

PLOTINUS, ENN. 3.9.1, AND LATER VIEWS ON THE INTELLIGIBLE WORLD

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Plotinus' short note on the internal composition of the Intellect, which Porphyry has placed as the first of the *ἐπισκέψεις διάφοροι* (*Enn.* 3.9 [13]), gave rise in later Neoplatonism to a variety of interpretation. In particular, Amelius Gentilianus and Porphyry, both of them pupils and companions of the Master for many years, seem to have drawn quite different conclusions from it. They are each criticized for their conclusions by Iamblichus, and then by Proclus, each of whom himself took the passage differently, bringing the total of interpretations to four. I wish, therefore, after recording in turn Amelius' and Porphyry's doctrine on the Demiurge, to turn to a detailed examination of the short passage from which all this bewildering variety appears to have sprung,¹ and to consider how their very various interpretations could have arisen from it.²

The stimulus for the doctrine, for Plotinus and Amelius at any rate, was Plat. *Tim.* 39E:

ἦπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῷ ὃ ἔστι ζῶον, οἷαί τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὄσαι, καθορᾷ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διενσήθη δέειν καὶ τόδε σχεῖν,

¹ We cannot, of course, ignore the probability that Plotinus' pupils based their views of his doctrine equally much on unpublished discussions with the master—Amelius explicitly refers to such in another connection (Procl. *In Tim.* 2.213.9 ff. Diehl)—but their positions are in fact adequately derivable from *Enn.* 3.9.1. Porphyry puts 3.9 among the first group of treatises, written before his time, which would mean that he cannot have participated in the discussion which led to it. Amelius, on the other hand, very probably did.

² I am not here concerned with the occasion for the writing of 3.9.1, which was the thesis that the Ideas are outside the Intellect—a view to which Porphyry himself adhered (*Vit. Plot.* 18) when he first arrived in Plotinus' circle. These matters are discussed adequately by Bréhier and Armstrong in the introduction to the tractate in their respective editions (Budé and Loeb). Indeed, a look at either or both of these editions of the tractate is recommended before one proceeds further.

although the main discussion, as recorded by Proclus (*Comm. In Tim.* 1, pp. 305–10 Diehl),³ is based on *Tim.* 28C, no doubt because that is where Porphyry and Iamblichus, in their commentaries, first raised the subject.

Let us take Amelius first. He is the senior disciple, his commentary on the *Timaeus* preceded that of Porphyry (cf. *μετὰ δὴ τὸν Ἀμέλιον ὁ Πορφύριος*, Pr. 1.306.31 f.), and he was very probably present when the discussion that led to *Enn.* 3.9.1 took place. Porphyry must be taken as reacting to him, rather than he to Porphyry.

For Proclus, the triad of Demiurgic Intellects was Amelius' most distinctive doctrine. He reports it in two contexts, apropos of *Timaeus* 28C and 39E, which latter passage is the one from which Plotinus takes his start. Proclus' evidence is as follows: (1) *In Tim.* 1.306.1 ff. Diehl (ad *Tim.* 28C):

Ἀμέλιος δὲ τριττὸν ποιεῖ τὸν δημιουργὸν καὶ τρεῖς νοῦς, βασιλέας τρεῖς, τὸν ὄντα, τὸν ἔχοντα, τὸν ὁρῶντα. διαφέρουσι δὲ οὗτοι, διότι ὁ μὲν πρῶτος νοῦς ὄντως ἐστὶν ὃ ἐστίν, ὁ δὲ δεύτερος ἔστι μὲν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ νοητόν, ἔχει δὲ τὸ πρὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ μετέχει πάντως ἐκείνου καὶ διὰ τοῦτο δεύτερος, ὁ δὲ τρίτος ἔστι μὲν τὸ ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ οὗτος· πᾶς γὰρ νοῦς τῷ συζυγοῦντι νοητῷ ὁ αὐτός ἐστιν· ἔχει δὲ τὸ ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ καὶ ὁρᾷ τὸ πρῶτον· ὅσω γὰρ πλείων ἢ ἀπόστασις, τοσοῦτ' ὁ ἔχειν ἀμυδρότερον. τούτους οὖν τοὺς τρεῖς νόας καὶ δημιουργοὺς ὑποτίθεται καὶ τοὺς παρὰ τῷ Πλάτῳ τρεῖς βασιλέας καὶ τοὺς παρ' Ὀρφεὶ τρεῖς, Φάνητα καὶ Οὐρανὸν καὶ Κρόνον, καὶ ὁ μάλιστα παρ' αὐτῷ δημιουργὸς ὁ Φάνης ἐστίν.

"Amelius conceives the Demiurge as triple, and says that there are three Intellects, three Kings, he who *is*, he who *possesses*, and he who *sees*. The first intellect *is* really what he is; the second *is* the Intelligible which is in him, but he *possesses* the Intelligible which is prior to him, and in all ways participates solely in him, and is for this reason second; and third too *is* what is in him—for all Intellect is identical with the Intelligible linked to it—but he also *possesses* the contents of the second Intellect, and *sees* the first element; for the intensity of possession becomes dimmer according to the degree of remoteness. These three Intellects and Demiurges he also identifies with the three Kings in Plato (*Ep.* 2.312E),

³ Proclus Diadochus, *In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols. (Leipzig 1904–6).

and the Orphic triad, Phanes and Uranos and Cronos (fr. 96 Kern), and according to him the Demiurge par excellence is Phanes."

(2) *In Tim.* 3.103.18 ff. Diehl (ad *Tim.* 29E):

Ἀμέλιος μὲν οὖν τὴν τριάδα τῶν δημιουργικῶν νόων ἀπὸ τούτων μάλιστα συνίστησι τῶν ῥημάτων, τὸν μὲν πρῶτον ὄντα καλῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ "ὅ ἐστι ζῶον," τὸν δὲ δεύτερον ἔχοντα ἀπὸ τοῦ "ἐνούσας" (οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ δεύτερος, ἀλλ' εἴσειον ἐν αὐτῷ), τὸν δὲ τρίτον ὁρῶντα ἀπὸ τοῦ "καθορᾶν."

"Amelius relies particularly on this passage in constructing his triad of Demiurgic Intellects, calling the first 'he who is' from the 'really existing living being,' the second, 'he who possesses,' from the phrase, 'existing in' (for the second does not exist, so much as that they exist in him), and the third 'he who sees,' from the word 'behold.'"

Of the three, ὁ ἔχων perhaps presents the most difficulty. What does ὁ ἔχων possess? The ideas, we must say, the *content* of τὸ ζῶον, rather than τὸ ζῶον itself. The curious statement οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν ὁ δεύτερος, ἀλλ' εἴσειον ἐν αὐτῷ must mean that ὁ ἔχων is no more than the sum of the ἐνούσαι ιδέαι. It is hard to regard ὁ ἔχων as conscious at all. As soon as he begins to contemplate the ideas within him, he becomes ὁ ὁρῶν.

But we must turn now to Porphyry (*In Tim.* 1.306.31 ff.):

μετὰ δὴ τὸν Ἀμέλιον ὁ Πορφύριος οἰόμενος τῷ Πλωτίνῳ συνάδειν, τὴν μὲν ψυχὴν τὴν ὑπερκόσμιον ἀποκαλεῖ δημιουργόν, τὸν δὲ νοῦν αὐτῆς, πρὸς ὃν ἐπέστραπται, τὸ αὐτοζῶον, ὡς εἶναι τὸ παράδειγμα τοῦ δημιουργοῦ κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν νοῦν.

"Following on Amelius, Porphyry, considering himself to be in accord with Plotinus, calls the hypercosmic Soul the Demiurge, and its Intellect, towards which it is turned, the Essential Living Being, so that the Paradigm of the Demiurge is for him the Intellect."

Proclus protests against this. Where, he asks, does Plotinus make the Soul the Demiurge? (p. 307.4-5). This is a question that I hope to answer in what follows.

Plotinus, as we have said, begins his enquiry from a consideration of *Tim.* 39E (rather loosely quoted):

Ἔνους, φησίν, ὁρᾷ ἐνούσας ιδέας ἐν τῷ ὅ ἐστι ζῶον· εἴτα διενεθήθη,"

φησίν, "ὁ δημιουργός, ἃ ὁ νοῦς ὁρᾷ ἐν τῷ ὅ ἐστι ζῶον, καὶ τόδε τὸ πᾶν ἔχειν."

The first *aporia* raised is: Are the *eidé* then prior to *Nous*, if *Nous* sees them as already *onta*? In replying to this, he says, we must first of all consider the possibility that the *Zōon* is not *Nous* but other than *Nous*. That which beholds is *Nous*, so that the *Zoon* in itself will not be *Nous*, but the object of intellection (*noēton*), and thus *Nous* will be beholding objects outside itself. But in that case *Nous* will immediately cognize not reality, but *eidōla*, which is intolerable.⁴ We must therefore consider *Nous* and *to Zōon*, Intellect and its object, as being distinguished only in theory:

οὐδὲν κωλύει, ὅσον ἐπὶ τῷ λεγομένῳ, ἐν εἶναι ἄμφω, διαιρούμενα τῇ νοήσει, εἴπερ μόνον ὡς ὃν τὸ μὲν νοητόν, τὸ δὲ νοοῦν· ὁ γὰρ καθορᾷ οὗ φησιν ἐν ἑτέρῳ πάντως, ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ νοητὸν ἔχειν.

"There is nothing in the statement to prevent us from taking these two elements as one, although they may be distinguished conceptually, if only to the extent that there is one element which is cognized, and another which cognizes; for Plato does not mean that the element which cognizes beholds in any sense something outside itself, but that it contains the cognized element within itself."

The ideas, and τὸ ὅ ἐστι ζῶον, must, then, be *in* *Nous*, or absurdities result. This conclusion was more fully worked out later in *Enn.* 5.5 [32], where the relation of Intellect to the Ideas is the primary problem. Here it is only the first part of the enquiry. *To Zōon*, then, is analyzed (albeit somewhat tentatively: οὐδὲν κωλύει) as *νοῦς ἐν στάσει καὶ ἐνότητι καὶ ἡσυχία*, while the *νοῦς ὁρῶν ἐκείνον τὸν νοῦν* is envisaged as *ἐνέργεια τις ἀπ' ἐκείνου, ὅτι νοεῖ ἐκείνον*. This distinction is important as a source for two of Amelius' *νόες* (and *Demiurges*), the first and the third, ὁ ὦν and ὁ ὁρῶν. The second *νοῦς*, ὁ ἔχων, is, however, readily deducible from the conclusion that *Nous* possesses the *Zoon* within it (*ἐν αὐτῷ . . . τὸ νοητὸν ἔχειν*). *Nous qua* possessor can be reasonably distinguished from *Nous qua* beholder, especially if, as was the case with Amelius, one has a weakness for triads.

Plotinus, however, does not propose ὁ ἔχων in so many words in

⁴ Porphyry's equating of τὸ ὅ ἐστι ζῶον with the *Paradigm* and with *Nous* (see above) would be open to this criticism.

this passage. Instead, he produces another possible third element, *to dianooumenon*.⁵

τοῦτο (ὁ νοῦς ὁρῶν) οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ "διανοηθέν," ἃ ἐκεῖ ὁρᾷ, ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ ποιῆσαι ζῶων γένη τέσσαρα. δοκεῖ γε μὴν τὸ διανοοῦμενον ἐπικεκρυμμένως ἕτερον ἐκείνων τῶν δύο ποιεῖν.

"This then is that being which 'planned' to create in this lower Universe what it sees there, the four classes of living beings. He seems, certainly, to make the planning element tacitly distinct from the other two."

So, as he says in the next line, we seem to have three elements, τὸ ζῶων αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστίν, ὁ νοῦς, and τὸ διανοοῦμενον. Some, he says, may see all these as one, others as three; it depends how you look at it. If, however, one postulates τὸ διανοοῦμενον as a distinct element, what would be its role?

Its role, as it turns out, would be distinctly demiurgic. Its task is ἐργάσασθαι καὶ ποιῆσαι καὶ μερίσαι all those things which νοῦς beholds in τὸ ζῶων. The energies of Nous are turned inward upon itself; those of τὸ διανοοῦμενον are turned outward, upon the world. A triad has emerged.

At this point, however, we reach a starting point for Porphyry's doctrine. Porphyry equated the Demiurge with the ὑπερκόσμιος ψυχῇ, and its Nous with the Autozoon and the Paradigm. As between the two disciples, we see the representation of two extreme views—on the one hand, an urge to schematize each moment of each hypostasis (triadically), in the case of Amelius; on the other, an impulse to simplify, as represented by Porphyry, who often in this respect seems to look back to Middle Platonism.

At any rate, Plotinus here goes on to raise another *aporia*:

ἢ δυνατόν τρόπον μὲν ἄλλον τὸν νοῦν εἶναι τὸν μερίσαντα, τρόπον δὲ ἕτερον τὸν μερίσαντα μὴ τὸν νοῦν εἶναι· ἢ μὲν γὰρ παρ' αὐτοῦ τὰ μερισθέντα, αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸν μερίσαντα, ἢ δ' αὐτὸς ἀμέριστος μένει, τὰ δ' ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ τὰ μερισθέντα—ταῦτα δὲ ἐστὶ ψυχαί—ψυχὴν εἶναι τὴν μερίσανσαν εἰς πολλὰς ψυχάς.

"It is possible that in one way Intellect is the divider (producer of partial

⁵ We get a clue, however, to Amelius' interpretation from a passage of Proclus (*In Tim.* 1.242.23–24): νοῦς μὲν γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ νοητόν, αἰσθησις δὲ ὁρᾷ τὸ αἰσθητόν, διάνοια δὲ ἔχει ἐν αὐτῇ τὸ διανοητόν. This is an application of what must have been Amelius' formulation. τὸ διανοοῦμενον is then ὁ νοῦς ἔχων.

existences), while in another the dividing agent is not Intellect; that to the extent that the partial existences proceed from it, it is the divider, while to the extent that it itself remains undivided, its products being what is divided—these products being souls—it is the Soul that is the agent causing division into many souls.”

And he seems to appeal at this point to *Tim.* 35A, where the creation of the Soul is connected with the creation of divided Nature (τρίτον ἐξ ἀμφοῖν ἐν μέσῳ συνεκράσατο οὐσίας εἶδος etc.):

διὸ καὶ φησι τοῦ τρίτου εἶναι τὸν μερισμὸν καὶ ἐν τῷ τρίτῳ, ὅτι διανοήθη, ὃ οὐ νοῦ ἔργον—ἡ διάνοια—ἀλλὰ ψυχῆς μεριστὴν ἐνέργειαν ἐχούσης ἐν μεριστῇ φύσει.

“Which is why he says the separation is the work of the third element and begins in it, because it thinks discursively, which is not a characteristic of Intellect, but of Soul, possessing as it does a dividing activity within divided Nature.”

Porphyry thus had ample excuse from this passage for positioning Soul as the Demiurge. That Proclus credits Porphyry with identifying the Demiurge not just with *ψυχή*, but with *ἡ ὑπερκόσμιος ψυχή* (1.307.1), or *ἡ ἀμέθεκτος ψυχή* (1.322.1–3), would seem to indicate that Porphyry already had postulated an unparticipated Soul-Monad, to preside over the psychic order, the multitude of partial souls, a development which on other grounds I would prefer to attribute to Iamblichus. We need not, however, assume that, even if Porphyry used these terms to describe his Demiurge-Soul, he had developed the whole system as we find it in Proclus.

Iamblichus and Proclus are thus unreasonable in condemning Porphyry's interpretation as un-Plotinian, at least as regards the interpretations derivable from this seminal passage, 3.9.1.

It remains to consider Proclus' and Iamblichus' own interpretations of the passage, to appreciate the full extent of the ambiguities therein contained.

Proclus declares (1.305.16 ff.) that Plotinus assumes the Demiurge to be double (διττός), τὸν μὲν ἐν τῷ νοητῷ, τὸν δὲ τὸ ἡγεμονοῦν τοῦ παντός, which doctrine he himself commends. He must, then, take the two Demiurges as *νοῦς* and *τὸ διανοούμενον*, τὸ ζῶον being merely the object of intellection. *Νοῦς* in contemplating τὸ ζῶον produces the ideas, the content of the Intelligible Realm, τὸ διανοούμενον

beholds the Ideas and “divides” them in the Universe. Again, an interpretation surely derivable from the text as we have it.

Iamblichus, at least in his *Timaeus Commentary*,⁶ takes the whole Intelligible Realm as the Demiurge, roundly condemning Porphyry as un-Plotinian (we must accept Kroll’s insertion of *μῆ* in 307.16), and claiming himself to follow Plotinus. Proclus quotes him as follows:

τὴν ὄντως οὐσίαν καὶ τῶν γιγνομένων ἀρχὴν καὶ τὰ νοητὰ τοῦ κόσμου παραδείγματα, ὃν γε καλοῦμεν νοητὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὅσας αἰτίας προυπάρχειν τιθέμεθα τῶν ἐν τῇ φύσει πάντων, ταῦτα πάντα ὁ νῦν ζητούμενος θεὸς δημιουργὸς ἐν ἐνὶ συλλαβῶν ὑφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἔχει.

“Real Existence and the origin of created things and the intelligible paradigms of the Universe, which we term the Intelligible Universe, and those causes which we posit as pre-existing all things in Nature, all these things the Demiurge God who is the object of our present search gathers into one and holds within himself.”

ἡ ὄντως οὐσία will be *τὸ ὅ ἐστι ζῶον*, while *ἡ τῶν γιγνομένων ἀρχή* and the intelligible paradigms of the Universe are the Ideas. Both of these the beholding and possessing and apportioning element contains within itself, and one is perfectly entitled, according to Plotinus, to take the whole combination as one or as three (*ἄλλοις δὲ δόξει τὰ τρία ἐν εἶναι, . . . ἢ ὥσπερ ἐν πολλοῖς, προτείνων ἄλλως, ὁ δὲ ἄλλως, νοεῖ τρία εἶναι*). Iamblichus takes the former alternative. It might seem that for the Demiurge to “contain within himself” the whole noetic world need not imply identity with it, but Proclus is quite clear, in the preceding passage (*πάντα τὸν νοητὸν κόσμον ἀποκαλεῖ δημιουργόν*), that that is what Iamblichus meant.

This is not the whole story of the identification of the Demiurge by the successors of Plotinus. Amelius, for instance, derives another triad, *ὁ βουλευθείς*, *ὁ λογιζόμενος*, and *ὁ παραλαβών*, from the passage *Tim.* 30A (Proclus, *In Tim.* 1.398.16 ff.).⁷ My purpose, however, has

⁶ *Ap. Proc. In Tim.* 1.307.14 ff. D. Proclus quotes against him a much more elaborate categorization of the Demiurge which he made in an essay *Περὶ τῆς ἐν Τιμαίῳ τοῦ Διὸς δημιουργίας*, where, very much under the influence of the Chaldaean Oracles, he gives the Demiurge *τὴν τρίτην ἐν τοῖς πατράσιν τάξιν, ἐν τῇ νοερᾷ ἑβδομάδι* (1.308.17 ff.).

⁷ The doctrines of Theodorus of Asine (1.309.9 ff.) and of Syrianus (1.310.3 ff.) are not immediately derived, I feel, from 3.9.1. Theodore elaborates on Amelius’ triad, and Syrianus postulates a Demiurgic Monad presiding over a triad of demiurges. At this stage the doctrine has developed its own momentum.

been merely to demonstrate, in this one instance, the openness of Plotinus' philosophizing, the openings it gave for further developments by his successors, and the use made of these openings. It really does seem as if we have, in 3.9.1, a record of the results of one of the discussions that took place in Plotinus' circle, transmitted to us by Porphyry from Plotinus' papers in a more unfinished, tentative state than that of any completed tractate. It is, more truly than in the case of the finished tractate, a piece of "work in progress," work in which Amelius had a hand, but (if Porphyry's own chronological listing is accurate) not Porphyry himself.⁸

⁸ I am grateful to Prof. T. G. Rosenmeyer for reading over this paper, and making helpful suggestions on presentation. One might remark in conclusion that a proper study of the philosopher Amelius is an obvious desideratum in Neoplatonic studies.