in account, equal things tend to happen to souls of equal merit.

The fate of many people of unequal merit being hit by the same afflictions was first explained by denying that there is a problem: they suffer insofar they have something in common and for the good people the suffering is not real (here one could bring in the arguments from §33-7). The second reply amounted to saying that sometimes collateral damage is inevitable. The third reply, like the first, denies the reality of the problem, this time by pointing at hidden similarities between people who suffer the same fate. These commonalities are explained by the idea that they are souls of the same type, as being followers of the same god (an unalterable difference between soul types), or by actions in previous lives.

> **§42** Against those who criticise the inequality of goods bestowed on different people by providence, it has already been said that the morally good receive true goods, the morally bad only apparent goods (§33). Yet there is more: providence gives the best among the apparent goods to the virtuous: a good reputation, that is. The wicked are mocked as soon as they are dead by those who praised them while alive, while the good enjoy enduring prestige. This distribution, too, is in accordance with the principle of merit. The good moreover enjoy a tranquil equanimity, by which they resemble the gods, the bad are always worried, which is fitting for someone who is a slave of her or his passions. The distribution of this too corresponds to merit.

Proclus returns to the beginning of the argument, where he distinguished between true and apparent goods in order to save the idea of a just distribution based on geometric equality. He now adds the idea that the best of the apparent goods, prestige, is awarded to the virtuous as well. Finally the virtuous also enjoy tranquillity and equanimity whereas the wicked are plagued by worries, as is fitting to their respective characters.

Seventh problem: irrational mortal animals

Proclus discusses the question whether there is individualised providence over brutes, starting alternately from one of two contradictory hypotheses: either there is a vestige of self-determination in them or not. In other words, animals are either capable of acting freely, or they are fully determined by natural impulses. The idea that providential care could extend to individual non-human animals (animals considered inferior to humans, that is), is quite revolutionary. It entails that the principle of merit applies to animals, with the further implication that treatment of animals, but also animal behaviour,[82] is subject to rules of justice.[83]

In order to clarify the problem Proclus sketches a three-level hierarchy in relation to the unitary rule of providence and fate.[84] The superior beings are ruled in a perfect manner by providence. The intermediate level, to which human beings belong, are ruled by providence and fate alike (as we have both 'reason' and 'necessity'). The lowest level, that of irrational animals, provided they are merely natural, and plants, is ruled primarily by fate, but also to an extent by providence.

The distinction between fate and providence is not explained here. From *On Providence* we learn that providence is the divine cause of goods, whereas fate is the cause of some connection and sequence between events (*Prov*. 7). Providence is superior to fate in such a way that everything that is ruled by fate is also ruled by providence, but not the other way around (*Prov*. 13). This is in fact a traditional doctrine. It is one of the leading ideas in the treatise *On Fate* falsely attributed to Plutarch,[85] and it is picked up by Plotinus,[86] Iamblichus,[87] and many others. Concerning the question how the relation between providence and fate works in practice, Proclus' general idea is that providence is the divine force that confers goodness onto the universe. It includes fate, which is understood as the connection between things (in line with the original Stoic concept of fate as the causal network connecting antecedents and consequents). Providence is more akin to intellect and rationality, fate to body (nature), in accordance with the doctrine expressed in the *Timaeus* that the world is a mixture of reason and necessity, whereby reason rules over necessity (*Tim*. 48A1-2 quoted in *Prov*. 13,13-15).[88] The fated connection between events is intended by providence and used by it to bring about goodness. Providence does not only extend over the world as a whole and over unchanging beings (stars), but also over individual souls, for which there is special, individualised providence. Since, however, the activity of the gods is unchanging, the providence exercised over the latter is mediated by demons in the broad sense (divine beings living in the world: angels, demons *sensu stricto*, heroes).

Proclus' replies to the objection of the seemingly unjust treatment of irrational mortal animals by providence are essentially identical to those given in the case of humans, under the hypothesis that irrational animals have some form of self-determination like we do.

§43 What explains the inequality and equality among animals, given the fact that providence extends to them as well? There are in fact three issues: inequality (some are healthy, others sick, some have a pleasant life, others a wretched life);[89] equality (they are sometimes victims of common catastrophes);[90] they eat each other.[91] A preliminary distinction needs to be made: either brutes have some form of self-determination, or there are only natural causes acting in them.

§44 If they have some form of self-determination, they have the possibility of behaving better or worse (either truly or apparently better/worse) – for that is what self-determination amounts to – their fortune, their eating each other and their common catastrophes fall within the domain of [individual] providence, just as is the case with humans. Providence, then, treats and arranges their passions in a just way, makes them correspond to the cosmic cycles or with the similarity of their lives, just as it does with humans.[92] The fact that they eat each other is their own responsibility, as the capacity for self-determination was given to them by providence, just as with human souls.[93] The norm of justice is the same for brutes and humans, but animals can only eat one another, or by extension, do physical harm to one another, whereas humans can also harm one another by aiming at each other's money and possessions. As in the case with humans, providence makes use of free agents as its instruments. Here too the principle 'unjustly for the offender, justly for the victim' applies. The suffering is therefore deserved. If animals have self-determination they can indeed become morally better or worse. Therefore providence applies therapeutic measures to them and also enacts retribution.

When they have similar fortunes, as with human souls this can be understood by a similarity of essence, by the fact that they follow the same demons[94] or belong to the same cosmic cycle, by the fact that they have the same merit or demerit.[95] All the inequalities and equalities can be explained in a plausible way. The demons allotted to them treat them in different ways [in accordance with their individual merit and demerit]. These different fortunes follow a single decree of providence; they are part of a cosmic providential network in which everything is woven together causally. Thus providence coordinates everything into a unity.

§45 If brutes have only a mortal form of life [i.e. if they have no self-determination whatsoever], there is a common [i.e. not an individual] providence over them, just as in the case of plants (plants have no imagination, animals have sensation and imagination).

There is only one *logos* for all the things in the world, but some parts are more important than others (just like some body parts are more important than others). All parts benefit from providence (*pronoia*) and fate (*heimarmenê*). The leading parts, however, benefit more from providence, the inferior parts [i.e. plants and irrational animals provided there is no vestige of self-determination in them] more from fate. §**46** Evidence for this view consists in the fact that the leading parts follow an orderly path; the intermediate parts, i.e. those having the capacity of choice, are governed by providence and fate equally. We are indeed aware of the influence of both providence and fate in our lives. We even mistakenly attribute to fate things that are up to us. We experience providence in oracles, in epiphanies of gods and demons, in dream therapy.[96] We experience fate when we are in distress and when we are aware of the influence of the stars. The influence of either fate or providence can be so striking that we misguidedly think only one of the two is active over us. Our intellect is more akin to providence, the necessity in us [i.e. the natural and mortal] is more akin to fate. We will perceive either of two forces depending on whether we live more in accordance with necessity or with intellect. **§47** The inferior beings [irrational animals, plants] have nothing transcendent, and although they share in fate and providence, live almost completely in accordance with fate. For they are close to body and fate is the power ruling body. Every providential action is interwoven with fate. Hence they receive their origin, life, and death, but also their well-being (the ultimate trace of providence) through fate. Their destiny is fully dependent on that of other things. In their case the principle of merit only reaches this far: to be dependent on other things and hence to be co-affected with them, that is their merit.

§48 The further question, why some thing has a certain rank in the universe and not another, makes no sense.[97] The explanation for their situation *is* their rank in the universe; why they are at that specific rank is no longer subject to explanation. But if something which has a different, transcendent origin comes to be in the universe, [this has the capacity to behave either in accordance or not in accordance with its rank, and hence] the principle of merit applies. But those beings for which this is not the case automatically conform to their rank. Merit in that case

is reduced to occupying the position assigned to the thing in question. Contrary to the things superior to it, there is for them no special merit in behaving in accordance with their rank.

Eighth problem: why does providence sometimes postpone its punishments (and rewards)?

The eighth and ninth problem are inspired by Plutarch of Chaeronea's dialogue *De sera numinis vindicta, On the Delays of God's Punishment*. We compare the two texts on pp. 50-9. Proclus' (and Plutarch's) argument suffers from the fact that different functions of punishment are not clearly distinguished. Although Proclus argues that the punishment imposed by providence serves corrective purposes (i.e. heals the soul), he also attributes to it the function of preventing further crimes, both in a specific and a general sense (it prevents the same person from committing the same type of crime, and it deters others from committing this and other types of crime), but also implicitly allows for purely retributive aspects, even the notion of revenge, to play a role. The conflation of these different dimensions sometimes leads to unclarities in the argument, as we will see. The aspect of retribution is the more popular one and can be justifiably used when describing the reactions of ordinary people to delayed punishments or punishments conferred on relatives of wrongdoers. Proclus does indeed refer to the retributive role of punishment to this effect. Yet he also occasionally argues that providence *itself* wants retaliation. A full-blown theory of punishment, obviously, was not yet available to Proclus.

§49 Divine punishment inflicted on wrongdoers sometimes follows only long after the facts. This seems to cause problems: offenders benefit less from a late punishment; when they are finally punished they have forgotten their crimes, as a result of which they get indignant. Providence does not seem to get the desired results: good people, who once were offenders, do not understand why they now suffer and get indignant; bad people blame their misfortune on chance, for they see both themselves and good people suffering alike. Hence bad people think one does not benefit from being good, rather on the contrary: the vicious seem to prosper more. All of this would not happen if the punishment were simultaneous with the crime.

Having set out the problem in §49, Proclus proceeds to offer a series of replies: (i) swiftness of punishment does not always deter either; (ii) knowledge of the *kairos* belongs to *tekhnê*; (iii) not to be punished yet in itself amounts to a form of punishment; (iv) the delay teaches us to be patient and equanimous; (v) god's decisions take into account

the specificity of the cases; (vi) great natures should not be prevented from achieving great things; (vii) there will be punishments after death, which criminals fear already now.

These arguments, which are drawn from Plutarch's text, are organised in a rather haphazard way. Replies (ii) and (v) amount to the same argument; (vi) could also be treated as a specific case under the same heading. Moreover, several conceptions of punishment are at play: (i) considers punishment in its deterring function, i.e. as preventive (in a sense this is also the case in (iv)); in (ii) and (v) punishment is viewed under its corrective aspect; in (vii) punishment is seen as primarily retributive; in (iii) the retributive aspect is mixed up in a rather confused way with the corrective; in (vi) the delay is explained with reference to pragmatic reasons; in (iv) the reasons are didactic.

§50 (i) A punishment that directly follows upon the crime does not always eliminate depravity either, as the empirical evidence shows. Sometimes the depravity is simply too strong: it goes for immediate gratification and deliberately ignores the consequences. Why then blame punishment for not punishing immediately?

§51 (ii) True craftsmanship (*tekhnê*) sometimes requires waiting, as the comparison with physicians shows. For the pathologies of the soul, too, it is sometimes opportune to wait until they have developed fully. This is in the interest of the patient. To choose the right moment (*kairos*) is part of craftsmanship (supported by a quotation from *Leg*. IV 709B, on gods heeding the right moment). Providence therefore awaits the right moment to punish, as its punishment is primarily corrective. This deserves our admiration, rather than our criticism.

§52 (iii) Real evil consists in the perversion of the soul, the disease of the soul being much more terrible than that of the body. To be just to the soul is to purge it from its disease. This is what punishment by providence amounts to. Not to be delivered from this disease would be a real punishment for the soul. Hence the offenders who are not immediately punished do not escape punishment: by the very fact of the postponement their punishment is worse.

§53 Not to be punished immediately amounts to an intensification of punishment. Whoever understands this would want to be punished sooner in order to be healed, just like one wants one's bodily wounds healed, if necessary by painful treatments. The wrongdoers who are not punished immediately suffer this delay because they are not yet worthy of being punished. In fact

> they are punished all the while. Their conscience plagues them so that they in fact undergo a double punishment. Socrates therefore encouraged people to turn themselves in.

The argument is only on the surface contradictory: the lack of punishment constitutes a punishment; being punished is not really being punished. Proclus rhetorically plays on the ambiguity of the term punishment – between its retributive and corrective (and preventive) aspects, we might say. The penalties paid by souls for their wrongdoings are punishments in that they heal the soul. They seem to be punishments in the retributive sense, but they are not. Not to be paying the penalty (i.e. not being subjected to corrective and preventive punishment) would amount to being subject to revenge (retributive punishment) by the gods. The argument is not inconsistent, but still bizarre: for the postponement is here justified by the fact that this increases the punishment in the sense of retribution. Yet Proclus' main argument is based on a theory of corrective and preventive punishment. Here, however, the retributive view is used as it were to soothe those who want to see revenge. The double punishment that Proclus mentions at the end of §53 consists, then, of the suffering inflicted upon the offender by way of revenge, on the one hand, and the likewise painful treatment of his disease, on the other. The latter takes place later, the former follows directly upon the deed and lasts until the latter sets in. As a matter of fact, however, the retributive punishment as described by Proclus consists itself of two different aspects – though Proclus does not make the distinction and speaks as if it were one and the same thing: the mere fact of the postponement, which intensifies the disease and the debt to be paid, on the one hand; the bites of conscience, on the other (here cited for their retributive function, yet they would have a corrective dimension too, of course). The confusion in the argument[98] is thus due to the intrusion of popular notions of punishment. Plutarch, by whose argument Proclus is clearly influenced, explicitly refers to the common people's understanding of punishment. Proclus calls the two forms of punishment 'internal' and 'external'.[99]

> **§54** (iv) Imitation of god, i.e. assimilation to the divine is the greatest good for a human being (supported by a combination of passages from the *Timaeus*). By postponing the punishment providence shows us that it is good to remain equanimous and impassive. By giving it time, providence persuades the soul to repent. The punishment that will eventually follow has a double function: corrective, by healing the wrongdoers, and didactic (preventive), by showing the others the value of not rushing and of not being led by strong emotions. Anecdotal examples of restraint: Plato, Archytas, Theano.

The argument in §54 amounts to the claim that divine equanimity and patience are qualities that we should imitate. Proclus announces his next argument (in §55) by saying that different arguments are needed when matters are obscure to us.

§55 (v) God recognises the disposition from which vice will arise and decides the time, the form and the intensity of punishment for each individual case, based on what each soul deserves and what is best for it. In some souls wrongdoing stems from a firm disposition, in others not. Prompt punishment may prevent the evil from becoming habitual. In the case of other souls it is wise to wait until the perversion has reached its peak. Some souls err because of an error of judgment, without there being an underlying bad condition, others because the irrational is in such a bad shape that it perverts the judgments of the soul [and will continue to do so]. In the first case an immediate punishment is beneficial, in the second not, because the soul is incapable of accepting the admonishment. The time of punishment may also depend on cosmic cycles, determined by fate. Providence indeed acts with and through fate. **§56** In these cases the principle of merit is respected. There may be many reasons for the postponement, which are not always clear to us. Instead of blaming providence, we should look for its reasons.

(vi) In human life enormous wrongdoings are sometimes mixed with big accomplishments. So-called great natures are great in both extremes. In their case providence often postpones punishment so as not to preclude the accomplishments of which these 'natures' are capable. There are plenty of examples of people having the capacity to do great good and bad things: Themistocles, Dionysius, Periander.

§57 (vii) What for us is a long time span (subjectively) is just a moment for providence[100] – and not just for providence, but also for the souls that are outside of generation [i.e. the time between reincarnations is much longer than that of a human life]. Hence the time of eschatological retribution is much longer than our earthly life; likewise the abodes in Hades are much bigger than the earth.[101] Hence it is not a problem if the punishment does not follow shortly after the facts nor takes place here. Contrary to punishments in this life, punishments after death are unmixed with pleasure. The fear of eschatological punishments tortures offenders already during their life – a foretaste of what awaits them. Known examples are Apollodorus the tyrant of Cassandreia, and Ptolemy Ceraunus.

Despite the variety of argumentative strategies the guiding princi-

ples of Proclus' replies are relatively clear: in the long run every soul gets its due. The time spans we need to look at, however, may be considerably longer than a single human life. The subject of divine justice is therefore not the human being as having one earthly identity, but rather the soul as it passes through several cycles of reincarnation. This becomes clear in the next problem.

Ninth problem: inherited guilt and punishment by proxy

The problem of punishment for the sins of the forefathers is discussed in Plutarch's dialogue *De sera numinis vindicta*, a text that without any doubt has inspired Proclus' account (cf. pp. 50-9). Proclus mentions the question of inherited guilt also in his *Commentary on the Cratylus* 93, p. 46,12-23, and gives three explanations, complementary to one another: (1) the souls of ancestors and offspring belong to the same *suntaxis* (they are grouped together); (2) via the body, through the badness of the seed, the descendents inherit the depravity of the forefathers; (3) the descendents profit from the wealth inherited from their relatives and acquired by the latter in an unjust manner. Proclus also points out that Socrates in the *Phaedrus* claims that this pollution by the sins of the forefathers can be treated by *telestic* means. Hermias, in his commentary of the passage (*Phaedr.* 244D), discusses the problem of inherited guilt in terms that are strongly reminiscent of Proclus' account in *in Crat.* and *Dub.* §58-9.[102] Proclus must have been familiar with Hermias' discussion (*in Phaedr.* 96,8-97,14) or its source. Hermias mentions the wealth acquired by unjust means and inherited by the progeny (*in Phaedr.* 96,9-11), the similarity of the souls (*in Phaedr.* 96,11-15; cf. *Dub.* 59,46-9; 61,2-4), which makes a soul be incarnated into the family of a criminal (*in Phaedr.* 96,13-15; cf. *Dub.* 60,13-14: Proclus cites Oedipus as an example),[103] the role of seeds that pass on badness[104] (*in Phaedr.* 96,17; cf. Plut. *De ser. num. vind.* 563A4-6, quoted by Procl., *Dub.* 61,11-13), the strong unity of the family and the continuity that may not always be visible to us (*in Phaedr.* 96,16-23; *Dub.* 59,1-33), the role of the family demons who await the right moment to intervene and to punish without being constrained by the boundaries between generations (*in Phaedr.* 96,24-8) and of course the possibility of expiation through rites (*in Phaedr.* 96,28-97,14). Some of these ideas also figure prominently in Plutarch's text, especially the idea of the family constituting a physical unity. Hermias even appears to allude to the Growing Argument (*in Phaedr.* 96,19-21), to which Plutarch explicitly refers (and which is also mentioned by Proclus), which may be an indication that Hermias, too, knew Plutarch's work.

§58 Punishment of progeny for crimes committed by the fathers and forefathers seems unjust: either the wrongdoers them-

selves have already been punished – then there is a double punishment, for which the only motive seems to be revenge; or they have not been punished, but then the innocent are punished whereas the guilty go free. Punishment of progeny appears to be real (cf. mysteries, absolutory rites and popular belief). How can it be reconciled with the principle of merit honoured by providence)?

The problem is set up in a way very similar to Plutarch's account (see below). The reference to rites that absolve the descendents from inherited guilt refers to *Phaedrus* 244D, a passage quoted in this context by Proclus and Hermias (see above).

§59 (i) Every city and every family is an organic living being, having a unity that is greater than that of individuals; they have a much longer life and are more divine than individuals. One person presides over the city as over one single whole, and likewise for the family. Every member of the family and every citizen of the city is linked with the whole of which they are a part. Providence, being one, and fate, being one, rule over each city as over one single whole and over each family as over a single whole. Hence it is normal that individuals are rewarded and punished for deeds of other members of either family or city. Indeed, we also benefit from what others did for our city or family. That others are punished does not mean, however, that the original offenders escape justice.[105] Since all the parts are connected, punishment may be inflicted not only on close, but also on remote relatives. It is not the case either that the intensity of punishment depends on proximity. For sometimes the more remote parts resemble one another more than proximate parts. Compare medical practice: often certain organs are healed through manipulation of parts in a completely different region of the body. Providence looks at which parts are co-affected, even if this co-affection is hidden from us.[106]

This argument is based on Plutarch's treatment of the issue. See below. Notice that Proclus denies that the original offenders ever escape their due penalty.

§60 (ii) If the doctrine of reincarnation is true it is possible that when someone is punished for the crimes of his or her forefathers, it is actually the very same soul that perpetrated the crime, in another life, and is punished now, and likewise for rewards. Apollonius of Tyana is an example. There is, then, nothing strange about a soul being punished for crimes it committed while in another body. Souls moreover do not end up in

> a specific family or town by coincidence. Hence, even if it is not the same souls that are punished, the soul that gets punished is a soul that has ended up in a specific family or town for a special reason [i.e. because it belongs in that family or town because of a certain affinity]. And if they are the same, there is all the more reason for it to be punished. The lives of cities and families can be compared with theatre plays, with fate as the poet of the play; the souls are like the actors, each of them playing several roles. In order to understand the workings of providence, we should not look at the surface identity of the characters played, but at the deeper-lying identity of the actors.[107]

This argument has no parallel in Plutarch. The hypothesis that it is actually numerically the same soul that undergoes the punishment may very well stem from Proclus himself. The idea that souls end up in the family of a criminal because of bad disposition is already in Hermias, *in Phaedr.* 96,13-14.

> **§61** A punishment across generations is not strange if the soul is the same, but remains difficult to accept if it is different, unless one understands that there may be a hidden similarity between the life of the wrongdoer and that of the person punished. Providence notices the similarity, i.e. it sees the innate defects and prevents the later-born from erring by punishing them before they have the opportunity to do so. Providence can thus anticipate: it knows that certain conditions spring up again after several generations.

One could ask why providence did not do the same thing, i.e. intervene in a timely way, when the forefathers were about to go wrong. Surely it must have had its reasons, one would think. Proclus cannot seriously mean that providence only knows vice about to erupt because it has observed similar characters before. If it is possible to anticipate in the one case, it should also be possible for it to do so in the other.

Tenth problem: providence of angels, heroes, demons, souls

Proclus ends his work with an overview of the different types of providential agents, from the universal providence of the gods over the higher kinds down even to our souls that are occasionally providential.

> **§62** What kind of providence is exercised by angels, heroes, demons [the three 'superior kinds'], and the 'souls governing the

world'? It could not have the same unitary character as the providence of the gods.

§63 Each god has his being defined by, and proceeds from, the One-Good, which transcends being. The henads, which are the different forms the One takes, are produced by the One. The first type of henads (the gods) is self-complete, the second consists in derivative unities existing in other things. The series of the One is indeed structured according to the triad 'in the cause', 'according to its substantial rank'; 'in the participants'.

Intellects and souls are one through participation. Likewise, the 'one and absolute intellect' produces first a series of self-complete intellects, each having its own character (e.g. some are solar intellects, other lunar intellects); below that are entities, i.e. souls, that participate in intellect. The latter have self-motion *qua* souls and are intellective *qua* participating in intellect. Likewise there is a double psychic procession: the first soul produces first self-complete souls, i.e. substantial souls separate from bodies; next come the beings that are ensouled through participation. The latter one may call 'entelechy' or better 'ensouled bonds' [i.e. the shadows of souls, or irrational souls].

	Unity	*intellect*	*soul*
kat' aitian	the One-Good	the first intellect	the first soul
kath' huparxin	self-complete henads (gods)	self-complete intellects	self-complete souls
kata metexin	derivative unities (intellects, souls)	intellective souls	ensouled bonds

The doctrines of the triad of procession and the related theory of the double series proceeding from the cause are explained in the *Elements of Theology*. The precise references are given in our notes to the translation.

§64 The primary hypostases thus all bring forth a double series, one of self-complete entities, and one of participatory entities. Angels, demons, heroes, and also our souls – in that hierarchical order – belong to the second series with respect to unity (Oneness being the principle of providence). They are not henads, but still henadic. This means that they have within them a trace of divinity, something that surpasses intellect, and which is the principle of their providential activity.

§65 Whereas gods exercise a universal providence by what they are essentially – i.e. henads –, angels, demons, and heroes

> exercise providence through the one that is in them. Through that by which they imitate the gods and are united with them – their henadic character – they are also providential. Assisted by the gods, they exercise providence over all things. The primary agents of providence are the gods, as goodness coincides with unity. [Angels, heroes, and demons are the secondary agents of providence, as participating in oneness/goodness.] After them come the souls, that, like the superior kinds, exercise providence together with the gods, by participating in oneness, i.e. goodness. Their providence does not consist in making calculations about the future, but comes to be when they are firmly rooted in the One of the soul, which is why their providence, too, is transcendent and unitary. This state of divine inspiration is temporary for the souls, but permanent to the superior kinds. Hence the providence of the superior kinds is constant and not dependent upon deliberation. Their providence is due to their henadic nature. Yet they are not just henadic, but also have something other besides the One, i.e. their special character which constitutes their substantial being and is related to the specific god whom each of them follows. **§66** Therefore everything that can be said of providence belongs to the superior kinds in a secondary manner. The very first principle (the One/Good) transcends providence, except if one is willing to call this providential too for its being the ultimate final cause. The primary agents of providence, properly speaking, however, are the gods/henads.

The doctrine expounded here is fairly straightforward: strictly speaking the One transcends providence. The gods or self-complete henads are the primary agents of providence. Angels, heroes, demons, but also souls are derivatively henadic and secondary agents of providence. Their providential activity is transcendent, universal, unitary and not dependent on dianoetic thought insofar as they are established in the One. For the superior kinds this is always the case; souls reach this state only intermittently.

Plutarch's On the Delays of God's Punishment (De sera numinis vindicta)

In the eighth and ninth problem Proclus makes ample use of a text by Plutarch of Chaeronea, whom he does not mention. Only a vague allusion at the end of the preface may be taken as a sign of his awareness of the proximity of his argument to Plutarch's and even as a kind of apology for having copied his text almost shamelessly (which is at least how contemporary scholars would view the matter). Proclus borrows arguments, expressions, analogies, historical exam-

ples and anecdotes from his predecessor. Plutarch's *De sera numinis vindicta*[108] is a dialogue, set in Delphi, between several interlocutors. The dialogue starts in the middle of an ongoing conversation, just at the moment when a character by the name of Epicurus makes an unexpected exit – it is no coincidence, of course, that his famous namesake was regarded as the denier of providence; obviously, the radicalness of the latter's rejection of providence makes him, in the eyes of the Platonist Plutarch, unfit for a conversation dealing with a special problem related to providence. The remaining speakers are firm believers in providence: Plutarch, his brother Timon, his son in law Patrocleas and Olympichus. The work ends with a myth about the journey to the underworld by a man called Thespesius, who prior to his vision went by the name Aridaeus (who is probably meant to be the same person as Ardiaeus/Aridaeus – mentioned in the myth of Er, *Resp*. 10, 615C5; E6). There he witnesses the punishments of the wrongdoers, including those whose crimes caused suffering for their descendents. One of the issues raised by 'Epicurus',[109] as an objection to the belief in providence, is the fact that providence would seem to postpone its punishments unreasonably long (548C-D).[110] If one believes that misfortunes are in fact punishments by the gods, the latter would seem to handle the punishments in a rather inefficient and even unreasonable manner. Often the alleged punishment comes so late that it completely misses any effect it could have had, had it come more timely. Moreover, the gods would seem to punish and reward the wrong ones. Hence it would be better, so 'Epicurus' appears to have argued, to drop the idea that misfortune and good fortune are due to the gods.

The interlocutors obviously do not want to take that path, but instead try to find a reasonable explanation for the lateness of the punishments and rewards. The postponement of divine punishment was held to be a problem long before Plutarch. Plutarch cites Euripides, among other, as someone who already complained about it.[111] In the course of the ensuing conversation different aspects of the problem are developed and different solutions of the difficulties are proposed. We try to arrange them in a somewhat more systematic way (deviating from the divisions made by Plutarch's characters themselves, as they often conflate several points that ought to be distinguished more clearly). The general framework of the discussion is the same as that in Proclus: providence knows and cares for the universe and everything in it, including human beings. Its activity is beneficial, even if this means that it sometimes has to punish. This is only possible because its bestowal of goods fundamentally respects the principle of merit.[112] Only then can the providential activity be called just. Piety obviously compels us to regard the divinity as invariably and supremely just.

First problem: the postponement of punishment

The frequent postponement of providential punishment has several negative consequences.

i. Punishment (as deterrent) fails to prevent further crimes perpetrated
    a. by the same offenders (548D),
    b. by others (549A-B).
ii. The procrastination makes the victims desperate and fails to give them comfort (548E) (punishment is here probably conceived as retribution, the victims being those to whom retribution is owed, whereby the punishment gives them comfort).
    a. Victims may either not live to see the offenders punished (548F-549A),
    b. or they may fail to see the connection between the offence and the afflictions of the offender (see below).
iii. The general belief in providence is lessened (549B-C). This in fact explains the first point: because people see no reason to belief in the justice enacted by providence, they carelessly proceed on the path of vice; the offenders fail to see their afflictions as punishments for crimes they committed much earlier (549C-D).
iv. The bad disposition of the perpetrators goes untreated as long as the punishment is deferred (this refers to the corrective dimension of punishment).
v. When the punishment finally follows, it can no longer have the healing, i.e. corrective, function, because of the aforementioned failure on behalf of the criminals to understand that their misfortune is meant as a punishment (549C).

Second problem: the punishment of descendents

Timon raises what is in fact another problem, yet one that is closely related to the first: the punishment may sometimes come so late that not the perpetrators, but their offspring, even their remote descendents, seem to be punished.

vi. If punishment visits other people, i.e. apparently innocent descendents, can this be just? The punishment is unfair to the descendents.
    a. If the offenders have already received the punishment owed by them, one crime would be punished twice, which is unjust (556E6-9).

b. If the offenders have not been punished, it would be unfair for god to make up for his original indolence by punishing innocents (556E9-11).

This is an especially damaging objection, for if the punishment is not fair, the one who imposes the punishment,[113] i.e. god, would be unjust – *horribile dictu* (556E).

vii. It is unfair that the offenders escape their punishment, understood in a retributive sense (*passim*).

viii. The punishment is ineffective.

a. The offenders can no longer be healed by the punishment. This kind of punishment can hardly fulfil a corrective function. Plutarch invokes a comparison made by Bion: the deferred punishment would be even more ridiculous than if a physician were to treat a descendent for the disease of an ancestor (561C).[114]

b. The future punishment of descendents does not prevent further crimes committed by the offenders (as they do not know yet that their descendents will be punished).

c. The future punishment of descendents does not prevent further crimes committed by contemporaries of the offenders (as they do not know someone will have to pay the penalty for the injustice committed).

The two problems are indeed sufficiently distinct for Proclus to deal with them in two separate questions (the eighth and ninth problem, respectively). The quotation from Bion shows that divine punishment of descendents was an ancient popular belief, that was already felt to be problematic even in ancient times.[115] The ancient stories of cursed families come to mind and especially their literary treatment by the great tragedians. The treatment of this problem in Greek tragedy[116] is examined in a recent monograph by N.J. Sewell-Rutter, who argues that archaic authors tend to justify the punishment of descendents by arguing that the latter share certain pertinent character traits with the offenders.[117] This argument is also used by Plutarch and Proclus. The problem of inherited guilt was also discussed by other philosophers, for instance Philo of Alexandria (who generally appears to be strongly influenced by Stoic accounts of providence).[118] It is not unrelated to the Christian doctrine of original sin, which was of utmost importance for their speculations on divine providence. Yet that tradition had no bearing on our text.

Replies to the first problem

Whereas some of the replies are directed at specific objections, others defend the postponement of punishment in a more general way, for

instance by saying that the benefits from the postponement outweigh the disadvantages (1, 3, 4, 5, 6) or that in some cases there is in fact no delay (7, in some sense,[119] 8).

1. God is our paradigm; he wants to set a good example, that is: it is indeed better not to rush and to avoid anger and violence in punishment, as that is damaging for the person punishing (examples of humans refraining from punishment for this very reason: Plato, Archytas). There is of course no danger involved for god himself, but only for us. So the postponement serves didactic reasons (550C-551C). God's teaching in this respect does not so much target the offenders, but rather people in general.
2. Divine punishment is primarily corrective, not retributive, as is often the case when humans punish. In curable cases, the offender is allowed time to repent and/or better the disposition from which the offence sprang. That this is the intention can be seen from the contrast with incurable offenders who get punished immediately (551C-E). God can do so, because he knows that goodness is innate, so that there is in most cases hope for a spontaneous improvement. Moreover, he can oversee the evolution of the patient (550D-552B), and he is also certain that the offenders cannot escape from their punishment (551E; cf. 554E-F). This argument targets in particular objection iv.
3. The delay is acceptable because of the benefits which the offender is expected to produce in the meantime. In this case a small evil, the postponement, is compensated by a greater good (552D-E).
4. So-called great natures (*megalai phuseis*, 552B12) are capable of great deeds, both for the better and for the worse. By punishing such characters too soon god would prevent them from producing their great benefits (552A-553C).[120] This is a special case of 3.
5. God uses wrongdoers as instruments for his own purposes, for instance to punish others (552F-553A). This punishment is here conceived as cathartic, i.e. corrective (553A5).
6. God knows the right moment (*kairos*). This is a point that is very general but also central to Plutarch's defence of providence (549F-550C; 551D; 553D; *passim*), and has obvious links to the other points made (which explain in what way the timing is appropriate). Knowledge of the *kairos* belongs to the *tekhnê* of providence; god is indeed the 'perfect craftsman' (*aristoteknas*, a term used by Pindar, 550A6-7); to the craft also belong knowledge of the right manner and degree of punishment (see also 562E6-9). This argument addresses the objections iv and v, but also the problem in general.
7. Vice contains its own punishment; in this way punishment (understood in a retributive sense) is always simultaneous with the crime (553F-554B; 556D6-9). This is true in several ways:

a. Vice springs from a bad disposition; having a bad disposition constitutes a punishment (554B; also 555F-556D).
b. The bad disposition often leads to further crimes, which makes the guilt and the future punishment worse (554D).
c. There are secondary effects (554B; 554F5-555D4; 555F-556D): anxiety, pangs of remorse.

The offenders awaiting their punishment are compared to actors playing villains in the theatre: only a young and inexperienced audience is fooled into believing that the villains will get away with it. Adult viewers know that the wrongdoers are already being punished while they are still parading around (554B-C, the ensuing damage to one's reputation may be considered a further secondary effect). Further comparisons are that with fish on a hook (554E9) or with the convict who has already drunk the poison but does not yet notice its effects (554E2-4). This again refers to the ineluctability of the punishment.

The postponement is thus a prolongation of the punishment (554C9-D1).

d. Even the fact that crime does not always bear fruits would be a source of worry for the criminal (555D-F).

The argument in 7 targets the objections i, ii, and iii. It does not require the assumption that the soul is immortal, as 'Plutarch' emphasises. It is even stronger when there is nothing after death: for then a quick punishment, assumed that the punishment consists in the loss of one's life, would be wrong, as it would amount to a quick deliverance from fears and other unpleasant consequences (555C11-D4).

8. A long time for us is a short time for god (554D2-7). This point is made in the course of the argument for 7.b, but can also be considered on its own; it then somewhat softens the notion of a long delay. The point is related to the idea that the criminal cannot run away from his punishment: it is ineluctable (554E-F).

Replies to the second problem

Some of the replies address the problem of the punishment of descendents directly, either by denying its prevalence (9 – a reply 'Plutarch' admits to have made only in order to gain time), by explaining why it is good after all that descendents are punished for crimes they did not commit (12, 14), or by denying they are punished for crimes they did not commit (11, which is in fact the final reply given by 'Plutarch': see below). Some replies specifically target the felt injustice of the phenomenon with respect to the descendents (objection vi; replies 10, 12) or the original offenders (objection vii, replies 13, 15), others its alleged ineffectiveness (objection viii, a; replies 12, 15; b: reply 15; c: reply 14).

9. Many stories about punishment of descendents are unreliable (557E-558A). This is above all an *ad hominem* argument against Timon, who in 556F-557E had listed a series of alleged examples.
10. Everyone who approves the rewarding of descendents for the virtue of their ancestors should also accept their punishment for their crimes (in part an *ad hominem* argument; 558A-D). People are indeed also proud if they belong to venerable families. They believe the virtue of their ancestors reflects on them.
11. Moral badness is contagious and can pass over from one generation to the next (558D-F). The consequence is obvious: the descendents are not actually punished for the crimes of their ancestors, but for their own badness. This is explained later on (591C10-562A12): Punishment of descendents is sometimes not a punishment for the crimes of the ancestors, but a punishment for their own sake, namely when god diagnoses a slumbering illness that, when not treated, will lead to wrongdoing. Hence punishment is pre-emptive, i.e. not retributive but preventive. God can indeed distinguish between cases that look deceptively equal, but are not; he can detect the badness that we may manage to hide from our fellow human beings (562A13-D9: 'Plutarch' conflates the cases of a bad disposition of which those who have it are not aware, and that of a similar disposition of which others are unaware). When one is born without the shortcomings of one's forefathers, one will not be punished for their wrongdoings (562E9-563B5).

    With the last remark Plutarch as a matter of fact ends the dialogical part of the work. It is followed by the myth of Thespesius. The remark, however, fits ill with those arguments starting from the assumption that the punishment for crimes committed by ancestors is a real phenomenon (especially 10, 12, 14, 15). Indeed, the present remark seems to make the *general* claim that perceived postponed punishment does not correspond to the fact of the matter: the descendents are actually punished for their own sakes, namely in virtue of a bad disposition unknown to themselves and/or to others (punishment is here taken in its preventive and corrective dimension). It should be stressed that these other arguments in the course of the conversation precede the remark at 562E9-563B5 (we have put this remark here because it takes up the argument of point 11, which we present in its proper position). The relevance of the position at the end of the conversation *could* be that the remark is meant to overrule the previous arguments, making them superfluous.
12. A city is an individual with a strong identity, like a living thing, all parts of which are linked by sympathy (559A1-7). The 'Growing Argument' devised by Epicharmus[121] in order to question the persistence of individuals is sophistic and even less applicable to cities than to individual human beings (559A-C). Hence the pun-

ishment of fellow citizens for crimes perpetrated by other citizens is justified (558C; 559E6-7). The same holds for families and their members, as the identity of a family is even stronger than that of a city (559C10-D6).

The 'sympathy' by which the members of a city or family are connected can be compared to the way a living organism forms a unity: physicians too heal one part by making incisions and cauterising elsewhere (559E7-F5). In the same manner should we understand the punishment of one part to heal another. The correction is passed on from soul to soul, just like when a teacher or a general punishes one person to admonish all the others (560A1-10).

After making this point the argument is interrupted by Olympichus who ask about death: should we accept that the soul survives death, either for a short time or even completely, and does this have any repercussions for the main argument (560B5-8)? 'Plutarch' replies that the immortality of the soul is crucial, as god would not waste efforts on an ephemeral being (560B8-C7; 560F3-6). This allows 'Plutarch' to complement his argument with an eschatological aspect.[122]

13. It is not so that in the aforementioned cases the offenders do not undergo punishment, for they are punished after death (560F6-A6). 'Plutarch' here seems to have in mind primarily the retributive dimension, but maybe also the corrective.
14. Punishment of descendents is a deterrent for their contemporaries – contrary to the eschatological punishment of the souls of the deceased, which is invisible to others (561A6-8).
15. Punishment of descendents is at the same time a punishment, in a preventive and corrective sense, of the offenders, as it is very painful for them to witness the afflictions of their descendents (it is assumed that they not only watch the world but also that they understand who bears the blame): next time around they will refrain from doing wrong (561A9-B7; C1-10).

In order to make the last point more plausible Plutarch ends the dialogue with a myth in which eschatological punishments are described in rich detail (563B-568A). Prior to that, in the course of his treatment of the second problem, he has already given explicit arguments in favour of the immortality of the soul (assumed for points 13 and 15), as we have seen. The survival of the soul after death also sheds a new light on 3, 4, 6 and 8 (all replies to the first problem). The delay may obviously amount to a punishment after death, in which case the contemporaries of the offenders, including in some cases the victims (if they still live, obviously) might think there is no punishment at all.

On several occasions 'Plutarch' reminds his interlocutors to be cautious and not to make bold assertions concerning the reasons god may have for his way of proceeding. We can merely make plausible conjectures regarding his motives (549E5-550A3; 551C11; 552E2; 553F3-4; 558D5-9; 558F4-5; 561B7). If we forget the limits of our understanding we are led to entertain impious and blasphemous thoughts: we are upset at providence, yet we should only blame our own ignorance (562D10-E9).

Proclus borrows several of these arguments. The table[123] shows how much he is indebted to Plutarch (for specific expressions, historical examples, and quotations,[124] see our notes ad loc.).

Like Plutarch, Proclus repeatedly points to the limitations of human understanding (e.g. §56,1-9; §55,1-3): our ignorance of god's reasons should not make us conceive a grudge of providence.[127] Unlike Proclus, Plutarch emphasises the 'Academic' background of this caution. In other words, the influence of the Hellenistic epistemological debates is made more explicit. Plutarch is convinced that the caution advocated by the (New) Academics agrees with Plato's own approach.

F. Frazier[128] draws the attention to the difference in style of the two treatments, related in part to the different literary genre. In Plutarch the arguments are presented in the course of a conversation, one argument leading in a natural manner to the next. In the dialogue the punishment of descendents is discussed as part of the same general issue of postponed punishment, actually as its most extreme and most problematic case, whereas Proclus separates the two problems and treats them as the eighth and ninth problem respectively. So even if Plutarch introduces the eschatological dimension only in his discussion of the problem of inherited punishment, the fact that this is part of the same general discussion means that the arguments offered here have repercussions for the postponement problem as well, as is clear from the end of the dialogical part, where the two aspects are drawn closer together.

Obviously, specifically Neoplatonic conceptions underlying Proclus' arguments are absent from Plutarch. So even in cases where Proclus picks up a Plutarchan train of thought the underlying idea may be different. One may think of the doctrine, exposed in the preceding Problems, of a literally 'absolute' and eternal knowledge of providence, a (paradoxical) fore-sight from an a-temporal perspective. Such an idea is absent from Plutarch, who has a much less metaphysical theology and a less stringent notion of eternity. In another sense too Proclus takes a more transcendent and hence less worldly perspective than Plutarch does. For he appears to focus less on the punishment of a particular crime and more on the general destiny of a soul (he also calls the argument that is based on the health of the soul [8.iii, §52,1-2] the most important), i.e. its general condition across generations.[129] His idea that a soul may be punished

Proclus, *Dub.*		**Plutarch, *De ser. num. vind.***
Postponed punishment		
The problem	§49,5-23	i.a; iv, v
	§49,23-6	ii, iii
Replies		
8.i	§50 (immediate punishment not always effective either; incurable cases)	— (the incurable cases are mentioned in the course of 2)
8.ii	§51	6, with elements from 2
8.iii	§52 ('the most veridical argument')	7, esp. 7a
	§53	7b
8.iv	§54	1
8.v	§55 (*kairos*, including considerations about form and intensity of punishment)	(6) (Proclus elaborates on the different types of offenders,[125] thus going beyond Plutarch)
	§55,28-34 (cosmic cycles, fate)	—
	§56,1-9 (despite limitations of human knowledge we should believe in providence's justice)	*passim*
8.vi	§56,9-38	4
8.vii	§57,1-4	8
	§57,4-35 (the shortness of the time contrasted with the punishments after death)	— (Plutarch appeals to eschatological punishment only in connection with the second problem)
Punishment of descendants		
The problem	§58	vi a/b
9.i	§59	12 (including the medical analogy),[126] also 10
	§59,27-8 and 59,45-6 (the offenders too are punished)	→ vii
Replies		
9.ii	§60 (in the case of reincarnation: it may be the same soul that gets punished)	—

in one of its earthly lives for crimes committed in a different earthly life (9.ii) exemplifies the general tendency of his argument.

Finally, it is remarkable that punishments in the underworld, though Plato and Plutarch are wont to depict them in vivid detail, hardly play a role in Proclus' discussion. Most of his arguments focus on what souls suffer and enjoy during their earthly lives.

Note on the translation

As the basis for our translation we use a reconstruction of the lost Greek text made by Benedikt Strobel (Universität Trier).[130] For this reconstruction Moerbeke's Latin translation is the main source, as it is the only document that has transmitted the complete text of the treatise. Fortunately long sections are preserved in the compilation of Isaak Sebastocrator, though with often substantial rewriting; some texts are to be found in a Byzantine florilegium; some are quoted by Philoponus and Psellus; and for some phrases there are parallels in Plutarch. Strobel does not just offer a Greek retroversion of the Latin translation, thus reconstructing the Greek model used by Moerbeke, but, by making use of the indirect traditions and introducing a number of conjectural corrections he made a critical edition of the three treatises that aims to be as close as possible to the original version of Proclus. The edition of Strobel is accompanied by an extensive philological commentary justifying the retroversion and all corrections introduced in the text. On difficult passages we had intensive email discussions and we also benefited from a workshop organised at the university of Würzburg (12-13.10.2009) and an informal meeting in Leuven. As Strobel's edition is due to appear in the series *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina* (De Gruyter) it would not make much sense for us to summarise all his findings and arguments in a philological appendix to our translation. For a philological justification the reader is referred to Strobel's forthcoming edition. In our footnotes we refer to Strobel whenever he introduces corrections in the text deviating from Moerbeke's translation, insofar these were not already proposed by H. Boese. In principle we translate the text as reconstructed by Strobel, pointing out in the notes the few cases in which we deviate from Strobel. We should however gratefully acknowledge that we owe much more to his philological acumen than could be mentioned in the notes. If we had not had at our disposition the full Greek retroversion, we would have had many more difficulties in understanding and translating correctly Proclus' often convoluted arguments, as is demonstrated *e contrario* in Appendix 1 where we propose a number of corrections to our translation of *De malorum subsistentia* that were made possible by comparing our translation with Strobel's reconstruction of the Greek text (which was not yet available when we published that volume).

About two hundred years ago the English Platonist Thomas Taylor published the first English translation of this treatise in an appendix to his translation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* (1816). For his translation he used Moerbeke's Latin version, which he knew in the first edition of Fabricius (1717). At the end of his career, in 1833, he published, as a separate volume, a new version of his translation,

adapting it to the new edition of Victor Cousin (1820). Taylor's translation is an impressive achievement, if one considers that he had to work with Moerbeke's often obscure Latin and could not make use of the resources available to contemporary scholars. This was compensated, however, by his extraordinary knowledge of Proclus' philosophy and his great admiration for the Platonic Diadochos. Taylor had noticed that Proclus depends on Plutarch in essays 8 and 9. In these essays and in essay 7, Taylor did not always have the courage, apparently, to produce a full translation of the text. He skipped long sections and complained in a footnote that 'Moerbeke's version of the remaining part was, unfortunately, so barbarous, that I found it impossible to translate it'.[131] Certainly, much can be criticised and improved in Taylor's translation of Proclus' arguments. Also his archaic style unnecessarily bestows a flavour of arcane wisdom. Yet, not being native speakers of English, we were often pleased to find inspiration in his translation when we were searching for expressions rendering Proclus' style, in particular for the first part of our translation.

Notes

1. A note on terminology: Proclus and Platonists roughly contemporary with him did not of course regard themselves as *Neo*-Platonists, which is why nowadays some scholars prefer to refer to them just as Platonists. Yet we do not abjure the conventional terminology. It has the advantage that it makes clear that the philosophy of these late Platonists was in significant ways different from that of Plato and from that of earlier followers of Plato.

2. See Babut 1974, Dragona-Monachou 1994 and Steel 2007, 5-11 for the history of the problem in the imperial period.

3. For Plotinus, see Sharples 1994.

4. cf. Dragona-Monachou 1994, 4419, who mentions, among others, Diogenes of Apollonia and Socrates. Favorinus, quoted by Diogenes Laertius, asserted that Plato was the first philosopher who attributed providence to the gods (DL 3.24). The idea of the 'moralised supernatural', to use an expression by E.R. Dodds (1951, 35), is probably older than the belief in divine providence.

5. *Leg.* 10, 899D7-903D19. Similar ideas are central to the *Epinomis*: cf. 980C10-D3.

6. *De providentia et fato et eo quod in nobis ad Theodorum mechanicum* (*Prov.*) = *On Providence* (Steel 2007); and *De malorum subsistentia* (*Mal.*) = *On the Existence of Evils* (Opsomer and Steel 2003). A comparison of the arguments in *Prov.* with discussion of similar problems in the three *opuscula* and in the other works seems to suggest that the treatise *Ten Problems Concerning Providence* is an earlier work and the first in the series (see Appendix 1).

7. Proclus, *ET* §120, p. 104,31-2; 106,5-9, tr. Dodds (modified).

8. Plutarch, *Stoic. rep.* 1051C (= *SVF* II 1178; tr. H. Cherniss). Epictetus could be believed (Dragona-Monachou 1994, 4445) to disagree: *Diss.* 1.16.9-14. There is, however, no strong inconsistency: Epictetus here praises the fine organisation of the world, even in its details.

9. Cic. *ND* 2.164-7.

10. Cic. *ND* 2.167 ('magna di curant, parva neglegunt'); see also *ND* 3.86.

11. The view of Alexander of Aphrodisias is in fact much more sophisticated, see Sharples 1983, 25-6; 1990, 91-3; Rashed 2007, 294-304.

12. See *Dub.* 32,2-3; *in Parm.* 1017,16-17; *in Remp.* 2,102,4-7.

13. See Sorabji 2004, II, 3a and 4a (pp. 69-89).

14. See Philop. *Aet. mund.* 37,19-39,1; 569,22-588,18.

15. Similarly in *in Parm.* 779,1-3: we accept that gods know contingent things and exercise providence over them; it remains to be examined how this is possible.

16. An image often used by Plotinus: see our translation, n. 44. See also Philop. *in DA* 13,25-35.

17. See, e.g., Alex. Aphr. *Fat.* 200,12-201,32.

18. See *Prov.* 63 and Steel 2007, 24-5. On this Platonic 'dialectical reading' of the history of the problem, see Opsomer 1997, 343-7; Opsomer and Steel 1999, 232-3.

19. cf. Opsomer and Steel 1999, 229-35.

20. One may usefully compare *in Parm.* 842,20-2; 921,11-13.

21. See also *in Tim.* 1,352,5-8; *Prov.* 64,1-8; *TP* 1,98,5-9.

22. In fact 'literally' merely refers to the words *dia tên tou theou genesthai pronoian* (30B8-C1).

23. Amm. *in Int.* 135,14-19; on this principle, see also Procl. *in Tim.* 1,352,11-16. Iamblichus' account was apparently based on the same idea as that which we find in our text, namely that knowledge is intermediate between knower and known (*in Int.* 135,16; cf. *Dub.* 7,2-4). Ammonius goes on to develop an account of divine knowledge that is strikingly similar to that of Proclus and that contains very similar expressions: god knows contingent things in a manner superior to their nature (136,11-12); he knows divided things in an undivided way, plurality in a unitary way, temporal things in an eternal way (136,15-16).

24. The use of the term 'indeterminate' in the context of future contingents may be usefully compared with Ammonius' (and Boethius') analysis according to which future contingent propositions divide the true and the false in an indefinite way. Cf. Mignucci 1998, 55, 58, 67-9.

25. On the problem of henadic knowledge of individuals and accidents, see also Lloyd 1990, 159-63.

26. According to Boeth. *in Int.* II, 226,9-13 god knows the contingent as contingent, which means that he knows that *A* is contingent. Proclus and Ammonius would agree. Boethius adds the claim that god will also know *what* will happen, because he understands our motives and reasons (better than we do). Boethius fundamentally espouses the central idea of the theory propounded by Proclus and Ammonius, according to which providence knows contingents in a determinate way: cf. Boeth. *in Int.* I, 108,4-5; 123,20-2; 124,6-7; II 190,7; Amm. *in Int.* 137,1.

27. Our free choices presuppose contingency, as Proclus explains in *in Remp.* 2,275,8-19: our choices are not (fully) determined, i.e. they do not belong to the necessary (*anankaion*) but to the contingent (*endekhomenon*), yet what follows from our choices follows with necessity (in other words, this is a hypothetical necessity: if you choose *p*, then *q* follows with necessity). This also applies to our choice of a life type, that precedes each single life, as Proclus explains. Later on he adds that this choice of a *bios*, though to some extent (*ta polla*) determined by our previous lives (*Resp.* 10, 620A2-3), is always free. Proclus explains that Plato by adding the expression *ta polla* makes the proposition a contingent one: cf. *in Remp.* 305,2-12.

28. cf. Sharples 1983, 165.

29. We are in other words talking about events that are complete in every instance of their occurrence; the case of processes that can only be said to have happened after their accomplishment, but can in a sense said to be happening during their occurrence can be fitted in easily: in that case the 'now' of the observation should be the posterior limit of their occurrence.

30. Only in a deterministic framework, such as that of Diodorus, does unalterability attach to future events. Cf. Cic. *Fat.* 17-18.

31. In accordance with the definitions of contingency and necessity: cf. Amm. *in Int.* 143,11-13; 151,26-7. See also 145,11-12; 14-15 (tr. D. Blank): 'For just because time has brought it into being, we should not think it has happened by a necessary pre-establishment (*prokatabolê*). […] If this is so, it is clear that it was also possible for it not to occur.'

32. cf. Mignucci 1998, 60-1, 64.

33. cf. Amm. *in Int.* 136,1-3 and 15-20, with Sorabji 1983, 262.

34. *Cons.* 5,6 (l. 66-72 Tester). Cf. Sorabji 1983, 254; Marenbon 2010.

35. *Dub.* 8,38.

36. *Cons.* 5,6 (l. 72-5 Tester). See also Amm. *in Int.* 136,26-9.

37. cf. Amm. *in Int.* 136,19-21, citing the *locus classicus, Tim.* 37E6-38A2.

38. See, e.g., Amm. *in Int.* 141,31-4; 154,28-34.

39. We have benefited from discussions with Benedikt Strobel regarding this argument (workshop Würzburg 12.10.2009).

40. The latter difference would not seem to coincide with the traditional one between 'in most cases' and 'in the fewest cases' (*hôs epi to polu / hôs epi to elatton*); cf. Amm. *in Int.* 142,1-3; 151,30-1. For the time of determination is likely to be independent of statistic probability.

41. cf. Mignucci 1998, 60 and our nn. 77-8 to the translation.

42. cf. Steel 2007, 25.

43. cf. Sorabji 1983, 255-7; also 259-62. To say that the One simply transcends the distinctions between contingent and necessary (*Prov.* 64,8-12, cf. Schneider 2010, 110-11) does not solve anything either.

44. See Luna 2000.

45. There are no greater and smaller quantitative infinities. On Proclus' concept of quantitative infinity, there is nothing greater than quantitative infinity. Cf. Dodds 1963, 248.

46. This corresponds to *ET* §93.

47. cf. *in Parm.* 1120,26-30; 1121,17-1124,28; *ET* §89-92; *TP* 3,8,24-10,14; Van Riel 2000, 404-6.

48. cf. Soury 1942; Brenk 1986.

49. cf. *ET* §113-65, esp. 113, 116, 120, 122, 134.

50. See also n. 136 to our translation.

51. cf. *ET* §143; *TP* 1.18, p. 83,24-84,15; *Mal.* 7,25-7; 41,25-7. See also the fourth problem.

52. See n. 117 to our translation.

53. See Philoponus, *De aet. mundi*, 24,1-16, 103,21-5, and 549,7-550,24 (cf. Lang and Macro 2001, 41).

54. Proclus recalls the triad being-life-intellect, that structures all of reality (below the One).

55. See nn. 131-2 to our translation.

56. See n. 135 to our translation.

57. The reference is to Plat. *Resp.* 6, 510B4-511D5.

58. cf. nn. 138-9 to our translation.

59. For a discussion, see our introduction and notes in Opsomer-Steel

2003, and the more recent publications Schäfer 2002 (not cited in our translation), O'Meara 2005, Phillips 2006, Narbonne 2007, Phillips 2007, Opsomer 2007, Kavvadas 2009.

60. cf. *Mal.* 27-8, with our nn. 193, 199 (Opsomer-Steel 2003, 118).

61. cf. *Mal.* 20-6.

62. cf. *Mal.* 7.18-19: 'For all good things would be the lowest [in the hierarchy] of beings, and the eternal beings would exist at the level of matter', with our n. 40 (Opsomer-Steel 2003, 108).

63. See also *in Tim.* 1,376,28-377,7.

64. cf. *Mal.* 50, Opsomer-Steel 2003, 23-8.

65. Properly speaking the irrational soul is not a soul, but merely a 'shadow' of a soul.

66. Irrational animals will be discussed in the seventh problem (§43-8). See also *Mal.* 18,22-3 (tr. Opsomer-Steel): 'In the case of lions and leopards one would not consider rage to be something evil, but one would do so in the case of human beings, for whom reason is the best.' In this text, Proclus adds the qualification that for brutes too there can be evil, namely when they act contrary to their nature. Cf. *Mal.* 25,20-7: 'And as for virtue, it does not exist in the same way in all beings; in one case it is by possessing the virtue of a horse that one has the good corresponding to one's nature, in another case by possessing the virtue of a lion, or that of another animal. And all species reside in the good, though some more, some less. But if an animal becomes a fox instead of a lion, slackening its virile and haughty nature, or if it becomes cowardly instead of bellicose, or if another assumes any other type of life, abandoning the virtue that is naturally fitting to it, they give evidence that in these <beings> too there is evil.'

67. The irrational soul does not properly speaking descend. It is rather created for the sake of the animation of the body. For more details, see the notes to our translation and Opsomer 2006.

68. Proclus considers this to be an essentially Platonic doctrine, *pace* Dragona-Monachou 1994, 4488, n. 211. See our n. 185 to the translation.

69. cf. Cic. *ND* 3,66-95 (esp. 79) (Cotta's argument against providence); Philo Alex., *Prov.* 2,8-11 Hadas-Lebel (the suffering of the virtuous; replies: 2.16-33); 2,3-6 (the prospering of the bad; replies 2,12-14); Sen. *Prov.* 1,1; 3,1-14; Plot. 3.2 [47] 6,1-6; Iambl. *Ep. ad Maced.* (Stob. *Anth.* II, 175,17-176,10 W.-H.). Proclus (*Prov.* 53,13-14) mentions Plotinus, Iamblichus and Theodorus of Asine (= Test. 39 Deuse) as philosophers who have struggled with this problem. Cf. Steel 2007, 22 and 88, n. 248.

70. cf. Iambl. *Ep. ad Maced.*, fr. 6 (Stob., *Anth.* II, 175,22-3 W.-H., tr. Dillon-Poleichtner): 'There is, then, no fruit of virtue other than virtue itself.' Iamblichus goes on to say that the good person is superior to all accidents of fortune. See also ib., fr. 7 (Stob., *Anth.* II, 176,12-21 W.-H.).

71. cf. Iambl. *Ep. ad Maced.*, fr. 6 (Stob., *Anth.* II, 176,4-5 W.-H.).

72. e.g. 44,26-7, in the case of irrational animals; 52-3 (with our comments); 57 (eschatological retribution).

73. cf. Orig. *Contra Cels.* 4,75; 4,78 = *SVF* II 1173; Sen. *Prov.* 1,5-6; 2,3-7.

74. cf. Plat. *Ap.* 30C6-D5.

75. cf. Plat. *Gorg.* 470E; 471E; 507C; *Crito* 48B. Cf. Irwin 1995, 58-60.

76. cf. DL 7.89; Plut. *Comm. not.* 1062B; Epict. *Diss.* 1,17,21-8; *Ench.* 1.

77. Long-Sedley 1987, section 58.

78. Platonists often use a kind of poetic licence when citing Plato: the context in the *Republic* is of course different, while eschatological. Yet the idea is the same: the one who chooses is responsible, not god. The require-

ment that god be never made responsible for evil is expressed repeatedly by Plato: see also *Resp*. 2, 380B6-C3; *Tim*. 42E3-4. For a reconstruction of the freedom attributed to the soul in choosing its type of life and in making choices within its earthly life, see Schneider 2010, 278-83.

79. Of course not everything done by rational beings results from choice. The position of the brutes is intermediate between lifeless things and rational animals.

80. These would be assumptions about the effectiveness of our actions, including their ability to create badness in a providential universe.

81. At *Dub*. 39,14-15 Proclus cites this phrase from Plotinus in a loose way, but when he applies the same argument to brutes at 44,18, he quotes Plotinus literally; see our notes ad loc.

82. cf. n. 66.

83. For this debate, see Sorabji 1993, 166-169, citing Maimonides, who claims that the rule of providence does not extend to individual non-rational animals, but merely to their species. See also Sorabji's ch. 14 on Christian teachings regarding the treatment of animals.

84. A similar appeal to the unity of the cosmos in Iambl. *Ep. ad Maced.*, fr. 1 (Stob. *Anth*. II, 80,11-81,6 W.-H.).

85. *De fat*. 572F-573B; see also Calc. *in Tim*. 143. For the early Stoics, see Dragona-Monachou 1994, 4432-3.

86. Plot. 3.3 [48] 5,15-16.

87. Iambl. *Ep. ad Maced.*, fr. 4 (Stob. *Anth*. II, 173,26-174,8 W.-H., tr. Dillon-Poleichtner).

88. cf. Steel 2007, 77 n. 59: 'The identification of 'intellect' with 'providence' and 'necessity' with 'fate' goes back to Middle Platonism, see Numenius quoted by Calcidius, *in Tim*. 269 and 296.'

89. For similar examples in the human world, cf. §32.

90. The same happens with humans: cf. §40.

91. Human beings too inflict harm on each other: cf. §39.

92. cf. §40.

93. cf. §39.

94. In the case of human souls Proclus makes gods the leaders of their 'chains', in that of animals demons fulfil that role. Cf. §41,4.

95. This broadly corresponds to the account of human fates in §39-41.

96. See also Cic. *ND* 2,162-4; Marc. Aur. *Med*. 1,17,20; 9,27,3.

97. Just as it makes no sense to question the principle of procession itself: cf. Opsomer-Steel 2003, 21.

98. See also our n. 360 to the translation.

99. See our n. 330 to the translation.

100. In fact there can be no comparison, i.e. *no* proportion between any time span and eternity.

101. cf. Steel 2012.

102. For a more extensive discussion of these parallel texts, see Van den Berg forthcoming (cf. n. 108).

103. Our previous lives determine the choices made by the soul which lead to the next reincarnation. Cf. Plato *Resp*. 10, 617E3-5.

104. Plato *Tim*. 87B4-6 claims that in those cases the parents are responsible, as R. Van den Berg (cf. n. 108) points out.

105. This possibility, mentioned when Proclus outlined the problem in §58, is not a real one: wrongdoers do not escape justice, but that may not always be visible to us (as was clear from the discussion of the eighth problem).

106. For the idea of inherited badness, of soul and body, see *in Crat.* 93, p. 46,18-20.

107. This is of course exactly what one should *not* do when watching a play (or a movie): in suspending disbelief, the audience is supposed to forget the actor and watch the character (which is however less obvious the stronger the personality cult is).

108. De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 170-9 and Baldassarri 1994 are reliable introductions to the text. For a more extensive, recent study with new bibliography, see Frazier 2010. In a forthcoming text that she kindly made available to us, *Justice et Providence. Du dialogue de Plutarque aux questions de Proclus*, Frazier moreover examines, in an exemplary way, the relation with Proclus' *Ten Problems*. We have also benefited from the kindness of R.M. van den Berg, who provided us with a copy of his forthcoming article on the ninth problem and its relation to Plutarch, 'Proclus and Plutarch on inherited guilt and postponed punishment'.

109. Henceforth we use quotation marks to distinguish the characters 'Epicurus' and 'Plutarch' from the historical figures. The character 'Epicurus' is of course not supposed to be the well-known founder of the Epicurean school, whereas 'Plutarch' does stand for a historical figure, viz. the author.

110. The same criticism is voiced by the Academic Cotta in Cic. *ND* 3,90, where it is meant as a criticism of the Stoic theory of providence.

111. cf. Eurip. *Or*. 420 (548D) and fr. 979 Nauck (549B, D).

112. *Expressis verbis* appealed to by Plutarch at 558C3 and 560B3.

113. cf., e.g., *Dub.* 53,2, referring to the justice of he who punishes.

114. The same example, without mention of Bion, is given by Philo Alex., *Prov.* 2,7 Hadas-Lebel.

115. cf. Dodds 1951, 33-4.

116. Plutarch cites Euripides (fr. 980 Nauck) as someone who criticises the gods for this (556E3-6). Plato too mentions the punishment of descendents for the crimes of ancestors (*Resp*. 2, 366A6-7).

117. cf. Sewell-Rutter 2007, 10-11, 23, 33-34, 48.

118. cf. Philo Alex., *Prov.* 2,7 Hadas-Lebel.

119. Compare our remark on the same argument as used by Proclus, p. 44.

120. cf. Philo Alex., *Prov.* 2,31-2 Hadas-Lebel, on the benefits tyrants may provide, as intended by providence.

121. Epicharmus was the first to have advanced this famous argument (DK 23 B2). Plutarch quotes it several times: *De tranq.* 473D-E; *De comm. not.* 1083A, *Theseus* 23,1. He connects it with Heraclitus' theory of flux (559C6-9)

122. Proclus makes a similar move when he introduces reincarnation in §60.

123. Proclus' arguments are indicated by the roman numbers used in our analysis of the text (pp. 42-8, preceded by 8 and 9, standing for the eighth and ninth of the *Dubitationes*, respectively; it should be noted that in the case of Proclus the numbering follows the sequence of the text; we have not, as we did for Plutarch, regrouped the arguments. We add a short description for the arguments added by Proclus.

124. Proclus also uses some analogies that can be found in Plutarch, but also in other texts. This is the case for the frequent medical analogies. An analogy that is somewhat more special is that of a dramatic play. Proclus uses this analogy in a markedly different way though: he compares the reincarnations of a single soul to the different roles played by the same actor,

whereas Plutarch highlights the contrast between the knowledge had by the spectators (they anticipate the inevitable punishment of the characters) with the ignorance the characters have regarding what awaits them.

125. Hermias, *in Phaedr.* 96,28-97,8 provides a parallel in that he in a similar way connects the severity of the disease, i.e. the question to what extent a crime does or does not spring from an inveterate disposition, with the possibility of postponement of the treatment. Only, in Hermias' account the treatment consists in expiatory rites, whereas in *Dub.* 59 it is the punishment that does the job.

126. See also n. 420 to our translation.

127. This answer is traditional. See, e.g., Philo Alex., *Prov.* 2,30 Hadas-Lebel.

128. See n. 108 above.

129. Both F. Frazier and R. Van den Berg (cf. n. 108) make this point.

130. Another attempt at retroversion, though not of the whole *opusculum*, was made by Schneider 2010, 319-30: §6-8, 13-15, 31 (*partim*), 39 (*partim*), 46 (*partim*), 47, 60 (*partim*), 63 (*partim*).

131. Taylor 1833, 61.

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PROCLUS
Ten Problems Concerning Providence

Translation

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Ten Problems Concerning Providence

Preface

1. The great Plato, in the tenth book of the *Laws*, 'forced' us, so to speak, 'with adamantine arguments'[1] 'to admit' that providence exists,[2] and he did so in many other places, as in the *Timaeus* where he shows that the works of creation, even down to the most inferior things, have been accomplished with accuracy, 'because of the providence of God',[3] as he literally says. Having faith in what Plato demonstrated, as the Oracles, too, testify to Plato's demonstrations in the clearest way[4] – for that very transmission of the Oracles to the worthy disciples of the gods is, I believe, the most evident demonstration of providence – we should 'strike all around' whatever illusion (*phantasma*) prevents the thought of many people from admitting that all things are in accordance with providence, and, having refuted the faults in what is said, bring it back to the truth.[5] Not that these problems did not receive due concern from our predecessors. [Our] soul, however, longs 'to speak and hear'[6] about these problems, even though they have been raised and articulated a thousand times, and wants 'to turn back upon itself'[7] and, as it were, discuss with itself,[8] and not just take in arguments about these issues from outside. Let us, then, interrogate ourselves, if that is all right, and raise problems in the secrecy of our soul and thus attempt to exercise ourselves in solving these problems. Whether we discuss what has been said by previous thinkers or not, it makes no difference. For as long as we say what corresponds to our own view, we may seem to say and write these views as our own.[9] After all we have the 'common Hermes' as our leader, the same who is said to place in every soul the untaught preconceptions of the common notions.[10]

First problem

2. Before all other problems let us examine [the following issue].[11] Given that providence extends to all things, to wholes, to parts, even as far as the most individual things, to the celestial and to what is under the heaven, to the eternal and the corruptible, and that it ought to know the merit of all things it provides for (or else in case it would ignore their merit, it would not be possible to 'steer all things in accordance with justice')[12] how does providence know everything, the whole and the parts, the corruptible and the eternal, and what is the mode of its knowledge? And if we are capable to get a grasp on

this, we will subsequently raise some other problem and then again another [and so on].

3. After having proposed first this problem to ourselves and having awakened the common Hermes[13] we should say that [there are different types of] knowledge.[14] (1) The first type one may think of as being connatural with the irrational part [of the soul]: it is called perception or imagination; both these definitely belong to particular things and do not exist outside bodies, which shows that they are cognitions of particular things. (2) Another type is essentially inherent in rational life and is called a kind of opinion and scientific knowledge. They are different from the irrational cognitions by the fact that they know the universals, whereas the former, as was said, only apprehend[15] particular objects; they differ from one another because the first, namely opinion, is cognition of things in change, the latter, science obviously, is cognition of what is always stable and unchangeable. (3) Prior to them is the so-called intellective cognition, of which one kind is knowledge of all things at once and absolutely, another of all things under one aspect. In these respects the knowledge of the all-encompassing intellect and the knowledge of the particular intellects are different.[16] All these intellects think all things and thus transcend rational cognitions, yet the [universal intellect] is all things and thinks all as a whole, whereas the [particular intellects] are both [i.e. being all things and thinking all things] in a particular way, because as each intellect is, it also <thinks> what it thinks and as it thinks it <is> also what it is.[17]

4. Beyond all these [forms of knowledge], however, is the knowledge of providence. It exists above intellect, having established itself[18] in an activity prior to thinking by virtue of the One alone, according to which every god is said both to exist and to exercise providence over all things.[19] By this One, according to which it also exists, [providence] knows all things. Indeed, all other cognitions are necessarily connatural with [different modes of] being,[20] – for instance, imagination and sense perception, which belong to irrational life, must themselves be assumed to be irrational, and the cognitions prior to these to be rational, as they pertain to rational souls, and the cognitions of the intellects to be intellective. If that is the case, it would be absurd not to define the cognition possessed by the gods, in so far as they are gods, in accordance with their unitary being. For our common conceptions conceive of the divinity as something better than intellect and make us admit that each being also knows in the manner in which it exists.[21] If it is, then, according to its [being] one that providence is that which it is said to be and imparts what is good to all things and if this [good] is the same as the One,[22] it is in virtue of the way it exists as providence for all, that it also knows the things

for which it provides. It is therefore by [being] one that [providence] is capable of knowing all things, i.e., by the fact that it does not pertain to wholes more than to parts, not more to what is according to nature than to what is contrary to nature, not more to forms than to what is formless. Just as of all perceptible things there must be some indivisible criterion and likewise of the Forms prior to the perceptible things there must be some other criterion which discerns them[23] – for if one part were to discern one object, another part another, it would be similar, as someone[24] says, to 'me perceiving this thing and you another' – thus there must be something prior to the Forms, having a unitary knowledge of both universals and individuals. For how could it otherwise order some things as participants, others as participated?[25] In fact, these things have nothing in common but [being] one. Prior, therefore, to what knows the Forms, there is that which knows all things insofar as they are one. It is evident that this [principle] knows in accordance with the One, such that like is known by the like,[26] I mean, what comes from a cause by its cause. For everywhere, and in all these things, is the One. But not all being whatsoever is universal, for the universal and the particular are different things; nor is everything form, for there is something which is not form; nor is everything according to nature, for there is also the unnatural. But whatever one can conceive of is one, as the One is over all things. If something does not participate in the One, it would not exist at all and it would not be able to participate in providence.[27] If therefore nothing escapes the One, if something is to know everything, it will know it in a unitary way obviously. For [it will know] either by what is one or by what is not one. This [latter mode of] knowledge, however, is inferior and alien to the One. By virtue of the One, therefore, providence knows whatever is in some way one. If then something knows everything, it will know all things in accordance with the One. For that is what is common to all things, to those that are and to those that are not.[28]

5. Since providence, as we have said, is characterised by [its being] the One and the good, and since the good exists prior to intellect (for the intellect longs for the good, as do all beings; but the good does not long for the intellect), providential knowledge, too, must be superior to intellective knowledge. And in this manner providence should know all things, namely by its own One, according to which it also makes all things good: those that think as well as those that do not think, living as well as not living things, beings as well as non-beings. To all things it imparts unity, as a trace of its own One. For the One of [providence] is not like the individual one, for this is the last of beings and is inferior to the universal and is what it is through participating in the universal, whereas [the One of providence] is even superior to the universal.[29] For [the universal] is something one

but not the One itself, for it is many things and not only one, since it also possesses the differences of the things it contains.[30] But the One, which characterises the being of providence, is not even something like a whole. For the latter is divisible, whereas the former, which is 'truly one', is also 'truly indivisible'.[31]

In summary,[32] we say that this One [sc. of providence] brings forth all things, preserves them all, has an existence more true than all being and more clear than all knowledge, not being divided by the objects known nor moving around them. The latter [features] are peculiarities of psychic and intellective knowledge. For also every intellect is one-many[33] both in its being and in its thinking. And every soul, being motion, also thinks with motion. But [providence], which remains in the One both immutable and indivisible, also knows all things in the same manner. And it not only knows humankind and the sun and everything whatsoever of that kind, but also every single one of particular things. For nothing escapes that One in any way, whether in its being or in its being known. And it is said, and rightly said, that the entire circle exists in the centre in the mode of the centre, since the centre is the cause, the circle the thing caused. And for the same reason every number exists in a monadic way in the monad. In the One of providence, however, all things exist in a superior way, since it is also one in a degree superior to that of the centre or monad. Suppose, then, that the centre had knowledge of the circle, it would have a central knowledge, as it likewise had a central existence, and it would not divide itself in the parts of the circle.[34] In a similar way, the unitary knowledge of providence is in the same indivisibility the knowledge of all divided things and of every single one of both the most individual and the most universal things. And just as it gave existence[35] to everything <according to the One, so it knows everything>[36] according to the One. And neither is its knowledge divided by the objects known nor are the objects known commingled because of the one unification of knowledge. This knowledge, while being one, comprehends the whole infinity of the objects known, but it is united above all unification that is in them. Let this be the answer to the first of our problems concerning providence.

Second problem

6. Let us put forward, if you like, a second problem and examine in what sense[37] one may say that providence knows contingent events, since the ancients too have amply shown the depth of this problem.[38] Because of this problem, some philosophers who admitted the existence of providence banished the nature of the contingent from reality, whereas others, who could not contradict the evident existence of contingent events, denied that providence extends as far down.[39] Both of them are right in assuming that (1), if providence has to

exercise its activity, it must know the objects of its providence and that (2), if it should know them, it must not, because of the ambivalent nature of the contingent, know them in an ambivalent way. The demonstration of these points – I mean both that providence extends to all things and that the contingent is not a mere name but a truly existing nature – does not pertain to the present argument. For it is [from this double assumption] that providence exists and that all things exist which are said to be,[40] that we have undertaken to solve the many serious problems concerning these issues.

7. With these problems set before us and granting beforehand the existence of providence, let us say that knowledge – and I mean all knowledge – is always intermediate between some cognitive [power] and an object known – that from which, and that toward which, respectively – and connects both; hence it must be in one of two conditions: either to change together with the knowing subject and to be such as the subject, or to be homogeneous with the objects known. Or[41] it is neither of the two, and knowledge corresponds not more to the one than to the other. But if knowledge had its being in the object known, it would need to be defined with reference to the object exclusively. If, however, it existed in both, or without both, it should not belong to any one of the extremes more than to the other. But since knowledge is in the subject, yet longing for the object known, it is evident that, being the perfection of the one and desiring the other,[42] it is defined correctly with reference to the nature of the knowing subject, having only as much of the object known as to distinguish it completely from other cognitions. For knowledge must have something of the object, too, as this is its end.

This having been demonstrated – I mean that knowledge exists in the knowing subject and is characterised from the latter's existence in accordance with its mode of being – it is already clear that the cognitions of [knowers] that are in all respects immutable are of the same kind [i.e. immutable], and that cognitions of mutable [knowers] are of the opposite character; and that things whose essence is not rational have a non-rational knowledge and beings whose essence is reason and intellect also have knowledge that is a kind of reason and intellect; and that beings whose existence is superior also have a superior knowledge. Therefore, if providence existed somehow at some distance from the One, its knowledge too would necessarily as it were escape from the One. If, however, it is nothing else but One, obviously it would also remain in the One, when knowing, and, while remaining, it would know everything in accordance with its own character. And just as it knows in a unitary manner, even if the objects known are multiple, so it would know its objects with necessity, even if they are contingent. And, in general, it will know all

things in accordance with its own existence, not in accordance with the existence of the objects known. Therefore it makes no difference to providence whether its object is divided, or generated in time, or corporeal, or instable. No, its knowledge of these objects is characterised by one limiting principle, which is incorporeal, timeless, undivided, detached from all contraries, since, as was shown, knowledge is defined in accordance with the peculiarity of the knowing subject, and this subject is unitary, immutable and established according to one limit.

8. If then someone inquires into how providence knows what is contingent, we shall say to the person inquiring into this that providence does not know the contingent things the way they are – for that was what troubled us – but [knows them] the way providence is, that is, in a manner superior to the existence of contingent things. For we claim that providence does not know them by looking at them so that it would be affected along with these unstable things; but rather that, existing outside of them and prior to all time, it possesses knowledge of the things that change in time. For to know each thing from its cause is also more venerable than to know it from itself, and to know something in a superior manner is more venerable than to know it at its own level. Knowing, then, the indeterminate in a determinate manner, [providence] knows both that it is indeterminate and that it has been determined within itself.[43] For neither does it know merely that [the contingent] has been determined within itself – for that would not amount to knowing it – nor does it merely know that it is indeterminate – for that would not amount to knowing it according to providence's own mode of being. Therefore its knowledge has both, the determinate on account of the knower and the fact that [this piece of knowledge] is of something indeterminate on account of the nature of the object. Providence knows by possessing as a whole 'a determinate knowledge of the indeterminate', whereby the indeterminate will come to be, but is not actually present, and the knowledge anticipates the cause of the indeterminate. For [providence] knows that something indeterminate will take place. Seeing the cause of this [indeterminate thing], it also knows it. And in the manner it makes the indeterminate exist, in the same manner it also knows it. It makes the indeterminate exist not in an indeterminate, but in a determinate manner. By consequence, providence also knows the indeterminate in a determinate manner, just as it knows incorporeally and without distension that which is distended and made corporeal, which comes after it.

One may compare the reason-principle inside the seed:[44] in every single part of the seed it is one and whole and it contains the cause of the further division of what proceeds from it. Suppose it [also] knew itself as the cause of the division for what comes after it and as

being itself indivisible. Then it might say the following: 'I possess in an indivisible manner what is divided, without being separate from either [the indivisible] or [the divisible], but containing the inferior in the superior – this in order to avoid that the division is either uncaused or already anticipated[45] in the cause; it exists there causally, but formally [only] in those which have received it.'[46] And suppose it investigated the cause within itself of that division, it would find that it itself, despite being indivisible, is nonetheless lying in another substrate.[47] The fact that it is itself in another and not in itself grants the [recipients] the opportunity of being divided and being present in other things and [makes it possible] that each part is not everywhere. After this manner, we say, providence too, being the cause of all things it knows, also knows the things of which it is the cause, both the determinate and the indeterminate, in a determinate way. And it knows as a future event the coming to be of that which is indeterminate and knows the cause of how it will provide to indeterminate things a determinate[48] entry into being. And nothing impossible happens on account of this, since the indeterminateness exists in things posterior to [providence], even if it is preconceived by its knowledge, as is fitting for causes. This much is clear by now.

Third problem

9. A third problem following upon this deserves to be examined, since it too requires much attention.[49] If providence is cause of both determinate and indeterminate beings, is it [the cause] of both in the same respect or according to different aspects? For if it is in the same respect, how could it discriminate in its knowledge that some things proceeding from it will be determinate, others indeterminate? But if it is according to different aspects, how can unity still persist in the being [of providence], if there are different aspects in it?

10. Let us then, in this case too, beseech the divinity[50] to join us in coming to grips with the argument[51] and bring to their end the labour pains we suffer in our souls[52] regarding this subject, and let us say to ourselves that according to our argument providence is established in the One. For, as our common conceptions tell us,[53] whatever exercises providence communicates either a real or an apparent good, but always a good, to the subjects of its care. And providence is nothing other than doing well to the things that are said to belong to it. But we claim, and have said so before, that to bestow goodness is in all cases identical with the bestowing of unity, because the One is good and the good is One – and this has been said a thousand times.[54]

We say, then, that providence is characterised by the One – or, which is the same thing, by the good – but the One of providence, as we have already shown before,[55] is not so in the manner of the

material one. For the latter is inefficacious and infertile, as there is nothing after matter, whereas that One is fertile and most efficacious, as all things come after providence. Nor is it like the individual one, for this has reached ultimate division and is one in such a way as to be none of the other things, whereas [the One of providence is one] as containing all things and as present to all things of which it is the cause and as the principle of preservation for all things. Nor is it [one] – and that is a most paradoxical statement – in the manner of what some call the 'universal one'.[56] For this one, while containing the things which fall under it and imparting essence to each of them, nonetheless anticipates the differences of the things that it contains, and is essentially 'one many',[57] whereas the One [of providence] is exempt from all things of which it is the productive and perfective [cause] and is free from any variety. Providence, therefore, being none of these, but established above every specific essence, and nevertheless producing all things according to its unitary union, possesses a power that cannot be circumscribed and is incomprehensible[58] for all things. Hence, neither can one of the things which exist from it, nor all of them distributively, nor all of them collectively, unfold the power that pre-exists in it, or receive it in themselves and embrace it in their bosom and adopt it, whereas the powers of all other things, that are as it were absorbed by it, love to participate in it somehow, insofar as it is in the nature of each.

11. The One of providence is thus more one than any union, incorporeal and corporeal, and its infinity of power more infinite than any power, infinite or finite.[59] There is nothing surprising about [the idea that], among infinite powers, one is more infinite than another. For no one would assume that, up there, there is a quantitative infinity (in which the infinite does indeed not have anything more infinite [than itself]).[60] Nevertheless, everything that is infinite in power[61] will be infinite with respect to beings that are inferior to it, but will be finite to the beings that are prior to it, being limited by them. For otherwise, if it were not comprehended, it could not be governed by the superior beings nor held together by them, being indeed ungovernable. If, then, it is held together, though it is infinite, it is dominated, and if it is dominated, it is also comprehended, <and if comprehended>,[62] it is not infinite to them. But neither is it infinite to itself. For that which is infinite to itself cannot be comprehended by itself; therefore it would not be capable to hold itself together and preserve itself. But every being is capable of preserving itself according to its power. It remains, then, that each of the infinite beings is infinite only to the things posterior to it.

Let us, then, conceive of the infinite power of providence as a power comprehending all powers that the subjects of its providential care possess, and as bringing forth and dominating them all accord-

ing to its one union, each of them in their own infinity, just as it imparts to all things a union commensurate to the essence of each. For even unity is not the same in all cases. It is, for instance, not the same in incorporeal beings as in bodies, nor is it the same in everlasting bodies as in corruptible bodies, since the union of everlasting bodies is greater. Or how could the former remain indissoluble, whereas the unity of the other perishes? Further, the incorporeal is more proximate to the One, whereas body, on account of its infinite partitioning, falls short of the One by a great deal. Nor should one consider it to be a problem if there is something more one than another, seeing, as we do, that everything in the universe through declining always becomes other with regard to what is prior to it, until it reaches the extremity of its own series.[63]

12. Providence, then, is both unitary and of infinite power. Yet though all things which are produced by it and fall under its care share in both [features], some of them rather exist according to the One, those namely for which determination is in their nature, others according to the infinite, those for which the indeterminate is in their nature. For through their indeterminacy the things here below are 'imitations' of the infinity there, and through their determinacy [they are imitations] of the One.[64] Therefore, the first classes in this universe are what they are according to one unchangeable limit, whereas the beings that succeed these tend to indeterminacy as they have a second rank.[65]

As all infinity exists according to the infinity of providence and everything determinate according to the unity [of providence] and as the infinity there is dominated by the One and belongs to the One, here too indeterminate beings are 'by nature subservient' to determinate beings,[66] and the determinate beings order the manifold changes of things that are moved in an indeterminate manner. And just as their primordial causes are ordered the one to the other, so their effects too have received a relation analogous to their causes and thus make the world complete, whereby the inferior beings depend upon the superior.

13. The argument will become clearer to those who accept the following assumptions. The intellect too produces effects of two sorts[67] – the body and the incorporeal, I mean – yet it knows and produces each of them in an incorporeal manner in accordance with its own nature. The reason-principle (*logos*) of the incorporeal in the [intellect] is itself incorporeal and cause of incorporeal things, whereas the reason-principle of body, though being incorporeal, is cause of bodies. The former principle makes also its product similar to itself, the latter produces things more foreign to incorporeal form because of a declension with respect to the former. As a matter of fact, the soul

likewise generates [two sorts of] reason-principles: those in other souls, which are alive and in motion, and those which fall into matter, the former being scientific reason-principles, the other technical ones. And yet the soul produces all of these reason-principles in a vital manner; but some proceed through life into life, others through life into the lifeless.[68] And, to summarise, everything that generates and knows what it generates by different causes,[69] generates and knows its effects according to the superior. Of the things, however, which are produced from this cause, some are produced according to that [superior cause], some according to the inferior. Therefore, it may be right to say that providence, too, possesses, through the One, the cause of determinate beings, and, through infinity, the cause of indeterminate beings; that it knows and brings forth both sorts of things in a determinate manner and according to both principles in the same manner,[70] just as the intellect [knows and brings forth] according to the reason-principle of an incorporeal or according to the reason-principle of a body in an incorporeal manner, but that of things [thus] produced [by providence] it is right to say that some are determinate on account of the One, others indeterminate on account of infinity. Yet neither the necessary beings are without a share in infinity nor the contingent without limit. For the latter too end up at any rate in the bound of necessity and the former, being everlasting on account of their necessary nature, participate in infinite power; or from where else do they derive their everlasting character and the [property] of never being in another state?[71] In some cases, the One prevails and, on account of this, makes that which is produced in accordance with it necessary, stringing together, as it were, the infinite with limit. In other cases, however, the infinite predominates and, by trying to escape from what swiftly approaches it and attempts to catch it, it makes the One fade away.[72] Providence, however, knows both, be it according to the superior, as we have already said, and it anticipates in its knowledge the peculiarity of both kinds [of beings] with respect to generation: the one, if one may say so, as limit-producing, the other as infinity-producing.[73]

14. Every limit, therefore, stems from there and every infinity, whether in corporeal natures or in bodies, stems from there; and the product of both likewise stems from there.[74] And for that reason the knowledge of both simple and composite things is there, just as also the coming to be of both simple and composite things originates there. Because, as said, the One and the infinite power of the One are there, both the limits and, separately, everything that is somehow infinite proceed from there. But because one of them – infinite power – also belongs to the other – to the One – down here too the products from both form couples[75] and make the [resulting] whole one. What is produced is either necessary, when the One is firmly established

[in it], or contingent, when infinity outruns it. Since, however, it was not right that even down here the infinite be bereft of the One, the contingent too ends in the nature of the necessary, as we have said. This [contingent thing] either is to a greater extent dominated by the One, and having been switched[76] into something necessary is made determinate a long time before its occurrence, or, on account of a weaker participation in the One, it underwent the same change as the former [i.e. it switched to something necessary] though only a short time before, and having been made determinate it came to a standstill from 'the slippery nature'[77] and became alike the former and imitated the infinite power which belongs to the One, not to itself.[78] For every power belongs to some other thing, which possesses it, but not to itself.

Everything that is somehow indeterminate has its indeterminacy and so-called 'contingency' in the fact that it does not yet exist, but it ends into that which by necessity either exist or does not exist, and this either a long or a short time before [its occurrence]. And this is what the conjectural divinations show, for they are more true when made a shorter time than a longer time before the future events, as if the indeterminate had already fallen [into necessity].[79]

15. That the beings superior to us[80] must have knowledge of the indeterminate too, if this too is to partake of order and not be, as it were, an episode[81] unconnected to the universe let this be granted, since it has been demonstrated elsewhere.[82] We were investigating merely how [they have such knowledge]: this too should be made clear. For the universe will not be one nor its governance in accordance with intellect, if there were not also some connection of this [indeterminate being] with things that are determined and have the same order. This knowledge [of the indeterminate] must be attributed either (1) to demons alone – for they, being proximate to the things down here, would seem both to know and to govern them – (2) or also, prior to them, to the gods, who, while apportioning providence to the demons, to different demons for different things, remain themselves master over all these things.

Now, if we leave the knowledge and providence of indeterminate events to the demons alone, we must say either that they know the objects of their providence and the realities prior to themselves in turn, just like we do, or else that they know both simultaneously. And if they know them in turn, in what way indeed will they differ from our souls? For [our souls] are not capable of exercising providence while belonging to themselves and looking at the higher realities.[83] How could we, then, avoid to admit that [the demons], by extending themselves towards what is external, will also follow the events, and will themselves be in an indeterminate state [when occupying themselves] with the indeterminate. If, however, [they

know the higher and the lower] at the same time, it is again necessary either to attribute to them knowledge based on reasoning[84] about the things they govern and to entrust them with reason-principles as well as exemplary forms of indeterminate [things] (for knowledge of these is discursive reasoning); or else, if we affirm that this knowledge is established prior to reasoning and in a manner proper to those who are divinely active, we must refer it *a fortiori* to the gods, from whom also the demons possess divination and the capacity to have determinate foreknowledge even of the indeterminate.[85] For if they grasp what is not determinate in an indeterminate manner, we will deprive[86] them of the impassivity which is appropriate to the immutable classes. For everything [that knows] in such a way,[87] needs both imagination and sense perception, so that, by remembering what is not present, it may link the conjecture of the future events to the present and the past. If, however, [they grasp the indeterminate] in a determinate manner, why should we grant this to the demons and not to the gods too, much more so – [I mean the capacity] to know indeterminate things in a determinate manner, just like they also know temporal things in a non-temporal manner, and to have providence over what is indeterminate according to their mode of knowledge? For if [the gods] are unable to know indeterminate things in a determinate way, it is absurd to grant this knowledge to the demons and to remove it from the gods as if they lacked the power for such knowledge. And suppose [one would say] that the gods do not want [to have providence over indeterminate things]:[88] that would be even more absurd than [to say that] they are not capable [of doing so], since although they are their creators (*hupostatai*), they would not want to exercise providence over the things they brought to existence. Are not all mortal things and all particular things and 'everything the world comprehends'[89] creatures of the gods? Some of the things created stem from the 'one father', others from the cosmic gods; yet the latter too made [everything] in accordance with the father's commandment, and he produced these things too, yet through them.[90] But it was not right and it is not right that the gods, who produce things either directly or through intermediates, would, while being gods, not take care of the things they produce.

16. If, then, the [gods] both want to exercise providence over indeterminate things in a determinate way and are capable of it, it is absolutely evident that they both exercise providence and, in their exercise of providence, know the merit of the objects of their providence. And gods exercise their own providence in a transcendent manner and extend it to all beings, whereas the demons partition the supervision they receive from them,[91] some having bound to themselves the herd-keeping[92] of these kinds of beings, others of other

kinds, 'down to the ultimate division' as Plato says,[93] so that some are guardians of human beings, others of lions, others of other animals or plants, and, still more partially, some of eyes, some of the heart, some of the liver.[94] And indeed, 'all is full of gods'.[95] Over some of these beings the gods too exercise providence directly, over others through the mediation of demons, as was said. Not because they would be incapable of being present to all, but because the lowest beings are too weak to participate in the primary beings out of themselves. The inaptitude[96] of the participants to enjoy [the care] of the gods is evidenced by the fact that sometimes they are [merely] aware of the providence coming from the demons,[97] whereas the recovery of their aptitude is shown by the fact that they have the gods immediately present and know then that they are known by them and receive the providence coming down upon them, of which they partook and in which they shared without noticing. Just like someone sleeping in the light of the sun may because of his sleep not be aware of being illuminated, but on waking up would see himself bathe in light. Such a person might then think that the light is present, and is present to him for the first time, although it was he who was not present to the light, because of his ignorance. At that point, then, the indeterminate too is determined. Only after its conversion to the divinity, with whom the indeterminate [always] was in a determinate manner, and after having partaken from there in limit, does it realise,[98] thanks to its participation, that although it was indeterminate for itself before its conversion, it did not appear to the divinity such as it was in itself, but such as is appropriate to the divinity. It existed in fact in a determinate way, but it was known [to itself] as something that had fallen from [the divine limit] on account of its own indeterminacy, yet not as having fallen so deep as to escape limit completely – for in that case it would without noticing have slipped[99] into the yawning gulf of non-being[100] – but rather in such a way that it neither has no share at all in limit nor is fully established in it. Having been established [in limit] after its conversion it came to understand that knowledge of its own indeterminacy and limit, which brings order into indeterminacy, pre-existed up there.

17. Indeed, if we admit that the good comes to all things from nowhere else but providence, just as intellection comes from intellect and life and vital motion from soul – for what is somehow living lives because of soul, and whatever is thinking thinks because of intellect – it is obvious that also what participates of the good possesses its good on account of the providential cause, even if it belongs to particular beings and to intermittent participants. For one must lead each thing to its own source, from which existence comes to the whole series. If, then, something of the things in the world is made good, it is made good thanks to providence. And [this is true] not only of every

single eternal, but also of every single corruptible being; and not only of every single determinate, but also of every single indeterminate being, whether each receives its proper good immediately from providence or through intermediates, which have first been made good from it. For the intermediaries among beings are not intermediaries by taking away from the causes prior to them of their action upon what comes after them,[101] but by making the gifts that come from what is prior commensurable to the things that come after them. The intermediaries, which themselves participate in these gifts in a fused manner (*sumphuôs*), introduce [to the higher beings],[102] as it were, the beings posterior to them, which are weak because of their declension,[103] and render the latter apt for participation, corroborating them with their own precursory illuminations.

The beings, then, which are more proximate to providence enjoy it much more and are adorned to a greater degree by its vicinity, just as what is closer to the sun, to soul or to intellect would be more illuminated than more remote things, more vital, or more perfect with regard to intellection. This is what we too should admit, and it also agrees with our common notions.[104] For one uses the very term 'close' on account of the affinity of an essence with those things to which it is indeed close, and the term 'remote' because of a distance in being in all respects whatsoever. By consequence, the beings that are more kindred to the beings that are capable of giving them what they actually give, are capable of a greater participation in them. Therefore, they also enjoy a greater participation.

18. As providence hastens to do nothing else but to make all things good, beings that participate more in it, are made good and adorned to a greater extent. But also things that are not close to it must be attached to it, albeit through intermediaries that are precisely close to it. The result is that some things will enjoy providence immediately, whereas others will need other beings as bonds connecting them to it. For if there were no coordination of all things into unity, the world would not be one either. But if all things participated in the same way in the adorning [cause], there would be no order of things adorned. There must, then, be both order and coordination: order distinguishes all things and produces some things prior to others, other things posterior to others, whereas coordination converts divided things to the one good. If that is the case, it is necessary that there should be providence over all things, but not the same providence over all things. Providence indeed exists on account of coordination, but is not the same on account of order. For if providence is over the first beings, there must also be providence over the secondary and over others following upon them. As Plato says and true reason has it,[105] every power that sets greater things in motion is all the more capable of moving smaller things; being

in control of the stronger, it will control the weaker all the more. Since in case of the gods[106] will converges with power,[107] it is necessary that there is also providence over smaller things.[108] For it is not the case that the gods are capable, but do not want to do what they are capable of. Similarly the good persons among us are believed to want [to achieve] whatever they are capable of, and there is no room in them for a power without will nor for a will without power, since the latter would render the appetite vain, whereas the former would render the power unaccomplished.

19. If, however, there is providence over secondary beings, it is even more necessary that it be also over primary beings. For it does not pertain to providence to take care of the inferior things and to order them while leaving the superior things destitute of itself. For even if the superior beings do not need anything, this itself, i.e. the absence of need for anything, is something they have from providence, we could say, and gives to them, primary beings indeed, self-sufficiency.[109]

If we assert that providence is the cause of all good things – which our common notions shout out, so we have said before[110] – we are forced to admit that self-sufficiency, too, stems from there for the beings possessing it and exists on account of it. For either these beings are in need: in that case they receive plenitude from providence and do so prior to all others on account of their proximity in being [to providence]; or else they are not in need: in that case they are always fulfilled and have self-sufficiency on account of the cause that produces them as self-sufficient beings, prior to those beings that are constantly in need, yet always receive a 'restored' plenitude.[111]

20. All beings, then, as I have said, are full of providence[112] in accordance with their order, including those that come to be and do not always exist. Some stem immediately from it and exist always, whereas others have their generation through the mediation of beings that always exist – not because providence would need others, posterior to itself but existing prior to them, for the production and perfection of these beings, but because the latter, in consequence of being several stages below it, need beings produced in the vicinity of providence in order to participate of providence. However, although providence is present everywhere and in all beings, the good is not the same in all things, which should not surprise us. For this too is the work of the most excellent providence, that there is for all things a participation of the good, yet a participation measured by the merit of the beings receiving it; and that it lets each thing take what it is able to take, whether essence causes the difference, as in souls and bodies – for the good of each of them is not the same, because their

being is not the same either – or whether it is merely its activity that establishes [the recipient] in this or that merit, as we say that souls having different activities receive different fates from up there. All souls, indeed, receive [the gifts of providence], but some enjoy what they acquire, others suffer them with hardship, namely those that could never revert to providence without feeling hardship.[113]

Having determined this question in this way we may take our leave from it. That true providence must also be concerned with particular things can be grasped by considering the fact that all these things that are happening contribute something to the universe and that of all the things happening in the universe nothing is episodic,[114] even if we are not capable of detecting the causes in every case. Also, even for blockheads it is clear in some cases that what happens comes from providence. And it would be ridiculous that in some cases it were thus, in other cases not, as all things are similar. Enough about this.

Fourth problem

21. Let us catch our breath,[115] as it were, after this argument, and examine a fourth [problem], taking another starting point. How do we say participations of the gods come about?[116] This is a problem that also those who love to speculate about the Forms are accustomed to investigate regarding the Forms.[117] For either the gods are always active, but the things here do not always participate of them; now how would that not be absurd? for to what will their activity extend, if there is no participant? Or we do not credit [the gods] with the continual exercise of the activity they have. That is even more absurd, 'if one may call absurd what is impossible'.[118] For whatever belongs to the gods belongs to them always and prior to all time, not[119] only prior to this particular time, but also prior to the entire infinite time. For time is, even in its infinity,[120] posterior to the gods.[121]

22. In order that these [questions] too may be adequately investigated, at least for the present account, it must be said[122] first that all participation, whether it is by eternal or corruptible things, always holds an intermediary position between the participants and the participated. And as all intermediaries are supposed to have something in common with the extremes,[123] it is necessary that also this [intermediary] should be related in some way to the participant and in another way to what is participated. For if it were related to only one of the two, it would not connect both extremes to one another. Situated in the middle in said manner, it exists in the participants, as it proceeds from the participated entities, but establishes itself firmly in the things that receive the latter's activity, just like know-

ledge, as we said before, exists in the knowing subjects and not in the objects known.[124] Indeed, the knowing subjects are related as participants to the objects known. For every knower wants to participate of the known. This is the structure of participation, and all things participate primarily of providence – animate, inanimate, rational, irrational, eternal and corruptible beings – according to the power proper to each of them (for they are all instruments of providence, some serving it[125] from near, some from afar). Therefore it is necessary that participation not only reveals providence as the cause from which it proceeds, but also anticipates the aptitude of the participant; this aptitude exists rationally in rational beings, intellectively in intellective beings, in the way of imagination or perception in beings that live according to imagination or perception, in the way of substance and mere being in those that have received being without life. As all these are organs of providence and used by it, it is necessary that every single one contributes to its own work, thus serving the power using it, without obliterating in its activity either providence's proper mode of existence or its own nature, but displaying a single [character] resulting from both. So they say that the sun transmits light to the moon, which then comes from the moon unto us.[126] Yet this light is not like solar light, warm and dry, nor like lunar light, murky and caliginous, but as a mixture of the power of the participated and the participant it changes with respect to its colour and the activity it had. This can be observed in many other [phenomena].

23. Although providence is situated above all beings in accordance with its divine union and exercises one activity befitting to the One, everything that accedes to it participates in the manner it is naturally capable of. One thing shares in providence, and is perfected in the manner of which it is naturally capable, just in order to exist, another does so in order to live, still another in order to know, another in order to [obtain] all [of these three]. Some things participate always on account of their own power and have an uninterrupted participation on account of both the infinite activity of their giver and their own permanent and firm relation to it; others participate only at times because their nature is unstable, and from their own weakness bestow this 'sometimes' to their participation. Hence, they have their well-being from providence, but the impermanence of their well-being from the receiver. For the latter is indeed what withdraws itself, whereas providence has the power to give always and always gives to those beings that possess the power of always receiving from it what it gives.[127] Therefore, the participant does not attach the 'sometimes' to providence, but just removes from itself the 'always'. In the same way the sun always shines, but that which is not able always to look at it and looks [only] at times does not attach the 'sometimes' to the light of the sun. Rather, by turning away from the

light, it removed permanent vision from itself. Thus, even if the sun has no effect upon this [being] because of the latter's infirmity for participation, its activity does affect those that are capable of receiving its illumination. Participation, however, is not present in this being whenever it turns away, for we do not call participation the activity itself of providence, but only what comes from this activity to this [particular] thing.

24. If something, then, participates [only] at times, whereas providence is always active, this thing diminishes merely its own participation, without depriving the activity [of providence] from its permanency, for the activity of god always remains the same. Similarly in the case of a face which is motionless: one thing which is suitable and turned toward it is adorned, as when a mirror, which is smooth and brilliant, placed opposite to the face would receive some imprint from it, whereas another thing, either because of weakness because it is too far away or also because it is turned away from it, blurs what it receives from there for being irregular and dark. It comes to be of such a nature because of its enjoyment of matter.[128] A case in point are the oracles:[129] sometimes they participate of the oracular gods,[130] sometimes they leave off, becoming impotent and, as it were, without spirit[131] for a certain time. The cause of this irregularity should be traced to the oracles themselves, since [the gods] use without interruption spirits and constantly act upon that which is capable of participation.[132] For the true oracles, contrary to the apparent ones,[133] are those accomplished by angels, demons, and heroes, who themselves are illuminated by the gods and by the ever-present allotted regions of the universe (*moirai*).[134] Yet certain waters and chasms in the earth, because of their instable nature, cannot always participate of them. [A further example are] the powers of sacred rites, which sometimes enter statues and make them alive and filled with divine inspiration, but leave off in certain periods. One should, I think, attribute the deficiency of these, too, to the recipients and not to any change of the activity of the gods inspiring the statues.[135] For we would not dare to blame the sun for the eclipse[136] of the moon either, but explain it by the fact that the [moon] falls into the conical shadow of the earth.[137] In general, one should not attribute to providence, either, the impermanence in the case of those things that sometimes enjoy providence. One should on the contrary accept that the explanation is to be found in those beings in which the participation takes place, and not in that [being] from which these things as well as those that always participate get their participation.

25. As providence is present to all things according to its unitary and at the same time infinite activity, and as the beings that participate

of it, now in this manner, then in that manner, manifest an incomprehensible variety, there must exist, so I believe, some bonds that keep both [extremes] together, conjoining the One of providence with the multitude of these [participants], the permanency of the former with the instability of the latter. Among those intermediaries[138] some are more proximate to providence, namely some angels; some are more proximate to [the multitude of participants], namely the so-called heroes; and some complete the mediating connection of the extremes with the primarily participated, on the one hand, and the ultimate participant, on the other, namely the demons who are properly thus called.[139] Through these intermediaries the junction between instable beings and the unvarying permanence of providence, between multiplied beings and that which is both one and infinite is accomplished. And sometimes the illuminations to the beings posterior to them come *from* these [intermediaries], sometimes *through* these. For it makes a great difference whether something is illuminated[140] by the superior classes[141] or through the superior classes – this also produces a change of the illuminations. For some, because of the inferiority of their aptitude, scarcely participate of the beings that are posited proximately above them, whereas others, on account of their excellence, tend upwards to the participation of sublime beings. In the last case the illumination from the proximate serves as matter for the gift coming from above.[142] Take the case of one person who is only capable of participating in geometry, and that of another who is able to participate in both geometry and a more sublime doctrine.[143] Though the latter, too, could not be led upwards without geometry, 'having being accustomed to the incorporeal' through it,[144] the former loves to practice what geometry teaches, but is insufficiently strong to direct 'the eye of his soul'[145] toward what the intellect sees. It is, then, evident that for the first person the perfection comes from geometry and that his ascent is as far as to this, whereas for the latter the perfection passes through geometry toward beings prior to it. If this is also the case in the classes superior to us, it is one thing to be illuminated *through* the classes posterior to the gods, another thing to be illuminated *from* these classes.[146] In the latter case the cause of illumination goes back to the attendants of the gods, but in the former it goes back to the presiding gods themselves;[147] except that, although the illuminations, or rather some illuminations, come from them [i.e. from the intermediate classes] in another sense these illuminations, too, come from providence. Hence they receive their own power to illuminate other beings. For they, too, have the providential activity from there, as they imitate, in accordance with their order, the beneficent activity of [providence]. For, as we have often called to mind, it is necessary that some participate immediately of the first, some through intermediaries; [and this mediation may happen in two ways]: either

the intermediaries are seen as producing what they have from there [i.e. the gods];[148] or as leading, through what they have, the subsequent beings towards those [divine beings] from which they [themselves] derive their powers.

Let these be my answers to this question, able to lead those who are well disposed by nature to the perfect contemplation of providence.

Fifth problem

26. After this, if you please, let us examine another, fifth, problem. For this too agitates the imaginations of many: if there is providence, why does evil have a place among beings at all?[149] This problem persuaded many (1) either to accept evil because of its evidence and dispute the existence of an all-pervasive providence (2) or to admit that providence orders all things and get rid of evil by saying that all things are only good (though some people want to call 'evil' the good things that are the most remote from the primary). For there is not some evil that is not a lesser good.[150]

27. If (1), then, we too will agree with these people, there is no longer a need to examine the problems that we set out to investigate. For there will be no evil, the very thing that creates trouble for providence, as we said. If (2), however, we say that there is something that is in some way evil, we must establish from where it comes at all. For (2a) either it comes from providence, which is absurd, since from providence comes everything that is good; or (2b) it comes from another cause. (2b1) [But] if it comes from[151] what comes from providence, the argument runs the risk of tracing the cause [of evil] back to providence again. For that which stems from something that stems from providence, stems itself from providence. (2b2) And if it comes from something which has no share of providence at all, we will end up with two principles, one of good, and another of evil things; then it will be impossible to keep providence free from trouble, as it will have something contrary to it.[152]

Admitting, therefore, that evil exists, let us look in what manner it exists, without disturbing the kingdom of providence.[153] And because evil is twofold, one type existing in bodies contrary to nature, another in souls contrary to reason, and neither exists in all bodies nor in the universal souls,[154] let us first consider how, in agreement with providence, what is contrary to nature can exist and in what kinds of body.

28. What is contrary to nature is only found in corruptible bodies: that is obvious, since what cannot be in a state contrary to nature is everlasting,[155] if indeed to be contrary to nature is a path to non-being. But everything that perishes has a place among beings for the

very reason given by Timaeus,[156] that the universe should not be incomplete and that primary beings should not be the last of all: for everlasting beings come first and are cognate to the [demiurgic] cause. If, then, evil exists in order that the corruptible exist, and the latter exists in order that there be not only that which is perpetual, and this again in order that the universe be complete and perfect,[157] and this again because of the providence for the world, then it has been shown in the clearest possible way that evil exists because of providence, so that providence may be perfect in producing a perfect world. Therefore, for this evil too[158] the good is the end, since it is because of the good that this [evil] too is incorporated in beings so as to contribute to the whole. For all corruption is because of the generation of another thing, and all that is against nature exists in order that something in accordance with nature may come about, and not the other way around.

29. Hence, that which exists for the sake of the good is not evil in all respects nor is it unmixed with the good, but it is evil for a certain thing, namely for that which is corrupted, and good for another thing, namely for that which comes to be because of the corruption of the former. Hence, [this evil] is also good for the universe. Indeed, it is good for the universe by being the cause of corruption [for one thing] and the cause of generation for another. For there must be generation as well as corruption, and the universe needs both of them in order for it to be 'the All',[159] as it is so often called. Although that which corrupts does so according to nature, that which is affected is affected contrary to nature. But perhaps even the latter is affected according to nature.[160] For as it is one of a pair of contraries, it is according to nature to be affected by its contrary. Thus, it has become already clear to us that, because of the excellent providence within the universe, the contrary to nature received an entry into being, and that it is not simply contrary to nature, but rather in accordance with nature than contrary to nature. As a matter of fact, it is in accordance with nature for that which is corruptible to be corrupted and for that which is capable of corrupting to corrupt. And if there are contraries, there must be one that is corruptible and another that is corruptive; and if there is to be generation, there must also be contraries; for generation comes from contraries. If, then, generation is according to providence and that which is prior to [generation] is according to providence, also that which is contrary[161] to nature and comes to exist along with[162] the generation of one thing from another,[163] is an instrument used by the cause of the processes of generation to accomplish what is according to nature. Now let this discussion, which does not require a long argument, find its conclusion here.

30. Passing on to the consideration of what is contrary to reason and is evil in souls let us consider how this too exists in accordance with providence.

Well, in this case too, the meeting of contraries of some sort – I mean of the immortal soul and the mortal – creates room for that which is contrary to reason. For whenever that which is mortal prevails over that which is divine in us, vice arises in us. For instance, when anger or desire prevails, for themselves the affections by which they are affected are natural, that is, [it is natural] for anger to be in anger, for desire to be desiring (for the very affection that is natural for each of them is that by which it is indeed affected). But for the divine part [to be affected in that way] is contrary to nature, because the divine part is essentially foreign to mortal passions, even if these are natural for the beings that have been allotted an irrational nature.[164] Since, however, the divine part in us is reason, this [evil] received as name 'contrary to reason', instead of being called 'contrary to nature'.[165] Likewise when reason wins, the good is established in the souls and the name for this good is 'according to reason' instead of 'according to nature'. Both parts, however, are because of their desire for what is natural [to them] eager to act accordingly: the one to live in a passionate way, the other to live without passions; the one rationally, the other irrationally. In the mixture of both, however, and in their relation with one another, evil acquires existence, yet not a principal existence, not even here, but what is rightly called a parasitical existence (*parhupostasis*).[166] It is to everyone clear, then, that what is called 'contrary to reason' (and not 'contrary to the irrational')[167] is not only evil, but is also [in a sense] not evil. Indeed, it is evil for that being for which it is contrary to reason [i.e. the rational part]; but is not evil for that for which it is according to nature [i.e. the irrational part]. That is clear. For where there is no reason, for instance in irrational animals, nothing of these things[168] is evil. Moreover, the fact that it is according to nature for a passion to be passionate does not make it contrary to nature for it to be ruled by reason. For the latter state is even more in accordance with nature than what belongs to it from its proper nature. For when of two opposites one is better, the other worse, the latter is subject to its own passion when acting according to its natural ability, but is transformed to what is superior to its nature, when it becomes subservient to the better. For reason too, when acting as reason, frustrates that which in us is better than reason.[169] Yet in so doing it merely activates the kind of activity that naturally belongs to it. If, however, the [better part] prevails, reason will obtain to a greater degree what is good for it. For every being has both a good at its own level, and a greater good that comes from what is better than itself, as the intellect has the capacity to act divinely, and the soul to act intellectively, and the body to have self-motion. This then is also true of the

irrational: when it remains as such, is angry and desires, it is moved according to nature – and the more so as each of them [anger and desire] remains itself (for everything, indeed natural existence also increases natural activity). But when the irrational converses with the divine [i.e. rational] part in us and gets in its way in order to exercise its own activities, although it has the ability to participate in the greater good which comes from the [divine part], it remains deprived of this good as long as it wants to be moved with its own motions, and this offers the evil that is called 'against reason' an entry into partial souls.

31. If what we say is true, people who believe that these facts are not in accordance with providence must either blame the divine soul for its descent into the realm of generation or the mortal soul for its existence in body.[170] But if these people grant that both[171] happen in accordance with providence, they must absolutely refer also the origin of what is contrary to reason to a good worthy of providence which pervades the world. Clearly it is good that the divine soul descends to the last part of the universe, in order that also in this way[172] the 'All is complete'[173] and is not only full of rational immortal animals and, besides those, of irrational mortal animals, but also of living beings intermediate between these, beings that are both rational and mortal. Let it be added that it also contains irrational immortal beings: for such a tribe[174] too exists in this universe.[175] Without these the world would be truly incomplete. It is moreover clear to all that, given that the divine soul proceeds to generation, the mortal soul had to be present to the bodies prior to the divine and that the divine soul should not itself inhabit these fleshy, bony and, in short, earthy organs.[176] For how could a body destitute of life and mixed out of many elements participate directly in an incorporeal and immortal soul? And if it had really entered the material masses would it not have blinded its own reason, being itself affected by all the affections of the mortal soul? For perceiving the bodily affections it would itself be subject to the affections of sense perception, and holding the imprints of these affections, it would be subject to the affections of imagination, and desiring things needed for the body it would itself be subject to the affections of desire; and wanting to ward off[177] whatever is harmful to the mortal animal, it would be subject to the affections of anger. For if it were not active about all these things, or rather if it were not affected by them, it would soon have a serious destructive effect on the body, and its descent would have been in vain, as the [bodies] receiving it would not have benefited from it but would suffer destruction. For it is not possible to know the things which may corrupt [the body] from outside without sense-perception that knows the particulars. Nor can it yearn for drinks and food without desire, nor manage the mortal without memory of what

can harm or benefit it. In so far as it was better for the soul not to undergo itself the affections, but to let something other undergo them, even if the soul is occasionally troubled by this other thing,[178] and this only sometimes, not always, to that extent it was a greater good for the soul to endure the irrational [soul] than to turn itself into something irrational by undergoing the passions of the irrational [soul]. If, therefore, it was necessary that the immortal soul should descend to this place and that the mortal soul too should come to exist[179] for the sake of it, and that both facts are according to providence, contrariety to reason should[180] also be referred to the same decree of providence. And just as in the case of the bodies what is contrary to nature is for the sake of what is according to nature, thus too in the case of the souls what is contrary to reason is for the sake of what is according to reason. For the activity contrary to reason exists so that reason in us may act according to reason. But enough of this problem. For we have said enough for the present occasion.

Sixth problem

32. Next, let us discuss[181] a sixth issue: if there is providence and if, given the existence of providence, there must also be that which is meritorious, how can there be such inequality of human lives in the world?[182] Some have tyrannical power, although they are vicious; others are enslaved, although they are virtuous. Some are faring well as regards their bodily condition, in what fortune bestows on them, and all such similar things. Others, on the contrary, though [living] better forms of life are besieged by adverse circumstances. Regarding all these cases the theory of providence seems to be hard pressed for an explanation.

Not only are equal fortunes here distributed over people of unequal merit, which in itself is already unreasonable,[183] but there is also an inverse distribution of unequal fortunes such that the worse fortunes go to the better people, the better to the worse.[184] And yet it is not the arithmetic mean which seems to be appropriate to such [distributions], but rather the geometric[185] mean, which he [Plato] for this reason deigned worthy of the appellation 'Zeus' verdict'.[186]

33. The first thing to be said is this. Since providence, as we have said, gives to all what is fitting and provides the ends that agree with the characters, it is not at all surprising that it gives to the virtuous that which will increase their virtue and to the non-virtuous that about which they seriously care in their neglect of virtue. Such people when doing bodily exercise get health, when excited about money and power get money and power, things which the virtuous hold in contempt. Just as those who are exclusively focused on apparent goods are not demotivated by the fact that they are not temperate,

that they are not spectators of true being, that their souls are not undamaged, in the same way the virtuous are not displeased by the fact that they are not rich and have no power, for they do not exert themselves over it, being practitioners of virtue alone, which they already possess. For neither do peasants get irritated by not obtaining what sailors do, nor are the latter displeased for not partaking in the harvest, but both these [professions] stick to their own goals and when they obtain them believe that they enjoy them thanks to providence.

Let us therefore not say that the giving by providence is without concern for geometry, but rather that it is most harmonious:[187] it grants good things to all, but to each individually those to which they apply themselves and of which they show themselves worthy, be they apparent or real goods. And this too is clear: how the person that pursues virtue always attains what he desires and lives in accordance with virtue, but the person who seeks external things does not always obtain that which is connected with his appetite. In this case, too, providence provides what is fitting to character: giving to the one something lasting and self-sufficient, to the others what is insecure and full of indigence.

34. This is what needed to be said first. Next, however, we have to say that, for honest people, the shortage of apparent goods even contributes to virtue. For it whets the soul of some people so as to despise them, exercises them in adverse conditions, gets them used to treating the body with contempt, turns them away from the excitement about apparent goods. To other people it conveys more forcefully the true greatness of virtue. For it strips [virtue] from the things that most people believe to be good, displaying it in itself – to those who are capable of seeing true beauty[188] – as something venerable and surpassing those things that stun[189] the masses. For we do not admire the skill of the helmsman when the sea is calm and there is no wind, but only if there are storms and a rough sea. Likewise we do not admire virtue when our human affairs prosper, but we do admire the virtue that remains undisturbed under the blows of [bad] fortune.

35. Thirdly, if we say that providence has a pedagogical function even for those people who do not live in accordance with <virtue>[190] by distributing goods in a such a way [as described above], our conjecture might not be far from the truth. For if it were always giving wealth, bodily beauty and power to the virtuous, and all kinds of disgrace, dishonour, poverty and more such things to the wicked, then virtue, for being all-inclusive, would truly appear to have prestige and wickedness would have all that is to be shunned.[191] In reality, however, providence reveals virtue [as it is] by itself alone,

but wickedness in the company of its specific additional advantages. And virtue is admired all the more when coupled with bad luck, whereas wickedness is to be shunned all the more even when coupled with good luck. Providence thus stimulates, in persons with a good nature, the desire for virtue and the avoidance of wickedness. For they see that wickedness by itself puts any good fortune to shame and that virtue makes every circumstance into a true ornament; that virtue uses its own ornament, whereas wickedness does not even leave the ornaments it borrows undamaged, but taints those <too>[192] with ugliness. Or is not wealth made reprehensible by injustice, health by intemperance, power by smallness of mind? And does not greatness of mind[193] adorn poverty, does not courage grace ill health and pride powerlessness? When we say that these distributions of things are lessons given by providence, we will not be far off from the truth.

36. Furthermore we should say that, evidently a human being is soul – that has been shown conclusively – but a soul that uses body and a mortal form of life.[194] These latter often contravene the erotic occupation of the immortal soul with the truly beautiful[195] and they require things that are able to keep them in check. Such as, for instance, sickness, lest a vigorous body drags about the intellect in us; or poverty, lest the intemperate form of life gets the opportunity to stuff itself by means of possessions; or lack of power, lest the love of honour[196] [stuffs itself with honour]. For that reason even many honest people prefer to inhabit pestilential regions over healthy ones, thus chastising the festering body and choosing to carry around an ailing instrument rather than one that because of its strength despises its user. Others have thrown away the wealth they had, wanting to have their souls free from the passions that spring up through wealth. And many [examples] will come to mind for the students of these things: Plato, who settled in a pestilential location in order to deliver his body from excess;[197] Crates, who threw away his money shouting the famous words 'Crates sets Crates free from money'[198] and a good deal of similar stories.

37. Now, if providence bestows on the virtuous those goods which they themselves, even without it, destine for themselves out of love for virtue, how could one blame it for giving [these] to the virtuous? How then should one not rather call punishments the gifts of such things to the wicked?[199] Indeed, by providing the instruments of vice they expose these people's depravity, of which they may not have been aware, and increase[200] the verdict for what these people do when they make bad use of these instruments. Providence does not make even these people worse when it supplies them with these instruments. For many dispositions remain incurable as long as they remain inactive. They too would need some kind of treatment.[201]

Moreover, virtue too, which is not one – nor indivisible at that – but has many forms, is stirred up by providence, so we have to assume, toward ever different realisations of its reason-principles,[202] in order that the person who has virtue acts in accordance with every aspect of his virtue and proves himself, to the organisers of the virtue competitions, to be a genuine athlete of virtue.[203]

Therefore providence often forces men of action to rest, thereby turning their intellect toward itself. And those who look only to the inside it moves to action, thus teaching them what their specific kind of virtue was and to what extent it is variegated.[204] To these purposes therefore it both gives the instruments and takes away again some of those she has given. By introducing variations into their lives providence spurs the disposition of the virtuous toward all activity, which is the exercise of governance of this world together with the gods.[205] For the same reason does it expel the one or the other from his fatherland and takes him away from parents and friends, in order that this person gets around and finds himself in all kinds of situation while always remaining the same, and comes to consider[206] the earth as not so great.[207] It keeps another person in his familiar surroundings as a servant for the gods of his fathers, and a familiar[208] helper in the service of the providential care for his relatives.

Therefore any moral person, and not just an engineer, might say 'By the power given to me I move any state of affairs'[209] – for virtue is truly a power, not to be found wanting in the face of external circumstances, – and also 'These were given to my by providence as exercises for the reason-principles in me. One has to make use of them in a noble way and not let oneself be bent by any odd circumstance',[210] for it is not given to everyone either to bear extreme good luck with temperance or to suffer extreme bad luck with magnanimity.[211]

38. Let us put it in another way. The work of providence does not confine the bestowal of all kinds of goods to a single individual. Likewise Plato when founding the ideal state was not of the opinion that he should equip one single class with all goods, but rather thought he should assign different goods to different people. For that was the task of someone making the state <as a whole>[212] prospering and not just one part.[213] [Therefore,] since the souls descended into the realm of becoming, they should experience also some of the evils down here. Nudged by those [evils] they will be made to long for the transition from here to that place which is free from evils.[214] For those who are virtuous out of themselves, providence has devised the gift of apparent evils to this very purpose. But the wicked had to partake of the good, and indeed they partake in some image of it. And the just punishments direct them, too, towards the flight from this place.

39. Furthermore, of all the things we possess some we have through our soul's capacity for self-determination,[215] others because we suffer from other people, still others through the sole agency of the universe.[216] For the things then of which we ourselves are master by acting on our own, we have only ourselves to blame. 'For the responsibility', as he [Plato] says,[217] 'is with the person who chooses',[218] whether it is illness or poverty someone owes to himself. Providence is not to be blamed.[219] For we do not say that providence, which has brought about the capacity of free choice, rules in the universe for the sake of the abolishment of this freedom, but as preserving its coming about.[220] As for the things done to us by others,[221] though we may unjustly suffer, [we should consider that] the law of the universe allows parts to act on each other according to their own inclinations. All things converging to constitute a unity are of this kind, some acting and suffering by nature, others by choice. A just verdict, however, will befall all, those who act in a good and those who act in a bad way. And for the victim the suffering is deserved, but the agent does not escape from the law.[222] And as with natural agents one does not say that a random agent acts on a random patient nor that 'a random patient undergoes the action of a random agent.'[223] Similarly with agents acting on choice it does not seem to be the case that a random patient undergoes the action of a random agent, but rather that a specific agent has been put in place in the universe for the benefit of this patient. Neither, however, is the person who acted exempted from getting his adjudication,[224] although he was the instrument of the universe. For the [specific] quality of his inclination brings the agent to justice. Indeed, the agent was not like it were an inanimate instrument, but one that has put itself in line with its user.[225]

As for the things we undergo solely by [the agency of] the universe, whether they be rather good or rather bad things, they find their explanation, so we must believe, in our own merit. And that merit must either be referred to our present life – for instance in the case where we need some kind of rein; many indeed are made better because of their difficult situation – or to our previous life – for they were not honest people from the outset and there is a need for purification of their ways of living before they were virtuous – or to our future life.[226] [In the last case,] providence leads us away from human [occupations], in order that, having virtue alone as a perfection, we give first rank in ourselves to the love of virtue, being persuaded that only virtue is something good.

40. Furthermore, in the same way one could inquire why equal things come from providence to unequal people – on the arithmetic understanding of equality (for that is the remaining [problem])[227] – for instance, when whole cities perish, there being a common destruction

of both the good and the bad in the [city], that is, a similar situation, apparently, affecting people of dissimilar character.

To someone asking this question one could reply, I think, first that these people do not suffer similar things insofar they happen to be dissimilar, but insofar they are similar. For instance, by having chosen the same city, by having embarked on the same ship, by joining the same military expedition, or by some other circumstance of this kind, and so, for having done the same thing they suffer something in common.

But insofar some are better and others worse, they experience the common calamity differently: the ones indeed bemoan, the others calmly bear their ruin and after their departure some are received by the abode destined for the good, others by the abode for the bad.

Secondly, in the case of such coordinated fates of people that are saved together or perish together there is some kind of order in the universe linking both, a kind of common revolution of fate that from different beginnings results in the same end, a running together of courses that either save everyone or let everyone perish. The parts have to follow the whole, this part perpetrating or suffering something together with that, and another again with yet another. For comparison take an individual whose heart is in a <bad>[228] shape. Sometimes some single [bodily] part is co-affected, whereas sometimes more parts are co-affected. Likewise in this universe the less important parts suffer some of their own sufferings and others they suffer in common with the more important parts.[229] That the latter do not suffer anything of those things suffered by the former is no wonder. Hence, if the motions of the ones [the important things] are in accordance with providence, then so too are the effects that necessarily follow from these. If no argument commands us to believe that the effects that result from these motions are in accordance with providence, it will not be possible either to maintain that those motions themselves are in accordance with providence.

41. We should add to what we have said in reply to those who criticise the equality in unequal cases that they have overlooked that for many reasons the equality of souls takes on different forms in different contexts.[230] Indeed, insofar as souls belong to the same god,[231] for instance sun and moon, some, more than others, assimilate themselves to one another, and insofar as they have done things in common[232] in previous [life] cycles, it is no wonder that now too they suffer the same, repaying with common sufferings their due in return for the actions they perpetrated together. And[233] the greater the commonality amongst each other, the stronger the similarity tends to be of the things happening to them.

42. And to those who criticise the inequality of what people receive from providence in relation to their character, [the following shall be said]. Besides the fact that the morally superior have the upper hand with respect to true goods, whereas the morally inferior fare better with respect to apparent goods, which was [said to constitute] an example of distribution according to merit, providence moreover procures the most important of the apparent goods pre-eminently for the virtuous even if they do not make any special effort for them. Or should we not put a good reputation before pleasure, wealth and bodily health? Only the virtuous enjoy a good reputation, just as the wicked are all ill-reputed and deprived of respect, even if a thousand flatterers swirl around them. For as soon as they are dead they are mocked by those who extolled them while alive. As for the virtuous, they are admired to a larger extent [after they die], even by those who despised them while alive. If then the most important even of external goods falls to the lot of the morally superior, how would we not maintain that providence in these cases too aims at merit, bestowing on some what lasts the life down here – like cattle they long to be fattened and to but with their horns[234] – while to others it gives something they can take with them into the life hereafter. For the former live according to their mortal soul part, the latter according to the immortal one. Hence to those who relish the mortal part among the things inside them also the more mortal ones among the external things are fitting, but to those who advance the immortal, things that are immortal to a higher degree are appropriate. In both cases the principle of merit is preserved by the similarity of what is given to the life of those upon whom it is bestowed. Consider that the person having virtue is also blessed with good humour,[235] which is a feature of the gods as well, whereas the whole life of the depraved person is spent in worries and trouble, when he takes enjoyment in the pleasures of animals and lives the savage, bitter life of venomous creatures. 'And there is not rest from these evils',[236] for they are 'insatiable'.[237] [If all that is so,] how then could it not be clear to everyone that providence shows the one as being made equal to the superior beings,[238] whereas it ranks with beings inferior to human nature[239] the one who tries to satisfy his passions by means of what is given to him [by providence]?

Seventh problem

43. Well then, leaving the investigation of this topic, let us move on to the related problems that are customarily raised concerning irrational animals, and direct our attention to this seventh problem.[240]

Since providence extends to these as well,[241] wherein consists the inequality among them? For instance of those having an agreeable life and those that do not; of those that are weighed down by diseases

and those that are in good shape; and of those that differ from each other in other such ways? And wherein consists the equality in their case, dissimilar as they are? For in their case too, just as with humans, do we see that catastrophes occur in which they perish together. Here too we have to examine the reason for what happens, in the conviction that providence extends down to the lowest things.[242] And indeed, concerning the fact that they eat each other we have to look for what reason this happens.[243] For these are the three issues that pose a problem regarding providence in relation to them: the inequality in what happens to them; the common perishings inflicted on them too; their eating each other.

Let us say something about these issues already now, by first making the following distinction: either there is in them too some vestige of self-moving life and something separate from the body, or there is no such thing and the kind of soul inhabiting them is in its entirety quenched together with the body – for it would be something like the qualities or like the innate heat. Those distinctions having been made, we will not lack arguments to demonstrate the governance of providence in their case too.

44. If in them[244] too there is, as we said, some vestige of self-moving life,[245] and this has from[246] itself the power to do both something worse or something better – that is precisely what we call self-motion – either in accordance with belief or in reality, then we may attribute to providence their prospering, their eating each other, their perishing in common, as in the case of humans. Providence indeed treats each of the passions proper to them, orders them and tempers them justly, bringing them together either in accordance with the similarity of their lives, or with the cosmic cycles[247] or with both (for this was the case for human souls too,[248] more truly so). Providence leaves their eating each other up to them, just as it is also in our power to attack one another.[249] The norm of justice is the same in both cases, except that, in the manner of wild animals, the revenge exacted by them on one another ends in the feasting on one another, since they have no money and possessions to trigger greediness.[250] That is indeed absent.[251] The only possibility left for evil to cleanse itself is the attack from bodies on bodies. And this is a very important work of providence, also in their case to use the shameful as an instrument as it were for the cleansing of the similar adopting the principle 'Unjustly for the perpetrator, justly for the victim'.[252] This in itself shows that the user is another;[253] that therefore the experience of suffering is a just one; and that this and everything similar [i.e. the 'just' and 'unjust'] also has its place among these [animals]. For to them too, because of the vestige of self-motion, the principle applies that [it is possible] out of themselves to be in a better or worse condition. They can by all means become 'less just or more just',[254]

more moderate or more licentious, tamer and wilder. What comes to them from providence will reasonably be different things. For it takes away the bitterness of some by [making them experience] patience, or provides to others the benefits of a more temperate life, or demands from others, who have behaved unjustly[255] to one another, the retribution that consists in their being made to suffer the one from the other.

One could expand on many more similar things because of the similarity of their lives which metes out also to them situations similar to those of humans. For it is possible to trace back the coordinations [of their fates] and their perishing or being saved together to either the community in essence or to the fact that the demons that guide them like leaders of a herd[256] are the same or to the sameness of the cosmic cycle that is concordant with itself or to the repayment of the same debt because of the sameness of their actions. Each of these possibilities will receive a plausible explanation, for instance that those who have led a similarly cruel life will meet the same fate and likewise those who have become unjust. Their parallel course <must>[257] be fated[258] because their descent into [the realm of] becoming is concordant[259] (the hypothesis[260] is indeed that they possess some self-moving part separate from the body). The demons allotted to them[261] take pleasure, some in deaths of this kind, others in <births>,[262] some in these, others in others.[263] Or as far as their essence is concerned, some are akin to each other, others unrelated, and hence some find themselves subject to similar experiences, others to experiences opposite to those. Or all these [explanations] converge according to a single decree of providence, according to which also fated events are woven together with what is in our power and the antecedents are connected with the consequences; and there happens to be a single fabric in which all things are woven together, even those that seem to be detached. For whence comes that coordination and [their being] one, if not from the one, which we have said to define providence most of all and which also renders that which becomes good, since the good coincides with the one?

45. But suppose that every form of live in irrational animals is mortal, somehow[264] residing in a mortal body, [being] just like body and having nothing of its own, but everything from that in which it resides: then indeed the principle of providence in them will be by all means similar and shared,[265] as also in the case of plants, in which there resides only a nature without any imaginations[266] and which have nothing that is separable from their root. What then is the principle of providence in the case of these [plants] and the [animals] that have sensation and imagination, if at all, being capable only of experiencing or having experienced what comes from sense perception?[267]

Maybe [look at it in the following way:] for all things in this world there is only one reason-principle, consisting of all these; and of its parts, some are more important, analogously to the heart and the leading parts in ourselves, others less important than the former, without however being cast down to the lowest rank, comparable to the lungs and the organs that cooperate with those [leading] parts; and still other parts are at a rank most remote from the principles, similar to our nails and those parts in us that possess just the faintest echo of life.[268] Considering this, we may say that the whole world, in all its parts, needs to have the benefit of both, providence and fate; I mean, just like our body, as a whole and in all of its parts, has the benefit of nature and of rational soul exercising providence over each; yet those parts that have a leading role profit more from providence, the lowest parts more from fate, and those in the middle no more from the one than from the other.

46. The first and leading parts of the universe indeed show very clear marks of the gifts of providence. They always follow their path in perfect order, thereby imitating intellect and being all good and beneficent toward the other parts. They are creative and life-giving and are in full control of perfect virtue.[269] The intermediate parts – those are the ones that use choice and have received a life that frolics from one extreme to the other – do not appear to be governed any less by the one than by the other [i.e. providence and fate].[270] For people have experience of providence as something evident insofar that they say that they are aware of its influence and that Nemesis' corrective activity with respect to light talk is familiar to all.[271] People are also aware of fate, in such a way that, because of the manifest character of many events that have their origin in fate, they attribute many things that are in their [own] power to it. Indeed, gifts from both of them are theirs and strike their attention. They experience the one [providence] in the oracles, in the epiphanies of gods or demons, in dream therapy and all such occasions.[272] They experience the other [fate] when they get into all kinds of distress and are aware of the activity of the stars reaching down as far as to us.[273] As a consequence, there are many different beliefs among the different people [of the earth]: some asseverate throughout that fate is in charge of everything, others are convinced that providence, above all, presides over human affairs. For the manifest presence of each of the two [i.e. providence and fate] in our lives induces the imperfect conception that either the one or the other <is> the only one.[274] Because of its activity it strikes us, but because of our imperfect grasp of what strikes us it seems to be the only one. Struck by both is the person who possesses something akin to the striking force: the intellect in us is akin to providence, whereas the necessity in us is akin to fate. We live either in accordance with intellect being present in us in all ways or in accordance with the necessity in us.

47. The third rank of inhabitants of the world are those that have nothing transcendent. Yet even though these too partake of both [providence and fate] they live almost exclusively in accordance with fate, as they receive their shape from there and are in their entirety and in all respects governed by it. For fate is [the power] governing body and everything that, either in substance or with respect to its activities, has its seat in the body.[275] Everything then, which is available from providence for beings living in this way is woven together with the works of fate and is as it were fated, being co-affected with them.[276]

Therefore, since fate has provided the principle of their coming into being and shapes[277] their being as such, their *well*-being too follows in accordance with this principle,[278] which is precisely the ultimate trace of providence with respect to them. By consequence, if their original constitution has a share of this kind in the universe, their life and death will for them be of this kind too, corresponding to their original constitution. If, however, one of them has some other kind of origin, it will also receive some other kind of features from the things descending toward it from up there. Hence, whether they destroy one another or suffer their misfortune by other agents, whether they undergo this misfortune together or separately; whether they experience it with pleasure or pain: all these [eventualities] are consequences of earlier motions. Therefore the less important parts are necessarily always followers and have nothing of their own, but always experience the same, like a shadow[279] that is transformed in various shapes in accordance with the motions of the body whose shadow it is.

And <such is the correspondence to merit in their case>,[280] namely that something of such and such a shape must have such and such a life. For also in the case of self-movers we say that the quality of each defines their merit, but that quality is for them something that comes from themselves, whereas for non-self-movers it comes from others.

48. One should not ask the further question, why some specific thing has come to be in this particular rank of the universe, and that thing in another.[281] Or why this one is in pleasure, the other in pain because of the principle of its constitution, which provides for the creature constituted in accordance with this principle either a natural state or one contrary to nature. For to ask this question is to ask for a principle of a principle.[282] The only principle for such things is the order of the universe. One should not look for a principle prior to it in the case of things that have nothing prior [to itself], for there is nothing [prior] at all.[283] But this principle[284] is always productive of something, now this, now that, and will indeed fabricate the things that come to be in accordance with its own mode of production alone. If, however, something from elsewhere and having a prior existence

comes into this order of things, it is necessary to ask in the case of this creature about its merit and about its being in agreement with its rank and about what connects it with its rank – otherwise[285] the one would be connected in vain with the other. Everything that does not enter into a rank, however, but originates in it, is in unison with its order, even if there is nothing which brings them together. And therein consists the principle of merit for that thing, namely to be bound up with the order from which it has taken its origin. For the fact of having originated it receives no merit. For everything that is in accordance with merit is attributed to something pre-existing, but this thing did not exist at all before its coming into being in such a way as to make it possible for us to ask about the merit of its coming into being. Therefore, to summarise our position, for those who exist prior to their order [in the universe] their order is in accordance with merit; for those who originate from a certain order [their order] is not in accordance with merit, but is the principle of what is [for them] in accordance with merit. For what is in accordance with merit is posterior and not first. This is confirmed by the common notions, which say that this one suffers according to merit and another not according to merit, namely when they see nothing prior because of which what happens afterwards is deserved. That is what we had to say about this issue.

Eighth problem

49. Next, let us discuss an eighth issue,[286] that is often talked about, troubles many people and makes them contest providence,[287] namely the fact that the punishments that providence metes out to wrong-doers do not immediately follow upon the wrong-doings, but only after some time, even a very long one. What is the rationale for this to happen? Surely offenders would benefit more if they were immediately punished than if the punishment is deferred for such a long time that they do not even know for what they are punished. What is more, they even conceive a grudge against providence because they feel the punishments but have forgotten what they did wrong – for instance people who in other lives pay the penalty for previous lives, or even in this life for crimes committed a long time ago. Now, since providence acts for the good and since those who are sanctioned at the time of their crimes get more of the good,[288] why do we not see this happening? In some cases the exact opposite happens: good people have no explanation for their sufferings, since they have forgotten the deeds for which the present punishments befall to them: good people, that is! Bad people, however, attribute theirs to circumstances,[289] although it is they that incur them [i.e. their punishments]. And because they see them happen no more to themselves than to people who are said to be good, they do not think these events speak against

their own badness. They rather call the exercise of goodness vain, but not that of vice. For if, from above, the same things flow to both [goodness and vice], in the appearances vice happens to obtain the bigger share of things. If, however, the punishment of the offence were simultaneous with the deed, neither would the bad person blame fortune when he is punished nor would the good bear a grudge. For someone who suffers while being good would not blame his own life. For 'no debt', as someone says, 'when it becomes overdue' so augments effrontery 'as the debt of merited punishment',[290] when badness prospers,[291] that is.

50. Now, a retribution that is directly connected with the wrongdoings and whose cause is clearly understood by the wrongdoers does not necessarily eliminate depravity or hinder the actions springing from it. That is somehow clear to everyone when we consider people who get every day punished for what they have done, yet do the same things for which they were punished, stringing together without gaps, so to speak, deeds with punishments and punishments with deeds. They commit crimes of sacrilege, plundering, robbery, licentiousness and undergo the due sanction for it – which is in some cases a legal sanction [carried out] by men, in other cases a sanction [carried out by] demons – and show no greater restraint for knowing what they get beaten for. For the innate root of wickedness[292] brings forth the same activities without being turned around by the punishments that follow them, just like thorn-producing land will bring forth more of the same even if you cut the burgeoning thorns[293] a thousand times.[294] Hence, if even retribution immediately following the wrongdoings does not contribute anything, so to speak, or very little, to deter[295] bad people from doing wrong, why do we blame providence for its delay because of this? <Now> why would we say a retribution accompanying the wrongdoings is of little use? Even when retribution is foretold most clearly and is universally acknowledged badness does not cower with respect to the satisfaction of its own inclinations. No, it puts the immediate obtainment of what it desires before the blow[296] that lies before our eyes, separating the deed from the expected punishment by the 'already' and 'not yet'.

51. Moreover, that it is not a sign of craftsmanship to join the corrections immediately to the wrongdoings is shown by the judgments made by physicians who truly master their art. These observe not only the pathologies but also the right moments during which each of them is wont to be treated,[297] and wait for those, even if they seem to be long away, and do not attack[298] diseases when they are still, as they say, unripe, explaining that proper timing is the vital point of the treatment.[299] Such opportune moments, I think,[300] are also heeded by providence,[301] not only for pathologies of the body but

also for pathologies of the soul – different opportune moments for different pathologies; thus providence preserves an ensouled[302] therapy.[303] Making the interest of the patient its goal, it must wait for the opportune time for the retribution, whether it is necessary to grant some good or to purge away the opposite.[304] For also he himself[305] says that, 'with the gods, fortune and timing govern the totality of human affairs.' If it is the right moment that always puts every activity to work, including the one that corrects transgressions of the natural or rational (the natural pertaining to bodies, the rational to all human affairs, so to speak),[306] it is obviously necessary to suppose that, prior to these things, the providence ruling over this universe knows whether it is necessary to delay or to heal the badness immediately, and that it is not concerned with what would please us little people, but rather with how it could be beneficial by bringing the therapy to the wicked at the right moment. Obviously, the healing of souls, called 'chastisement',[307] is of all the medical arts the one that is the most characterised by true craftsmanship.[308] For the patient is soul, a divine thing, so to speak, and its badness is more diverse than that of the body.[309] So, for a greater therapy providence will need a greater craftsmanship. A greater craft does not consist in pleasing others by the speed of its execution but in helping those in need of healing, whether faster or slower, assisted by the right timing.[310] If then it is inappropriate for uncultured people to criticise the cultured, and more generally, for the 'craftless' to criticise 'craftspeople',[311] no one ought to criticise providence in ignorance of the fact that it knows that which in every treatment of bodies and souls is the most important, the right moment.[312] Nor shall one urge justice to cast its vote because one is being goaded on by sheer viciousness. One should rather listen to providence as it says: 'For you the time to suffer is now, and for the perpetrators the suitable time to suffer will come.'[313] If one thinks about this carefully, one will pity them for their persisting viciousness.[314] And while realising that one is oneself already getting what awaits them one will be, I think, an admirer of providence and sing its praise.

52. Also look, if you please, at another argument, the most veridical of all, by considering[315] wherein a righteous punishment would consist, and what the evil is for which some people will be rightly punished. Well, that [evil] would be a mutilation and perversion of the soul and because of that it is called, and it is, its real evil, when the soul is sick from the worst disease, not a disease of the liver nor of the heart – mortal and corruptible things, whose natural state consists in the fact that its components are in an unnatural state[316] – but a disease of the life that is in essence divine but is struck by disaster because of its falling down to an alien place, because it knows neither itself nor that place and embraces the place that is alien to

it.[317] We shall state that the righteous punishment consists in the deliverance from that wound, bringing a purgation of real evil and a disease that is really terrible.[318] For a disease of the body is not terrible for the soul, as it draws the soul back from its inclination toward the body. Its own disease, however, is [terrible for the soul], as it ties it to the body and completely drags it down toward [the realm of] becoming. By saying, then, that punishment is the treatment of this disease, we do not mean that the fact that the diseased are being subjected to a penalty is truly a punishment, but on the contrary, that not being subjected to a penalty would be.[319] For those who pay the penalty benefit, whereas those who do not, carry around their own, unhealed wound.[320] If then the wicked are immediately penalised we shall say that they pay their debt,[321] and if they are not immediately penalised, we shall say that then they pay an even greater debt, as they have a more chronic disease[322] and will therefore be in need of a bigger punishment; instead of receiving treatment they have their own vice remaining untreated.[323] For even for the body the cutting and cauterising alone is not the evil, but rather the fact of ailing and being in need of cutting and cauterising.[324]

53. Therefore, not yet to be punished by those who exact a righteous punishment is not a slackening of providence, but rather an intensification. Truly this is the greatest punishment, to remain in evil without being punished.[325] And if someone could see himself in this state, this person would really lament himself as someone who has not merited to undergo a punishment that is actually a cure, but is being overlooked in the universe, being tainted not in some part of his body, but in the most divine part of his soul. It is as if someone suffering from an extreme bodily disease were overlooked by Asclepius the Saviour,[326] and were to utter a thousand laments for being overlooked. And why speak of someone who fails to find Asclepius and to be delivered from the evils he has? What about a human person who possesses [medical] craftsmanship?[327] What person suffering from a wound of the leg would not wish to find someone who cures the wound by making incisions and cauterising?[328] Who would not resort to lamentation, even more than the previous person, if he were to incur a disease of the eyes, for that is what everyone always talks about: to be deprived of the light that is present in each of us?[329] What kind of wailing will then be emitted by the one who is tainted in his soul and is maimed in his highly valued mind itself, if he somehow becomes aware of the state he is in? Will he not by all means desire treatment and consider himself to be worthy of lament for not finding those who are capable of delivering him from his evil, with or without pain? In a nutshell: not to be punished immediately is an unsurpassable punishment. As a consequence, they too get a punishment, [but] in a different way, as they have not become worthy of

receiving the other punishment[330] because of the excess of badness. And it is not 'after a long time but during a long time'[331] that they pay the penalty, one kind [of punishment] being internal, the other external. For conscience,[332] being the cause of unbearable fears, and the evil that is inveterate induce a true retribution,[333] so that, in my view, it eludes them that they undergo a double punishment compared to the punishment exacted from those who are caught red-handed. Socrates strongly encouraged the wrongdoers to turn themselves in to the judges, in order that they be freed from wickedness by paying the penalty.[334] For he was convinced that the unpunished[335] is punished more severely than the punished and tries to convince us that it is a greater evil to have an evil than to be delivered from it with pain.

54. Let us approach the same discussion also in the following way, fighting for providence, or rather for ourselves [showing that we are] well-governed. What indeed could be greater for a human being than the imitation of god? Does not Plato state this when he says that 'the god kindled the light in the second orbit from the earth'[336] and that 'he has given us light-carrying eyes',[337] so that through them we may see the ordered motions in the heavens[338] and conceive the notion of number and thus assimilate the disturbed orbits in ourselves[339] to those, which are undisturbed?[340] Well, if this is the greatest good for the souls, the assimilation to the divine,[341] does not providence provide this greatest good to those looking at it? For it takes away our boisterous urge[342] toward the punishment of wrong-doers and admonishes our raging spirit to move smoothly and to imitate it somehow as far as possible[343] by postponing and withholding the punishments. It persuades the soul[344] to give itself time to consider repentance. As a consequence, this mode of correction, too, which educates the souls, is not unworthy of the justice that promotes the well-being of all: the wrong-doers by the punishment that eventually follows, the others by educating them already [beforehand]. Or, when we look at this, I mean the reining in of the bucking passions and the restraining of their vehement motions, are we not wont to be reminded of some of the ancients? Plato, brandishing[345] a stick over a servant then stood for a long time holding <it>[346] in the air. Asked for the reason he said he was chastening his own anger that had been rushing forward.[347] Or Archytas, on his farm, furious <as he saw that his slaves> had in a serious way failed to carry out his orders about farming[348] and needed to be punished, said: 'You are lucky that I am furious <at you>[349].[350] Or Theano, who spoke the following words to her female servant: 'If I were not furious, I would beat you!'[351] Through all these examples, that are like admonishments, we are strongly warned against entrusting two [agents] with punishments, spirit[352] and reason. Having kept our spirit in check through holding it back we leave

the judging to reason.[353] If, then, we are educated by the admonishments from such men,[354] it is so much more likely that when we see the deity withholding his punishments and waiting for the right time we might eliminate this unreasonable and unsteady inner drive towards punishing and practise magnanimity,[355] which the deity too put first.[356] By punishing he helps only those who are punished, but by withholding [the punishment] he educates more people and makes them less passionate.[357] For magnanimity is the teacher of impassivity.[358] So consider this mode [of punishment] favouring the postponement of the punishments that stem from providence, as we have described it, as settled, a mode that is educational for those who are capable of perceiving it.[359]

55. Let us also examine the following argument – for it is necessary in the case of things unknown to us to take into account several explanations for what happens, different explanations of different things happening[360] – let us then examine this argument, that holds that the god recognises the dispositions of the soul from which they get to commit their wrongdoings[361] and determines moreover in each case what is deserved in all punishments according to quantity, quality and time[362] – for neither the same punishment nor an equal punishment nor a punishment at the same time is fitting to all souls. Starting from there I think we might find another solution of the problem. For [the argument] holds that this too, i.e. the fact that some souls are purified more swiftly, others more slowly and that there is a different starting point of the purification for different souls, most of all aims at what the souls deserve.[363] What indeed if in some among the souls that erred the error does not stem from a life that has some passion habitually whereas in others it stems so to speak from an inveterate passion in them?[364] Is it not clear then that for some [souls] the penalty for a certain behaviour needs to follow [promptly], making them averse from suchlike behaviour? For thus it will be avoided that through overlooking their behaviour they repeat it again and again and let it settle into a habit.[365] And [is it not equally clear] that other souls [have to] await the lapse of time,[366] during which the habit becomes saturated by the activities related to it so that there will be room for punishment, the retribution being imposed after the inflammation has reached its climax? What then if some souls erred because the cognitive part of the soul had no [sound] judgment,[367] their life remaining healthy, whereas others have their life tainted <as well>[368] in addition to the maiming of their judgment?[369] Is it not clear in these cases too that the punishment which is imposed immediately on some souls draws the attention to the mistake, whereas for others who have received a postponement it will in due time procure a greater and more effective benefit for the reasons specified? For in the latter there is for the time being nothing

capable of receiving the treatment because of their manifold mutilation, as we have said. And what if there were some predestined times[370] for evil habits, i.e. cycles that bring either a swifter or a slower dissolution of these, just as in the case of bodily diseases? Is this not clear as well, that for this reason too some get a prompter punishment, others only after a longer span of time because of the ordering of the universe? For the decrees of providence descend from providence through the order of the universe down to the souls dwelling in the [realm of] becoming and are interwoven with the laws of destiny.[371]

56. So numerous, then, are the modes of punishment and there are even more, unknown to us but seen in advance by providence, according to which it is fitting that some souls are punished simultaneously with their wrongdoings and others not simultaneously. The principle of merit is present in the latter too, for not every soul deserves to be delivered more swiftly from the penalty for the crimes it has committed. Therefore one should not blame providence for the delay but look for the causes[372] due to which providence might impose an overdue punishment to some souls and exact an inexorable penalty from others for wrongdoings that are still fresh.

And lest we build our entire argument by inveighing against those who are punished with delay we should also consider the following point. Human life is mixed: often it commits great wrongdoings, but has some greatness, namely toward the accomplishment of great things in accordance with its nature – for both belong to great natures, as he[373] himself says.[374] And because of this, providence, as might be expected, contrives to bring about a delay of the punishment of its wrongdoings, in order that they are not reduced to smallness through punishments but use the greatness of their nature to accomplish great feats and by their success in achieving them acquire an aptitude, which they lacked, for purification with regard to great wrongdoings.[375] For both groups follows what ought to: for the ones, the addition of goods, for the others so to speak the incisions and cauterisations applied by physicians. So, if the Egyptians used to have a law specifying that a pregnant woman sentenced to death was not to be put to death until after the delivery,[376] why wonder if providence disregards a person who deserves to die but is capable of giving birth to deeds that are not insignificant,[377] but rather some that are extraordinary because he makes use of the greatness of his nature, and if it saves this person for the sake of those deeds instead of inflicting death upon him because of his wrongdoings and so preventing the achievements of his actions? And for these matters too you will find a long list of reported cases that lend credibility to this argument.[378] For instance, if Themistocles[379] had instantly paid the penalty for the things he did as a young man, who would have

delivered the city from the Persian evils? Who would have been the interpreter of the Pythia?[380] If Dionysius [had received his deserved punishment] in the early days of his tyrannical rule, who would have freed Sicily, expected to be laid waste, from the Carthaginians?[381] If Periander had been punished not after some long time span, who would have rescued Apollonia, the peninsula of Leucas and Anactorium from their enemies?[382] Would it then be strange that providence for these very reasons in some cases awaits the successes of great natures and imposes on those a late punishment for their mistakes? [By acting thus] it does not [make the mistake], by the speediness of the punishment, [of] prevent[ing] them who have done great things for the bad, to do great things for the good, as if it were angry with them and not eager to turn them back toward itself[383] and set them upright after they were fallen.

57. And for sure, there is even a further reason for admiring the judgment of providence, more particularly if one considers the length of that time span – not for us, who have a dim sight – and the dimensions of the place of becoming: each of them is small.[384] The time that separates us from old age is for providence – and not only for it, but also for the souls outside the realm of becoming – only so long as an indivisible moment for us.[385] And this place in which we live carrying around our bodies is absolutely tiny for the retribution of our great wrongdoings. But the 'prisons of pay-back'[386] and the places in Hades are vast and unmapped, and the size of the retributions for all who in whatever way end up there is unsurpassable.[387] So if both the span of a human life is nothing to the eye of providence[388] and this place [is nothing] for punishment, it is normal that both are disdained for this reason and that the delay in time happens with regard to the transferral of the [souls] who require great retributions from the smaller to the greater penitentiaries[389] and that the relocation is from a place that combines retributions with enjoyments to a region that is there for retribution alone, so that even in this brief time span they experience discomfort having their punishment looming large over them,[390] stabbing them unseen and stirring the images[391] of their wrongdoings present in them, in their dreams and while they are awake, making them their own accusers. Having within themselves the tribunal for what they did they live in fear. And what they experienced earlier in themselves they see coming [to them] afterwards from outside, bereft in the places where they are from anything that could somehow cheer them up. For everyone who has acted unjustly is immediately subjected to justice, 'swallowing the sweetness of injustice as some kind of bait'.[392] The rest of the time he is getting throttled little by little, when he rehearses in his mind the punishment to which the punishments in this life are mere preludes.[393] For because of the immensity of the retribution he can

not grasp it at once. The psychic fears with which they struggle are designed as fore-runners for the greatest sufferings. They say that Apollodorus the tyrant saw in a dream how he was skinned and boiled by some Scythians[394] and how his own heart was whispering from the cauldron: 'I am the cause of your torments'.[395] And they say that the friends of Ptolemy who was surnamed 'Lightning' dreamt that he was called to justice by Seleucus, before a tribunal composed of vultures and wolves. This kind of [fears] befalls the vicious beforehand as preludes to the punishments that hang over them and are imposed additionally on their own wrongdoings. So we have made our way through this rough sea, so to speak.[396]

Ninth problem

58. After this let us examine a ninth problem,[397] looking at a further anomaly showing up in what comes to be from providence, when those who do wrong are others [than those who are punished], for instance fathers and forefathers,[398] and the punishment is said to go to their progeny, in which case[399] they say: 'If those [back then] had paid the penalty for their wrongdoings, it would be superfluous and ridiculous for providence to impose further retributions on those who come after them. It would be just as if it wanted nothing more than glut itself with vengeance on human beings. If, however, it has let off those who have done wrong from their sentence and transfers it to people who have done no wrong, it does not avoid the perpetration of injustice, as it turns a blind eye to the offender and inflicts the punishment [owed by] the offender on a person that has committed no offence.[400] Now, some people are said to pay the penalty for the wrongdoings of their forefathers;[401] the mysteries and initiations confirm this and people strongly believe that there are some 'gods of absolution'[402] who provide purification from those [wrongdoings]. Given the existence of providence and the fact that providence[403] adheres to the principle of merit: what satisfactory explanation can there be for this to happen along those principles?'[404]

59. Such[405] being the problems regarding this topic, let us first say that every city[406] and every family[407] constitutes one single living being, more so than every single person, being to a larger degree immortal and sacred. Indeed, one single mayor presides over the city as over one single being, one relative over the family as one whole. And there is a single [life] cycle in common for the city and [one] for the family, <always>[408] making the life and the customs of each of them converge, different ones for different cities and families – as their lives are simultaneous as it were – and their different body sizes, different resources, postures and motions[409] – as if one single nature were pervading the whole city and every single family in it,

making both that city and that family one. If, then, also providence is one and fate, with respect to these things,[410] is one, if their life is of the same form and their nature from the same root, how could one refuse to call the city and the family one living being,[411] and from now on to talk[412] specifically[413] about each of them as one, since, when compared to any one of us, [each of them] is a living being that is longer-lived, more divine and more like the universe in that it encompasses[414] the other, smaller living beings and is akin to the everlasting? So if, as has been shown, every city and every family is a single living being, why wonder if the [deeds] of the forefathers are paid out to the progeny and if the life of the cities, being one, spread out from above [over the citizens] like a canvas,[415] encompasses the compensation, in other times, for actions, be they good[416] or bad, committed in other times? For providence shows not only that every one of us bears the fruit[417] of the things that he did in another time [of his life] and receives the penalty for them, but also that [this is the case for] the city as a unity and the family as a unity – and as a living being, at that – whereby the first to act are not disregarded either[418] (for it is not allowed that something is overlooked, given that providence exists) and the later-born because of the co-affection[419] to the first as to their founding fathers and by the fact that together with them they complete, as it were, one single living being, inherit from them the share that they deserve. For their origin is from them and they share a life and nature in common with them, so that it is obvious that because of them they receive honour and punishment.

Since all are parts of one and the same being and all are connected to one another, it is no wonder, I think, that not [only] the close relatives but those further away incur a fate similar to those [that came] before. For not all parts are in the same way similar to all others, but some are more similar, others less. Nor is the explanation the same: one ties them together more closely, another more loosely. And this gradual difference does not depend on proximity. For instance, nothing prevents the more remote parts to resemble [the first] more than those that are closer. This phenomenon can also be observed in medical practice. For instance, when the hips are injured the [doctors] cauterise, not the surrounding [flesh], but the thumb, and when the liver is inflamed they scratch the epigastric region, and if cattle get soft hooves they rub with ointment, not the parts next to the hooves, but the horns.[420] For their concern[421] is to act on the parts that need healing, not through the parts close by but through the parts that are co-affected.[422] Now, those who originally committed an offence have by all means paid the penalty for their wrong-doings, but also, among the persons that came after them, those[423] that have a co-affection with them. For something, unnoticed,[424] passed to them. And they do not suffer unjustly, but because they resemble[425] these [persons] more than they resemble those closer by, because of

a life that is similar and co-affected, they receive similar [punishments] from providence.[426]

60. One may also make the following point. Those who accept the reincarnations[427] of souls and their migrations to different lives would like to say that the souls [living] in other, second lives, as they come to be, are actually those of people that have lived before, and either enjoy rewards for the things they accomplished in their previous lives or receive the appropriate retribution in the form of punishment. And this is also clearly confirmed by history. For it is said that the great Apollonius received in the life [up] there the honours of the gods and a divine life, because he saved in a former life a virgin woman who would live[428] on a second time with the extra life time she obtained.[429] Why then would it still be paradoxical that souls who have migrated to different bodies are punished for wrongdoings committed in other bodies? For souls do not haphazardly consort with this or that family and do not by sheer coincidence live in this or that city.[430] By consequence, even if they do not happen to be the same [souls],[431] when they are allocated to this particular family on the basis of desert, they bear as their lot, deservedly, the punishment owed by that family. But if they are the same, it is – a fortiori – by all means necessary that they are submitted to justice. They have as it were put on masks as in the theatre and tragic boots and robes and seem to be others to those who are unable to see them naked.[432] For indeed in our lives the whole cycle of the family is analogous to a play, fate corresponding to the poet of this play, the souls to those who partake in the play, now these souls then others. However, the same souls occupy the fated scene several times, just like in the theatre the same actors appear several times speaking now the part of Tiresias,[433] then that of Oedipus.[434] Providence offers rewards to the souls and conveys honour, or dishonour, to some souls because of other souls on account of the similarity of their life, but also to some souls because of themselves in other lives[435] on account of their identity, an identity that escapes those who gaze at the exchange of the fated theatrical performance.[436]

Now that is something no one will find absurd, namely that, being the same, souls are honoured and dishonoured because of themselves, even if they appear as others on account of their living different lives.

61. But that others are punished because of others seems to be strange. However, that too has some reasonable explanation, namely, as we have said, the similarity of their lives festering[437] underneath.[438] This is cut away by providence, as some malignant plant root,[439] which for it is easy to spot ahead of time.[440] For scorpions too are born with their stings and vipers with their poison. And when

we are attacked by them we recognise what the poison is and what the sting.[441] But in the whole of things there is something that recognises this even before the attack. In the same way, then, does providence detect the innate psychic defects, as akin to those who already erred, and confer a punishment upon them, as they have a similar nature, even if they did not do what these other souls did.[442] For it removes their badness in advance,[443] as some hidden epileptic condition preceding the seizure.[444] 'Just like the warts, birthmarks and moles of the fathers that have disappeared in their children[445] reappear in the grandchildren',[446] so the particularities of character shoot up again in the nth generation. These may be unknown to the others, but one must grant that the One, which knows everything, both knows them and makes them disappear pre-emptively. They show the similarity [with their forefathers] by the fact that they have the impression that the penalty they pay is the consequence of what they [themselves] have done wrong. Let this then be clear on the basis of these arguments, as I am also aware that I have elaborated them in other works.[447]

Tenth problem

62. I will now bring the treatment of the difficulties to a close with this tenth[448] and – so to speak – crowning difficulty.[449] If, as has been established, providence, by this much-praised One, knows all things and leads them back to the good, how can also angels be said to exercise providence, and demons, and, if you wish, heroes and, in addition to these, souls 'governing the world'[450] together with the gods? Indeed, it is necessary that we determine also in their case the type of providence according to its essence, not claiming any longer that they too exercise providence in accordance with the One, which in fact we hold[451] to be characteristic of the mode of existence of the gods,[452] lest a demon, an angel, a soul and a hero be the same as a god.[453]

63. Indeed, every god, as I have already stated before, has his being as a god on account of the One, which we hold to be prior to intellect and which exists as identical with the good and proceeds from the good.[454] For the henads, i.e. the forms of good,[455] are of two kinds. They have been produced by that first good, which is the cause of both of them and is one in a different manner. One type of henads is complete in itself,[456] the other type of henads is sown as seeds into the things that participate of them.[457] For the one and the good are threefold: either in a causal mode, as in the case of the first; for that is the good and the One itself[458] as cause of all that is good and of all the henads; or according to its existence, as in the case of every single god, who is one and good; or through participation,[459] as in the case of the one and good in substances – through this each substance is

unified and has the form[460] of good. Every god, then, if indeed it is a henad, is a henad complete in itself,[461] not being of another, but of itself;[462] but every intellect and every soul,[463] that participates in some 'one' (for it is *some* one, of which a soul participates and of which an intellect participates), has the form of one.[464] In this way, indeed, is the one and absolute intellect the cause of all intellects, but of the intellects that stem from it some are complete in themselves, each single one being in a particular way all the things that the absolute intellect is in a comprehensive way, one having its particularity according to this, another according to a different form – one tending to the moon, the other to the sun, yet another to some other of the forms that are comprised in the absolute [intellect].[465] Other [intellects] are irradiations[466] from those [intellects] to souls that have been intellectualised.[467] Because of these irradiations those souls too, being intellective through participation, have the form of intellect and are called thus and are directed upwards toward the intellect. Insofar as they are souls, they possess the self-motion common to all souls, but insofar as they partake of intellect they also belong[468] to beings that have the intellective character, as has been said, through participation. If then we take a look at the soul, both the first soul and the souls that stem from it, they too will turn out to have a double appearance, the ones substantial souls separate from bodies, the others being irradiations in bodies from those that are souls in substance. For the ensouled is ensouled through participation, when some soul comes to be in it. Someone may call this 'entelechy',[469] if this someone likes to call thus the 'ensouled bonds'.[470]

64. Corresponding to all the hypostases that rank as principles (I mean soul, intellect, and the good)[471] there is a number [of entities proceeding] from it, but this number is twofold, on the one hand that of the hypostatical entities as complete in themselves, on the other that of their irradiations into what comes next.[472] Hence, although angels and demons, which are prior to us, and heroes and in addition our own souls are not gods nor henads, they still participate in some henads and have a henadic form: firstly those who are attached to the gods themselves, secondly those who through the mediation of the first connect to the gods, in the third rank, as they say, those who are inferior to the second, and ultimately we.[473] Indeed, even in us lies a hidden trace of the One, something that is more divine than the intellect in us.[474] When the soul has reached this and has settled itself in it, it is divinely possessed and lives a divine life, to the extent this is allowed to it.

65. The gods exercise providence <over the whole universe>[475] through the whole of themselves. For they are what they are, as we said, by being[476] all henads.[477] But angels and demons and heroes

exercise providence insofar they too have some seed of the One, not insofar they are alive or intelligising. For the latter two [activities] show them either as merely bestowing motion on non-self-movers or as merely cognising beings (for it is proper to soul to move and proper to intellect to think, [activities] that are available to all souls and to all intellects), whereas to exercise providence belongs to the 'one' that is in them. For that according to which they imitate the gods is also that according to which they exercise providence, together with them, over all things.[478] Indeed, that which primarily exercises providence is god, which is why it is also the primarily good. After them [i.e. after angels, demons, heroes] come souls. When they are established in the good, in virtue of the One [in them], they are active in a divinely possessed manner and with the gods and the kinds that are superior to us they exercise providence in a transcendent manner, just like[479] these too [i.e. the superior kinds] did. And their providence consists not in conjectural calculations about the future, as in the case of our political affairs;[480] but by positioning[481] themselves firmly in the One of the soul and therefore being illuminated all around by the unitary light of the gods they see the things in time non-temporally, divided things undividedly, things in location non-locally; and they do not belong to themselves, but to those who illuminate [them]. This condition befalls souls now and then, but to the angels and the other kinds prior to them it is permanently present. That is why these are always exercising providence, in a manner that is better than if they were active through deliberation, since they do not follow in the steps of what happens, but see all things by virtue of the one that is causally present in the gods, whether they intelligise or reason,[482] without any diminution of providential activity. They differ from souls by their constant providential activity, as we have said, and from the gods whose attendants they are by not exercising providence with their whole being, but with what is the most divine in them, through which they are united[483] with the gods. For whereas each of the gods is a henad, each of these [angels, demons, heroes] is *like* a henad.[484] Each then having something other besides the One, imitates through the One the god that precedes it and on whom it depends, but by something else it lives in accordance with another activity. And whereas the existence[485] of each is by virtue of the One, the [substantial] being[486] in them, of which it is the existence,[487] is in virtue of the not-one.

66. If that is understood, all the other things said of providence may be adapted to the [angels, demons and heroes] in a secondary degree, except for the fact that of the henads some will be present in them with a more universal, others with a more particular power, as was the case with the divine henads. But what is the very first among all things will be better than providence, just as it is better than all

power.[488] If someone would venture to say that this very first, too, exercises providence, then only as that which is for all things desirable and the final cause of everything and the cause of providence. For the providence of the gods and of all beings posterior to the gods is on account of the good,[489] as reality itself shows, and also Plato, who established this securely, just as we said at the beginning of this text.

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Notes

1. 'With iron and adamantine arguments' (*Gorg*. 509A1-2). Proclus refers to this Platonic passage in a similar way in *in Remp*. 1,167,15-17: 'the Athenian stranger established so to speak with adamantine arguments the providence of the gods, which extends to all things'. See also *Prov*. 46,8-9.

2. Book 10 of the *Laws* is entirely devoted to the demonstration of the existence of the gods and their providence (for a summary of the argument see Proclus, *TP* 1,15). The Athenian stranger expresses the compelling character of the argument in the same terms. Cf. 903A10: 'he [sc. who denies providence] was forced by our arguments to admit that he was wrong.'

3. *Tim*. 30B8-C1.

4. Reading *enargestata* for *energestata* (*efficacissime* g) [Kroll 1894, 50, n. 1; BS]. Proclus often insists that the Chaldean Oracles confirm by their sacred authority the doctrine of Plato (or vice versa: Plato by his arguments confirms their authority): see *in Parm*. 991,1-2; 'having faith in Plato and the Oracles'; *in Tim*. 2,50,31-2: 'the Oracles testify to the teachings of Plato' and *in Tim*. 1,408,24: 'Plato testifies to the Oracles'.

5. To 'strike all around' and detect 'the flaws in what is said' is the advice given by Socrates to Theaetetus in *Theaet*. 179D3-4 (see also *Phil*. 55C6-9). The 'phantasms' may be the illusionary concepts of the soul that are not worth to be given birth: see 150C1-3: 'the most important thing about my art [midwifery] is the ability to apply all possible tests to the offspring, to determine whether the young mind is being delivered of a phantom (*eidôlon*); that is, an error, or a fertile truth'.

6. An allusion to *Symp*. 173B8 [BS] on the pleasure of telling and hearing about what happened at the banquet of Agathon. Here the telling and listening occurs within the soul.

7. Expression taken from *Tim*. 37A7 [BS].

8. On thinking as an internal dialogue of the soul, see *Theaet*. 189E6-190A6.

9. It almost looks as if Proclus apologises in advance for using large sections of Plutarch's work on the tardiness of divine punishment later on. See Introduction, pp. 50-9.

10. On Hermes as our common leader see also below, *Dub*. 3; *in Remp*. 2,62,17 and 2,221,11; *in Alc*. 105,1-2: 'Reason is common to all and also the expression of reason, and therefore Hermes is common'. See Aristotle, *Rhet*. 2, 1401a21-2 (as an example of a fallacy!): 'to say that Hermes is the most sociable (*koinônikos*) of the gods: for he alone is called "Hermes Common".' Aristotle refers to the practice of invoking 'Hermes Common' when someone found a valuable thing and wanted to keep it for himself (cf. Kennedy 1991, 206). See also Theophrastus, *Char*. 30,9. The expression later became idiomatic for the sharing of reason (mentioned in the next phrase by Aristotle; '*logos* is the best thing'). See Simplicius, *in Epict*. 132,40-1. According to Proclus all rational souls share, without being taught, the same 'common notions' (*koinai ennoiai*). On the concept of common notions (of Stoic origin) see Steel 2007, nn. 28, 30, 34.

11. On the first problem, see Introduction, pp. 5-9.

12. Following Strobel's conjecture (*kata dikên* for *kat' axian* [*secundum dignitatem* g]). Proclus often uses the expression *kata dikên*, which is taken from Euripides *Tr.* 887-8: see *TP* 1,59,19; 77,8; 87,17 (with the notes of Saffrey-Westerink 1968 ad loc.); *in Remp.* 1,94,18. For the reference to Euripides, see Plutarch, *De Iside* 381B5 and *Quaest. Plat.* 1007C; and Plotinus, 4.4 [28] 45,28.

13. See n. 10 above.

14. Proclus classifies here under three types six modes of knowledge: sense perception, imagination, opinion, science, the intuition of the particular intellect, the intuition of the universal intellect. In the next chapter he distinguished the knowledge of divine providence as transcending these three modes. In *Prov.* 27-31 Proclus distinguishes five types of knowledge: opinion, discursive reasoning (in mathematics), dialectic, intuitive knowledge and divine knowledge beyond the intellect. See also Introduction, p. 6.

15. *qualificatorum perceptionem habere*: reconstructing the original Greek phrase as *poioumenôn tên antilêpsin* [BS].

16. See *ET* §170 (with the comments of Dodds 1963, 288): 'Every intellect has simultaneous intellection of all things; but while the unparticipated intellect knows all absolutely, each subsequent intellect knows all in one aspect.'

17. *et est unusquisque et quecumque intelligi, et ut intelligit et quod est*: reconstructing the original Greek as *kai <hôs> estin hekastos kai <noei> hosa noei kai hôs noei kai <estin> ho estin* [BS]. See *ET* §174: 'Every intellect constitutes what comes after it, and its making consists in thinking and its thinking in making.'

18. Reading *se ipsum* for *se ipsam* (4,4).

19. Proclus understands 'providence' – *pro-noia* – as an activity prior, i.e. superior, to (*pro-*) thinking (*noein*): cf. *ET* §120, p. 106,7: 'providence, as its name shows, is an activity prior to intellect'; cf. also §134, p. 118,25-6. This etymology features already in Plotinus: see 5.3 [49] 10,43-4.

20. Reading *hupostasesin einai* for *hupostasesi meinai* (*ypostasibus permanere* g) [BS].

21. The superiority of gods to intellect is since Plotinus a common idea in Neoplatonism, but the principle is already formulated by Aristotle: see *EE* 1248a28-9: 'what is superior to knowledge and intellect but god?' That the subject always knows according to its mode of existence, is a general principle first clearly formulated by Iamblichus: see Amm. *in De Int.* 135,12-19.

22. On the identification of the Good and the One, see n. 27 below.

23. On the criterion, see the interesting digression of Proclus, *in Tim.* 1,254,19-255,26.

24. This 'someone' is Aristotle, who makes this comparison in *DA* 3.2, 426b19. In this chapter he addresses the inter-sensory binding problem by introducing a common sensory faculty: a single faculty of perception is required to apprehend the difference between two objects of perception, such as white and sweet (426b14-19). Proclus applies this principle to higher levels of cognition. See also *in Parm.* 957,27-958,1: 'there is also one single life-principle by virtue of which we say 'I desire' and 'I am angry' and 'I make such and such a choice'; […] and prior to both faculties is the unitary principle of the soul'.

25. Participants are the individual things, participated the universals.

26. That like is known by the like, is a principle often invoked by Proclus: see *TP* 1,15,17-18 (with Saffrey-Westerink 1968, 15 n. 3, 135-6); *in Remp.* 1,177,21; 255,23-4; 2,326,24; *in Alc.* 247,12; *in Tim.* 1,246; *in Parm.* 924,27-8; 975,27; 1091,4-5; *Prov.* 31 (with n. 146). The principle goes back to Empedocles (31 B 109): cf. Aristotle, *DA* 1.2, 405b15.

27. The identity of the One with the Good is since Plotinus a firmly established central tenet of Neoplatonic philosophy: see *ET* §13 with Dodds 1963, 199-200.

28. Things that are not: such is matter or what exists contrary to nature as a *parhupostasis*.

29. On the individual one and the universal one, see also below, *Dub.* 10,14-22.

30. On the individual differences included in the universal, see *in Parm.* 981,12-17.

31. cf. *Soph.* 245A8-9.

32. This summary is quoted appraisingly by Philoponus, *De aeternitate mundi*, 37,20-39,1. See Share 2005, 39-40.

33. cf. *TP* 1,47,10-11; Plot. 5.1 [10] 8,25-6.

34. For the metaphor of the circle for explaining unitary knowledge, see also *in Tim.* 2,243,14; *in Remp.* 2,46,21; ps.-Philop. *in DA*, 542,29.

35. Reading *substituit* (*hupestêsen*) for *subsistit* [Cousin, Boese].

36. Addition from the quotation in Philoponus.

37. <*pôs*> added from Isaak [BS].

38. On this problem see Introduction, pp. 9-16.

39. This is how Proclus construes the opposition between Peripatetics and Stoics. See Introduction, p. 10.

40. *Dub.* 6,13-14: *tamquam omnium que dicuntur esse entia.* We follow the interpretation of BS: Moerbeke should have translated 'tamquam … entibus'. Proclus assumes that all things that usually count as in some way being (necessary, eternal, corruptible, contingent things; substances, accidents, etc.) fall under providence.

41. This 'or', then, does not introduce a third possibility on a par with the two previous ones, but an alternative to the earlier disjunction.

42. i.e. knowledge is the perfection of the knower and desires the known.

43. 'Within itself' (*par'autêi*); i.e. 'within providence'; 'in its own presence', 'on the level of its thinking'.

44. The example of the reason-principle in a seed (a favourite image of the Stoics) is often used by Plotinus, see 3.2 [47] 2,18-23 ; 3.7 [45] 11,23ff. See also Proclus, *in Parm.* 754,10-14.

45. *protheôn*: literally 'runs ahead in the cause'. This verb is already used in a metaphorical sense by Plato: cf. *Crat.* 412A3.

46. On the distinction between three different modes of existing: pre-existing in its cause' (*kat'aitian*); existing formally in accordance with its proper being (*kath'huparxin*); existing by participation (*kata methexin*) in its effect; see *ET* §65 (with the commentary of Dodds).

47. The reason-principle or *logos* is lying in the seed.

48. Reading *hôrismenên* for *hôrismenê.*

49. On this problem see Introduction, pp. 16-24.

50. On the necessity of invoking the gods when one examines a difficult question, see Proclus *TP* 1,7,17-8,4 (and Saffrey-Westerink 1968, 7 n. 4, 131). The inspiring example is Plato, *Tim.* 27C1-D1.

51. Understanding *illuminare* as an erroneous translation of *sunephapsasthai* (cf. Isaak). For a similar phrase see *in Tim.* 3,175,15-17 [BS].

52. For the metaphor of the labours of the soul, see Plato, *Resp.* 6, 490B7 and *Theaet.* 151A7. This metaphor is often used by Plotinus and Proclus.

53. On common notions, see n. 10 above.

54. See also above, *Dub.* 4,3-14. The identity of the One with the Good is a central thesis of Neoplatonic philosophy since Plotinus. Proclus often sets out the reasons for this identification, see *ET* §13 and *TP* 2,40-3.

55. On the difference between the One of providence, the universal one and the individual one, see above, *Dub*. 5,8-38.

56. The 'universal one' is the genus in which the differences of the species falling under it are subsumed and anticipated, or also the species with respect to the individuals falling under it. See also above, *Dub*. 5.

57. 'One many': this formula adopted from the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides* distinguishes the unity of the Intellect from the absolute One. See Proclus *TP* 1,47,10-11; Plot. 5.1 [10] 8,25-6.

58. 'Incomprehensible' here does not mean 'unfathomable, impossible to understand' but rather 'impossible to encompass or grasp'.

59. This sentence is rhetorical, but involves no contradiction if one understands that 'greater than any power' just means 'greater than any *other* power'. Just as the One (*to hen*) of providence transcends any union or unification (*henôsis*), so the infinity of power (*to apeirodunamon*) is greater even than any other infinite power. *to apeirodunamon* denotes the infinite principle of all *dunamis*, which resides in providence. Cf. Van Riel 2000, 399-406.

60. On the difference between quantitative infinity and infinite power see *ET* §86: 'All true being is infinite neither in number nor in size, but only in power'. Cf. Simplicius, *in Phys*. 452,16-17; Philoponus, *in Meteor*. 17,14-15; *in Phys*. 429,18-19; ps.-David, *in Isag*. 94,17-30.

61. We follow Strobel in deleting *kai kata tên dunamin apeiron* (*et secundum virtutum infinitum*) in 11,7 and adding <*kata tên dunamin*> before *apeiron* (*infinitum*) in 11,6.

62. *kai ei perieilêptai* added by BS.

63. On the role of 'declension' (*huphesis*) in the vertical series of properties, see *ET* §125, pp. 110,33-112,13. In our text Proclus emphasises that despite the declension identity is preserved, through intermediaries. See also *in Parm*. 880,25-8; *TP* 3,97,20-1: 'Every form heads some series. Starting from above it descends to the last [members of the series].'

64. See Aristotle, *Metaph*. A 6, 988a7 (explaining Plato's doctrine of the one and the dyad as principles): 'these things [the male and the female] are imitations of these principles'.

65. The first classes in the universe are the celestial bodies.

66. Proclus applies the Aristotelian vocabulary of 'natural slaves' and masters (*Pol*. 1.5, 1255a1-2) to explain the relation of the inferior to the superior beings.

67. In *ET* §64 Proclus demonstrates that every monadic principle gives rise to two series: to a series of self-complete beings and to a series of 'irradiations which exist in other things than themselves.' Thus from the intellect come forth other intellects and intellective irradiations in the souls participating of the intellect. See n. 457 below. Here the point is somehow different: the intellect produces not only intellective beings but also, since it is demiurge, bodies.

68. The two kinds correspond, respectively, to the transmission of knowledge from one mind to an other and to the realisation of *logoi* in artefacts.

69. i.e. it brings forth its products according to different causal principles existing in it. The soul, for instance, possesses principles of incorporeal and of corporeal effects.

70. We follow OSV and read *etiam ambo*, which corresponds to *kai amphotera*.

71. On perpetuity as a property that the celestial bodies receive from superior causes see n. 111 below.

72. It is limit which goes after the indeterminate and tries to catch it. The

metaphor of the escape from a pursuer already occurs in Plotinus 5.3 [49] 17,21-2: 'the soul runs after all truths and yet flees away from the truths'.

73. A search in the TLG-E produces only six occurrences of the term *apeiropoion* (limit-producing), five in Proclus and one in Damascius; the term *peratopoion* (infinity-producing) is apparently a *hapax legomenon*.

74. On the derivation of all forms of limit and unlimitedness from transcendent causes (*peras* and *apeiron*), see Proclus, *in Parm*. 1119,5-1123,14; Van Riel 2000.

75. *sunduasthenta*. The verb means 'to couple', 'to copulate'; but here it is used in the metaphorical sense for the pairing of limit and infinity. For a parallel usage see Themistius, *in Phys*. 39,8-10: form and matter mate to produce a composite nature, for instance, a plant or an animal.

76. The term *metapiptein* (denoting a sudden radical change) can be used in a technical sense for the transition of something that at first is purely possible to actuality. See Alex., *in An. Pr*. 193,14-17 and Proclus, *in Parm*. 696,22-3 (*metapiptein eis to alêthes*) in a discussion of Stoic logic.

77. The verb *olisthanein* 'to slip away' is used in a metaphorical sense for matter: see also Plot. 3.6 [26] 14,24 (tr. Armstrong): 'what it might have grasped, slips away from it as from an alien nature'; 6.9 [9] 3,6. Cf. n. 99.

78. In this somewhat obscure passage Proclus expresses the following idea: contingent, i.e. indeterminate, things too receive a share in necessity and determination. This happens because the events leading up to their coming about take a definite form at some point. To some contingent things this happens shortly before they come about, to others a long time before they occur. The former have a greater affinity with the One.

79. Proclus seems to hold the view that contingent events become necessary as soon as the causal conditions for their coming to existence have been fully determined. He even adds the idea that the closer an event comes to its outcome, the more determinate it already becomes, i.e. the less it can take an alternative course. This contradicts the scholastic definition of the contingent as that which could also have been otherwise. The fact that it later happened to be this way rather than the other should not make any difference to its contingent nature: it could have been otherwise, even though now it has taken a definite course. Compare the view intimated by Arist. *Int*. 9, 18b14-15, and the standard doctrine as given by Ammonius, *in Int*. 145,9-19 (contradicting the view that a prediction that will turn out to be correct deprives the contingent event of its contingency; it is false to say that something [contingent] will necessarily happen, even if it later effectively so happens); Proclus, on the contrary, seems to say that the correct prediction has more necessity the nearer the outcome. The ancient understanding of contingency, however, is closer to accepting that the facticity of what happens affects the status of the contingent. Cf. Sorabji 2004, III, 10(a-c). See also Ammonius *in Int*. 137,1-11 and our Introduction, pp. 14-15.

80. *en tois kreittosin hêmôn*. This should here not be taken in the strict sense as referring only to the so-called superior classes, heroes, demons and angels. The expression here has the general meaning of 'beings superior to humans' including the gods. In what follows, Proclus will examine whether only demons have this knowledge or also the gods.

81. Aristotle was the first to use this metaphor for the world: there should be 'nothing episodic' in the world as in a 'bad tragedy' (*Metaph*. N 3, 1090b19; *Poet*. 1451b33-5). Proclus refers to this passage at *in Tim*. 1,262,16. See also *Dub*. 20,3; *Prov*. 34,11; *in Remp*. 1,38,26-9; *in Tim*. 3,303,22 and Opsomer-Steel 2003, 127 n. 353; Steel 2007, 83 n. 156.

82. cf. Appendix 1.

83. It is the privilege of divine providence to take care of the inferior things without ever losing its transcendence, see *ET* §122: 'All that is divine both exercises providence towards secondary existents and transcends the beings for which it provides: its providence involves no remission of its pure and unitary transcendence, neither does its separate unity annul its providence' (tr. Dodds) and *TP* 1,74,17-77,4. Cf. Steel 1996. Not to be alienated from one's own nature ('to belong to oneself') is closely linked with the preservation of the bond with the transcendent causes of one's nature, as every being preserves its own nature by remaining attached to its cause. Hence the threefold alternative – to know the lower, oneself and the higher – boils down to a twofold one: to know the lower and to know oneself/the higher (cf. n. 383). As a consequence, what Proclus says about the human souls is in fact perfectly parallel to what was said about the demons.

84. *logismos*, 'calculation'. *Logismos* is denied of divine providence not only because it is discursive, but also because it remains conjectural and ambivalent: cf. below, *Dub.* 65,13 and 25; *TP* 1,75,1.

85. cf. Procl. *in Alc.* 87,2-88,11, in particular 87,3-14 (tr. O'Neill, modified): '[…] why the demon permitted Socrates to converse with him; at any rate the demon was not unaware that he would be corrupted and as time went by would break out into wantonness and would be a traitor to his country. But some say in reply that the undetermined tendency of our personal initiative is not clear even to the demon; for being unstable and liable to change both for the worse and for the better, it is difficult for the spirits themselves to ascertain. To me this view is insufferable, but nevertheless it is advanced by some. For is it not absurd to define the differences of knowledge by the nature of the objects known, and not on the contrary to distinguish them by the distinctions of knowledge?'

86. Reading *parairêsometha* for *paraitêsometha* (*excusabimus* g) [BS].

87. *tali omni*: *tôi toioutôi panti*. This may be a corruption for *tôi toiauta gnonti*.

88. Proclus follows Plato's argument in *Leg.* 10, 901E-903A, where Socrates maintains against the atheists that the gods both 'want' to take care of the world and are 'capable' of it: 902E8: *boulomenon t'epimeleisthai kai dunamenon*. See also *TP* 1,72,16-74,16, where Proclus first argues that the gods are *capable* of providence and, then, that they *want* to exercise it.

89. A quotation from *Tim.* 39E4-5.

90. The demiurge ('the one father') directly creates the world as a whole, the immortal soul and also the eternal celestial beings within the world. He orders the 'younger gods' to create the mortal beings in the world (see *Tim.* 41A-D). About the 'commandment of the demiurge', see Proclus, *in Tim.* 3,239,13-14, and Opsomer 2000; 2003.

91. See *in Tim.* 1,39,30-40,4; *in Alc.* 68,22-69,9.

92. *agelaiokomikê*: the expression stems from Plato, *Pol.* 275E5-76E11 where the visitor from Elea attempts to define 'statesmanship' by looking at the art of herd-keeping. Taking care of the animals is the task of the shepherd. The Eleatic visitor explains that the paradigm of herd-keeping is not appropriate for human statesmanship, but is more suitably used to describe the divine care in the age of Kronos (which is exactly why the Neoplatonists could rehabilitate the metaphor and use it for divine providential care). Proclus uses the term for the particularised providential care of the gods, thus explaining ethnic differences, for instance. See *in Tim.* 1,99,18 and 3,279,13. The same idea is also to be found in *Leg.* 4, 713D1-E3; see also *Crit.* 109B2-D2.

93. A quotation from *Leg.* 10, 903B9 (see Introduction, p. 5).

94. On the relation between demons and particular parts of the body, and the explanation of diseases and cures, see Proclus, *in Parm*. 826,15-18. On demons and animals and plants, see Proclus, *in Alc*. 69,3-14. Proclus gives an example of a particular plant related to demons at *in Remp*. 2,183,1-2.

95. This is a famous dictum attributed to Thales, quoted by Plato in the discussion on providence, *Leg*. 10, 899B9 (cf. DK 11 A 22). See also Proclus, *in Tim*. 3,36,25 and *ET* §145, p. 128,20.

96. On the aptitude, *epitêdeiotês*, of the participants or their lack of it, see n. 142.

97. They are aware of the providence of the demons, not however of the presence of the gods.

98. Following Feldbusch we read *ephistêsin* with Isaak, where Moerbeke has *existit*.

99. *exolisthêsan*. See our n. 77.

100. *non entis abyssum*, corresponding to *tou mê ontos akhaneian*. BS rightly keeps *akhaneian* for *abyssum*. See *in Tim*. 1,209,31-2; *in Parm*. 1072,5 and 7,504,12. Cf. also Syrianus, *in Metaph*. 60,5; Damascius, *in Parm*. (4,115,14 Westerink).

101. i.e. upon the things that come after the intermediaries.

102. We take *prosagousi* in the sense of 'introducing' as someone is introduced to a king or another superior authority. As the inferior beings are incapable to present themselves to the gods, they need intermediaries introducing them.

103. i.e. their lower rank in the scale of being. See n. 63 above.

104. On the common notions, see n. 10 above.

105. See Plato *Leg*. 10, 902E7-903A3: 'We must not suppose that God, who is supremely wise and willing and able to superintend the world, looks to major matters but […] neglects the minor, which we established were in fact easier to look after'. The same principle is applied in *TP* 1,72,25-74,16. On the concordance of Plato with the truth, see *TP* 1,94,3; 6,36,21; *in Remp*. 1,118,4; *in Tim*. 3,186,6-7.

106. *ekei*, literally 'there'.

107. On the relation between will and power in providence, see *in Tim*. 1,371,9-373,21 (commentary on *Tim*. 30A1: 'God wanted all things to be good'); *in Alc*. 125,4-126,3; *TP* 1,73,17-74,16.

108. The argument runs as follows: providence has the power to control lesser things. And it will, since it wants to do whatever is in its power.

109. See *ET* §10: 'All that is self-sufficient is inferior to the unqualified Good' (with Dodds 1963, 196-7). As Proclus argues, 'the self-sufficient has fulfilled itself with goodness; therefore that from which it has fulfilled itself must be beyond self-sufficiency'.

110. See above, *Dub*. 10,4-7.

111. The world and the celestial bodies are not eternal by themselves, but always receive from the divine demiurge a 'restored immortality' (*Pol*. 270A4). Proclus often uses this Platonic expression to indicate an immortality that is acquired. See *in Tim*. 1,260,14-15; 278,21; 281,2; Opsomer 2003, 32-3.

112. We follow the conjecture of BS: *mesta* (*meta* Isaak; *cum* Moerbeke) *tês pronoias*. Cf. above, *Dub*. 16,9-10: 'everything is full of gods'.

113. Proclus is committed to the view that some souls can only return to providence and the good life after having being punished for their sins.

114. cf. above, *Dub*. 15,2-3.

115. Proclus uses a Platonic metaphor (*Soph*. 231C8) [BS].

116. See Introduction, pp. 24-7.

117. The problem of participation of the Forms is raised in *Parm*. 130E4-135E3.

The question of participation is the third in Proclus' list of traditional problems related to Forms: see *in Parm*. 784,12-18 and 838,6-19; d'Hoine 2004.

118. Arist. *Phys*. 185a30.

119. Reading *ou tou* for *out'oun* (*neque igitur* g) [BS].

120. *kai* <*kata*> [BS].

121. On the distinction between a particular time and infinite time see *ET* §55: 'Whatever exists in time either exists always or has obtained its existence in some part of time'. The celestial bodies, for instance, exist always in an infinite time, particular living beings only during a limited span of time. The gods are eternal, whereas the world as a whole and the celestial bodies exist in an infinite time with perpetuity. See also *in Tim*. 1,278,3-6; 281,15-17; 282,5-6.

122. Reading *legesthô* for *epagesthô* (*inducatur* g) [BS].

123. On this fundamental principle see *ET* §148, p. 130,8-9: 'the mean term, reaching out towards both the extremes, links the whole together with itself as mediator'. See also *in Tim*. 2,207,6-10.

124. This is discussed in Proclus' treatment of the second problem.

125. Reading *hupêretoumena* for *ekpuroumena* (Isaak, Moerbeke, MS Vm in mg.).

126. The body of the moon has itself only a murky light; only when illuminated by the sun does it become bright and shining. See Cleomedes, *De motu* 32,9-15 and 194,3-11. Olympiodorus (with reference to Anaxagoras and Democritus) explains that planets have their own dim light in addition to the light they receive from the sun, as is clear in the example of the moon. The latter's own light is 'like coal', as can be observed during eclipses. See Ol. *in Meteor*. 67,32-5; Philoponus, *in An. Post*. 422,18-23.

127. These are everlasting beings such as the celestial bodies.

128. On Proclus' use of the metaphor of the mirror, see Steel 2008.

129. *khrêstêria* here refers not to the content of the oracle but to the sanctuary or the medium (the priestess). The question why some of the ancient oracles have ceased to function is discussed in Plutarch's celebrated treatise *On the Obsolescence of Oracles* (*De defectu oraculorum*). For an interpretation of this dialogue see Babut 1992.

130. The oracular gods are the gods who reveal themselves in a particular oracle, as Apollo was alleged to do in Delphi.

131. For Proclus the spirits are divine forces and share in the permanency of the gods who use them without interruption, even if the places are for some time not adapted. See also *in Remp*. 2,108,27-30: 'with the divine symbols the whole space on earth is full of all kinds of goods which the gods procure to human beings, and without them everything is without spirit and deprived of the illuminations of the gods'.

132. The role of vapours or 'spirits' (*pneumata*) in the functioning of oracles had already been discussed in Plutarch's dialogue on the obsolescence of oracles (*De def. or*. 434B-C). The materialistic explanation based on *pneumata* (inspired by Aristotle, *Meteor*. 1.3) is proposed by one of the interlocutors in order to account for the decline of the oracles. 'The same opinion is to be held regarding the spirits that inspire prophesy (*mantikôn pneumatôn*); the power that they possess is not everlasting and ageless, but is subject to changes. For excessive rains most likely extinguish them, and they probably are dispersed by thunderbolts, and especially when the earth is shaken beneath by an earthquake.' This view is discredited by other interlocutors, as such an explanation would make the power of the gods inferior to material conditions. In Plutarch's dialogue the term *pneuma* indeed

stands for a plain material substance, a kind of vapour. Proclus accepts that some physical phenomena may render oracular sites for some time unsuitable. This could create the impression that the gods are no longer giving oracles. Yet Proclus, too, denies that the *pneumata* used by the gods would themselves be affected by these physical causes.

133. Reading *pro apparentibus* (*anti tôn phainomenôn*) for *preapparentibus* [BS].

134. The places in the world are not just geographical divisions; they have been allotted by the demiurge to different types of divinities, who make these parts suitable for the exercise of their powers, be they mantic, medical or purifying. Cf. Procl. *in Parm*. 805,15-17: 'the gods who exercise authority over the allotments in the cosmos and draw up to themselves many portions of the divine allotments in the All'; *TP* 1,24,3-5: 'the demiurge of all things in the cosmos has placed in every portion (*moira*) of the universe similitudes of the unknowable existence of the gods'. Some places, for instance cracks in the earth or certain sources, are suitable for mantic revelations. Cf. *in Tim*. 3,140,25-6: 'the chthonic Apollo imparts to many places of the earth mantic waters and mouths foretelling the future'; see also 1,162,25 on mantic waters.

135. On the making of divine statues: see Proclus, *in Eucl*. 138,10-22; *in Tim*. 1,51,25-7; 1,144,16-17; 3,6,8-12 and 3,155,18-22; *in Parm*. 847,15-23.

136. The 'leaving off' (*ekleipein*) of the oracles and the ritual powers is compared to the occultation of the moon. In the Greek the same verb, *ekleipein*, is used in all these cases.

137. On this explanation of the eclipse of moon, see Theon, *Comm. in Ptol*. 962,15-963,11.

138. On the role of the three intermediate classes (angels, heroes and demons), in divine providence, see *Dub*. 15-16; 44,32; 46,14; 62-5. On the superior classes, see also n. 473.

139. On demons in the proper sense and demons in the larger sense (even the gods and the immortal soul can be called 'demons'), see *in Tim*. 3,153,22-159,7.

140. Reading *illustrari* for *illustrare* [BS].

141. <*apo*> *tôn kreittonôn* [BS]. The superior classes or kinds: another name for angels, demons, and heroes. Cf. n. 473.

142. Proclus adopts the hylomorphic model to explain the relation between the illumination by the proximate cause and the illumination by the superior cause. The first gift prepares the participant to receive the superior gift.

143. The more sublime discipline is dialectics. Cf. Plato, *Resp*. 6, 510B4-511D5.

144. See Plotinus 1.3 [20] 2,6: a text also quoted by Proclus, *in Eucl*. 49,9-12; see also David, *Prolegomena* 59,17-19.

145. *Resp*. 7, 533D2.

146. *ab ipsis* [*diis*]: *diis* deleted by D. Isaac.

147. The distinction between the presiding gods and the attendant divine classes stems from the myth of the *Phaedrus*, 252C-253C. Cf. nn. 231 and 450 below.

148. This is a rather free translation of a difficult and corrupted passage: *per media aut tanquam a facientibus ea que inde habent*: 'through intermediaries either as from producing what they receive from there'. The preposition *a* (which has no equivalent in Isaak's compilation) may stand for *para* or *apo* but could also be a vestige of a corrupted word or prefix. If we delete it with Isaak, we may construe *facientibus* (which should then have been rendered as *facientia*) in apposition to *media*. Proclus distinguishes here between two ways of participation through intermediaries (which he had distinguished earlier as 'from' or 'through'):

either the intermediaries are seen by the participants as being themselves the producers of what they mediate or they are seen as mediating and leading back to the divine causes.

149. On this problem see Introduction, pp. 27-32.

150. In defence of providence one may even 'consider evil as nothing else than a falling short […] and a lesser good' (Cf. Plotinus 2.9 [33] 13,27-9; but see also 1.8 [51] 5,6-8). This leads to a denial of the reality of evil. Proclus criticises this view in *Mal.* 4,32-4 and 6,19-25. See Steel 1998.

151. Reading *ei men <ek> tôn.*

152. To be free from trouble is a characteristic of the blessed state of the gods and also a component of human happiness (cf. Proclus, *in Parm*. 787,13-17). The exercise of providence risks causing the gods a lot of trouble: therefore the Epicureans rejected divine providence (see Cic. *ND* 1,22; 1,52; Plut. *Stoic. rep*. 1043B). According to the Platonists the gods exercise their providence in a transcendent way without there being any nuisance for them. See also Proclus, *in Parm*. 1017,1-2; Steel 1996.

153. See *Prov.* 14,1-2: 'You should consider that there are two realms, the intelligible and the sensible, each with its own kingdom, that of providence […] that of fate.'

154. There are two kinds of evil, in souls (evil contrary to reason) and in bodies (evil contrary to nature): see *Mal.* 39; 55; only particular souls are subject to evil, not the divine and universal souls: see *Mal.* 23-4; likewise, only particular material bodies can undergo evil, not the universal bodies: see *Mal.* 29.

155. See Proclus, *ET* §105. We do not follow the transposition proposed by BS.

156. See *Tim*. 41C1-4 (tr. D. Zeyl): 'as long as the mortal beings have not come to be, the universe will be incomplete, for it will still lack within it all the kinds of living it must have if it is to be sufficiently complete'.

157. We used 'complete and perfect' to translate *teleios*, as the subsequent argument depends on both meanings of the term.

158. i.e. the counter-natural in bodies.

159. cf. *Tim*. 41C3-4. 'The All' is the literal translation of *to pan*, a term that we elsewhere translate as 'universe' (in the sense of 'cosmos').

160. cf. *Mal.* 48,4-5; 59,4.

161. 'contrary' translates *para*, literally 'besides'.

162. i.e. *parhupostan*.

163. As there can be no process of generation without the destruction of another thing, the state of being *para phusin* exists together with and along the process of generation as an unavoidable by-product of a natural process. The state of being contrary to nature is parasitical upon what is according to nature. For the notion of *parhupostasis*, see *Mal.* 50 and Opsomer-Steel 2003, 24-8. In l. 21 we read with BS *pros tôn* instead of *pros tô* (*cum hoc quod est*).

164. The phrasing is somewhat convoluted, but the meaning is clear: for beings that have a rational and an irrational part, it is natural to be affected by passions. That is not, however, in accordance with the nature of the rational, divine, part itself. Yet for the irrational part it is again natural. In l. 10 we understand, with BS, *et in hiis que sortiuntur* as *kan hêi lakhousi*.

165. cf. *Mal.* 55, with our n. 381 (p. 129), ad loc.

166. Reading with D. Isaac *tou kakou* [*par*]*hupostasin … eikotôs <parhupostasin> lambanontos*. On the notion of *parhupostasis,* which we render as 'parasitical existence', see n. 163.

167. As one can say of vicious behaviour that it is against reason one could just as well say of rational behaviour that it is against the irrational part. The latter

state, however, in which the inferior is subordinated to the superior, will never be considered as evil.

168. What is meant is behaviour that would be regarded as bad in the case of rational animals.

169. When reason remains on the level of discursive reasoning it frustrates the intellect and its higher cognitive activities. We follow the correction of BS reading *tou* in l. 31 for *divinum* (= *theiou*).

170. Reading with D. Isaac *eam que in corpore subsistentiam* instead of *eum qui in generationem*. On the distinction between descending and coming to exist, see nn. 176 and 179.

171. i.e., the descent of the divine soul and the existence of the irrational soul.

172. We propose to read in l. 8 *hac* (*tautêi*) instead of *hic* (*entautha*).

173. See *Tim*. 41C1-4 and n. 156 above.

174. <*phulon*> added by Boese from marginal note in Vm.

175. Humans (rational and mortal) are between divine beings (rational and immortal) and brutes (irrational and mortal): see Proclus, *in Tim*. 3,324,15-19. Less evident is the insertion of another intermediate tribe of animals, which are irrational yet immortal. Proclus has in mind the 'irrational demons' which are irrational and immortal. See *in Tim*. 3,157,27-158,26, a long digression on the creation of these special animals.

176. Proclus distinguishes between the fleshy earthy body, composed of the four elements, and the higher vehicles of the soul (the pneumatic vehicle and the ethereal). The divine soul cannot be incarnated directly into the earthy bony body and put in a canvas of bones. Elsewhere Proclus relates three vehicles to three psychic levels: the ordinary, earthy, body is the vehicle of the vegetative soul; the pneumatic body that of the irrational soul, the seat of the passions and the lower cognitive faculties; the aetherial, luminous body that of the rational soul. Cf. Opsomer 2006. The term *osteinos* (bony) is used by Plato at *Tim*. 73E1; 7, 74A7 and E5.

177. Reading *repellere* (*amunasthai*) for *refellere* [BS].

178. Proclus is talking about the relation between the rational and the irrational soul.

179. Proclus distinguishes between the pre-existing rational soul which descends and the irrational soul, which is not eternal but comes to exist for the sake of the rational soul. This does not mean that a new irrational soul is generated each time a rational soul descends, as it is reusable a number of times. Cf. Opsomer 2006.

180. Reading *edei* for *eita* (*deinde* g) [BS].

181. We assume that the original Greek had the subjunctive form *theôrêsômen* (as in Isaak), rather than the future indicative *theôrêsomen*, rendered by Moerbeke as *considerabimus* [BS].

182. On the sixth problem, see Introduction, pp. 32-8.

183. This fact offends against the idea of a just distribution, based on geometric equality. Cf. n. 185.

184. This would seem to constitute a reversal of the just proportionality.

185. Geometric equality forms the basis of distributive justice (cf. Dodds 1963, 339): remuneration is supposed to be proportional to merit, punishment to demerit. Merit, of course resides in virtue. The meritocratic principle of distribution is proper to aristocracy, whereas democracy strives for a numerically equal distribution (the latter equality is also proper to friendship). See Plato, *Leg*. 6, 757B1-C6. See also Arist. *EN* 5.3, 1131a29-b24; *Pol*. 6.2, 1317b3-20. That Proclus is thinking of the passage from *Laws* 6 is obvious from the quotation of 757B7 (cf. n. 186), but also from another passage where he refers to the *Laws* explicitly: *in*

Tim. 2,227,2-6. On the principle of distributive justice, see also *in Alc*. 325,13-326,8.

186. A citation from Plato, *Leg*. 6, 757B7.

187. This is not a reference to the harmonic mean. The Greek does not contain a reference to *harmonia*, but to *mousikê*.

188. For this expression, see, e.g., *in Remp*. 1,108,22-5; 174,9; *TP* 4,31,10; *in Alc*. 27,5; 184,6. The *locus classicus* is Plato, *Symp*. 210E4-212A7.

189. Reconstructing the Greek as *di hôn hoi polloi eisin <en> thaumati*.

190. Reading *kat'aretên* for *kata pronoian* (*secundum providentiam* g) [BS].

191. One may have expected Proclus to have offered the following explanation: because it encompasses all that is bad.

192. <*kai*> [BS].

193. For greatness of mind (*megalopsukhia*) and pride (*megalophrosunê*), see *in Parm*. 854,15-25, where it is connected with the use of *megaloprepes* ('high-minded'); Plato, *Resp*. 487A4 (for the same association, see ps.-Plat. *Def*. 412E9-10). In our text, too, this association of terms appears to play a role, as the opposite of *megaloprepeia* is used earlier in the sentence: *mikroprepeia psukhês* ('smallness of mind'). For Aristotle greatness of soul consists rather in being worthy of *great* external goods. See *EN* 4.3.

194. For this definition of the human being as a soul using body, see *in Alc*. 45,17; 73,18; 296,25. This definition is based on *Alc. I*, 129E9-130A2. The expression 'mortal form of life' (*eidos zôês thnêton*) is taken from the *Timaeus* (69C7-8; also 41D1-2) and refers to the irrational soul – which is not a soul *sensu stricto*, but the soul's shadow which it uses in order to converse with the body. See *in Tim*. 3,233,26-8; *in Crat*. 53, p. 22,6; *in Remp*. 2,90,19-20. Cf. our n. 470.

195. cf. Plat. *Symp*. 211B7-D1.

196. On *philotimia*, see *Resp*. 5, 475A9-B2, but especially 8, 545B4-550C2: love of honour is the basis of a timocratic society, which evolves from the aristocratic society. The dominating soul part is the spirited. A further degeneration takes place when the love of money and possessions (*philokhrêmatia*) becomes dominant. Love of money forms the basis of an oligarchic society. On *philokhrêmatia* and the oligarchic state, see *Resp*. 8, 550C4-555B2. The oligarchic person gives in to certain desires (*epithumiai*), but keeps others in check.

197. cf. Porph. *De abst*. 1,36, p. 112,24-6 Nauck; Aelian, *Hist. var*. 9,10. See Riginos 1976, anecdotes 76 and 77, pp. 121-3.

198. The Cynic philosopher Crates of Thebes gave his money to a banker, who had to promise that he would later give it to Crates' children in case they would turn out to be ordinary citizens, but would distribute it among the people in case they become philosophers. When he renounced his riches he shouted the famous words quoted by Proclus. See DL 6,88, and Crates fr. 4-12 Giannantoni (*SSR*). The scene is famously depicted on the marble pavement of the cathedral of Siena and is sometimes used on the cover of books on ancient philosophy.

199. Namely, external goods which they use as instruments for their wrong-doings.

200. Considering the Greek *axiousas* behind Moerbeke's *exigentes* as a corruption of *auxousas* [BS].

201. Proclus discusses an application of this principle at *in Remp*. 1,105,12-106,10: when the Homeric gods were debating whether to stop the Trojan war or not, Hera and Athena were opposed; they wanted to precipitate the punishment and give the inherent vice the opportunity to express itself, so that it could be punished better afterwards.

202. Literally 'the projections of the reason-principles' (*probolas logôn*). The

souls freely choose which among the *logoi* (one can understand them here as plans, projects, blueprints) they possess they want to develop. This is called their choice in the myth of Er. Cf. *in Remp.* 2,95,2-4; *Resp.* 10, 617E. See also *in Alc.* 8,19-20; 15,14-15; *in Parm.* 896,2; *in Tim.* 2,124,18; 3,279,13-17.

203. For this image, compare Plot. 3.2 [47] 5,3-4; Plut. *De sera* 561A2-3.

204. Understanding *polueides* instead of *poluhodos*, translated by Moerbeke as *multarum viarum* [BS].

205. Our translation deviates from Moerbeke's Latin translation, and follows Isaak. Moerbeke wrongly connected *meletên ousan* with *hexin*, not with *energeian*. He should have written *quae* instead of *qui* [BS]. The idea that the souls co-administer the world with the gods stems from the *Phaedrus* myth. See our n. 450.

206. Reading *hupolabêi* for *blepêi* (*respiciat* g) [BS].

207. See also below, *Dub.* 57,3-4.

208. Assuming with BS that Moerbeke's *cognoscens* translates *gnôrizon* and that this is a corruption of *gnôrimon*.

209. A loose reference to Archimedes, fr. 15: *dos moi pou stô kai kinô tên gên*, 'Give me somewhere to stand and I'll move the earth' = Pappus *Syn.* 8,1060,1-4 (who calls this a *mechanical* discovery – *mêkhanopoios* is the word translated by us as 'engineer'). Compare *Prov.* 25,18-19 (with Steel 2007, 81 n. 117) for a very similar application of this Archimedean dictum in a moral context.

210. We have not been able to trace this citation. Possibly it is fictitious. Cf. above, *Dub.* 34,3.

211. cf. *Prov.* 25,14-15.

212. <*holên*> [BS]. Plato indeed emphasises this point: *Resp.* 4, 420B5-8; 6, 519E1-520A4 (*in Tim.* 1,43,28-31).

213. The train of thoughts is elliptical. What is supposed to be understood could be the following: it is not the case that one person gets all the good; hence this person will also partake of bad things, or at least lack some good things; that is natural, because all souls are destined to have negative experiences.

214. Probably an allusion (see also *tên enteuthen phugên*, line 13) to Plato *Theaet.* 179A9.

215. i.e. *to autexousion*.

216. See n. 247 below.

217. Reading *phêsi* instead of *phasi* (*aiunt*) [BS].

218. A citation from *Resp.* 10, 617E4: *aitia helomenou*. Cf. Opsomer-Steel 2003, 11 (T2).

219. Compare *Resp.* 10, 617E5: *theos anaitios*.

220. cf. *in Alc.* 143,7-17, again citing the myth of Er (*Resp.* 10, 617D), for the idea that human self-determination is preserved by providence: Lachesis proposes the types of life, the soul makes the choice, and the gods give to the souls what fits the life they have chosen.

221. Boese signals a lacuna. Unless the peculiar syntax is due to an anacoluthon (see Böhme), one might supply: '<the agent is to be blamed, but only as instrument of the All. For> we would <not> suffer unjustly, but the law of the universe …' [BS].

222. cf. Plot. 3.2 [47] 13,8-9.

223. A citation of Arist. *Phys.* 1.5, 188a33.

224. Following Dornseiff, we read *auto kriseôs* (cf. Isaak, *Dub.* 39,22 and *Phaedr.* 249A6, *kriseôs etukhon*) for *autokinêseôs* (*autokineseos* g) [BS].

225. Compare Ar. *Pol.* 1253b27-30.

226. cf. Plot. 3.2 [47] 13,1-15.

227. See above, *Dub*. 32,11-12 and our n. 185.

228. <*kakôs*>, added in the text of Isaak by Dornseiff.

229. This is a type of collateral damage incurred by the less important parts. It only affects the less important parts.

230. This echoes a passage from Plato, *Gorg*. 508A5-7.

231. In the *Timaeus* Plato describes how souls are sown onto different heavenly bodies (42D4-5). Proclus explains that each of these heavenly bodies commands a herd of living beings, from superior kinds (cf. n. 473) down to human souls. Cf. *in Tim*. 3,131,18-132,5; 3,164,5-11. See also *Phaedr*. 247A; 248C3; and especially 252C-253C6. The idea that different human souls follow different gods has been developed in later Platonism to the theory of different 'chains' or 'series' (*seirai*) of beings.

232. Reading *exeirgasmenas* for *operate et* (*exeirgasmenai kai*) [BS].

233. Supplementing <*kai*> [BS].

234. cf. *Resp*. 9, 586A1-B6.

235. cf. *in Parm*. 667,10-13 (tr. Morrow-Dillon): 'For it is primarily the gods whose life is free of care, and secondarily the divine classes of being and, when they participate in that blessedness, temperate souls, who always manifest good humour, joy, and contentment with their fate.' Plato, *Leg*. 7, 792D1-4.

236. *Resp*. 5, 473D5: 'there is no rest from evils' (*ouk estin kakôn paula*).

237. *Gorg*. 507E3; *Leg*. 4, 714A5.

238. Reading with BS *exisoumenon* for *axioumenon* (*dignificatum* g). An allusion to the assimilation to god (*homoiôsis theôi*), the Platonic *telos*. Cf. *Theaet*. 176A8-B3. Cf. Opsomer-Steel 2003, 11; Van den Berg 2003.

239. cf. *Prov*. 25,25-6: 'since they are estranged from the gods, the universe uses them as if they were irrational beings'; *in Tim*. 3,277,18-20: 'when the souls are dominated by the mortal kind of soul, they become slaves of fate: for the universe uses them as irrational beings.'

240. On the seventh problem, see Introduction, pp. 39-42.

241. cf. Plot. 3.2 [47] 6,20-2.

242. cf. Plot. 3.2 [47] 13,19-20.

243. cf. Plot. 3.2 [47] 15,3-4: 'the difficulties related to the fact that other animals eat each other' (*tên allêlophagian tôn allôn zôôn*).

244. Reading with Isaak *tauta* and not *toutôn* (*horum* g) [BS].

245. At *in Alc.* 225,16-17, Proclus says that the human soul even imparts to body the last vestige of self-motion (*autokinêsias eskhaton indalma*). Animal soul-shadows would be one level up from mere bodies. The irrational principle of life common to all animals is itself a shadow of soul (*indalma tês psukhês*): *in Tim*. 1,360,29-30. Proclus indeed thinks that all ensouled beings have a trace of self-motion: *TP* 5,66,6-9 (referring to *Phaedr*. 245E5-6, where Proclus probably read *autokinêton*, not *aeikinêton*). The concept of self-motion amounts to the idea that a soul is a true, i.e. independent and free origin of motion. In other words, it can freely decide to initiate a motion.

246. <*par*> *heautou* [BS].

247. Cosmic cycles, determined by the motion of various heavenly bodies, were held to concord with the lives of different types of (living) beings: see, e.g., *in Tim*. 1,116,10-21; 412,18-23; *Prov*. 12. See also Plot. 3.1 [3] 5,7-15 and even Aristotle, *Phys*. 4.14, 223b28-9.

248. cf. *Dub*. 41,5 (also 39,3), for the cosmic cycles; and *Dub*. 40 for the similarities of human lives.

249. The same parallel is drawn by Plotinus, 3.2 [47] 15,3-6.

250. i.e. *pleonexia*, a cardinal vice according to Plato.

251. Strobel supplies *ouden gar estin <en autois philokrêmaton>*: 'for there is no love of money in them'.

252. Plot. 3.2 [47] 13,8-9. See also Procl. *in Remp*. 1,105,21-2: 'This comes about 'unjustly for the perpetrator, justly for the victim', says Plotinus. Whether the perpetrator is guilty of evil in fact depends on his or her motive: cf. *Mal*. 59.

253. i.e. a third instance besides the perpetrator and the victim. This third party is of course providence as expressed in the order of the universe.

254. *Alc. I* 113D2-3; see also *Alc. I* 109D4 [BS].

255. Reading *adikôn* = *<in>iustorum* (Cousin, BS).

256. This refers to the notion of chains or series (*seirai*). See n. 231. On the role of demons as herdsmen, see Plat. *Leg*. 4, 713D1-3; *Polit*. 271D6-7; Hes. *Op*. 121-6. See also Procl. *Schol. in Hes*. 75, pp. 54-7 Marzillo.

257. Reading *kai dei* for *kai dê* (*et etiam* g) [BS].

258. Reading *heimarmenên*, instead of *heimarmenês* [BS].

259. According to Böhme 1975, 45 their souls followed a similar trajectory through the heavens and therefore heard the same heavenly music, hence the reference to 'concordant' (*sumphonous*) descents.

260. This is the assumption made at the beginning of the chapter.

261. Reading *daimonôn*; instead of *ontôn* (*entibus* g) [BS].

262. Reading *genesesi*, instead of *anesesi* (*remissionibus* g) [BS].

263. Ultimately the souls are themselves responsible for the guardian demons, and thus for the type of life, they choose for themselves. Cf. *Resp*. 10, 617E1-5.

264. *pou* instead of *poi* [BS].

265. If animals do not have a trace of rationality, there will be no individualised providential rule over them.

266. i.e. mental representation; cf. *TP* 3,24,7-12.

267. Proclus here examines the hypothesis that irrational living beings have no trace of self-determination. For those beings who lack this have only sensation (*aisthêsis*) and possibly a form of imagination (*phantasia*) – not, however, constructive imagination or imagination onto which rational principles are projected from above, i.e. from the rational soul, but at most an imagination that receives information from the senses. In other words, Proclus is speaking about those beings that have only receptivity (on the receptivity of the senses, see ps.-Simpl. *in DA* 165,31-166,33). On the two forms of imagination and on the fact that plants have only the receptivity of the senses and the lower form of *phantasia*, see *in Remp*. 1,232,15-233,28. Cf. Lautner 2006, 128-30; Opsomer 2006, 142-4. In our text Proclus makes the point that particular beings that are in no way separate from the body are not the object of providential care (contrary to the whole of which they are parts), yet fall in the domain of fate. Cf. *Prov*. 3,10-14: 'The second distinction is that between two types of soul. The one is separable from the body and descends into this mortal region from somewhere above, from the gods; the other is that which resides in the bodies and is inseparable from its substrates. The latter depends in its being upon fate, the former upon providence.'

268. cf. Plot. 3.3 [48] 5.

269. Proclus here refers to the heavenly bodies.

270. Human beings, more precisely their rational souls, belong to this intermediary class of beings. See *Prov*. 20.

271. *Leg*. 4, 717C6-D3: the child should watch his tongue in addressing his parents, for Nemesis (Retribution), the angel of justice (*Dikês angelos*), oversees these things and punishes ill-considered language. Proclus refers to this piece of popular 'wisdom' as evidence for the common belief in providence. Also at *in Tim*.

1,198,2-3 does he refer to Nemesis as the overseer of ill-considered talk (*tôn kouphôn logôn episkopos*).

272. Marinus' *Life of Proclus* provides ample evidence for the importance attached to this kind of lore. For dreams, see §6,10; §26,28-36; for apparitions: §19,12; §32 (and also *in Tim.* 3,164,14-15); for oracles: §32,11. References to the oracles abound in Proclus' writings. See Majercik 1989, 21-46; Lewy 2011. See also Plut. *De sera* 566C6-7.

273. cf. Steel 2007, 75 n. 37.

274. *hôs monon <on>* [BS].

275. The vegetative soul is essentially linked to the body (cf. *in Tim.* 1,393,4-5), whereas the rational soul is essentially separate from the body, though it may have activities linked to the body Cf. Opsomer 2006, 148-9.

276. The 'fate' of these lower irrational forces (so-called souls or rather shadows of souls) is indeed inextricably connected with bodies, that are works of fate alone.

277. Reading with Boese *informante* (*morphousês*) for *in formam* [BS].

278. See *ET* §38,9-10: 'The well-being of a thing is derived through as many causes as its being, and conversely'; *in Remp.* 1,206,25-207,4.

279. cf. *TP* 3,23,21-3: 'In general it is clear from many passages that Plato regards as soul the rational soul, and the others as shadows of souls.' For a more extensive discussion, see Opsomer 2006, 136-40.

280. *to kat' <axian toiouton esti>* (Boese from Isaak).

281. It would not be sensible to complain about one's own ontological rank, i.e. about not being a god but merely human. This is connected to the idea that there need to be different levels, which in itself does not constitute a form of evil: cf. *Mal.* 7.

282. cf. *Phaedr.* 245D2-3; Arist. *Metaph.* 12.10, 1075b24-7; Plot. 6.8 [39] 11,8-9.

283. Reading *oud' holôs on.*

284. i.e. the order of the universe.

285. Reading *ê* instead of *mê* (*non* g) [BS].

286. On the eighth problem, see Introduction, pp. 42-6. The eighth problem, just like the ninth, is closely inspired by Plutarch of Chaeronea's dialogue 'on those punished late by the deity' (usually cited with its Latin title *De sera numinis vindicta*). Proclus borrows arguments, examples and some expressions from Plutarch's text.

287. For this characterisation of the problem, see Plut. *De sera* 548C-D; 549B9.

288. This is the kind of reasoning Proclus will contest further on. He will argue that in many cases it is better for the wrong-doer to be punished later.

289. i.e. to coincidence. For this type of reasoning, see Plut. *De sera* 549C1; D5-7.

290. A literal citation of Plut. *De sera* 548D10-11 combined with a paraphrase of 548E1-2.

291. The same verb, *euroousês*, used by Plutarch, *De sera* 548D10.

292. For the expression, see Procl. *in Remp.* 2,49,13; *Dub.* 61,3-4. On the presence of evil in the soul, see *Mal.* 23-4; 45-6.

293. *akanthas*. Cf. Isaak, *Dub.* 50,13 [BS].

294. Plutarch mentions the thorny plant (*akantha*) at *De sera* 553C3, but in the context of its having edible roots.

295. *non abstinere* (*mê apekhesthai*); Moerbeke should not have translated the redundant Greek negation [BS].

296. The expressions are inspired by Plut. *De sera* 554C9 (*tên parautika plêgên ekphugein*).

297. cf. Plut. *De sera* 549F2-550A3.

298. Reading *conantium* (*egkheirountôn*) instead of *cogentium*, cf. Isaak, *Dub.* 50,20 [BS].

299. *psukhas therapeiôn* (Boese with Isaak); literally: 'the souls of the treatments'. Cf. Corp. Hipp. *Epist.* 16,31: 'the right moments are the souls of the therapies' (*psukhai de tôn therapeiôn hoi kairoi*); *Aphor.* 1,1; Proclus cites the saying and attributes it to 'Hippocrates, one of the Asclepiadeans', in *in Alc.* 120,12-14. More extensive references in Segonds 1985, 99 n. 5 (p. 193).

300. Reading *puto* (*oimai) for puta* [BS].

301. We keep *tên pronoian*, deleted by BS.

302. i.e. a therapy that takes into account the *kairos*, which constitutes the soul (the vital point) of the treatment. See our n. 299.

303. cf. Plut. *De sera* 550A3-10.

304. For the idea, see Plut. *De sera* 550A-B; 551D.

305. i.e. Plato. The quote is from *Leg.* 4, 709B7-8. This text is also quoted in the discussion on *kairos* in *in Alc.* 124,12-13, and in *Prov.* 34,19-22 (where the quotation is extended so as to include skill, *tekhnê*). See Steel 2007, 83 nn. 157-60.

306. Nature is the ruling principle of bodies, reason that of the desires located in the irrational soul. Cf. *Dub.* 30,11-12; *Mal.* 55, with our n. 381 (p. 129), ad loc.

307. i.e. *dikê*. Plut. *De sera* 550A4-5: 'the medical treatment of the soul (*hê peri psukhên iatreia*), which goes by the name of chastisement (*dikê*) and justice (*dikaiosunê*)'. This may be inspired by Plato, *Gorg.* 464B8: 'the part corresponding to medicine is justice'.

308. cf. Plut. *De sera* 550A5: 'the greatest of all arts' (*pasôn tekhnôn megistê*).

309. cf. *Mal.* 56.

310. Reading *hotan êi kairos* instead of *hôn ô kairos* (*quorum tempus* g) [BS].

311. The same idea in Plut. *De sera* 549E8-F4; 550A12-B2. The expression *atekhnous teknitôn* (= *eos qui sine arte arteficum* g) is a literal quotation from *De sera* 549E8-F1.

312. A similar idea in Plut. *De sera* 550C10-14.

313. Compare Aesch. *Choeph.* 313: 'suffering [comes] for the perpetrator' (*drasanti pathein*); fr. 665,3 Mette; Soph. fr. 209 Nauck = 229 Pearson (*drasanti gar toi kai pathein opheiletai*): 'for the perpetrator owes some suffering' (*ton drônta gar ti kai pathein ofeiletai*).

314. See below, *Dub.* 53: to be guilty of a crime and not to be punished directly makes things worse for the wrong-doer.

315. Reading *intelligens* (*noêsas*) instead of *intelligis* [BS].

316. What is natural (*kata phusin*) for the whole is unnatural (*para phusin*) for the parts, that have been pressed together (*sumpepêgen*) against their natural leanings. Cf. Isaac 1977, 117 n. 1 (p. 117), citing Dornseiff.

317. Proclus continues alluding to the theory of natural places. The 'alien place' (*allotrios topos*) is an expression often used to refer to unnatural places, that is, the places different from the natural place of (elementary) bodies. See, e.g., *Inst. phys.* 2,15,46; *in Tim.* 2,12,3; 3,115,4. For the lack of self-knowledge and the concomitant love of the material world, see *in Alc.* 33,21-34; 53,12-17; 112,9-10; *Mal.* 20,11-12.

318. Divine punishment is in essence, at least for the curable cases, corrective, not retributive, as Plutarch also points out: *De sera* 551C6-D8; 561E5-F3. For Plato himself on divine punishment, see Mackenzie 1981, 236-7.

319. cf. Plato *Gorg.* 478D4-7: 'Was not paying the due penalty getting rid of the worst thing there is, depravity? – It was. – Indeed, justice (*dikê*) makes people self-controlled and more just (*dikaioterous*) and proves to be a treatment against depravity'; 479D5-6: 'Not paying the due penalty when one has done something unjust is the first worst thing, the very worst of all things that are bad.'

320. cf. *Mal.* 59,11-16, and already Plato *Gorg.* 460B2, for the image of the unhealed wound.

321. i.e. what they owe, their *dikê.* In *in Remp.* 2,140,11-12 Proclus distinguishes 'justice' (*dikê*), which is beneficial, from *timôria,* 'vengeance' or retribution. In *Dub.*, however, *timôria* is also used for beneficial, corrective forms of punishment.

322. See also Plut. *De sera* 552C1-3; 554C8-D1, for the idea that a delayed punishment is worse for the wrong-doer. This is of course connected to the idea that vice is its own punishment: 556D6-9.

323. Compare *in Remp.* 1,106,3-8.

324. Compare Plut. *De sera* 559E7-F2, where the context is however somewhat different (healing one part of the body by inflicting a painful treatment on another), yet the underlying idea agrees with Proclus' remark. See also Plato, *Gorg.* 460C6-8.

325. See also Plut. *De sera* 554A7-B4.

326. For Asclepius Sotêr, see Saffrey 2001, 35 n. 6 (p. 162).

327. The comparison between human craftsmanship, in particular medicine, and the craft of providence is one of the leading ideas of Plutarch's *De sera.* See, e.g., 549E-F; 561C11-E4; 559E7-F2.

328. cf. n. 324 above.

329. Sight was deemed the most valuable of the senses, and the most akin to mind: cf. Plato *Resp.* 6, 507E5-B5; *Tim.* 47A1-C4. The latter passage is quoted at the beginning of the next chapter (*Dub.* 54,6-8).

330. i.e. the immediate punishment. Proclus' argument, as was Plutarch's, is rendered somewhat confusing by the various uses of the expressions denoting punishment. What he means here is that those who have not received the punishment that is conferred by an active intervention (by providence, or by human authorities) are in fact being punished in a different way, as they suffer in various ways (by bearing the consequences of their viciousness; through anxieties etc.) while they await that other punishment. The claim that not to be punished is the greatest punishment may produce a nice rhetorical effect, but is rather unsuitable for technical arguments. This tells something about the nature and purpose of these texts. Plutarch explains the terminological confusion by his remark that ordinary, unthinking people, take to be the punishment for a crime what is actually only the end of the punishment (because the wrong-doer dies, in the most extreme case): He compares this to someone who denies that a fish is caught if it has swallowed the hook but is not yet set to broil or being cut in pieces by the cook, or to children who see villains parade on stage and think that their affairs go well and they are happy, till the moment when before their eyes they get stabbed: *De sera* 554B5-C4; E5-F1. Proclus later in the chapter will call one kind of punishment internal, the other external (53,23).

331. Plut. *De sera* 554C9-10.

332. i.e. *to suneidos* (see also Plut. *De sera* 554F3). What is meant here is merely the awareness of previous crimes (for which no amends have been made), not some kind of mental faculty or centre of such awareness. For the early history of the concept of conscience, see Reiner 1974, 574-81.

333. cf. Plut. *De sera* 554A7-B4; E5-9; 555A3-C11.

334. Socrates makes this point in the *Gorgias*, 480A6-D7. See esp. 460A8-B2 (the wrong-doer should go as soon as possible to the judge as to a doctor, in order that the disease of injustice be not protracted so as to make the soul unhealable); C3-5.

335. There may be a word-play on *akolastos*, which literally means 'unpunished', but usually denotes licence and incontinence.

336. Plato, *Tim*. 39B4-5. The sun is the second heavenly body from the earth.

337. Plato, *Tim*. 45B3.

338. Plato, *Tim*. 47B6-7.

339. Plato, *Tim*. 47C3-4.

340. Plato, *Tim*. 47C3. Plutarch refers to the same *Timaeus* passage (47B-C) at *De sera* 550D6-E5.

341. This is the traditional Platonic *telos*, for which the key passage is *Theaet*. 176A. See our n. 238. Interestingly Plutarch has inserted a remarkable passage on assimilation to god in *De sera* 550C12-F4: god is said to 'set himself in the middle' as a paradigm and assimilation is given both a moral and a cosmological sense. God, as a moral paradigm, teaches us to be slow and gentle by being himself slow and gentle when it comes to meting out punishments.

342. Plut. *De sera* 550E8 (*labron aphairôn*).

343. cf. *Theaet*. 176B1: 'assimilation to god *insofar as possible*' (*homoiôsis theoi kata to dunaton*).

344. This argument is inspired by Plut. *De sera* 550C12-F4: god sets an example of mildness and unhurriedness. Thus the perpetrator is given time to repent (551D1). Just like Plutarch, Proclus lets the argument on providence be followed by human examples that show why it is wise not to punish while in anger, but rather to wait. The first two examples are again taken from *De sera*, in the same order (see nn. 347 and 350 below).

345. *epanateinamenos*: *superextendit* g [BS].

346. <*autên*> cf. Gnom. Par. 173. [BS].

347. Cf. Plut., *De sera* 550A10-B1. For this anecdote, see De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 198-9, n. a; Riginos 1976, 155-6, anecdote 113 (version B).

348. BS assumes a lacuna in the text.

349. <*humin*> [BS].

350. cf. Plut. *De sera* 550B2-6. For this anecdote, see De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 199, n. b.

351. The example of Theano (a famous Pythagorean, considered to be the wife of Pythagoras and the daughter of Brontinus; some sources claim she was not Pythagoras' wife, but just his student, and not the daughter, but the wife of Brontinus; cf. DL 8.42) is not in Plutarch, but may have been inspired by the preceding mention of Archytas. We have been unable to trace another mention of this anecdote. Cf. Riginos 1976, p. 156, n. 16. This is one of several apophthegmata and anecdotes attributed to Theano.

352. i.e. *thumos*, translated as 'anger' in the Plato anecdote.

353. cf. Plut. *De sera* 551A8-9.

354. Proclus apparently has already forgotten that one of the anecdotes concerns a woman, namely Theano. The reason may be that he is freely copying Plutarch who also speaks of examples of *men* that we should remember (551B6). In his series of examples Plutarch indeed only lists men.

355. Plut. *De sera* 551C2 (*megalopatheian*). Using a word play Proclus goes on to make the point that *megalopatheia* teaches *apatheia* (54,35).

356. cf. Plut. *De sera* 551B6-C5.

357. cf. Plut. *De sera* 551C3-5.

358. i.e. *megalopatheia* is the teacher of *apatheia.*

359. Compare the exhortation at Plut. *De sera* 551B6-C5.

360. Proclus appears to be aware of the fact that the different explanations he

found in Plutarch and reproduced by him are not always compatible (for instance providence is said to wait in order to give the wrong-doer ample opportunity to do even more wrong, so that the evil becomes more apparent, but is also said to wait until the wrong-doer shows repentance; or also: not being punished is called the worst punishment, but it also offers opportunities for getting rid of the evil). That is why he points out that the delay in punishment is due to different reasons in different cases.

361. In *De sera* 562B1-D9 Plutarch argues that god knows more than we do, as he knows hidden motives and character dispositions. The present argument is not so much inspired by this passage, though, as by 551C11-E9 (or even up to 552D3): the deity detects the passions (*ta pathê perhoran*, 551C12) and can discern between curable and incurable cases; it knows whether the crimes stem from an ingrained habit and how stable the evil disposition is. The latter idea is indeed picked up by Proclus (55,12-14).

362. These three aspects are also mentioned by Plutarch, *De sera* 550A9 (*to pote kai pôs kai mekhri posou*).

363. i.e. *to kat'axian*. Cf. Plut. *De sera* 558C3; 560B2-3.

364. cf. Plut. *De sera* 551D7-E9.

365. Compare Plut. *De sera* 551D5-6.

366. *ton khronon perimenein* (Boese, Isaak, *Dub*. 55,17; Plut. *De sera* 551B10-C1: *perimenonta ton khronon*): *tempore expectare* g.

367. cf. Plut. *De sera* 551E2-3: 'those whose proclivity for error springs from ignorance of the beautiful rather than choice of the shameful'.

368. <*kai*> (Boese).

369. Reconstructing the Greek *meta tou pêrou tês gnôseôs*: *cum orbali cognitione* g [BS].

370. Compare Arist. *Meteor*. 352a29 [BS].

371. *Tim*. 41E2-3: *nomous tous heimarmenous*.

372. At *De sera* 551D9-E9 Plutarch lists some possible causes for the difference in treatment wrongdoers receive from providence.

373. i.e. Plato. Cf. n. 374.

374. The idea that 'great natures', i.e. people with great natural endowments, can turn out either very well or very badly is explained in a famous passage from Plato's *Republic*. Whether they develop their abilities for the good or for bad purposes is said to depend on nurture and education (6, 491D1-E5). Plutarch takes up the idea in *De sera* 551E9-552D3. The idea of great natures is important throughout Plutarch's oeuvre and underlies many of his character portraits in the *Lives*. See Duff 1999. Both Plato and Plutarch use agricultural metaphors: strong seeds and fertile soils.

375. This application of the idea of great natures to providence is taken over from Plutarch, *De sera* 551E9-552D3; 553B7-C11.

376. The example is taken from *De sera* 552D4-7.

377. cf. Plut. *De sera* 552B12.

378. Plutarch indeed lists several examples: *De sera* 551E9-552B11; 552D4-553C11.

379. cf. Plut. *De sera* 552B5-9.

380. Themistocles famously interpreted the prophecy of the Delphic oracle according to which only a wall of wood could protect Athens as a reference to the fleet, and subsequently beat the Persians at Salamis. Cf. Herodotus 7.140-3.

381. cf. Plut. *De sera* 552E3-5. Dionysius I (c. 430-367), the infamously cruel tyrant of Syracuse, combated the military presence of the Carthaginians in Sicily with varying success.

382. cf. Plut. *De sera* 552E6-8. Periander of Corinth, whose reign began in 628 (the traditional date) and lasted for about forty years, was the classical example of a tyrant (he murdered his own wife). He established colonies in Apollonia, Leucas and Anactorium and thus secured Greek presence in these regions.

383. This is the Platonic idea of reversion: the soul should turn toward the higher causes (whose trace it can find within itself; cf. n. 83 above). On reversion, see *ET* §31; 35; Steel 2006.

384. cf. *Dub.* 37,24.

385. cf. Plut. *De sera* 554D, esp. D1-3 (tr. De Lacy-Einarson): 'When I speak of a long period I mean it relatively to ourselves, as for the gods any length of human life is but nothing.' Any period of time is strictly speaking incommensurable with eternity.

386. i.e. *tês tiseôs desmôtêria,* an expression taken from Plato, *Gorg.* 523B3 (*tiseôs te kai dikês desmôtêrion*, 'the prison of pay-back and retribution').

387. For the punishment in Hades, see *in Remp.* 1,117,22-122,20.

388. Proclus uses an expression from Plut. *De sera* D2-3, who says that for the gods the length of a human life is 'nothing' (*to mêden*). Cf. n. 385.

389. Human prisons and the underworld, respectively.

390. cf. Plut. *De sera* 554D8-10 (tr. De Lacy-Einarson, modified): 'as people in prison playing at dice or draughts with the rope hanging overhead'.

391. Plutarch too mentions the role of imagination (*De sera* 560A9-10), more particularly in the transmission of fearful images – through stories – from one soul to another.

392. A quotation from Plut. *De sera* 554F1-2 (tr. De Lacy-Einarson, modified): 'he has snapped up in an instant the sweetness of injustice, like a bait'.

393. Plutarch devotes the final part of *De sera* to an eschatological myth (563B7-568A12), but had introduced the eschatological perspective earlier on (560F6-561B7). Plutarch moreover emphasises the idea that fear and anxiety in themselves constitute a severe punishment (554F2-3; 555C1-556D9), yet understands this condition predominantly as fear of being found out and punished during *this* life.

394. Reading *skuthôn* instead of *poion* (BS, based on Plut. *De sera* 555B2).

395. Proclus has taken this and the next anecdote from Plut. *De sera* 555B1-6 and 555B8-C1, respectively. Apollodorus was the tyrant of Cassandreia from about 279 to 276 BCE, known for his cruelty. He had killed a young man called Callimeles and served the flesh to his fellow conspirers so that they would become fellows in crime (see also *De sera* 556D2-3). Cf. Polyaenus *Strat.* 6,7,2; De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 221, n. d; 228-9, n. b. Ptolemy Ceraunus ('Lightning') murdered Seleucus in 280 BC. Cf. De Lacy-Einarson 1959, 223, n. a, suggesting that the dream may have been triggered by the proverb 'the hare runs for her meat'.

396. An image from Plato *Parm.* 137A5-6.

397. On the ninth problem, see Introduction, pp. 46-8. For his treatment of this problem too, Proclus continues to use Plutarch *De sera* as the main source. Hermias of Alexandria raises the same issue in his *Commentary on the Phaedrus*: *in Phaedr.* 96,8-9.

398. The idea that in Hades punishment will be exacted for crimes committed, either from the perpetrators of the crimes or from their children's children, is mentioned by Plato at *Resp.* 2, 366A6-7. Apparently Euripides had already called this a scandal (Plut. *De sera* 556E3-6; = Eur. fr. 980 Nauck).

399. *kai* instead of *kan* (*quamvis* g) [BS].

400. Plutarch starts his discussion of this problem with the same dilemma; it is raised by the interlocutor Timon: *De sera* 556E6-11. Proclus borrows this argument

and goes on by confirming that there are good grounds for believing that punishment is sometimes inflicted on the progeny of the wrong-doer. Plutarch, or rather the interlocutor Timon, offers a long series of examples that are supposed to show the reality of divine punishment of offspring: *De sera* 556F1-557E6. The character that bears Plutarch's own name subsequently casts doubt on these stories, but does not dispute the reality of the phenomenon (557E9-558A2).

401. *tôn de* instead of *to de* (*quod autem* g) [BS].

402. cf. Plato *Resp*. 2, 366A7, but especially *Phaedr*. 244D, cited in this context by Proclus *in Crat*. 93, p. 46,12-23 and Hermias, *in Phaedr*. 96,8-97,14. See Introduction, p. 47.

403. Reading *providentie* (*têi pronoiai*) instead of *providentia* [BS].

404. cf. Plut. *De sera* 557D4-5 (Timon speaking, tr. De Lacy-Einarson): 'where is the logic or justice (*to eulogon … kai dikaion*) of this?'

405. Reading *toioutôn,* instead of *toutôn* (*hiis* g) [BS].

406. This argument concerning the city is based on Plut. *De sera* 559A1-C9: a city has a unity like that of a living being, with an identity that persists through time; Epicharmus-style arguments (the sophistic 'Growing argument': 559A11-B2) against persistence through time are even less sound in the case of a city than in that of an individual person. Hence it is perfectly justifiable that divine wrath crosses the boundaries between generations and even affects individuals that are not related to the original wrong-doers: the fact that they are citizens of the same city suffices.

407. The argument regarding the cross-generational unity of the family is drawn from Plut. *De sera* 559C10-D6 (with a rhetorical reinforcement of the argument up to 559E7): the unity of the family is even stronger than that of the city, as there is a genetic connection of all family members to the first family father. On the unity of the family, see also Herm. *in Phaedr*. 96,16-18; 22.

408. Reading *kai aei* instead of *kaitoi* (*equidem* g) [BS].

409. i.e. *kinêmata*. cf. Plut. *De sera* 559B7. Postures, motions, glances etc. are often considered as 'mirrors of the soul' (not the expression used in the sources), i.e. as tell-tale signs of passions, especially in early Christian texts. See, e.g., Ioann. Chrysost. *in ep. i ad Tim*. 541,43-5; Bas. *De virg*. 708,12-13.

410. Reading *hec* (*tauta)* for *hoc* [BS].

411. Here Proclus goes beyond Plutarch *De sera* 559A2, who merely compares the city to a living being, and does not go so far as to say it *is* a living being.

412. Proclus here literally cites the expression *êdê poieisthai tous logous* from *Tim*. 27B5-6.

413. Reading *diapherontôs* for *diapherontôn* (*differentium* g) [BS].

414. *to perilêpt<ik>on*: *comprehensibilitatem* g [BS].

415. Understanding *skênê* for *funem* (*finem* Latin MSS). Cf. Plot. 1.4 [46] 1,18-19; Procl. *TP* 5,73,22-3. [BS].

416. Plutarch argues indeed that we do not complain when we share in the honour of a city or family: if we accept this we have no reason to refuse to accept the common guilt or disgrace (*De sera* 558A5-D2). See also Herm. *in Phaedr*. 96,18.

417. This image also in Plut. *De sera* 549B3; 553C7.

418. In other words, the fact that the progeny will be punished does not mean that the original wrong-doer escapes from punishment (whether in this life – but maybe unknown to his contemporaries – or in the afterlife).

419. i.e. the *sumpatheia*. Cf. Plut. *De sera* 559A4; Herm. *in Phaedr*. 96,11. Cosmic sympathy was a key concept in Stoic moral cosmology and is crucial to their doctrine of fate (*SVF* II 532 = Philo, *Migr. Abr*. 180; Posid. fr. 106 Edelstein-Kidd

= Cic. *Div.* 2,34). The idea was picked up by Platonists. Cf. Plot. 3.1 [3] 5,7-15; Procl. *in Alc.* 69,9-15.

420. These examples are taken from Plut. *De sera* 559E8-F2 (with highly similar wording). Plutarch adds the reflection that the notion to heal one thing through another applies even more to souls, because souls perceive what happens to other souls and use their imagination. As a consequence they will adapt their behaviour. This explains why teachers and generals occasionally single out one individual for punishment, thereby giving a lesson to the whole group: cf. 560A1-10. Plutarch's explanation makes better sense of the medical comparison: the comparandum is indeed how one soul is healed through (perceiving) the corrective punishment of another (a form of 'sym-pathy') – namely in the way one part of the body is healed through treatment of another part, based on the principle of co-affection. Proclus has detached the comparison from this context, and makes his argument rest on the idea that the offspring has the same bad disposition and hence needs to be corrected (an idea used by Plutarch too; see n. 425 below).

421. Reading *melei* for *mellei* (*fiet* g) BS].

422. Hermias connects the medical comparison with the idea of timing: *in Phaedr.* 96,24-6.

423. Reading *hoi* for *dia* (*per*) g [BS].

424. cf. Plut. *De sera* 561D2-9; 562A13-D9.

425. Plutarch also argues that the similarity in character and (evil) dispositions may be inherited from distant forefathers and may skip generations, just like an inherited skin colour may stem from a distant forefather. Cf. *De sera* 562F5-563B5 (the passage also contains a comparable observation on warts, birth marks and moles, quoted at *Dub.* 61,11-13 = *De sera* 563A4-6). Compare Arist. *GA* 1.18, 722a9-11. This is connected to the idea that the offspring is not actually being punished for the moral shortcomings of another, but for its own shortcomings, even if they are not yet apparent. Therefore it is the similarity of character that counts. The punishment is accordingly not retributive, but corrective (of the disposition) and pre-emptive (relative to the deed). Cf. 561C1-562F4.

426. cf. *Prov.* 21,9-11: 'For similarity everywhere connects beings with one another; and that which is assimilated enjoys the same regime as that to which it is assimilated, and also the same leader of this regime.'

427. Plutarch sees a strong connection between the survival of the soul after death and individual providence, but discusses this merely in the context of eschatological punishment. He does not develop the idea, as Proclus does, that a soul may be rewarded or punished *during its earthly life* for a previous earthly life.

428. Reading *diaxousan* for *degentem* and taking *deuteron khronon* (translated by Moerbeke as *secondo tempore*) as the object of *diaxousan*.

429. cf. Philostr. *VA* 4,45: Apollonius saves a young, still unmarried, bride believed to be dead. The story told by Philostratus is about what happens to the girl resurrected by Apollonius, not about two different lives of Apollonius. There is an unsatisfactory element to Proclus' version of the story: one would expect there to be some relation between Apollonius in the second of his lives mentioned here and the young woman saved by him, for otherwise the details about the woman being unmarried and then married in the extra time she got by being resuscitated are pointless. One would above all want to know more about this second, divine life of Apollonius. H. Boese, followed by Böhme 1975, 103, suggests that Proclus has conflated the story of the resuscitation of the young girl (according to Philostratus it is unclear whether she was really or merely seemingly dead) with an earlier episode in which Apollonius tells that in a previous life he was a sailor whose only

laudable feat appears to have been not to betray his ship to pirates (*VA* 3,23-4; Boese 1960, 98). Yet except for the reference to reincarnation there is nothing that connects this passage with the version given by Proclus: neither is there a reference to a divine life, nor to a life subsequent to the life as thaumaturge. Philostratus reports that Apollonius was considered a supernatural and divine person (*VA* 1,2: *daimonios te kai theios nomisthênai*) and later sources go even further (cf. Eunapius, *VS* 2,1,4). His 'divinity', however, refers to his life as a thaumaturge, not to some later life. A possible connection, however, is with the second to last chapter of Philostratus' *Life* (8,30). One of the stories surrounding his death has it that he disappeared from the temple of Dictynna while a chorus of maidens was heard singing 'Hasten thou from earth, hasten thou to Heaven, hasten'. From this passage Eusebius infers that the pagans believed that Apollonius 'went to heaven in his physical body accompanied by hymns' (*Contra Hier.* 8, p. 377,23-4; 40, p. 408,3-15 Kayser). This is at least a clear reference to a second, divine life in which he consorted with the gods. None of the extant sources, however, connect Apollonius' heavenly life with the episode featuring the young bride. Proclus' source probably embroidered the account in Philostratus *VA* 4,45 to the extent that it represented Apollonius' 'divine life' as his reward for resuscitating the young girl. There need not be a reference to his possible ascension, though there may be. It should be noted that what Proclus goes on to argue after having given the Apollonius example would seem to be a different point: *if* we accept the Apollonius case, then we should also accept the reincarnation case. This may confirm the interpretation that the second life of Apollonius is not a second earthly life, but the divine life among the gods. We thank Danny Praet and Christopher Jones for sharing their knowledge on Apollonius of Tyana.

430. Indeed, according to the Platonic theory of incarnation the souls themselves choose their lives and in their choice are determined by their history, which has made them what they are. Cf. *Resp.* 10, 617D6-618E2. Cf. Procl. *in Remp.* 2,304,23-305,17. Hermias, too, connects the choice of the souls explicitly with the issue of inherited guilt. See *in Phaedr.* 96,13-14: 'For the one who deserves to suffer this is introduced into such a family.'

431. People born into the same family or into the same city are not the same (they are not numerically identical) in the sense in which souls transmigrating from one body to another are the same.

432. cf. Plat. *Gorg.* 523E1-6; Plut. De *sera* 565B11-15.

433. Reading *Teiresiou* in [*Peiresii* g] [BS].

434. Proclus may be alluding to the tragic tales of doomed families (e.g. the house of Atreus), in which an error is passed on from generation to generation, but the point he is making is a different one: just as one actor plays many roles, so one soul in its reincarnations becomes different persons. Proclus refers to Pelops in the context of inherited guilt at *in Crat.* 93, p. 46,12-21.

435. i.e. in their own previous lives.

436. For the metaphor of the stage, see *Prov.* 2,8; Plut. *De sera* 554B5-C4; E5-F1; but especially Plot. 3.2 [47] 11,13; 3.2 [47] 15-17. At 15,21-9 Plotinus compares, as Proclus does in our text, the actor playing different characters to the metempsychoses of the soul.

437. cf. n. 320.

438. The argument amounts to the claim that these souls are not, in fact, being punished for crimes of others, but rather for their own bad disposition. In his commentary on Hesiod Proclus expresses the same idea: see Procl. *Schol. in Hes.* 122, pp. 104-7 Marzillo. It is possible that the fragment in question, a scholium to

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 282-4, goes back to Plutarch of Chaeronea (fr. 39 Sandbach), whose commentary on Hesiod appears to have been an important source for Proclus. The scholium is also close to the argument of *De sera*, esp. 559D-E, 562C-D, 563A.

439. cf. Plut. *De sera* 553C5: *rhizan ponêran*.

440. cf. *Dub.* 50,10, with our n. 292.

441. cf. Plut. *De sera* 562C5-11 (tr. De Lacy-Einarson): 'One might as well fancy that scorpions grow their dart when they sting, and generate their venom when they strike – a foolish notion, for the various kinds of wicked men do not at the same time become wicked and show themselves wicked; rather, the thief and the tyrant possess their vice from the outset, but put their thievery and lawlessness into effect when they find the occasion and the power.'

442. cf. Plut. *De sera* 562C11-D9.

443. Plutarch discusses the pre-emptive working of providence extensively: *De sera* 561C10-562F4.

444. *hôsper epilêpsin hupophuoumenên*. Cf. Plut. *De sera* 562D8-9 (tr. De Lacy-Einarson): 'his purpose is to cure them, removing the vice, like an epilepsy, before the seizure'.

445. *en paisin*: *genitis* is an alternative translation for *natis* [BS].

446. A literal quotation of Plut. *De sera* 563A4-6.

447. This cross-reference is unclear (see Appendix 1).

448. On the tenth problem, see Introduction, pp. 48-50.

449. The wording – especially the use of the expression *prosthêsô … ton kolophôna* – is closely inspired by Plut. *De sera* 549D11-E1.

450. Proclus often uses this expression that is inspired by the *Phaedrus*, e.g. *in Remp.* 1,52,10-11; 2,99,7-8; 2,177,28-9: *in Alc.* 149,1-6; *in Tim.* 3,284,20-1; 3,296,25-6. Cf. *Phaedr.* 246C1-2: *panta ton kosmon dioikei*.

451. cf. *Dub.* 4-5.

452. *tôn theôn*: *diis* g [BS].

453. cf. *ET* §120, p. 104,31-2 (tr. Dodds, modified): 'Every god embraces in his existence the exercise of providence over the universe; and the primary providence resides in the gods.'

454. cf. *Dub.* 4-5. See also our n. 19.

455. *agathotêtes*, literally 'goodnesses'. The use of the word 'form' in our translation may be misleading, as it is suggestive of the realm of Being, i.e. the Intelligible, which is, however, inferior to that of the Henads-Gods.

456. They are *autoteleis*. Cf. n. 457.

457. Reading *autôn* for *aitiôn* (*causis* g) [BS]. Cf. *ET* §64 *cor.*, p. 62,5-6; §114, p. 100,18-21; *in Parm.* 707,6-7; 1062,23-6. The more general principle is that every originating principle gives rise to two series, one consisting of entities complete in themselves (*autoteleis*), the other of 'irradiations which derive their being from something else' (*ET* §64). See n. 67 above. Applied to the One this means that its series, that of the henads, is likewise twofold: true, self-subsistent henads, i.e. gods, on the one hand, and derivative unities, on the other.

458. Reading *autohen* for *autothen* (*ex se* g) [BS].

459. This is the triad that explains the presence of characteristics at three levels: in their cause (*kat'aitian*), at their own substantial rank (*kath'huparxin*) and in the participants (*kata methexin*). Cf. *ET* §65. Applied to the One/Good and its series these three levels map onto (1) the One/Good itself; (2) the henads that are complete in themselves (*autoteleis*); (3) the henads in the form of irradiations, i.e. as existing in the participants.

460. The Greek term is *agathoeides*. Here the *eidos*-component truly refers to the formal aspect of a thing. Compare our n. 455.

461. cf. n. 456.

462. cf. *ET* §114.

463. cf. *ET* §64 *cor.*, p. 62,6-9 (tr. Dodds): 'and of intelligences some are self-complete substances, while others are intellective perfections; and of souls some belong to themselves, while others belong to ensouled bodies, as being but phantasms of souls.'

464. The Greek term is *henoeides*. Cf. n. 460.

465. The self-complete intellects encompass the totality of the first intellect, but each in a different manner. On the series of intellects, see *ET* §166 (tr. Dodds): 'there is both unparticipated and participated intelligence; and the latter is participated either by supra-mundane or by intra-mundane souls'. For the self-complete intellects in sun and moon, see *in Tim.* 1,159,26-7 (Asclepius is a lunar, Apollo a solar intellect); 1,404,18; 1,422,21-6.

466. Reading *hoi de ellampseis* for *ho de ellampsis* (*hic autem illustratio* g) [BS].

467. All souls stem from intellects and revert to them: *ET* §193.

468. Reading *ousai* for *noousai* (*intelligentes* g) [BS].

469. Entelechy or actuality. Aristotle defined the soul as the (first) actuality of a potentially living body (or: of an organic body), but this definition according to the Neoplatonists is only applicable to the lowest irradiation of soul. Cf. Ar. *DA* 2.1, 412a21-2; 27-8; b5-6. For Proclus' criticism of Aristotle's definition of soul, cf. Trouillard 1982, 207-15. See also Plot. 4.7 [2] 85,25-8 (Plotinus rejects the Aristotelian definition and even the attempt at harmonisation consisting in identifying soul as entelechy with the vegetative); Porph. in Eus. *PE* 15,11,4 = 249 F 2-4 Smith (cf. Chiaradonna 2002, 94-5). Proclus identifies entelechy with the vegetative; he argues it dies with the body: cf. *in Tim.* 3,300,2-5.

470. *Tim.* 38E5; cf. Procl. *in Tim.* 3,72,16-18. For souls too, Proclus distinguishes between souls proper and irradiations of souls, i.e. the so-called shadows of souls or irrational souls. This double procession of souls is again in accordance with the general principle stated in *ET* §64 (p. 62,8-9 for the application to souls). For the shadows of souls, see our nn. 194, 245, 276 and 279.

471. The One, intellect, and soul are the three main hypostases that 'rank as principles', the *arkhikai hupostaseis. On the three primary hypostases* (*Peri tôn triôn arkhikôn hupostaseôn*) is the Porphyrian title of Plotinus *Ennead* 5.1 [10]. Porphyry probably understood the title as referring to the realms *produced by* One, intellect and soul (see *Sent.* 30), yet in *Phil. hist.* he used the expression to refer to these three principles themselves (fr. 221 Smith; cf. Chitchaline 1992). This is also the usage in the later tradition: cf. Procl. *in Parm.* 1135,17; 1213,1-7. These are also the levels of reality Proclus analyses in *ET*.

472. cf. *ET* §64.

473. Within the category of participants ('irradiations') Proclus distinguishes four levels: the three superior kinds – angels, heroes, demons – and human souls. The three superior kinds figure prominently in Iamblichus, yet he uses the expression also for other higher beings, namely for all beings transcending the soul but inferior to intellect. Cf. Iambl. *DA* 40, p. 68,7-11 (Finamore-Dillon) = Stob. 1,455,1-5 W; *in Parm.* fr. 2 Dillon. See already Orig. *Contra Cels.* 7,68. For a discussion of the three superior kinds by Proclus, see *Mal.* 14-19. For their ontological rank, see esp. *Mal.* 15,11-25.

474. In *TP* 1,15,3-4 the One of the soul is identified with the so-called 'flower of intellect', an expression stemming from the Chaldean Oracles (fr. 1 and 49 Des

Places). In his commentary on the Chaldean Oracles, however, Proclus distinguishes the flower of intellect – a supra-intellective mode of knowledge through which we are connected with the intelligible Father – from the One of the soul, through which we are connected with the One. Whereas 'the flower of intellect' is the summit of our intellective faculty, the One of the soul is the summit of the entire soul. Cf. *De phil. chald.* 4, pp. 209-11 Des Places (esp. 210,28-31; 211,4-12). Cf. Majercik 1989, 138; Steel 1994, 98.

475. <*holôn*> [BS]. Literally: 'over wholes'. The providence of gods is universal and extends over universal beings (analogously to the first demiurgy: cf. Opsomer 2000).

476. BS reads *ontes* for *pantes* (*omnes* g).

477. cf. *ET* §114 (tr. Dodds): 'Every god is a self-complete henad, and every self-complete henad is a god.'

478. cf. *ET* §120, p. 104,33-4 (tr. Dodds): 'For all things else, being posterior to the gods, exercise providence in virtue of divine compresence, whereas the gods do so by their very nature.'

479. *hôs*: *hois* (*quibus* g) (D. Isaac).

480. Or alternatively: 'as in the case of our politicians'.

481. *labousai* (Boese).

482. Reading *dianoôntai* for *noôntai* (*intelliguntur* g).

483. Reading *sunhênôntai* for *coniuncti* g (cf. Isaak, *Dub.* 65,24). Or correcting *coniuncti* into *couniti* [BS].

484. i.e. 'like (the) one' (*henoeidês*).

485. i.e. their *huparxis*, or highest foundation of being, pure existence. Cf. Steel 1994, 91-5.

486. i.e. their *ousia*. The substantial being can be considered as being caused by *huparxis* acting as limit upon the unlimited potentiality (limit and unlimited being themselves produced by god). The resulting mixture, third term of the triad, is substantial being. Cf. *TP* 3,8-9 (esp. 3,31,14-32,2; 34,25-35; 36,13-15; 37,21-8).

487. i.e. the *ousia* corresponding to that specific *huparxis*.

488. The One is even above providence.

489. cf. *ET* §120, p. 106,8.

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Appendix 1

The place of the *tria opuscula* within Proclus' work

In the introduction to our translation of the treatise *On the Existence of Evil* we laid out several arguments for dating the composition of the *tria opuscula* to Proclus' later career. These arguments were nothing but a summary and development of what Helmut Boese said in the introduction of his edition. To our surprise, these brief comments came under intensive scrutiny by Segonds and Luna who argued polemically that 'la datation tardive des Tria Opuscula doit être définitivement rejetée'.[1] The completion of the present translation of the three *opuscula* affords an opportunity to reconsider our views after this criticism and discuss the arguments in more detail. In this matter, the philosophical importance of which is negligible, certainty is unattainable.

In order to situate the *opuscula* within the whole work, cross-references could give us an important clue. However, as Segonds and Luna rightly observe,[2] cross-references are difficult to evaluate. They are often imprecise (and could refer to different works in which similar ideas were discussed), they may have been added afterwards or may refer not yet to the final ('edited') redaction of a commentary, but to a course (*sunousia*). The publication of the commentaries, for example, does not necessarily correspond to the sequence in the teaching curriculum. We agree with their conclusion that 'it is impossible to propose a general coherent chronology' of Proclus' works. The best we can hope for is a relative chronology for some texts. The only established facts are that Proclus worked at the end of his career on the *Platonic Theology* and that the *Commentary on the Parmenides* was composed shortly before. What then are the arguments for a relative chronology of the three treatises? The fact that they have been transmitted in the order *Dub. Prov. Mal.* does not necessarily correspond to their order of composition. We shall first examine the internal references and indications we find in the three treatises and then discuss what may be references to these treatises in the other works of Proclus. We start with the treatise *On Providence*, where we find some indications suggesting that it was composed rather late in Proclus' career.[3]

On Providence

1. The treatise is a reply to a letter sent to Proclus by Theodore, who is introduced as somebody known to Proclus 'a long while ago', 'nobis olim (*palai*) noti, sicut estimo et ipse scripsisti' (1,8-9). He may have been once a disciple of Syrianus in Athens together with Proclus. The fact that he addresses Proclus from abroad to ask for his view on a number of problems regarding free choice and providence, shows that he considers Proclus as an authority. How many years have passed since they first met will remain an open question. But he certainly was no longer a young man.

2. In chapter 45 Proclus indirectly indicates that he is already an 'older man'.

For when discussing Theodore's hedonistic views, he declares that 'it is unworthy of his philosophical conviction and of his age' to entertain and discuss such views. 'That a young man should entertain such an opinion would not surprise me, […] but for someone who has made the intellect, which is characteristic of a mature age (*presbutikon*),[4] leader, intellectual thoughts of prudent judgment are fitting' (45,4-9). Of course, the vocabulary of *presbus* does not necessarily designate old age as in contemporary usage, but Segonds and Luna slightly exaggerate when they say that any person 'à partir d'une trentaine d'années' (XCI) could be considered as *presbus*. It is unlikely that the term *presbutikos* would be used for someone younger than forty.

3. In chapter 22 Proclus seems to refer to a dramatic event in his life, that was also known to Theodore, since he mentioned it in his letter: 'for also the accidents that, as you mentioned, recently came over us from outside, have deprived us of walls and stones, my friend, and have reduced wooden beams to ashes, all of which are mortal and inflammable things, and have ruined our wealth'. According to Westerink, this could be a hint to the destruction by Christians of the temple of Asclepius, which may also have caused serious damage to the school, which was adjacent to it. This may also have been the reason for Proclus' precipitous flight to Lydia.[5] As we know from Marinus, Proclus spent a year in Lydia before it was safe to return to Athens.[6] If Proclus' allusion to a personal experience is related to the destruction of the temple, this may have happened in the fifties.[7] Though all this remains very speculative, it seems reasonable to suppose that the attack on his property happened when Proclus was already an established scholar with reputation.

4. There is one cross-reference in *Prov*. 50,11-12 where Proclus refers to an earlier study wherein he examined the authenticity of the *Epinomis* ('olim enim nos'). This question is discussed in the anonymous *Prolegomena to the Philosophy of Plato* (25,3-12), which depends on a similar introduction by Proclus. Proclus may refer here to that earlier work.[8] The use of the term *olim* (*palai*) indicates that he studied that question a considerable time ago.

5. Finally, there is one external argument that would seem to put the composition of *Prov*. after Proclus' Commentary on the last section of the *Republic*, the celebrated myth of Er. After having explained the whole myth in detail, Proclus wants to formulate, before he finishes the work, some seminal ideas on what depends on us, fate, and providence:

> Let this be the end of [our explanation] of the myth. I too shall conclude my essay, but only after having added to the preceding some small seeds (*smikra spermata*) regarding Plato's doctrine on what depends on us, on fate and providence (*in Remp*. 2,355,8-11).

In what follows he first explains what, according to Plato, is *to eph' hêmin* or choice ('what is up to us') and how it differs from what is wanted (*hekousion*); this is followed by an account of what fate is (not a god, not a divine soul, but the nature of the universe), and finally by an account of divine providence as that which connects our free choice and fate (the passage is mostly a long quotation of *Laws* 10, 904A6-D3). One finds similar, but much more developed, views in the treatise *On Providence*: §57,60 on the difference between *boulêsis* and choice (or what depends on us); §11-12 on fate understood as nature; §14 on fate not being god; §13 on providence; §35 comments on *Laws* 10, 904B. Most surprising is the fact that the description of the subject of these seminal ideas corresponds *exactly* to the title

of the treatise *On Providence*, except, of course, for the dedication to Theodore: *peri tou eph' hêmin kai heimarmenês kai pronoias*. It seems that Proclus took the letter of Theodore as an opportunity to compose the treatise 'On what depends on us, on fate and providence' that he had intended to write later after having finished his commentary on the *Republic*. If he had himself already composed a work with this threefold title, he would most probably have referred to it. It seems thus reasonable to place the composition of the treatise some years after Proclus had finished the redaction of the commentary on the *Republic*. Unfortunately, we do not know when the *Commentary on the Republic* was composed, but in any case it must be situated after the *Commentary on the Timaeus*.[9] In fact, the *in Rempublicam* is not really a commentary, but a collection of essays on diverse issues related to the *Republic*, which may have been written at different points in time. It reached its final form, however, after the 'edition' of the commentary on the *Timaeus*. The sixteenth essay on the last section of the dialogue, the myth of Er, was probably also the concluding essay.[10]

All these arguments seem to put the composition of *On Providence* later in Proclus' career. This does not entail, however – as we had concluded all too hastily – that the two other treatises were also composed at that time. Let us now see what evidence there is for the other two treatises.

Ten Problems Concerning Providence

The text contains two cross-references, and both are problematic.

> *Dub*. 15,1-3: That also the beings superior to us must have knowledge of the indeterminate if this too is to partake of order and not be, as it were, an episode unconnected to the universe let this be granted since it has been demonstrated elsewhere (*allakhou dedeigmenon*).

What Proclus takes 'as having been demonstrated elsewhere' is the idea that contingent indeterminate events are not pure chance events falling outside the order of providence. This is only possible if there is some connection of the indeterminate to determinate things, and this connection depends on divine providence. This corresponds rather well to the argument at *in Tim*. 1,262,1-29, where Proclus demonstrates that the world is a coherent system in which all phenomena, including contingent events, are explained through a concatenation of causes coming from divine providence. Besides invoking the same quotation from Aristotle (*Metaph*. 12, 1090b17), Proclus also uses there the terms *heirmos* and *taxis* (1,262,18; 20). For that reason Boese refers in his apparatus to this text; but he also notices that it remains uncertain whether Proclus is really referring to this passage, since in the *Timaeus Commentary* too Proclus notices at the end of its argument (1,262,29) that he had discussed this 'in other works'. Again it is not clear where he might have done so. Segonds and Luna (2007, XCV) suppose that Proclus refers in *Dub*. 15 to what he had said in *Dub*. 8. But it is unlikely that Proclus would use the term 'elsewhere' (*allakhou*) to refer to an earlier passage in the same work. Maybe, however, we should not search for a specific reference. It may be a rhetorical phrase to indicate that a thesis is here taken for granted 'as being demonstrated elsewhere', that is, outside the present discussion. In the present chapter, Proclus wants to investigate the 'how', not the 'that'. For a parallel phrase see Galenus, *De san. tuenda* 6,12,5.

61,18: Let this then be clear on the basis of these arguments, as I am also

> aware that I have elaborated them in other works (*et novi etiam a me ipso in aliis elaboratum*).

In this chapter Proclus is discussing the question why later generations may suffer punishment for the sins of their ancestors. A possible explanation may be that there is some hidden similarity between the wrongdoer and the person punished. In what other text could Proclus have discussed this problem? Proclus could be referring to *in Crat*. 93, where he comments on what Plato says in *Crat*. 395C-D about Pelops 'who had no foresight of the effects it would have on his descendants'. According to Proclus this text 'teaches that children partake of the punishment of their ancestor's sins. For children's souls become participants in injustice through their association with unjust persons, while their bodies are instituted from bad seeds and their external goods had their source in sinful conducts' (tr. B. Duvick). The author also refers to *Phaedrus* 244D-E where it is said how the souls can be purified from inherited sin through certain rituals. As Segonds and Luna notice (XCVI), Proclus might have discussed the problem of inherited sin also in his commentary on the *Phaedrus*. This commentary is lost, but in the commentary of Hermias, who attended with Proclus Syrianus' seminar on that dialogue, we find indeed an explanation similar to Proclus' arguments: see p. 96,2-28. Finally in Proclus' *scholia* on Hesiod we find similar arguments; see CVII and CXXII in the edition of Marzillo (2010). If we can use the parallel text of Hermias as an indirect proof of what Proclus himself developed in his now lost commentary on the *Phaedrus*, it may seem that he is referring to that commentary. The commentary on the *Phaedrus* (at least the lectures on which it was based) is prior to the final version of his commentary on the *Timaeus*, since Proclus refers to it (*in Tim*. 3, 295,3-14).

On the Existence of Evils

> *Mal*. 1,17-18: In short, we have to consider all the questions we usually raise in our commentaries.

As Segonds and Luna rightly observe (LXIX-LXXVII), this cannot be taken as a cross-reference to commentaries previously written by Proclus. With the plural form Proclus refers to the tradition in the Platonic school where different questions on evil were discussed in relation to problems raised in dialogues of Plato, above all in the *Timaeus*, *Republic, Theaetetus* and *Parmenides*. This text can therefore not constitute an argument for situating *On the Existence of Evils* after the composition of these commentaries. Of course, this does not exclude that Proclus had himself already given seminars or even composed commentaries on some dialogues dealing with the problem of evil.

> *Mal*. 7,1-3: What then shall we say is the necessity of evil? Is it its opposition to the good, as Socrates suggests to us? As we have said in other works (*in aliis*) […]

Proclus argues that evil cannot be avoided because there should not only exist eternal beings, but also intermittent participants. Cousin refers to *ET* §63 where indeed the distinction between two orders of participants is made (see also Dodds 1963, p. 234). This distinction is, however, so common that one may find it in almost all works of Proclus. Besides, in the *ET* there is no explicit connection with

the problem of evil. This connection with evil (as *parhupostasis*) is made in *in Alc.* 117,22-118,25 (cf. nn. 5-6 of Segonds 1985, 189-90). Could Proclus be referring to that dialogue?

> *Mal.* 34,14: Ut in aliis dictum est.

This is not a reference to another work of Proclus, but to another text of Plato, namely the *Republic*.

Possible references to the *tria opuscula* in other works of Proclus

in Remp. 1,37,22-3

This cross-reference comes in the fourth essay of Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* that deals with the patterns (*tupoi*) one should follow in speaking about the gods (cf. Plato, *Resp.* 2, 379B-383C). Proclus concludes from his explanation of the text that one should hold on to the following principles: the gods are good and cannot be held responsible for evil; the gods cannot alter themselves; the gods do not deceive us by falsehoods in deeds or words. Next Proclus mentions three difficulties that may be raised regarding Plato's conclusions: (1) If the gods are only responsible for what is good, whence comes evil? (2) if gods cannot alter themselves, how can one explain that they may appear in different forms, human and animal, or even without specific shape, in the form of light;[11] (3) if the gods cannot deceive, why do they deceive us by rendering false oracles (37,3-22)? Proclus addresses these three questions in the sections that follow: (1) on the origin of evil (37,23-39,1); (2) on the apparitions of the gods (39,1-40,5); (3) on false oracles (40,5-41,2). Yet, as he observes, it is not the first time he discusses these issues:

> These problems (*peri toutôn*) have been discussed at length in other works (*en allois*). Now too, however, let us state succinctly, if you please, with respect to the first *aporia*, that … (37,22-5).

This text should not be taken as a reference to a previous discussion of only the first problem, that of evil. As is clear from the use of the plural form *peri toutôn*, Proclus refers to his earlier discussion of the *three* aporiae, as is also confirmed by the use of the particles *men*/*de*/*de*: *pros men tên prôtên* (37,24), … *pros de tên deuteran* (39,1), … *pros de tên tritên* (40,5). After having discussed 'in short' the three problems Proclus concludes in 41,2-3:

> These matters, then, have received a sufficient examination also in other works (*en allois*).

This conclusion again shows that the reference in 37,22-5 (*en allois*) concerns the discussion of the three problems and not only that of the question of evil. It is in this context that we should also interpret the scholion in the *Laurentianus* 80.9, which is an attempt (dating from late antiquity) to determine the vague reference in 37,22-5:

> One [problem] is discussed in the monograph *On the Existence of Evils*, the other in the commentary on the speech of Diotima. There is [also] a discussion on the existence of evils in the commentary on the *Theaetetus* [where he

> says] 'but it is not possible that evils will be abolished' [176A5] and in the commentary on the third *Ennead*, 'Whence come evils?'[12]

All scholars so far (including ourselves) have understood this scholion as offering a list of works in which Proclus discusses the problem of evil. This is, of course, true of the first reference, the one to the treatise *On the Existence of Evils*, and also for the last part of the scholion, where two lost works are mentioned that presumably contain a discussion of the problem of evil: the commentaries on the *Theaetetus* and the *Enneads* (the scholiast mentions the third *Ennead*, but the reference 'Whence come evils' is clearly to *Enn.* 1.8 [51], Plotinus' treatise on evil; the passage from the *Theaetetus* figures in almost all Platonic discussions of evil: see Opsomer-Steel 2003, 10-11). The problem is the reference to Diotima's speech: it is not evident what in this speech may have occasioned a discussion of evil.[13] Scholars, however, have overlooked the fact that the scholiast in the first section gives references for two different points, as indicated by *to men … to de …* If, however, *en allois* is not just a reference to the discussion of the first aporia, but to all three problems, it becomes easier to understand what the scholiast is explaining. The first point (*to men*) clearly corresponds to the first puzzle mentioned by Proclus, namely the explanation for evil: here the reference is obviously the monograph *On the Existence of Evils*. The second point (*to de*) should then be related to the two other aporiae, which concern the apparitions of the gods and the possible deception involved in the communication through oracles. Both aporiae are somehow related, for if the gods can change and take on different shapes they may also deceive, which contradicts Plato's second *tupos theologias*. The question remains why this problem should be discussed in the context of Diotima's speech. In a comment at the very end of his digression Proclus attributes the deception in oracles to the role of some demons (41,11-29). As is well known, Diotima's speech, and in particular 202E-203A, was considered by Platonists as the *locus classicus* for an account of the nature and function of demonic beings. Diotima also mentions the role of demons in witchcraft (*goêteia*) (202E7-A1), which may have offered Proclus an opportunity to discuss the second and third aporiae in his commentary.[14] In fact, Socrates in *Resp*. 2, 380Dff. explicitly denies that gods and demonic beings could be like sorcerers able to appear under different forms in order to deceive humans. Proclus has difficulties reconciling theurgic practice with this theological model (cf. *in Remp*. 1,109,11-114,29). It is very well possible that he also devoted a long commentary to *Symp*. 202E-A1 and tried to solve the aporiae mentioned in the *Commentary on the Republic*. Be that as it may, the idea that the scholiast mentions the commentary on Diotima's speech in a list of works on evil proves to be unfounded.

For our purpose, however, only the reference to a text on the origin of evils is of interest. Does Proclus here refer to his treatise *On the Existence of Evils*, as the ancient scholiast supposes? In his concise reply to the aporia Proclus first observes that one should not search for a principal cause of evil: gods are not causes of evil; there are neither intelligible forms nor formal causes of evil; neither can matter itself be considered as evil, for it is necessary for the existence of corporeal beings and hence for the universe. As a matter of fact, there is no single cause of evil, but merely a variety of particular causes. Further, evil is never absolute pure evil, but always mixed with some trace of the good. Evil comes about as a *parhupostasis*. This answer is just the standard view on evil that Proclus exposes in many works and most extensively in *On the Existence of Evils*. As Kroll already noticed, there are obvious parallels, also terminological, with the discussion on the causes of evils

in *Mal.* 40; 47-9, and with the refutation of the Plotinian view on matter/evil in *Mal.* 36. In the passage from *in Remp.*, Proclus also distinguishes between the evil in bodies, which is due to a disproportion of their composing parts, and evil in souls which results from a conflict between the different forms of life (rational/irrational). Though this distinction is also present in *On the Existence of Evils*, the closest parallel is with the fifth problem from *Ten Problems Concerning Providence*. He insists for instance on the necessity of an intermediate irrational soul to make the incarnation of the rational soul possible without harming it too much. Although evil may result from the mixture of forms of life, this mixture is needed, as Proclus explains in his commentary on the *Republic*. For if 'the rational souls were implanted in the bodies without the irrational soul, they would themselves both act and suffer what is proper to irrational souls, have desires, sense perceptions and imaginations. For mortal beings need these, if they have to keep themselves alive even for a short time' (*in Remp.* 1,38,17-22). This is almost a summary of the long argument in *Dub.* 31,13-33, for which there is no parallel in *On the Existence of Evils*.

What then is the conclusion from the cross-reference in the fourth essay of the *Republic* commentary? In the last section of his answer Proclus most probably refers to the fifth Problem of the *Ten Problems Concerning Providence*. Yet this work is not mentioned by the scholiast. In the first part of his answer Proclus summarises the standard view on evil, set out at length in *On the Existence of Evils*, but probably also expounded in the two commentaries that are now lost (*in Theaet.* and *in Enn.*). It is intriguing that the scholiast first identifies the reference as one to the treatise on evils, and in the second section of his note quotes other works in which Proclus probably discussed the same problem.

***in Tim.* 1,381,12-15**

> On evils, on how they come to exist, on the nature of providence even they meet with from the gods, this is enough for present purposes; they have been discussed at greater length in other writing [of ours].[15]

This reference comes at the end of a long digression on the problem of evil (1,373,22-381,22), which Proclus inserted in his commentary of the lemma *Tim.* 30A1 ('God wanted everything to be good'). If divine providence wants everything to be good, he asks, how can there be evils in the universe? The problem is formulated as a dilemma in a way similar to that of the beginning of the fifth problem of *Dub.* (§26) and of *Mal.* 58,2-7:

> Starting from this puzzle, some have gone as far as to totally do away with evil, while others have despaired of providence, the former believing that if providence exists all things are good, the latter being unable to believe that things are governed by providence if evil things exist. (373,24-28)

In his reply Proclus sets out the view of his master Syrianus (374,4-375,5).[16] He makes a distinction between the divine perspective, from which all is good, and our human perspective. Evil does not exist for the whole, but for parts in their interaction. There is no absolute evil. Evil can only exist insofar as it is somehow mixed with good things. Evil things are given measure and limit by the demiurge according to the capacity of the subjects. The rejection of absolute evil was a

fundamental presupposition of the late Neoplatonic discussion of evil. Syrianus had the following argument against the thesis of an absolute evil.

> For if you conceive of this thing we call evil as devoid of all good, you are putting it beyond even absolute non-being. Just as the Good-itself is prior to Being, so is Evil-itself posterior to the nothingness of non-being; for the thing which is furthest removed from the Good is evil and not absolute non-being. So if absolute non-being has more existence than Evil-itself, but is among the things that cannot exist, then [evil] is to a much greater degree unable to exist. (*in Tim.* 1,374,14-20)

Interestingly, in *Mal.* 3,1-9 Proclus uses this very argument in order to refute those who pretend that evil does not exist.[17]

After having set out Syrianus' views, Proclus answers to the objection that the demiurge himself must be responsible for evils because he brought particular beings into existence. To refute this objection he first (1,375,6-376,15) adduces a number of texts of Plato from outside the *Timaeus*: *Politicus* 273B-C, *Resp.* 2, 379C and *Theaet.* 176A. The same texts are also quoted and commented in the treatise *On the Existence of Evils*.[18] After the explanation of the Platonic texts Proclus addresses the problem in a more systematic way, distinguishing different classes of beings (1,376,15-378,22):

> There are wholes (1) and parts (2).
>
> Among the parts some (2a) keep their well-being for ever, for instance particular intellects, others only have it temporarily (2b).
>
> Among the latter, some are moved by themselves (2b1) others are moved by other things (2b2).
>
> In the first category we have again to make a distinction between those who only make evil choices (2b1a) and those who go beyond mere intentions and perpetrate the act following from their evil choice (2b1b).
>
> Evil is only found, in different degrees, in partial beings that cannot keep their good forever.

Even though this systematic division is not found as such in *Mal.*, the different elements are there: to begin with, the fundamental difference between whole and parts; and then, among the parts, between parts keeping their wholeness (such as the intellect and the divine universal souls) and the really particularised beings, including human souls. The distinction between evil in souls (self-movers) and bodies is fundamental both in the fifth problem of *Dub.*, and in *Mal.* The distinction between evil choice and evil action (377,7-378,22) is also found at the end of *Mal.* 58 and in *Mal.* 59. Proclus also explain why all levels of beings down to the most inferior – where evil occurs – are needed for the plenitude of the universe (*in Tim.* 1,378,22-379,26), again a standard idea developed in almost all his works. Finally, Proclus addresses the question again whether God wanted or did not want evil to exist. The answer is: 'both'. He wanted evil in so far as he makes everything exist, but he did not want it *qua* something evil. If evil exists at all it is coloured by the good. Even if some souls appear to suffer, they in fact benefit from the evil to which they are subjected, as is clear in the case of punishment (1,380,8-24). Inspired by *Laws* 5, 728C, Proclus compares the divine punishment with medical treatment, such as the opening of abscesses, which may be painful, but is ultimately for the good of the sufferer. We find a very similar argument in *Mal.* 59, but also in *Dub.*

52, *in Remp*. 1,102,29 and *in Alc*. 119,12-16. Proclus concludes that we find evil as a *parhupostasis* only in particular souls and particular bodies, not in their essence and powers, but in their activities.

There are undeniably several parallels between what Proclus says in this digression and what we find in *Mal*. To be sure, it is a traditional doctrine, it goes back at least to Syrianus, and it also may have figured in other works of Proclus. Still it is reasonable to suppose that Proclus here refers to his *On the Existence of Evils*. This treatise (or an early version of it) would then have been composed before the (final redaction of the) *Commentary on the Timaeus*. According to his biographer Marinus (*Vita Procli* 13), Proclus had already finished the composition of this commentary at the age of 27. This is surprisingly early, and difficult to accept given the existence of other cross-references, in particular to the *in Remp*.[19] So probably we should make a distinction between an initial version and a later, possibly much more developed, version.

What can we conclude from all these cross-references and other indications? It seems plausible to situate *Prov*. after *Remp*. X and rather late in Proclus' career. *Dub*. and *Mal*. are prior to *Remp*. IV and *Mal*. is prior to *in Tim*. Can anything be ascertained about the relative chronology of the *tria opuscula*? There are no cross-references between the three. Yet, if one compares the fifth problem of *Dub*., the one devoted to the problem of evil, to *Mal*., it seems to offer a less sophisticated view on the nature of evil than *Mal*. (see above, pp. 27-32). The fifth problem is certainly not a summary of the views one finds in *Mal*. There may be other reasons for considering *Dub*. as a relatively early work. In particular the fact that Proclus relies so heavily on earlier sources and borrows many arguments from Plutarch could suggest an early date. If we compare, however, the discussion of contingency and divine foreknowledge in *Prov*. 63-5 with *Dub*. II-III, one gets the impression that Proclus in *Prov*. summarises what he discussed before and at greater length in *Dub*.: there is no real development in thought. As to the relation between *Prov*. and *Mal*.: there are no indications for a relative chronology, as there are no parallel discussions of the same issues.

Notes

1. See Segonds-Luna 2007, LXIX-XCVIII.

2. See Segonds-Luna 2007, XVIII n. 1.

3. See also Steel 2007, 1-3 for arguments regarding the chronology of this treatise.

4. *intellectum autem senilem presidem statuenti*. One may discuss whether 'senilem' characterises 'intellectum', as in Steel's translation ('the older intellect') or 'presidem' as Segonds-Luna (2007, XCI: 'un chef experimenté comme un veillard') and B. Strobel interpret it. The fact that Proclus uses the term *presbutikos* and not *presbutês or presbuteros* could speak against the latter interpretation.

5. See Westerink 1962, 162-3, and Saffrey 1975, 555-7.

6. See Marinus, *Vita Procli* §15, 15-17 with Saffrey 2002, n. 2 (pp. 119-20).

7. Saffrey 1975, 555-6 dates the event 'peu après 450', but his calculation is based on many fragile suppositions.

8. See Steel 2007, 239; Segonds-Luna 2007, XCVII.

9. According to Marinus, the commentary on the *Timaeus* was one of the first works of Proclus (*Vita Procli* §13). It is probable, however, that Proclus reworked it later (see Saffrey's note at §13, 14-17, p. 112). In his commentary on the *Republic*, Proclus refers to it as an already published work (*in Remp*. 2,335,20: *ekdidomenois*).

10. This refutation of Aristotle's critique of Plato's political views in the *Republic* was probably an independent treatise, added later as an appendix to the commentary.

11. On the apparitions of the gods in theurgic rituals see *Chaldean Oracles* 146 and Proclus' comments further down in the same essay (*in Remp*. 1,110,21-114,29).

12. The scholion is published by Kroll in his edition of the commentary on the *Republic*, 2,371,10-18.

13. Segonds-Luna 2007, LXXX n. 2 suppose that it may have been a discussion of 205E-206A1, but this text does not deal directly with the problem of evil.

14. Proclus refers twice to this section of Diotima's speech in an explanation of demonic witchcraft: *in Remp*. 2,337,14-20 and *in Parm*. 836,9.

15. We quote from the translation of Runia and Share. The translators cite several parallels to *Mal*. (Runia-Share 2008, 238-48).

16. It is always difficult to determine where Proclus stops following Syrianus and gives his own views. According to Festugière 1967 (and Runia-Share 2008) the views of Syrianus are stated in the first section (374,2-375,5). From 375,6 onwards begins the discussion of an objection. One may however assume that Proclus' whole answer is concordant with Syrianus' views.

17. See Runia-Share 2008, 239 n. 154.

18. See the indices in Opsomer-Steel 2003.

19. See Segonds-Luna 2007, XVIII n. 1 on circularity in the references between the two commentaries.

Appendix 2

Addenda and corrigenda to the translation of *De malorum subsistentia*

A comparison of our translation of *De malorum subsistentia* (*Proclus: On the Existence of Evils*, 2003) with Benedikt Strobel's forthcoming annotated Greek retroversion of this treatise made it possible to correct mistakes and to integrate some of his new conjectures. Of course, it is not possible to enter here into a full discussion of all difficult passages. We limit ourselves to a list of corrections that may have a bearing on the argument. References are to Boese's edition (also indicated in the margin of our translation), with first the published text and after the bracket the proposed revised version.

1,19 'we will give the impression'] probably 'we will have to admit' (if *reputabimur* stands for *oiêthêsometha* [BS]).

2,14 'and before it is being it is one'] 'for the One is before being'.

2,20-1 'either there is no principle or evil does not exist and has not been generated'] 'either evil does not at all exist or it is not evil and has not been produced as evil' (*aut neque esse principium aut neque esse malum* [*aut*] *neque factum esse malum*). As Strobel observes, *principium* (*tên arkhên*) is here not the subject of *esse*, but is used in an adverbial sense: *mêde einai tên arkhên*: 'not to exist at all'.

3,22 'for this is not right for him'] 'for this is not right for it (i.e. evil agency)'.

6,31-4 'for their existence … belongs to beings, but also because'] 'for to be necessary is also to be good. But Plato says that it is necessary that evil exists; therefore it is good that evil exists. If, however, it is good that evil exists, evil certainly exists, according to his argument, not only because it has been so produced that "it will not cease to exist" – that is certainly also true – but also because'.

10,6-7 'However … them'] 'yet it is inescapable that there is evil for particular things of which he removes the good, dividing nature according to grades'.

13,11 'the first henads'] 'first the henads' (cf. *ET* 21, p. 24,30-1).

13,12 'For the good … evil'] 'Let this not be allowed!'

13,21 'unholy'] 'unacceptable' (*tolerabile* = *anekton*); cf. *Theaet*. 154C4-5 [BS].

13,22 'For that … not good'] 'For what is not good is not congenial with the good' (reading with Strobel *bonum non* for *to mê agathon*).

13,24-6 'For that which … activity'] 'For similarity is in accordance with the One and what is eternal stems from what is before eternity, and that which is established unchangingly in activity is the first to receive existence from that which is superior to the property of activity.'

13,30 'and a god is whatever is good'] 'and a god, each one, is good'.

14,5 delete '– it does not know that it is such –'.

14,12 'inside the One'] 'in the One'.

17,9-10 'for the latter may be both'] 'for where there is' (correcting with BS *homou* [*simul*] into *hopou*).
17,14 'those who make mistakes'] *persequentibus fluctuose* = *tois plêmmelôs metadiôkousi*. The verb *metadiôkein* requires an object (to pursue something). It could be *taxin*, as Erler and Strobel suppose, or a word like *bion* could have been omitted in the Greek text or in the Latin translation: 'those who lead a wrongful <life>'.
18,6-7 'For <nor> … also evil'] 'For "always" means power, whereas evil is a lack of power of those things for which it is also evil.' We read with D. Isaac *hoc enim impotentia* instead of *hoc enim in potentia*.
18,10 'a demon or a hero'] 'a demon or a god'.
18,14 'and other so called evils stemmed from'] 'and all such [emotions] stemmed for those that are allegedly evil from' ('dictis malis' refers to demons, see further 19,16-17) [BS].
18,18-19 'itself … its … its'] 'himself … his … his'.
19,30 'have received a fine treatment from us'] 'have become somehow propitious to us'; as Westerink notices, *misericorditer* stands for *ilea* (cf. *Phaedo* 95A4-5).
21,11-12 'they are perfected'] 'they perform this'. We follow Strobel's conjecture *epiteloi<e>n <tou>to* for *epitelointo* (*perficiuntur* g).
24,14 'contemplate the plane of oblivion'] 'at the plane of oblivion' (adding *<eis>* with BS and Plato, *Resp*. 621A1).
26,7 'replete with these things'] maybe 'replete with passions' (if one accepts Strobel's conjecture: *pathôn* for *autôn* [*ipsis* g]).
26,13 'prior to its activity'] 'from its nature' (reading with Strobel *para* for *pro* [*ante* g]).
27,4 'being'] 'body'.
27,17 'To this … strange'] 'To the nature of other things other species [are contrary to their nature]'.
33,18-19 'separated … powerlessness'] 'distinguished [from one another] through their own power and powerlessness'.
36,7 'it will be a god' (*deus erit*)] maybe 'it will be godless' (if one accepts the conjecture of Strobel: *<a>theos* [cf. *in Tim*. 1,368,5-6]).
37,21 'prior to them'] 'containing them' (keeping with Strobel *circa* [*peri*], a quotation from *Tim*. 31A6-7).
38,10 'both are not identical'] 'the being of both is not identical' (reading with Strobel *hekaterou* for *hekateron* [*utrumque* g]; cf. *ET* 34,9 and *Dub*. 20,13-14).
39,21-2 'whereas <that … power or> substance'] 'whereas that which is [destructive] of either power <or> substance is contrary'.
40,10 'from different suppositions'] 'from foreign [i.e. non-Platonic] suppositions' (accepting Strobel's conjecture *ali<en>is* [*allotriôn*]).
41,13-14 'Hence the whole is good. And … is in the gods'] 'Hence the whole good and … are in the gods'.
43,2 'pertain to them'] 'stem from them' (reading *ex his* (instead of *et hiis*) with AOV and D. Isaac).
44,4 'cause to be evil'] 'cause for evil'.
45,7 'life?'] 'life in accordance with the same rank?'
45,13 'originates'] 'is woven [onto the soul]' (*exoritur* translates *proshuphainetai* [BS]); see our n. 183.
45,14 'Indeed … good'] 'Indeed, their offspring too is all good'.
45,20-1 'activities, we must … be made good'] 'activities, and even that evil is not permanent, but <…>, as I have said before [cf. 25,9-12], because this soul too is somehow made good' (*sed quod aliquando dictum est a me*: *pote* (= *aliquando*) may be a corruption of *prosthen*).

46,1-2 'be absurd … evils'] 'also be absurd to make such a soul the cause, so to speak, of all evils' (accepting Strobel's proposal to understand *in totum* as a translation of the adverbial *to holon*, which is itself a corruption of *to holôn*).
46,8 'does disorder affect our'] 'are we deprived of' (accepting Strobel's conjecture *ateuksia* for *ataksia* [*inordinatio*]).
46,21 'from itself'] 'by itself'.
50,23-4 'causes … appear through causes'] 'a principle … appear from a principle'.
50,39-40 'evil is … nature'] 'evil exists in a divided nature and is not one'.
50,42 'winged nature'] 'winged chariot' (understanding with Strobel *hama* (*simul* g) as a corruption of *harma*; cf. *Phaedr*. 246E5).
51,25 'withdrawal'] 'paralysis' (following Strobel's conjecture, restoring *paresis* for *parairesis* [*exclusio* g], cf. *in Remp*. 2,95,19-20).
52,14 'because … evil'] 'because when it [i.e. injustice] has brought forth vitality, imparts even to an evil person' (following Strobel's conjecture *endidôsi* for *on didôsi* [*ens dat* g] and understanding *ipsum vitale* as *to zôtikon*).
53,9 'whereby [the body's] natural capacity to act disappears'] 'whereby nature is annihilated' (following Strobel in considering *eis to poiein* [*ad facere* g] as a corruption of *eis to mê on*).
54,15-17 'For privation … activity'] 'For what is capable of producing something or is capable of something in general is not a privation, and what has of itself no capacity or activity is not a contrary'.
57,8 'rational souls … images'] contrary to what we claimed in n. 391, there seems to be a lacuna after 'rationalibus autem', which may be filled as follows: *tois logikois <ho nous; hôste tais men psuchais dia> to pro autôn to agathon*. Maybe *to pro autôn* (*quod ante ipsas*) is a corruption for *ton ptra* (= *patera*) *autôn*. Proclus characterises the demiurgic intellect as the 'father' of the souls: see *TP* 6,15,19; *in Parm*. 950,5-6; *in Tim*. 1,211,1. The translation would then be 'rational souls <the intellect. Hence for souls the good is due to their father>, for images'.
58,6 'and this is indeed a troubling problem'] 'this too is something that delights the soul'; as Strobel observes, *inquinat* here stands for *sainei*, which means 'to gladden/to cheer' (cf. Arist., *Metaph*. 1090a36-7).
58,14 'deny that it exists'] 'deny that it is evil'.
59,6 'he does evil, and he gives in to the'] 'he gives in to an evil and foul self-love and to the' (following Strobel's reconstruction *kakên kai atopon heautou <philian> kai*; cf. *Prov*. 34,5-6).

Corrections in the Philological Appendix (pp. 133-45)

7,21 *ante hec*] *ante* for *pro*, not for *anti* (as we claimed previously) [BS].
13,12 keep *ad hec* (*pros tauta*) [BS].
18,7 delete.
25,25 *laxans* corresponds to *khalasas* or *khalôn* [BS].
27,7 delete.
36,14 for *illis* (*ekeinois* g) read *allêlois* with Isaak.
37,21 delete.
39,21 the proposed addition in the text makes the argument more explicit, but is not needed. It suffices to add <*aut*> after *potentie*.
43,29 delete.
45,20-3 delete.
46,1 delete.

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Index of Passages

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Index of Names

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Index of Subjects

Numbers in bold refer to the notes to the introduction (pp. 61-7). Numbers in italic refer to the notes to the translation (pp. 121-47). Other references are to the page numbers of this book.