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Iamblichus on Light and the Transparent

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The nature of light poses a dilemma for neoplatonists, who are committed to the view that the teachings of Plato and Aristotle are consistent.¹ Plato (*Tim.* 45b2-d3) states that light is corporeal; Aristotle (*De an.* 418b13-17) that it is not. Of the neoplatonists who discuss the nature of light, Proclus alone claims that it is corporeal, while Plotinus, Simplicius, Philoponus, and probably Syrianus as well think it is incorporeal.² In his surviving works, Iamblichus does not explicitly discuss the nature of light, but an examination of Julian's *Hymn to King Helios* (133c-134d) along with some works of the later neoplatonists and Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis III* will suggest that Iamblichus' theory of light represents a compromise between the Platonic and Aristotelian theories and influenced Proclus' unique theory.

Plato in his *Timaeus* (45b2-d3) states that vision occurs when the fire that produces the gentle light (φῶς ἡμερον, b5) of the day joins together with the pure fire emanating from our eyes (τὸ τῆς ὀφθαλμοῦ βεῦμα, c3). These form a single body (ἐν σώμα, c4) and vision occurs. For Aristotle, on the other hand, light is the actualisation of the transparent qua transparent (ἐνέργεια τοῦ διαφανοῦς ἢ διαφανές, *De an.* 418b9-10), and is therefore incorporeal. The transparent is 'what is visible not simply in and of itself but because of the color of something else; examples include air, water, and many solids' (διαφανὲς δὲ λέγω ὃ ἐστὶ μὲν ὁρατὸν, οὐ καθ' αὐτὸ δὲ ὁρατὸν ὡς ἁπλῶς εἶπεῖν, ἀλλὰ δι' ἀλλότριον χρῶμα. τοιοῦτον δὲ ἐστὶν ἀήρ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ πολλὰ τῶν στερεῶν, 418b4-7). The transparent is, therefore, the clear medium through which vision can occur. Aristotle explicitly states that light is not fire or any body at all and argues against philosophers like Empedocles and Plato who think that vision occurs by an emanation from a body (b14-15).³

The evidence that Iamblichus agreed with the Aristotelian doctrine that light is incorporeal is found in Julian's *Hymn to King Helios*.³ Julian discusses the role of the three 'suns' in the three neoplatonic universes: the Good in the noetic realm, Helios in the noeric realm, and the sun in the visible realm. In discussing sunlight, Julian mentions the Aristotelian doctrine of light in the transparent (133c-134d). Light is 'in a way the incorporeal divine form of the actualised transparent' (εἶδος ... ἀσώματόν τι <καὶ> θεῖον τοῦ κατ' ἐνέργειαν διαφανοῦς, 133d1-3). Vision occurs only when the transparent is illuminated. The transparent, Julian says, is a sort of matter (ὕλη) underlying bodies; light is its form (134a3-5; cp. 134c1-d5).

That is to say, light makes what is present in the transparent visible.

Thus far Julian's explanation seems to be consistent with Aristotle's. There is a difference, however. When Aristotle claims that light is incorporeal, he says that it is an actualisation (ἐνέργεια), i.e. a positive state that either exists or does not. He does not believe, therefore, that light can travel (*De an.* 418b20-26). Furthermore, there is no continuum of corporeality; light is simply incorporeal. Iamblichus thinks differently.⁴ For Julian says (134a5-b7):

Of light, which is itself incorporeal, the rays of the sun would be some sort of summit (ἀκρότης... τις) and as it were flower (ὥσπερ ἄνθος). Accordingly, the doctrine of the Phoenicians, who are wise and knowledgeable about divine matters, states that the sunlight that proceeds in all directions (ἀπανταχῇ προϋσσαν) is the undefiled ἐνέργεια of pure intellect. Our theory is not inconsistent with theirs since light itself is incorporeal, if one should consider that its source is not a body but the undefiled ἐνέργεια of intellect illuminating into its proper abode. It was allotted the middle of the entire heaven, and shining from there it fills the heavenly spheres with vigor and illuminates all things with a divine and undefiled light.

For Iamblichus and Julian, light travels not only within our own realm but also between realms. As Lacombrade has pointed out, the first sentence of this passage with its Chaldaean vocabulary shows that the incorporeal source of light is Helios and the One beyond him.⁵ Light is incorporeal, Julian says, because its source is incorporeal – not because it actualises a potentially transparent medium. In fact, the very meaning of the Aristotelian term ἐνέργεια, which Julian himself uses, has changed from 'actuality' to 'activity'.⁶ It is this pure activity of Helios that is said to illuminate into (ἐλλαμπόμενῃ εἰς) the noeric realm and by that process through the sun to fill the lower universe with light. Julian and Iamblichus, then, seem to have conceived of a higher activity being transmitted from one place (admittedly, from a noetic and from a noeric one) to another. Light travels. It also seems likely that light becomes less pure in its descent and perhaps more corporeal. For Julian allows that the rays of sunlight are, although at their summit noetic and noeric, ethereal.⁷

It is instructive to compare Plotinus' writings on this point. In IV 5.7, Plotinus describes light as a non-flowing activity of a luminous body (ἐνέργεια οὐ ρέουσα, line 4) and compares it to a soul whose activity can endow a body with life.⁸ This activity can affect an external body, Plotinus says, as an object causes a reflection in a mirror (lines 44-51). The image is also called an activity, and the original acts on it without itself flowing (οὐ ρέοντος) into the reflective surface. As long as the object is there, the reflection persists. Thus, in an analogous way, a luminous body can illuminate a second body without light travelling to it. When discussing the phosphorescent bodies of animals (lines 25-37), Plotinus makes an intriguing distinction between incorporeal light and corporeal fire. These animals have fire within them. When they stretch themselves out, the fire shines outward (ἐκλάμπει εἰς τὸ ἔξω, line 28); when they draw themselves up, there is no light outside them. The explanation, Plotinus says, is that their contracted bodies block the fire, which then

subsides within them (ἔδω εἰς τὸ εἶσω, lines 30-1). But this is not true of light, which is an incorporeal activity of the body. Thus, one cannot rightly say that light 'has left' or 'is present,' for an activity does not act in that way (lines 42-4). Light corresponds to the form of the luminous body and is incorporeal (35-42). Fire is a body.

Plotinus uses this distinction elsewhere. At II 1.7, Plotinus states that there are different forms of fire. Citing *Tim.* 58c, Plotinus claims that the sun is a fire that gives off a gentle heat. 'This light is a body, but a light of like nature shines from it, which we say is incorporeal' (lines 26-8). At I 6.3, Plotinus distinguishes between light, which is incorporeal, and fire, which is the most subtle of bodies and nearly incorporeal (λεπτότατον δὲ τῶν ἄλλων σωμάτων, ὡς ἐγγὺς ὅν τοῦ ἀσωμάτου, lines 17-23).

For Plotinus, then, light is an incorporeal activity. There are corporeal forms of light, e.g. the sun and fire, that somehow house this incorporeal activity. These can be said to move within or outside of the body containing them, but light itself cannot. Light does not travel.⁹

Iamblichus' contribution to this earlier neoplatonic doctrine is, as usual, a blending of his intricate metaphysical schema with his religious doctrines. He associates the incorporeality of light with the higher, incorporeal, noetic and noeric gods. Like Plotinus, he believes that light in its pure state is incorporeal. Unlike Plotinus, he thinks that it travels from the upper realms into our own through the sun. Plotinus believes in different kinds of light. There is evidence that Iamblichus believes that light becomes more corporeal in its lower forms.¹⁰

Proclus, although he believes that light is a body, holds a theory otherwise similar to that of Iamblichus. In his *Platonic Theology* II 7, Proclus discusses the analogy of the Good and the sun in Plato's *Republic* 6.507a6-509c2. In a passage reminiscent of Julian's, Proclus discusses how each monad exists both in the realm before its realm and in its own realm and illuminates the entities below it; e.g. in Iamblican terms, the noeric monad, Helios, is illuminated by the noetic monad, the Good, and passes on its light to the sensible monad, the sun (*Th. Pl.* II 7.44.17-45.13).¹¹ Proclus says that Plato calls the light from the One 'the brightest of all realities' (*Rep.* 518c9) not because it participates in light but because 'it is the cause of the light everywhere (πανταχοῦ) and the source (πηγή) of every noetic, noeric, and encosmic divinity' (48.9-14). The One for Proclus, then, does not emit light, which he considers corporeal,¹² but is the incorporeal source of light. Iamblichus would agree, of course, that the One is the incorporeal source of light, but he shows no reluctance to call its emission light. Proclus concludes (48.14-15) that light is 'participation in the divine existence' (μετουσία τῆς θείας ὑπάρξεως). As Saffrey and Westerink point out,¹³ citing *Rep.* 509b6-10, light can be termed 'participation' in the sense that just as all things on the earth obtain their existence and essence from the sun, so too all the lower gods obtain theirs from the first god. The act of illumination from on high is the act of participation as seen from below. For Iamblichus, this incorporeal light is the higher gods' manifestation in all the lower realms. It is not visible to the eyes, but for Iamblichus as for Proclus, it is visible to the 'eyes' of the purified vehicle.¹⁴

Supracestrial light differs from its counterpart below. Indeed, Proclus believes in a descending scale of fire from less material to more material. In *In Tim.* II 7.18-10.16,

Proclus takes issue with Aristotle's doctrine that the heavens are not made of fire. Alluding to *Tim.* 58c5-d1, where Plato distinguishes kinds of fire (πυρὸς γένη), such as flame (φλόξ), the non-burning irradiation from flame that provides light, and the glowing embers of an extinguished fire, Proclus says (8.22-5):

For light and flame (φλόξ) are not the same, nor are flame and charcoal, but there is a descending scale (ὑφεσις) of fire from up above down to the earth. Fire advances from the more immaterial, more pure, and more incorporeal to the most material and most dense bodies.

Proclus believes that Aristotle has failed to consider the difference between immaterial and material fire. Heavenly fire is immaterial in the sense that it is free from sublunar matter, imperishable, and pure (9.11-15).¹⁵ There is, therefore, a distinction to be drawn between kinds of fire, and this distinction is based upon the position and composition of fire.

Proclus again differentiates between heavenly and sublunar fire in *In Tim.* II 42.9-44.24. Heavenly fire is not the same as that beneath the moon but is a copy (μίμημα) of the noeric fire (43.28-31).¹⁶ Heavenly fire is pure fire (εἰλικρινὲς πῦρ, 44.6, cf. 44.1 and *Tim.* 45b7: πῦρ εἰλικρινές); earthly fire exists by participation and materially (44.7). There is an obvious similarity with Julian's text, where the source of sunlight is said to be the noeric god Helios. But here Proclus explicitly delineates a difference between types of light based upon its materiality. We have already seen that Julian considers sunlight ethereal, the equivalent of Proclus' 'pure fire.' For evidence that the entire descending scale of light is Iamblichean, we must turn to *De Mysteriis* III.

Throughout this book, Iamblichus is concerned with the kinds of sacred rites and divinations that occur through divine illumination. He gives several examples, but the basic elements of the rites are similar. The god illuminates from above. He is external to and separated from the recipient of this illumination.¹⁷ In agreement with Proclus' statement in *Th. Pl.* 48.14-15, Iamblichus associates this divine illumination with the lower entity's participation in the higher.¹⁸ In his fullest account, that of the oracle of Apollo at Claros (124.10-126.4), Iamblichus explains what happens when the god illuminates the water of the shrine's spring. It seems, Iamblichus says, that a mantic breath (πνεῦμα μαντικόν, 124.18) pervades (διήκειν) the water, but such is not the case.

For the divine does not permeate in such an extended and divided way (διαπεφοίτηκεν οὕτω διαστατῶς καὶ μεριστῶς) through what participates it, but giving itself externally (ἐξῶθεν) and illuminating the spring, it fills it with the power of divination from itself. (124.19-125.3)

Thus, the light of the god, which is equivalent to the rays that Julian called 'the summit and flower' of incorporeal light (134a5-6), is the incorporeal noeric and noetic light of Helios and the One. Apollo is the separated and transcendent monad of the visible realm. The power of divination comes about by a process of participation. If a mantic breath had entered the water, it would have formed a material,

corporeal compound with it because the πνεῦμα itself would be a body. There is not, however, and cannot be a *physical* mixture of incorporeal light and corporeal spring water. Rather, there is what might be called interpenetration of the immaterial with the material, with no contamination of the immaterial element.¹⁹ As Iamblichus says in III 12, the divine prophetic power is present as an undifferentiated whole (ἁδιαίρετος ὅλη, 129.4) in each entity that participates it.²⁰ Under these circumstances, then, the divine power is separated from the lower realms. The recipient of their power is said to participate in it. There is no mixture or compound of the two elements. The divine light remains whole and incorporeal. Divine inspiration occurs under many guises, Iamblichus assures us, but in the end the central element in all forms of true divination is illumination by light (ἡ τῆς αὐγῆς ἑλλαμνις, III 14.134.12).

There is, however, another lower form of divination. In III 28-30, Iamblichus discusses what he calls the image-making art (ἡ εἰδωλοποιητικὴ τέχνη, 168.13-14).²¹ This so-called art does not derive externally and separately from the gods but arises from the material and corporeal powers around matter and in bodies (168.6-7). Although some think that its practitioners make their images through the revolving stars (διὰ τῶν περιπολούντων ἀστέρων, 169.1-2), i.e. through the planetary gods, Iamblichus disagrees.

For whereas the heavenly gods have an infinite number of powers, one class of these is the final of all powers in them, viz., the physical. Again, of this class one, which is situated in the seminal reasons (λόγοι σπερματικοί) and in the immobile Forms before them, in and of itself precedes [the realm of] generation; the other, situated in the perceptible and visible motions and powers and in the effluences and qualities from heaven, has dominion over all the visible cosmos. (169.4-12)

Here Iamblichus provides a fascinating division of divine powers. The lowest of these is physical and concerned with the realm of generation, but even this lowest form can be further subdivided. The first class of physical powers has its source in entities above the physical gods, namely the noetic Forms and the noeric seminal reasons.²² This power is, therefore, equivalent to the description of divine illumination, whose source is also noetic and noeric. The second class of physical powers is, however, quite different. Its source is perceptible, is more immediately involved with the realm of generation, and proceeds by effluences from the visible gods. These effluences themselves seem to form a hierarchy; for, Iamblichus tells us, some of them benefit useful arts, such as medicine and gymnastics. The image-making art, however, makes use of a very obscure portion of these effluences that is enmeshed in the realm of generation (169.14-170.2). Far from using the revolving stars, the image-maker uses these final effluences of nature artificially (τεχνηκῶς), not theurgically (θεουργικῶς) (170.7-10). These effluences are mixed with matter (170.10-13; cf. 171.2-4). Such effluences, welded together adventitiously (ἐπίκτητόν τι συγκεκρότηται, 171.19), are unstable. Using them for prophecy is, Iamblichus concludes, worthless (172.11-12).

It is important to note here that Iamblichus is not claiming that these effluences are unconnected with the gods. In III 30, he says: 'The last of the things in generation

are moved by the heavenly motions and are in sympathy with the effluences descending from them' (173.14-16). Rather, the problem is that these effluences are more partial and divided, and further removed from their immaterial, divine source. They are, in short, compounded with matter and, hence, corporeal. The resulting images are, therefore, unstable and are untrustworthy guides to future events.²³ This schema is consistent with Iamblichus' doctrine in *In Alc.* fr. 8 that the effect of higher principles on lower entities diminishes as one proceeds lower in the chain. The more material a compound, the less it displays its higher element.

There is evidence, then, that Iamblichus like Proclus adopted a theory of degrees of materiality and corporeality in light. A reference in Simplicius' *De anima* commentary helps to clarify how Iamblichus developed his theory. In *De an.* 133.31-5 (= Iamblichus, *In Tim.* fr. 89), Simplicius discusses Aristotle's statement that light 'is not fire or body at all or an effluence from any body' (*De an.* 418b14-15). Simplicius believes that Aristotle has Plato's *Timaeus* in mind here, and he refers the reader to Iamblichus' commentary on the *Timaeus*:

How light is said to be the Form of fire there [i.e. in the *Timaeus*] and how daylight and the current that flows from the eye (τὸ μεθιμερινόν τε φῶς καὶ τὸ τῆς ὀψεως ῥέθυμα) having become conjoined (συνπαγές γινόμενον), are said to make a single body (ἐν σώμα), one must learn from Iamblichus' commentary on the *Timaeus*. (133.32-5)

Iamblichus would have been commenting upon *Tim.* 45b2-c5:

First of the organs, they fashioned eyes that produce light and bound them [to the head] for the following reason. They fashioned from the fire that cannot burn but provides a gentle light a body akin to the light of day. For they made the pure fire within us that is related to this [body] flow smooth and thick through our eyes, compressing the whole eye and especially the middle of it so that everything that is thicker is blocked, but the pure fire of this sort alone passes through. Accordingly, whenever there is daylight around the current that flows from the eye (μεθιμερινόν ἢ φῶς περὶ τὸ τῆς ὀψεως ῥέθυμα), then like meeting like and becoming joined together (συνπαγές γινόμενον), one body (ἐν σώμα) is formed suitably along a direct line with the eyes.

Simplicius, who believes that light is incorporeal, sends the reader of his commentary to Iamblichus' description of a corporeal compound of daylight and ocular effluence. Iamblichus, who we know believed in the incorporeality of light, seems to have found a way to make Plato's theory consistent with Aristotle's. Simplicius does not explain how Iamblichus did this, but we can, I believe, approximate Iamblichus' reasoning.

The subject of the verbs in the third person plural in the Platonic passage is the younger, or planetary, gods.²⁴ This is significant. The Demiurge is the intellectual Helios and is, therefore, directly involved with immaterial light from the One. The younger gods, on the other hand, are more closely connected than the Demiurge to the realm of generation. From *De Mysteriis* III, we have seen that Iamblichus

believes that planetary gods are involved with the lower powers of nature. These include a corporeal form of light. Thus, they can be responsible for the combination of two corporeal forms, like daylight and the visual ray, into a single body. This is not to deny that light, at its source, is incorporeal or even to deny that corporeal fire can emit incorporeal light, since even at its lowest level corporeal compounds have some connection to the incorporeal gods. Rather, what Iamblichus seems to have done is to combine the notion of light as an incorporeal noetic and noetic activity with the notion of lower, corporeal forms of light compounded with matter. We have seen that Plato himself differentiated different kinds of light (*Tim.* 58c5-7). Plotinus (II 1.7.24-28) and Simplicius (*In Cael.* 85.7-15)²⁵ considered the three kinds of fire that Plato listed to be corporeal. One of the three types does not burn but provides light (*Tim.* 58c6-7). This was certainly taken as equivalent to the fire that does not burn but provides a gentle light (*Tim.* 45b4-5). Thus, Iamblichus would have thought that both the daylight and the pure light from the eyes were corporeal. Plato's theory of vision accorded with the neoplatonic view that light is corporeal in the realm of generation. Iamblichus would not think that Aristotle disagreed with Plato. When Aristotle states that light (τὸ φῶς) is not 'fire or a body at all or the effluence from any body' (*De an.* 418b14-15), Iamblichus would have interpreted him to mean that light in its purest form is not the same as corporeal fire.

Aristotle's view, therefore, would have been of prime importance in theurgic matters, where our purified vehicles with every material stain removed could be illuminated by the incorporeal light of the gods and participate in that light without forming a corporeal compound with it. Plato would be thought to have agreed with Aristotle on the incorporeality of light (as the *Republic* would have been assumed to show). In the end of the *Timaeus*, however, where the material realm is under consideration, light would rightly exist corporeally. Thus interpreted, the theories of Plato and Aristotle are not in conflict; the one complements the other.²⁶

Notes

1. Plotinus uses Aristotelian language in IV 5.7 to define light as an ἐνέργεια and says explicitly that it is incorporeal: ἀσώματος δὲ πάντως δεῖ τιθέναι, καὶ σώματος ἢ (lines 41-2). Cf. I.6.3, I.18: φωτὸς ἀσώματος and II 1.7, lines 26-8: the light of the sun is corporeal but a light of like nature is incorporeal. Simplicius [?] affirms that light is incorporeal in *De an.* 131.38-132.4 and 134.22. In *In De Phys.*, Simplicius interprets a Chaldaean oracle (fr. 51) as saying that light is prior to corporeal entities and is 'the whole incorporeal realm that transcends the corporeal worlds' (πᾶσαν τὴν ἀσώματον διάταξιν, τὴν τοῖς σωματικοῖς κόσμοις ὑποχουμένην, 616.12-13). Philoponus argues at length that light is incorporeal in *In De an.* 324.25-330.27. For Proclus, compare Simplicius *In De an.* 134.5-20 and *In Phys.* 612.24-35 with Proclus *In Remp.* II 163.1-2, 195.8, and 198.26-9. Although it seems likely that Syrianus considered light incorporeal, we have no definite statement about his beliefs. In his *In Metaph.* 85.22, he uses a conditional: 'even if someone should wish to call [light] incorporeal' (εἰ καὶ ἀσώματά τις βούλοιτο λέγειν). He has just stated that immaterial bodies interpenetrate and that they are

like light from two lamps interpenetrating (85.15-22). He concludes that light, even if one grants that it is incorporeal, interpenetrates matter because it is simple and immaterial (85.22-8). See R. Sorabji, *Matter, Space, and Motion* (London, 1988) 112-13 and S. Sambursky, *The Concept of Place in Late Neoplatonism* (Jerusalem, 1982) 59.

2. Aristotle does not mention Empedocles or Plato by name here, but does so in *De Sensu* 437b10-438a5. Aristotle takes Plato to task for thinking that vision occurs when fire leaves the eye because under such circumstances we could see in the dark but could not see in a rainstorm (when the visual ray would be extinguished).

3. See J.F. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico, 1985) 133 and 159, note 29, for the arguments that Julian's hymn is Iamblichean. See also Priscianus, *Metaphrasis in Theophrastum* 9.12-14: 'Following Iamblichus, I do not think that [light] is a body.' I am grateful to P. Huby for this and other references to Priscianus.

4. Sorabji, above n.1, 109, cites Simplicius, *In De an.* 133.31-5 and 134.6-20 as suggesting that Proclus 'and perhaps Iamblichus before him' think that light travels. See below.

5. See C. Lacombrade, *L'Empereur Julien: Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 2, Part 2 (Paris, 1964) 105, note 1 and 202, note 2. On the Chaldaean term ἀκρότης, see also E. des Places, *Oracles Chaldaïques avec un Choix de Commentaires Anciens* (Paris, 1971) fr. 76 with note 3 and fr. 1 with note 1, as well as J.M. Dillon, *Iamblichus Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden, 1973) 374; on ἄνθος, see H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy*, M. Tardieu (ed.) (Paris, 1978) 167-9 and note 384. On the 'doctrine of the Phoenicians,' see Lewy, 409, note 32. Proclus (*In Parm.* 1043.30-1045.1) holds a similar view of the origin of light. The first principle of light, he tells us, is not the sun or its soul or even its intellect, but the One itself, which he calls 'the flower of this intellect.' I am grateful to A.C. Lloyd for this reference. For a translation and analysis of this passage, see H.-D. Saffrey and L.G. Westerink, *Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1978) lx-lxvi; G.R. Morrow and J.M. Dillon, *Proclus' Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (Princeton, 1987) 404; and Lewy, 151 and note 312. I shall discuss Proclus' theory of light below.

6. On this shift, see S. Sambursky, 'Philoponus' Interpretation of Aristotle's Theory of Light' *Osiris* 13 (1958) 114-17.

7. 132c5-6. See Lacombrade, above n.5, 103, note 2.

8. On this topic, see A.H. Armstrong, *The Architecture of the Intelligible Universe in Plotinus* (Cambridge, 1940; rpt. Amsterdam, 1967) 54-8 and his *Plotinus*, vol. 4 (London, 1984) 308-9, note 1.

9. We may compare Priscianus, *Metaphrasis in Theophrastum* 9.7-12. He distinguishes between that which causes light (e.g. the sun or fire) and light itself. The argument about light, he says, is not about the cause but what goes out from the cause (περὶ τοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ προιόντος), i.e. the activity of the transparent. The use of προιόντος suggests that Priscianus, like Iamblichus, thinks that light travels.

10. *De Myst.* II 4.77.10-18 also reveals a descending scale of light for divine ἀγγέλματα, from incorporeal light for the gods, archangels, and angels to corporeal fire for demons, heroes, and souls.

11. On the Iamblichean origin of the doctrine, see Finamore, above n.3, 33-53 and 133-44. Proclus' metaphysical scheme is, of course, more complex, although here he simplifies it by omitting the noetic/noeric and hypercosmic/cosmic gods. See Saffrey and Westerink, above n.5, vol. 2, 105, note 3 and E.R. Dodds, *Proclus: Elements of Theology*, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1963) 282-3.

12. For Proclus, light can be more or less corporeal: 'For of the elements fire is more corporeal, but light is more incorporeal than fire itself' (*apud* Simplicius, *In Phys.* 612.28-9). But even the light described by Plato in the Myth of Er (*Rep.* 616b2-6), which Proclus thinks is supracosmic (*In Remp.* II 196.1-15), is corporeal (195.9; 196.11). Proclus calls this light 'the purest of bodies' (*apud* Simplicius, *In Phys.* 612.29) and makes it the place of the universe (30-5). On this topic, see Sorabji, above n.1, 114-18; Sambursky, above n.1, 18-21; and A.J. Festugière's notes to Proclus, *In Remp.* II 193.2-202.2 in his *Proclus: Commentaire sur la République*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1970). Lewy, above n.5, 409 says that 'the eternal ('infinite') light which is created by Ormuzd (Ahura Mazda) and in which he dwells, is called 'location' or 'place;' 'place' is, according to the report of Aristotle's disciple Eudemus, one of the names of Zervan' [i.e. of Aion]. Further, in note 32, Lewy states that Philo of Byblus interpreted the name Iao (= Aion) as φῶς νοητόν. Proclus, who cites *Chald. Or.* fr. 51 in *In Remp.* II 201.10-202.2 (cf. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 615.36-617.34), may have been elaborating upon a Chaldaean doctrine first explicated by Iamblichus.

13. Above n.5, vol. 2, 108, note 6.

14. *In Remp.* II 195.12; 196.19-21; 199.21. Cf. Sorabji, above n.1, 117, note 89 and Plato, *Rep.* 508d4.

15. Cp. 10.3-7: 'I mean by 'material' and 'immaterial,' as I have said before, to distinguish matter that is the most dense and that does not receive the Forms from that matter that always remains the same in its appropriate form.' See Festugière, *Proclus: Commentaire sur le Timée*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1967) 32, notes 1 and 4.

16. Proclus is engaged in a discussion of the mixture of elements. Heavenly fire is pure but contains κατ' αἰτίαν the qualities of the other elements (43.20-8). See A.J. Festugière's edition, above n.15, 72, note 2 and Dodds, above n.11, 235-6.

17. God or the power of divination is external (ἐξωθεν) to what is illuminated: 125.2; 127.10, 18; 129.5; 134.13; 150.5; separated (χωριστός): 126.18; 128.2; 129.3; 133.2; 138.13; 140.1; 150.5.

18. 125.1; 127.11; 129.4.

19. On the neoplatonic concept of interpenetration, see Sorabji, above n.1, 106-19. Proclus (*In Remp.* II 162.24-48) explicitly states that immaterial bodies pass through immaterial and material ones. Syrianus (*In Metaph.* 85.15-28) argues that two immaterial, simple bodies can interpenetrate. He gives as examples light and the ethereal vehicle. Syrianus says that two interpenetrating lights are 'simple, immaterial, and when divided do not split up' (ἀπλὰ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀυλὰ καὶ οὐ μερίζεται διαιρούμενα, 85.25). Just so, the divine light in the *De Mysteriis* does not permeate in parts (μεριστός). The vehicle is ethereal, and hence halfway between corporeality and incorporeality. An ethereal body can be said to interpenetrate with a material one if it is pure, i.e. without material accretions. It is only when our vehicles are purified that they can ascend and unite with the ethereal bodies of the

visible gods. Thus, the rays of the sun, which are ethereal, can be said to interpenetrate with the spring water. There is, unfortunately, too little evidence in the present passage from the *De Mysteriorum* to determine with certainty if Iamblichus is speaking of interpenetration of ethereal light and water or merely of illumination/participation. Besides the use of *μεριστῶς*, mentioned above, the use of the prefix *δια-* in the words *διήκειν*, *διαπεφοίτηκεν*, and *διαστατῶς* also suggests interpenetration. See the passages cited by Sorabji and Plotinus' discussion of interpenetration in II 7.1: *διεληλυθός* (line 18), *διένειν* (lines 28 and 31), and *διαπεπεῖν* (line 29). I am grateful to R. Sorabji and D.J. O'Meara for discussion of these matters.

20. See also III 21 for Iamblichus' arguments against the possibility that this external, unmixed prophetic power could form a compound with the human soul.

21. On the nature of these images, see E. des Places, *Les Mystères d'Égypte* (Paris, 1966) 141, note 3, who associates the image with a cloud from incense burned over charcoal. Iamblichus (167.13-15) claims that using such images is like exchanging what is first (i.e. the gods) for what is last. For the Chaldaean belief in a single correct form of divination that is opposed to lower forms, see fr. 107 and Lewy, above n.5, 254-7; cf. 285.

22. On the *λόγοι σπερματικοί*, see Dodds, above n.11, 215: 'these creative forces in Nature became for Neoplatonism the intermediaries between the Forms and the material world.' Iamblichus (*In Parm.* fr. 2) links them with enhylic forms in the sixth hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, just above matter (*ὄλη*) in the seventh. Cf. Finamore, above n.3, 141.

23. The problem with the image-making art is two-fold. First, there is its corporeal nature that is far removed from the gods. There is, furthermore, a second problem: the human agency behind it. Near the beginning of his discussion (168.3-4), Iamblichus clearly differentiates between true prophetic power from the gods and the images made by human beings. Image-making is a human art (*ἀνθρωπίνη τέχνη*, 168.8) and the resulting powers are weaker than their human creators. Although many arts make better use of the sensible powers and qualities 'of the effluences descending from heaven' (*τῶν ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ καταπεμπομένων ἀπορροίων*, 169.16-17), the image-making art is inferior to all of them. The image-makers themselves are impure and incapable of being illuminated by the gods (172.17-173.8). Thus, their *φαντάσματα* can be said to have nothing divine in them (173.13-14), although strictly speaking even these images are part of the great chain of nature.

24. They are referred to as the Demiurge's 'sons' in 42e6, where they take over the creation process begun by the Demiurge. They are called simply *θεοί* at 44d7 and 45a4. See Dillon, above n.5, 373 for the neoplatonic view that the *νέοι θεοί* are the planetary gods.

25. On the passage, see P. Hoffmann, 'Simplicius' Polemics', in R. Sorabji, *Philoponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science* (London, 1987) 79-80. A similar theory is also held by Proclus (*In Tim.* II 8,22-5).

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