

PART ONE

On the Ineffable

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Section I. On the Ineffable

Chapter 1. On the Ineffable and Its Relationship to All Things

■ In this opening discussion, the topic is the relationship between the first principle and all things. If the first principle is transcendent, then it cannot be related to all things as a first principle. If the first principle is related to all things, it then becomes a member of all things and no longer a first principle. At the outset, by placing the One on the same footing with all things, Damascius reverses the order of exposition employed by all Neoplatonists in their reification of the Parmenidean hypotheses and in particular violates Proclus' *Elements of Theology* Proposition 7, that "every cause properly so-called transcends its effect." So Damascius begins his work by criticizing the central tenets of Proclean metaphysics as expressed in the *Elements of Theology*. Proclus' doctrine of undiminished giving represents his formalization of the theory of emanation already articulated in the *Enneads*. According to Proclus, the One preserves its transcendence in its aspect as cause of all things, and the transcendence of the Good is expressed in Proposition 8 of the *Elements*, "all that in any way participates the Good is subordinate to the primal Good which is nothing else but good." Together these two propositions demonstrate that the first principle is the One, source of all things and transcending all things. These are the linchpins of the Proclean system, whereas Damascius at the outset problematizes just this structure.

In creating an argument that is designed to show the circularity of Proclus' schema of transcendence, Damascius is possibly deploying Skeptic attacks on the concept of causation as a whole. In *Outlines of Empiricism* III.20–22, Sextus discusses Skeptic arguments designed to show the

inconceivability of causes. These arguments target the conceptual correlativity of cause and effect: it is hard to conceive of a cause without understanding the idea of an effect. This conceptual interdependence seems to be what Damascius objects to in the case of the first principle. To be a cause is already to exist in relationship to an effect. Thus the notion of a transcendent cause seems dubious to him. The Skeptics also examined the temporal aspect of causation. Sextus argues (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism* III.25) that since a cause implies its effect qua cause, cause and effect must be simultaneous. But since a cause produces its effect, the cause must precede its effect. Hence causes both do and do not precede their effects. The structure of this argument is clearly discernible in the opening chapter of the *Problems and Solutions*: here Damascius complains that the One must *precede* all things since it produces all things, and yet must be *simultaneous* with all things, since it is related to them as their cause. Again, the One both precedes and does not precede all things. ■

(I 1) Is the so-called one principle of all things beyond¹ all things or is it one among all things, as if it were the summit of those that proceed from it? And are we to say that “all things” are with the [first principle], or after it and [that they proceed] from it?

If someone were to assert this last hypothesis, how could [it] be something outside of all things? For “all things” means, *stricto sensu*, “that from which nothing whatsoever is absent.” But the first principle is missing. Therefore, what comes after the first principle would not be properly speaking “all things,” but rather all things up to the point of the first principle.

Moreover, the term “all things” designates a limited multiplicity, since the indefinite could not be exactly equivalent to “all things.” Therefore, outside of all things nothing whatsoever will come to be. Totality is a kind of limit; it denotes an inclusivity in which the first principle functions as the upper extreme and the farthest thing from the first principle functions as the lower extreme. Therefore, “all things” [designates what is] within these limits.

(I 2) Moreover, the first principle must arise coordinately with the things [proceeding] from the first principle, since it is with respect to them that it is called “a principle,” and actually is one. Similarly, the cause must arise coordinately with its effects, and the first [in a series] arises coordinately with the subsequent members of the series. When many things form a plurality that constitutes a unique system, we designate them as “all things,” just as the first principle also belongs among all things. To generalize, we call “all things” properly speaking just those things we are capable of conceiving, howsoever we conceive them. And we can also conceive of a first principle. [Let us add to this argument that] by the term, “the whole city,” we usually mean the rulers and the ruled; by “the entire family” we mean the parent and the children.

But if all things are together with the first principle, then the principle of all things could not be anything, since then the first principle would be subsumed within all things.² Therefore, the unique system that consists of all

things (which we designate by the term "all things") is without a first principle and uncaused, lest we continue [the series] *ad infinitum*.

Surely, however, it is necessary for everything either to be a first principle or to be from a first principle.³ Accordingly, all things are either a first principle or from a first principle. And yet, in the latter case the first principle would not be among all things; instead, it would be outside of all things, since it is the first principle of the things that proceed from it. In the former case, what would be able to proceed from all things as from a first principle or [proceed] out of all things downward, as if it were an effect of all things? For this too would [have to be] numbered among all things. Strictly speaking, the concept of all things leaves nothing aside. Therefore, all things are neither a first principle nor from a first principle.

Furthermore, all things [can] be considered simultaneously both as belonging to a multiplicity and as subject to differentiation: indeed, it is impossible to conceive of the all without both of these aspects.

Then how did any differentiation and multiplicity suddenly arise? Surely it is the case that all things possess multiplicity and differentiation in all ways and that unity is the apex of the many [as] the Unified is the monad for that which is differentiated, though the One is still (I 3) simpler than the monad.

But in the first place the monad is all of number, even if it is [number] as not yet enumerated. Therefore, [as number] the monad, too, is all things. Further, the One is not a part of the many. Otherwise it, too, would have become multiple along with the many, just as each of the other [parts of the many]. But as many things as the many are insofar as they are subject to division, that One is those things before division by not being subject to division in any way. Therefore, [we are concerned] not with the One as the least element, as Speusippus⁴ is reputed to have taught, but with the One as engulfing⁵ all things. By means of its unity it dissolves all things, and so makes all things one. And that is why all things are from it, because it itself is all things before they are all things. However it is not⁶ the case that the One is all things prior to [their being] many in the way that the Unified is prior to the differentiated, rather, when we unfold the whole of our thought into all things, then we shall no longer refer to all things in the same way, but in at least three ways, as united, as unified, or as multiplied.⁷ that is, [our thinking starts] from the One and is [modeled] on the One, as we are accustomed to saying.⁸ If, however, we speak in a more customary manner, and speak of all things as both subject to differentiation and as belonging to a multiplicity, we shall assume as the principles of [all things] the Unified and (still more) the One. If we nevertheless conceive these [namely, the Unified and the One] as all things and divide them among all other things according to their relationship and rank with respect to all things, as has been said above, the argument will require from us another principle prior to all things, one that it is impossible either to conceive as all things or yet to assign to the order of things coming after it.

(I 4) If someone said that [this principle is just] the One, even if it is all things in some way or another, yet still it is one before all things in that [multiple] way, and it is more one than it is all things (for it is one in itself, but it is all things as their cause and in relationship to them), but if someone says this, then first he would be attributing duality to the One. But in fact it is we who make the divisions and it is we who create a duality concerning its unity and even multiply that duality, because that One, just insofar as it is One, is all things in the simplest possible way. If someone should say this, nevertheless it is necessary to say that the principle of all things is independent of all things as well as of the one totality and of the singularity that engulfs everything else, the singularity that belongs to the One.

Chapter 2. The Transcendence of the Ineffable

■ This chapter negotiates the difficulties presented by the limits that our conceptual activity imposes on the transcendence of the Ineffable. Damascius has established that the first principle is transcendent and unrelated to all things, so that paradoxically the first principle cannot be a first principle nor can it be a cause. Yet since nothing can be the cause of itself, nor can the many function as causes for each other lest causation be circular, the One is the sole and unique cause of the multiplicity. Therefore, Damascius complements his earlier critique of Proclean metaphysics by accepting the logic of *ET*, Proposition 1, according to which “every manifold in some way participates Unity” (Dodds 1963, 3).

Nevertheless, the Ineffable in and of itself cannot be conceived or indicated. The only path to it is not by means of inclusion within a philosophical system, but on the contrary, by means of complete negation and through the removal of all multiplicity. Perhaps even more astonishing is the idea that the Ineffable can only be reached through self-knowledge. Here for the first time in the treatise Damascius adumbrates a method of realizing the Ineffable as the center of the self, through the removal of all that is other than the One. He also touches on the theme of simplification, of resolving one’s identity back into the One. One of the central metaphors that the Neoplatonists use to discuss the state of the human soul before its enlightenment relates to the ‘Titanic’ experience of division or fragmentation; Damascius uses the verb *μερίζειν* to convey this theme. The metaphor of fragmentation relates to the discursive thinking that is unable to grasp the One in its simplicity and is also linked to the Orphic myth narrating the *sparagmos*, or fragmentation, of Dionysus that symbolizes the dispersal of the divine unity. ■

Therefore, our own soul divines that there is a principle of all things we are capable of conceiving [that is] both beyond all things and unrelated to all things. Hence it is not a principle, nor yet can it be called a cause, nor can it be called the first, nor yet is it prior to all things, nor yet is it beyond all things; hardly therefore can it be celebrated as all things. Nor indeed can it be celebrated as anything at all, nor conceived of, nor even hinted at. For the object of our

intellection or of our discursive thought will turn out to be some one of all things, which is actually a truer⁹ conception, or else all things, if our conception is purified, even if we proceed to that which is most simple, by removing [all] multiplicity [from it] and by removing any multiplicity from ourselves, [and arrive at] that which is the most remote limit, as it were, the last periphery, not just of real beings, but even of non-beings. For of real beings, that which is unified and utterly without differentiation is the last limit (for every being is a mixture of elements) and of the multiplicity, the last limit is simply the One; for it is impossible to conceive of anything (I 5) more simple than the One, that is to say, the utterly One and solely One. If we speak of it as the principle or cause or first or most simple, in that realm, such [epithets] and any other [designations] are simply in accordance with the One. But we, because we cannot combine [these designations] are ourselves divided as compared to the One, and so we designate that [One] by the divisions we have brought about in ourselves, except that these too we misuse, since they, in their multiplicity, can not attach to the One. Nor therefore is the One knowable, nor does it have a name; for it would be in this way also many. In fact, such things would be in the One in a manner proper to One; for the nature of the One is such as to receive all things, or rather it is such as to produce all things, and there is nothing which the One is not. And so all things are as it were unraveled from out of it; and so it is a cause in the truest sense, the first cause, and it is also the final cause or limit, since it simply is the coping-stone of all things. Of multiplicity, too, there is a single nature, not that which exists in the multiplicity [as it proceeds] from the One, but that which produces the nature that is in them prior to their arising, this nature that is the indivisible starting point of all things whatsoever, and is as well the greatest boundary that embraces all things, howsoever one speaks of them.

But if the One is the cause of all things and the container of all things, in what manner can we ascend beyond it?¹⁰ The danger is that we shall simply be stepping into the void and aspiring to that which is nothing at all. For that which is not even One, is nothing in the strictest sense. Whence, after all, [do we know] that there is anything beyond the One?

The many have need of no [causal principle] apart from the One, so that the One is the only cause of the many. Thus, too, the One is completely a cause, because it is necessary that only the One be the cause of the many: for it could not be nothing (the nothing cannot be the cause of anything) nor can it be the many themselves, for they would be unrelated, and how (I 6) could the many function as a unique cause? If, on the other hand, there are many causes, these [causes] could not then be the causes of each other: first, they are unrelated and next, causation would be circular. For each thing would be the cause of itself. Therefore, of the many there would be no cause. It is necessary therefore that the One is the cause of the many, which then is the cause of the coordinate existence of the many.

The coordinate existence is a kind of common life or unity of one thing with another.

Chapter 3. Our Affinity with the Ineffable

■ How are we to posit a first principle that can be equated with nothing whatsoever? The human soul possesses an innate affinity with that first principle, which we realize through a method that Damascius calls, following Proclus in his own *Commentary on the Parmenides*, *odis*, or the labor of emptiness. See the Introduction above for a discussion of this concept. The next chapters elaborate the importance of this method, which depends in turn on the Proclean concept of the “One in us,” that is, the basis of the affinity between the One and the human soul that forms the subject of this chapter. In Proclus’ words: “Predilection for the One does not come from knowledge, since if it did, what has no share in knowledge could not seek it; but everything has a natural striving after the One, as also has the soul. What else is the One in ourselves except the operation and energy of this striving? It is therefore this interior understanding of unity, which is a projection and as it were an expression of the One in ourselves, that we call ‘the One’” (Proclus 1987, 509). Damascius continues to focus on the relinquishment of form and indeed of all structures as a method of coming to an awareness of the One in us. ■

If someone working through these puzzles should at last come to accept the One as first principle, and should then add as a decisive consideration the grounds that we have no conception or imagination simpler than the One, how then will we speculate concerning what is beyond our most remote speculation and conception? If someone asks this, we shall have sympathy with the problem raised (for it seems unapproachable and thinking about it seems to offer no solution), but nevertheless on the basis of what is more familiar to us, we must stir up the ineffable labor pains in ourselves toward a hidden (for I know not how to express it) consciousness of that sublime truth. For since in our realm of existence that which is unrelated is in every way more valuable than that which is related, and that which is independent is more valuable than that which is coordinated within a system, just as the contemplative life deserves more honor than the political life, and Kronos,¹¹ let us say, more than the demiurge, and Being more than the forms, and the One more than the many whose principle the One is; so more simple than all causes and effects, and all principles and those things governed by a principle, is that which completely transcends these conditions and stands in no relationship at all and undergoes no conditioning whatsoever. For even as the One is prior to the many by nature and the (I 7) simple to the composite of any kind, and the greatest container is prior to what is contained within, so in the case of that which can be designated as beyond all: it is beyond any such opposition, not only the opposition of elements within a system, but also [beyond] the opposition between what belongs to the first and what comes after the first.

Chapter 4. Speculation Concerning the Ineffable

Furthermore, the One and the Unified, and the many deriving from them and undergoing differentiation, comprise all things. For as many things as undergo differentiation, so many are the Unified from which they are distinguished, and as multiple as the many are, so multiple is, in fact, the One from which they are unfolded. However, the One is not less [One] on that account; rather it is more so because the many are after it and not in it; and the same is the case for the Unified, because it is a gathering together of the many distinct items prior to their differentiation. Whether [one views them] according to their coordinate existence or according to their own unique nature, in either case they constitute all things, but all things cannot be first nor can they be a principle, either in terms of their coordinate existence, because the last elements will be among the all, or in terms of the oneness in them, because they will be both one and many together (we have not yet discovered what is completely beyond all things) and the One, as the cause of the things from it, will be the summit of the many.

In addition to these arguments, on our part it is we who think of the One by purifying our speculation in the direction of what is simpler and of greatest compass. But the most venerable thing of all cannot be apprehended by any conception or by any speculation, since even among things here, whatever escapes toward that which is higher with respect to our thoughts is more lofty than whatever is ready to hand, and so that which escapes our conceptions most completely is the most valuable of all. If this is nothing, then “nothing” must be of two kinds, one greater than the (I 8) One, the other inferior to it. If therefore we are “stepping into the void” when we speak this way, then “stepping into the void” also has two meanings, the one falls out of speech into the Ineffable, and the other falls into what has no kind of existence at all. The latter is also ineffable, as Plato says, but in an inferior way, while the former is so in a superior way.¹²

If we are in search of the function of this entity, this is the most useful and necessary of all functions, namely, that from that realm everything proceeds as from an inner shrine, but in an ineffable and secret manner. For it does not produce the many as does the One, nor the distinct as does the Unified, but rather it is as ineffable that it produces all things in a like way.

If in saying these things about it, that it is Ineffable, that it is the inner sanctuary of all things and that it cannot be conceived, we contradict ourselves in our argument,¹³ it is necessary to realize that these are names and thoughts that express our labor pains, which dare to meddle improperly [with the Ineffable], standing at the threshold of the inner sanctuary,¹⁴ but reporting nothing about what takes place there; instead they simply inform [us] about our own states with regard to it, namely, the puzzles and the failure to find resolution, and that, not clearly, but through intimation, and at that, [only] to those who are capable of attending to these things.

Chapter 5. On Plato and the Language of Metaphysics

■ In this chapter, Damascius elaborates on the activity of unknowing, or rather, on the cultivation of knowledge of the One through the method discussed in the previous chapter. There is a close relationship between Damascius' and Proclus' discussions of labor pains as the operation of the One in us. Both writers emphasize that the One in us does not give us a conceptual grasp of the One: rather, "our apprehension of the One, i.e. our travail, is in our nature per se." (Proclus 1987, 56 K at 593) Thus the One in us is intuited when all such conceptual striving is released. In this sense, the labor is not so much the ignorance of the One, but it is rather the ignorance of all things, in other words, the capacity to ignore all things, that allows the soul to gain this intuition, as Damascius puts it here. Proclus discusses apprehension of the One by means of recourse to the One in the soul: "how else are we to become nearer to the One, if we do not rouse up the One of the soul, which is in us as a kind of image of the One?" (Proclus 1987, VII.1071 at 424–425).

Damascius works with a traditional Neoplatonic interpretation of the Platonic *Parmenides*, according to which Plato's One is beyond Being. In fact, for Damascius, Plato even points beyond the One by means of taking away the One, as Damascius interprets Plato's *Sophist*. Thus Plato, too, will hold, according to Damascius, that the One is knowable when knowledge is purified of any objects. Another name for this kind of purified knowledge of the One is unknowing, which is more intimate with the One than even knowledge. ■

(I 9) Still, we observe our labor pains and see that they have the same experience concerning the One, both sorely troubled about [its nature] and undergoing contradiction. Plato says that the One, if it is, is not even One.¹⁵ And if it is not, no account will agree with it, so that there is no denial of it, either. There is not even a name [for it], for this would still not be simple. There can be neither opinion nor knowledge concerning the One, for neither of these is simple: not even intellect itself is simple, so that the One is absolutely unknowable and ineffable. Why then are we still in search of something apart from or beyond what is ineffable?

But perhaps Plato has led us ineffably through the mediation of the One to what now confronts us, the Ineffable beyond the One, by the very fact of taking away the One, just as through the removal of the others he has brought us back to the One: since this is what he demonstrated in the *Sophist*,¹⁶ that he conceives the One, in its purified state, in terms of an affirmation of some sort, having demonstrated that it exists by itself, prior to Being. If Plato has kept silent concerning the One, having led us to that point, then it is right that he did so, maintaining the traditional silence concerning those things that are completely inexpressible: for there was indeed an additional danger that the argument would fall into the hearing of those unfit to receive it. Of course the argument, in raising a question concerning that which in no way exists,

contradicts itself and is in danger of falling into the sea of unlikeness,¹⁷ or rather of nonexistent emptiness. If even these demonstrations (I 10) do not fit with the One,¹⁸ this should cause no astonishment. They are human and based on a divided [way of looking at reality] and more composite than they ought to be. Indeed, they do not even agree with Being, since they relate to form, or rather they do not even agree with the forms, since they are simply the product of discursive thinking.

Was it not Plato himself who in the *Letters*¹⁹ demonstrated that we could convey no aspect of form through language—that there could be no impression of it, no word for it, no name for it, no teaching concerning it, and no knowledge of it? Intellect alone can apprehend the forms, and we do not yet possess intellect, if we are too content with engaging in dialectic. If, on the other hand, we apply intellect, that is, intellect [whose object is] the formal world, we could not relate it to the Unified or to Being. If perchance we employ concentrated intellection,²⁰ still even this will not be joined and will not attain to the One. And if we employ unified intellection [a form of knowing] that closes its eyes [to attain] the One itself, this at least will simplify itself until [it reaches] the One, if indeed there be any knowledge of the One. This question may be settled later. As there are many forms of ineffability and unknowability, we may conclude that the One is also unknowable. But despite the fact that we are in the condition that we are in, we approach the discernment of such great matters through allegories and hidden meanings, and we purify ourselves for the reception of unfamiliar concepts, and so we ascend by means of analogy and by negations, deprecating the things of our world by comparison to that [Ineffable] and being led to this away from what is less valuable, the things of our world, toward what is more valuable. Such, in fact, has been our constant method up to now. And it is perhaps the case that the absolutely Ineffable is that about which we cannot even posit its ineffability. The One, on the other hand, is ineffable in such a way as to escape every (I 11) statement and description, as well as every discernment, as, for example, the differentiation between a knower and the object of knowledge, and is and must be conceived in another way entirely, as most simple and most encompassing, and not just as one, as possessing the unique property of being one, but rather as One that is all things and as One before all things, but surely not as a one-among-all things.²¹

For these are the labor pains [we undergo], and in this way they gain purification with respect to the absolute One and the truly unique cause of all things. Assuredly the One in us, intuited in the way that it is because it is closer to us and more familiar, and altogether inferior to that [One], is that much more available for such an intuition. But from the One so qualified, however it has been qualified, the ascent to the absolute One is not difficult: even if we fail in every way to attain that, still, we can have some intuition of that which is before all things by using the absolute One in us as a vehicle. So the One is in this way both ineffable and communicable; but let perfect silence prevail

concerning that other principle, and even prior to this, let there be the perfect unknowing that disdains all knowledge.

Chapter 6. That the One Is Unknowable

■ The statement that the One is unknowable cannot be a statement about the One's intrinsic knowability or unknowability. Instead, the statement only reveals something about the knower, so that ignorance of the One is rather a privation belonging to him by virtue of his status qua potential knower (cf. *Met* Delta 1022b22, where Aristotle defines a privation as the lack of an attribute that is naturally possessed). No doubt Damascius carries forward the doctrine implicit within the previous chapter, where the presence of the One in us vouchsafes the possibility of knowing the One. Damascius here raises and solves puzzles familiar from the *Meno* and the *Theaetetus* (which he quotes) related to the learner's paradox, the problem of how one can recognize that which is hitherto unknown. His solution involves using the Proclean doctrine of the One in us, in a way similar to Plato's use of recollection to solve his own versions of the learner's paradox in the *Meno*. ■

Now let us investigate precisely this second problem, how the Ineffable is said to be completely unknowable: for if this is true, how can we undertake to write these [speculations] about it? Let us not engage in fiction writing, babbling copious nonsense concerning things of which we have no knowledge. If the Ineffable does not belong to the coordinate existence of all things and is unrelated to all things, and is in fact nothing from among all things, not even the One (I 12) itself, then these very things [are] its nature, a nature of which we are disposed to be, in some sense, knowers, and that we also earnestly attempt to dispose others to know. Further, either we know about the Ineffable's unknowability or we are ignorant of it: but if ignorant, how can we say that it is completely unknowable? And if we know, at least in this respect it is knowable, namely, insofar as it is unknowable, it is known as unknowable.

Moreover it is not possible to deny something of another thing, unless one knows that which one denies of the latter, nor can one state that this is not that, if one has no grasp whatever of that. For Socrates in the *Theaetetus* says that one cannot say that what he knows either is or is not that which he does not know.²² How, then, can we deny what we know in any way at all of that concerning which we are completely ignorant? It would be like someone blind from birth trying to demonstrate that heat does not belong to color. And yet perhaps he can say quite rightly that color is not warm, since the latter is tangible and he does know heat by means of touch, while he does not know color at all, except that it is intangible: for he knows that he does not know it. This kind of knowledge is not of that [unknown object] but simply of one's own state of ignorance. In speaking about that unknowable we are not describing it, but we simply affirm our own experience concerning it: the imperceptibility that belongs to

the blind person is not inherent in color, since blindness is not a property of color, but of him. So the ignorance we have of that is in us, just as the knowledge of the known is in the knower, not in the object known. But if, just as the knowable is in the known, constituting its ability to be manifested, so were one to say that the ignorance is in the thing unknown, like a darkness that belongs to it or an (I 13) invisibility according to which it is unknown and unmanifest to all—in saying this, one does not realize that ignorance is a privation, just as blindness is, and just as it is in the case of the invisible, so too is that which is not comprehended and not known.

In other cases, the privation of one [property] nevertheless allows the postulation of some other [property]: if something is incorporeal, and indeed invisible, still it can be intelligible, and the unintelligible can nevertheless be some other thing, as for example something that belongs to the category of things that are not apprehensible by means of any form of intellection. But if we eliminate any insight or intuition, and we say that we have no knowledge at all of an entity of which we have no capacity for vision at any level, and remain utterly without such capacity, and say that it is unknowable, then we are not saying something about the object itself, such as that it is inherently invisible, as in the case of an intelligible object, or that it is inherently unknowable by means of a substantial or ordinary intellection, as in the case of the One, but rather as providing no occasion for one's own ability to grasp it, or even to suspect its existence. We are not saying that it is only unknowable, so that it is some one thing, which then has a nature that is unknowable, but rather that it is not even something that is, nor is it One, nor is it all things, nor is it the principle of all things, nor is it beyond all things: we simply have no way to predicate anything of it at all. So then not even this is its nature, to be nothing or beyond all things or transcending cause²³ or not connected to all things, nor do such things constitute its nature, but [they are] simply a way of removing all things subsequent to it.

(I 14) How, then, can we say anything about it? Perhaps it is that, in knowing the things that are after it, through just this knowledge we come to realize that they fall short, if I may so put it, in comparison with what is entirely ineffable. Because even as that which is beyond knowledge in any respect is superior to that which can be apprehended by knowledge, so that which is beyond every form of intuition must be more sacred, not that it is capable of being known as what is more sacred, but that it is the most sacred is a fact about us, and an experience of ours, and its wonder is spoken of through its very ungraspability by means of our conceptions. Therefore, by analogy, if that which is in some way unknowable in the superior sense is higher than what is completely knowable, that which is in every way eminently unknowable must be recognized as the highest, even if does not possess the characteristic of being the highest, nor the most eminent, nor yet the most sacred; for these are conventional characterizations we have come to concerning that which entirely escapes our

conceptions and intuitions. Therefore it is by not intuiting it at all that we recognize it as the absolutely incomprehensible. If we got hold of it in our thought, then we would still be in search of something else that was prior to the thinking. And this would either go on forever, or else it would have to come to a stand in that which is absolutely ineffable.

Chapter 7. On the Complete Overturning of All Discourse Concerning the Ineffable

■ This chapter and the next discuss the overturning of all discourse concerning the Ineffable. All discourse or conceptual grasping of the Ineffable is subject to *peritrope*, to dialectical contradiction: for example, to think that it is unthinkable, to say that it is ineffable, to know that it is unknowable, and so forth, are all incoherent if they are taken to affirm something about the first principle. Overturning arguments hinge on statements that, when asserted in a dialectical context, lead to inconsistency. This kind of argument has a long history in Platonism starting from Plato's use of it to defeat Protagoras' "Man the Measure" doctrine in the *Theaetetus*, but it also widely informs anti-Skeptical strategies. Throughout this chapter Damascius evinces a detailed knowledge of the *Sophist's* discussion of non-being and alludes to the dialectical refutation of the idea of non-being at *Sophist* 238e1–239a10. In addition to Plato's *Sophist*, Damascius invokes puzzles from the *Parmenides* involving the predication of opposites. Finally, he shows familiarity with Proclus' *Commentary on the Parmenides*. Proclus' *Commentary*, Book VI.1071 considers the topic of negation and negative statements concerning the One.

At the heart of the chapter lies Damascius' solution to these problems of dialectical self-contradiction. His purpose is to explain negative language about the Ineffable in the terms of his teaching about the limits of metaphysical discourse. He also returns to the methodological point that emphasizes the value of not attempting to grasp the Ineffable by means of any language, whether positive or negative, and reminds the reader of his "agreement to continue to know nothing" about the Ineffable.

Damascius uses negative language of the Ineffable versus (as with Proclus) the One. Later in Book VI of his *Commentary*, Proclus goes on to show that the negations by which the One is referenced in the first hypothesis are in the second hypothesis of the *Parmenides*: "the causes of the corresponding assertions. For this reason, all that the second hypothesis, as we have said previously, asserts, is denied by the first; for all those positive assertions proceed from these negations, and the cause of these is the One, as being prior to all other things." Yet Damascius stresses throughout this discussion that in using negative language about the Ineffable, we are not predicating something about its nature, and he specifically cites the language of causation as an inadequate account of the Ineffable. Perhaps in stressing that negative language is not a form of predication, Damascius tries to circumvent the strategy of Proclus, who in his turn seems to offer a criticism of Iamblichus, since the latter also posited a One before the One. According to Dillon, "Proclus actually attacks [the separation of the transcendent from the causal One] in *ET*, Proposition 20: "Beyond the One

there is no further principle; for Unity is identical with the Good; that is therefore the first principle of all things, as has been shown" (Dillon, introduction to Morrow and Dillon 1987, xxi). For Proclus and for Plotinus in *Ennead* III.8.11, any qualification of the One beyond designating it as the Good, diminishes the One. Yet Damascius is clear that in alluding to the Ineffable, we are unable to qualify it in any way. Throughout this chapter, Damascius is once again using the metaphysical system of Proclus as a springboard for his own reflections on the status of the Ineffable vis-à-vis such a system. ■

Can we then demonstrate anything about it [the Ineffable], and is that something demonstrable, which we claim is not even conceivable?

(I 15) In fact, even by saying this much, we do demonstrate something about that, though we do not demonstrate that itself, nor yet is there anything demonstrable in that: for neither is there something other than [the demonstrable] in it, nor is that [demonstrable], nor is it even itself, but what we demonstrate is our ignorance and inability to articulate it, and this is the [only thing about it] that can be demonstrated.

What follows? Are we not engaging in forming opinions corresponding to the things we say about it? But if there is any opinion about it, then it becomes an object of opinion. Still, our opinion about it is that it is not, and this opinion is true, as Aristotle says.²⁴ Therefore if this opinion is true, then there is also a subject to which when joined the opinion becomes true, since it is by the existence of the subject that the opinion then also becomes true.²⁵

And yet how could [the Ineffable] be, or how could be something that is true, when it is entirely unknowable?

At least, its non-being and its being unknowable are true [of it], as in the case of the truly false. For it is true that it is false.

These statements apply in the case of privations and in the case of that which is in some way nonexistent, that is, in the cases where the deficiency is able to benefit from the existence of a determinate form, as in the case of light, and the absence of light we call shadow. For if there were no light, there could be no such thing as a shadow. But in the case of that which is nonexistent in any way or manner, as Plato says, neither can not-being or privation in general [apply]. But even these [phrases] "in no way," "in no manner" do not properly signify it: for it would then be something that exists, since signification is of something real, and that about which it is possible to form a conception is at least something real, even if one conceives it as something that in no way exists, nonetheless this (I 16) conception is at least something that exists. Consequently, Plato does better to describe as ineffable and unthinkable non-existence in the lower sense, even as we speak of nonexistence in the higher sense.²⁶

But still, we do have an opinion of it, namely, that it is not the object of opinion.²⁷

This [statement] is subject to overturning from within, [Plato] says, and we cannot, in reality, even have an opinion concerning it.²⁸

What then? Do we not think and are we not persuaded that [the Ineffable] is so [that is, nonexistent]?

Yes, but this is [simply] our experience in respect of it, as has been said often before.

Still, we do harbor this opinion.

Well then, it is an empty one, since it is an opinion about what is empty, or rather, about the indefinite. Just as when in the case of things that do not exist, we form ideas about them as if they did exist, ideas that are based in fantasy or are just invented (as, for example, we are under the impression that the sun is the size of a foot, though in reality it is not this size), so if we imagine something about the absolutely non-existent or write something about it, the impression resides in us that steps into the void: for in grasping it we believe that we are indeed grasping that, but that is not something that exists as relative to us, and so transcends our conception [of it].

How then is it possible to demonstrate so great an ignorance as abides in us concerning the [Ineffable]? How can we say that it is unknowable?

First, by means of the argument already enunciated, namely, we discover that that which is beyond (I 17) knowledge is of greater worth. Therefore, if that which is entirely beyond knowledge could be found, this would also be discovered as what is most valuable in itself; but it is enough for the demonstration that it cannot even be found. According to another argument, [the demonstration relies on the fact] that [the Ineffable] is beyond all things. If it were in any way knowable, then it would itself also be numbered among all things (for what we know just is what we mean by all things) and it would then have something in common with all things, namely, its very knowability. Those things, after all, that share something common belong to a single order, and hence in this way it becomes a member of all things: for this reason too it must be unknowable. The third argument is that the unknowable is present among real beings, just as the knowable is, and even if the unknowable is a relative term, it is nevertheless present. Just as we predicate great and small of the same thing relatively, in the same way [we can predicate] knowable and unknowable of the same thing relative to different things. Just as the same thing participates in the two forms, small and great, so that it is at once small and great, so too that which participates in the [form of] knowable and unknowable can be either of the two.²⁹ And just as the knowable has a reality prior to [being known] so also the unknowable must have a reality prior to [being unknown], especially if it is superior to the knowable, as the intelligible is unknowable by means of sensation, whereas it is knowable by means of intellect. The superior could not consist in a privation of an inferior reality, if that inferior reality were a form, especially if it has its reality in the intelligible order. For every absence and privation of this kind is either in matter or in the soul.³⁰ But how could it exist in

intellect, in which all things are present? And still more, how could it exist in the intelligible order? Unless we should call it deprivation in the higher sense, as that which is beyond form is not form (I 18) and what transcends Being is not being, and that which is truly unknowable through its transcending all things is non-being. If, then, the One is the limit of the knowable among those things that are knowable or the objects of intuition, that which is beyond the One is primarily and completely unknowable, because it is unknowable without even having the unknowable as its nature, and without our approaching it as unknowable, since we do not even know if it is unknowable. There is complete ignorance surrounding it, and we know that neither as unknowable or knowable. Consequently we suffer reversal by means of every method, because we have no contact with it whatsoever, inasmuch as it is not a real Being, or rather, it is not even this, namely, nothing. Therefore it is that which is in no way whatsoever or beyond this, if this turns out to be the denial of Being, and is beyond the One, and in that sense nothing.

But this “nothing” is void and is the abandonment of all things, whereas this is not our conception of the Ineffable.

Our reply is that “nothing” has two meanings: one is transcendent; the other is on “this side.” In fact the [word] “one” also has two meanings, as lower limit, in the material realm and as the first, or what is before Being. Therefore “not being” also [has two meanings], as not even the one as lower limit, and as not even the first. In a similar way the unknowable and the Ineffable have two meanings, as that which is not even at the lower limit of conception, and that which is not even the first.

Then is it in relation to us that we claim that it is unknowable?

Surely it would not be a paradox if it were permitted to say (I 19) that it is unknowable even to the much-honored intellect.³¹ For every intellect looks to the intelligible world, and the intelligible order is either form or Being. But perhaps it is divine cognition that knows it and it is knowable by this form of unified and super-essential cognition? But this cognition applies itself to the One, whereas that other is beyond the One. In general, if that were known along with all other things, then it would itself be among all things, for being-capable-of being-known would then be common to it and to the others, and so it would belong to the same order at least in this respect. Further, if it is capable of being known, divine knowledge will be able to circumscribe it. And therefore [knowledge] will delimit [the absolute]. But every definition ascends to its limit, which is the One; and that is beyond the One. Therefore it cannot be contained and it cannot be delimited in any way, and therefore [it cannot be grasped] by any form of knowledge; therefore it is unknowable even by divine knowledge. Moreover, knowledge belongs to the class of things known as existent or subsistent or participant in the One, but [the Ineffable] is beyond these things. Further, that which can be known is relative to knowledge and to the knower; therefore that too [if it could be

known] would also be coordinated with and have a relationship with such things.

Moreover, even the One is probably unknowable, since the knower and the known must be distinct, even though both of them subsist in the same thing, so that the One could not know itself, if it is truly One; for the One cannot be twofold, and so there will not be a knower and a known in the One. Nor again will the god, if he remains in the One itself alone, and unites with the One as the absolute One, be united with it dualistically: for how could the dual unite with the simple? And if the god knows the One by the One, there will be a One that is both knower and known (I 20), and each aspect will reveal the nature of the One, which is itself unique and one, so that it cannot unite with itself as one thing knowing another, or as knower with known, since this nature is only itself one. Therefore it cannot undergo union by means of knowledge. But how this can be the case with regard to the One is a matter to which we shall return.

A fortiori, then, that which is not yet one is unknowable, for Plato correctly says that it is impossible to say that one knows, and that one knows nothing.³² Now if the limit of the knowable is the One, we can know nothing beyond the One, a fact that renders these remarks of ours a meaningless rhapsody. But no, for in knowing the objects that we know, we know this as well, namely, that they are unworthy, if we may put it this way, of the primary postulate. Even so, even if we do not yet know the intelligible forms, we judge the images of the forms that are available in us as unworthy of the indivisible, eternal nature of those ideas, since these [conceptions] in us prove to be divisible and largely unstable. And again with still greater force, even if we lack knowledge concerning the totality of forms and kinds, having instead a [mere] image of that totality, an image which consists in the totality of the kinds and forms that are in us in a divided state, we speculate that Being is like the image, but Being is not like the image, but superior, and something supremely unified. And again, we try to conceive of the One, not grasping it through contracting [our minds] but by simplifying all things and resolving them into that; and in us this kind of simplification subsists in relation to all the things in us, but it falls far short of touching on that perfect simplicity. (I 21) For the One in us, or the simple, is least of all that which is expressed by these words, except insofar as speech can be a signpost for that nature.

Hence, too, when we have grasped with the intellect everything that is in any way capable of being known or intuited up to the point of the One, we think (if we must attempt to express what cannot be expressed or to conceptualize that which eludes all thought) we still think³³ it correct to posit that which does not coincide with anything and is not part of any system and indeed so transcendent that in truth it does not even exhibit the mark of transcendence. For the transcendent always transcends something and so is not entirely transcendent, because it is conditioned by a relationship with that which it transcends,

and generally has a fixed place in the progression of a system. If, then, it is to subsist as truly transcendent, it must not even be postulated as transcendent. In fact, the name that most appropriately designates the transcendent does not name it correctly, since it [designates] something that is already co-coordinated within a system, so that one must at the same time deny it the name. But denial (*apophasis*) is itself a kind of discourse, and that about which the denial is made is the subject of the discourse, but the [Ineffable] is nothing at all, and therefore no denial can be made concerning it, since it is altogether outside the realm of language, and it is not knowable in any way at all, so that it is not even possible to deny the denial.³⁴ Rather, the demonstration that reveals the [Ineffable] to us, about which we speak, consists in the complete overturning of discourse and thought. And what will turn out to be the limit of discourse, except silence that has no power to convey it, and the agreement to continue to know nothing about that which it is not permitted to enter into knowledge of, since it remains as the inaccessible?

Chapter 8. Three Questions Concerning the Ineffable qua Its Status as First Principle

■ In this chapter, Damascius tries to frame the Ineffable in terms of how it fits in with manifestation or in his own terminology, with the world of differentiation, and so with language, reality, and ultimately with all beings. He undertakes this task by posing three questions concerning the Ineffable:

Q: Is the Ineffable, inasmuch as it is outside of all discourse, merely nothing?

A: Negation itself is a relationship: what is inferior must be denied of what is superior and what is superior must be denied to what is inferior.

Q: Is the Ineffable the outer limit or upper boundary of all that is real? A: This function fails to capture its nature, because it has no determinable relationship with other things.

Q: Is the Ineffable present in things here? A: All things are in some way from it. Moreover, there is some trace of it in us, a trace that urges us toward it.

Throughout this chapter, Damascius is once again using the metaphysical system of Proclus as a springboard for his own reflections on the status of the Ineffable vis-à-vis such a system. Hence the first *aporia* is based on a principle enunciated at *ET* 21, which states that each order of being enjoys a correlation between a governing monad and conjoining multiplicity: “Every order of being has its beginning in a monad and proceeds to a manifold co-ordinate therewith; and the manifold in any order may be carried back to a single monad” (Dodds 1963, 25).

In terms of dialectic, Damascius strenuously denies that the Ineffable functions like a monad with respect to its coordinate multiplicity, once more separating his position from that of Proclus vis-à-vis the Ineffable. Cf. also Proclus, *PT* (1968–1987. II, 38):

διὰ γὰρ τὴν ὁμοιότητα τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνο καθ' ἑκάστην τῶν ὄντων τάξιν ἀνάλογον ὑπέστη τῷ ἀγαθῷ μονάς, τοῦτο οὖσα πρὸς ὅλον τὸν σύζυγον αὐτῆς <ἀριθμὸν> ὃ πρὸς ἀπάσας ἐστὶ τὰς τῶν θεῶν διακοσμήσεις τὰγαθόν·

Due to its resemblance to the first principle, in each order of beings there comes into existence a monad that is analogous to the One, that plays the role that the good plays for the entire order of gods just that role for the entire series to which it is united.

By the end of this chapter, although Damascius does appear to approach an interpretation of the Ineffable that has it playing an analogous role to the function that the Good takes on in Proclus, he ultimately rejects the logic of participation that would place the Ineffable on an equal footing with Proclus' Good. The last sentences in the chapter suggest that while the Ineffable cannot be thought of in terms of a system of hierarchical beings, the first principle can be sought in the terms of such a system. Hence he departs from consideration of the Ineffable as such and moves to a consideration of what a first principle would be like from the point of view of all beings. ■

Might not someone ask this [next] question, venturing such arguments as the following? If we [wished to] reach any statement about the Ineffable on the basis of an inference from our own world [we could say] that since at every level a monad is the leader of its own number (as there is one Soul and [I 22] the many souls, and one Intellect and the many intellects, and one Being and the many beings, and one Henad and the many henads), surely then the argument will require one Ineffable and the many ineffables, and it would be necessary for the Ineffable to be prolific in its own ineffable way and to generate its own plurality.³⁵

But this line of argument, or one constructed along similar lines, completely fails to take into account what has been said earlier. There is, in fact, nothing in common between the Ineffable and the things here, nor could anything belong to the Ineffable that is expressible, thinkable, or conceivable. So therefore it is not a one nor is it a many, nor is it prolific or productive or a cause in any way, nor is there any analogy or likeness with respect to it. So it is not like the things here: it is [not] "that" or "those," nor [can one say] that it is one or that it is many, but the best approach is simply to maintain quiet, remaining in the ineffable sanctuary of the soul without departing. However, if it is necessary to give an indication of what it is, one should do so by means of the denials of these: it is not one or many, not prolific or sterile, not cause nor not a cause, and yet it is just by means of these same denials that our discourse may overturn itself infinitely and without qualification.

(I 23) Do we then advance the position that it is entirely and unequivocally nothing, in our rambling attempts at utterance, for all that has been said will accord with that position, as well as just this overturning of all discourse that follows from that, as the Eleatic philosopher teaches.³⁶

This puzzle is not difficult to resolve, since even earlier it was remarked that that nonexistence relates to what is inferior, whereas this [overturning of discourse] is posited with respect to the superior. These denials are not made in the same way in both cases, since in the case of what is inferior, what is denied of it is superior, while in the case of what is superior what is denied is inferior, if we may so put it. For example, we utter negativities both in the case of matter and in the case of the One, but this [expression, "non-being"] is used in two distinct senses.

This puzzle, as I said, is easy to resolve, but there is another that is more substantial: if that which absolutely is not is in fact a complete falling away from Being, and yet the One is beyond Being (and this is still more true of the Ineffable), non-being will be the One that extends below the level of the things here, and it will turn out that it will be one, and even more so, ineffable, since the Ineffable extends below the One, just as it transcends it. Indeed, if that which is called absolute non-being turns out to be a deprivation of Being, then this non-being could be affected in this way. Nor is this result surprising, since matter is certainly non-being, when it comes to be contemplated in terms of the one, since in the higher realm the One is prior to Being, while in this realm it extends lower than Being; and there would be nothing strange either if it should participate in the Ineffable. But if it is declared to be absolute non-being, in the sense that it is postulated to be neither Being nor One nor the Ineffable, and does not exist in a manner that can be affirmed or denied, nor is it (I 24) the subject of internal contradiction, nor can it be refuted, nor can it be posited in any other manner whatsoever, (for such was the nature of that of which the Eleatic Stranger also discoursed) then this surely falls outside of every possible conception whatsoever, since it is what is not in any way at all.

Is, then, the Ineffable as it were a boundary wall that surrounds anything that can be expressed in language, from above transcending and from below serving as a foundation underlying all things?

No, even this will not properly convey its situation. It is neither above nor below nor is any aspect of it first or last, nor does it [experience] procession. Therefore it is not a boundary wall for all things, and it does not contain all things, nor is that which can be expressed in language inside it, nor is the One itself inside it.

Then does nothing of it [the Ineffable] come to be present in the things here? For this is the next question to be investigated.³⁷

And how would it not have come to be present, since all things are from it in some way? That from which each thing proceeds is also that in which [each thing] participates, and if it has nothing else from there, it has that which it is, and draws breath from its own principle and returns to that insofar as it is able. What, then, will prevent that from giving something of itself to those things that are from it? What other intermediary kind of existence [will be necessary]?

Of course, it is necessary always for the second to be closer than the third with respect to the first principle, and again for the third to be closer than the fourth; and if this is so, then, too, it is necessary for [the second] to emerge less from it. And if this is so, then it is necessary that it should remain that much the more within the boundary of that nature. And if this is so, then still more must it be like it, so as to be suitable for participation in it, and so also to participate in it.

How then could we entertain these suggestions about it at all, unless there was some trace of it in us, a trace that as it were urges [us] toward it? (I 25) Must it not also be said, since it is the Ineffable, to distribute an ineffable participation to all things, according to which there is something ineffable in each thing, something that leads us to recognize that by nature some things are more ineffable than others: the One is more ineffable than Being, and Being more than life, and life more than intellect, and there is a continual succession according to the same proportion, or rather the inverse, from matter up to rational being, the latter from the inferior perspective and the former from the superior, if one can put it thus?

Now if someone assumes this, he will generate a procession from the Ineffable and a kind of order of ineffability that governs all the stages of the procession, and we shall actually refer all things capable of expression in language back to the Ineffable as well, since everywhere it is apportioned into that which can be expressed in language.

And thus we shall postulate three monads and three numbers, not simply two as before, namely, the substantial, the unitary, and the Ineffable.³⁸ And so we shall posit this thesis, which we previously rejected, namely, that there are one and many in the Ineffable, as well as a series consisting in first, middle, and final terms, and, additionally, [the triad] of remaining, procession, and return; and in general, we shall incorporate a great deal of that which can be spoken of into the Ineffable.³⁹ But if, as we maintained, one must not apply [the expressions] “that” or “those” to the Ineffable, because we wish it to be beyond the one and the many, therefore neither must we posit one [Ineffable] that exists prior to the many [ineffables] and another that, by virtue of its participation in the many is divided in the same way as they. It will not then be something that can be participated in, nor does it give something of itself to that which comes after it, nor is each god ineffable before it is one, in the way that [each] is one before having an essential nature.

(I 26) But even here the argument, by its self-reversal, demonstrates that that entity is, after all, ineffable, since it conceives the Ineffable in ways that are fundamentally opposed and in terms of the natures that are inferior to it. But how could this come as a surprise, given the kinds of difficulties we shall come up against concerning the One, not to mention those concerning the Unified and concerning Being? But these must await us.

Section II. Ascent to the First Principle

Chapter 9. First Method: Self-Sufficiency as the Criterion

■ Damascius posits self-sufficiency as a criterion for identifying the first principle. In identifying the self-sufficient with the first principle, Damascius is following earlier as well as Neoplatonic precedent. Westerink here rightly cites Proclus' *Platonic Theology* Book II, where Proclus quotes Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a3; 1172b14–15: "The [first] principle is the final cause, or that which all things desire, or that which lacks nothing" (II.2.20.22–24). Aristotle there is already referring back to Plato's discussion of self-sufficiency in the *Lysis* 221d1–222b2. At *Lysis* 215b, Plato defines the object of desire as the Good, and adds that since it is good, it is entirely self-sufficient, which means that it can lack nothing. In both of these classical texts, the Good is defined as self-sufficient, as that to which nothing whatsoever can be added. Although Proclus uses this definition for his own understanding of the Good as the final cause, Damascius' usage of this criterion is also informed by Plotinus VI.9.6.34–35. There, Plotinus says, "a principle can never lack its subsequent." But later in the same paragraph, he goes on to remark, exactly as Damascius does here, that it is for this very reason that we cannot attribute "goodness" to the first principle (line 37) "thus there is nothing good in the One." Plotinus then goes on to say that the One as "hyper-Good" is not good in itself, but only in relationship to others. ■

(I 27) But now, concerning that which was posited as a first principle, we must still ask about what ascent there can be to it, and how this ascent can be accomplished, [taking as our starting point] the elements most remote from it. Now our argument must apply to principles in the most general sense, but specifically here to those

principles that proceed from [the first] to that which is most remote from them. As Parmenides followed a method in studying the One [that consisted in] tracing all the consequences that followed from [positing] a One, so we also proceed from what has been posited as a first principle, or rather, beginning from what can be indicated by means of speech or is familiar through perception, we shall proceed to those transcendent realities, and we shall bring our labor of [searching for the] truth into the harbor of the silence that surrounds the [Ineffable].¹ How therefore, setting out in the beginning from what is self-evident, could one complete this ascent?

Let us take, for example, the qualified body.² Now this is the first entity that is expressible for us, that is, something that is the object of sensation. Is this body in fact a first [principle]? No: here there are two things: body and something so-qualified that subsists in its substrate, body.

Which of these two is naturally prior?

Now the composite requires its own distinctive parts. And yet what subsists in a substrate requires the substrate.

So could the body be the principle, that is, primary substance?

But this is impossible. In the first place, the principle cannot receive anything from what is subsequent to it, or derived from it. But we say that body is qualified. Therefore its qualification and its quality do not proceed from it, since they actually accrue to it as something other than themselves. But second, body is entirely divisible, and each of its parts requires the others, whereas the whole requires all of them. Therefore the body is not entirely self-sufficient (I 29), since it is in need of itself and composed of things that are in need of each other. Moreover, if it is not one but rather unified, it requires a one to contain it, as Plato says.³ And so the body is a composite or is, more precisely, formless, as if it were a kind of matter, and therefore it requires order and an informing property, in order to be not just body, but some particular kind of body, for example, fiery or earthly or more generally ordered or qualified body. What therefore accrues to body perfects it and disposes it, just as forms order the secondary substrate, which is, as it were, a secondary matter.

So then is that which is added in addition the principle?

No, it cannot be. What is added does not abide independently nor does it subsist by itself, but it is in a substrate and requires the substrate. If someone conceives it not as a substrate, but as one of the elements in the substrate, as for example animal is in horse or in man, in this way too each will require the other, both this substrate and what is in the substrate, or rather the common element, for example, the animal, and its differentiae, as rational or irrational.⁴ For the elements always require each other, and what is composed of elements requires the elements themselves. But in general this sensible that is manifest to us, so conceived, is not the body, since body by itself does not awaken sensation, nor yet is it the quality, since quality is not extended [in space] in a way that is commensurable with sensation, and again, it cannot belong to the sense

organ, which is a body. That which scatters or composes sight⁵ is neither body nor color, but colored body or embodied color, and it is this (I 30) that awakens vision, or generally, the sensible object awakens sensation, and the sensible object is a body qualified in a certain way.

From these considerations it becomes clear, first, that this particularity that does the qualifying is itself incorporeal. For if it were a body, it would not yet be the body that is perceptible. So body requires the incorporeal and the incorporeal requires body, since neither is this sense-perceptible.

Next: these elements reciprocally determine each other, nor does one come into being prior to the other, but since they are elements of the one sensible body, they arise together, the one, body, giving spatial extension to what does not have spatial extension, and the other, quality, giving perceptible variegation by means of form to what has no form.

Third: neither is the composite [of both quality and body] a principle, since it is not self-sufficient. It requires its own elements as well as that which brings about the one form that is the sensible. But the body cannot bring this about, since it contributes spatial extension, nor does quality bring this about, since it does not even subsist apart from the body in which it is or with which it happens to arise. But in any case, it is the compound that is a form: now either it produces itself, which is impossible, since it does not converge with itself, but rather the whole diverges from itself in many ways, or it is not produced by itself, and [so] there will be another principle before it.

Chapter 10. Nature as a First Principle

Well, suppose that the principle is that which they call nature, since nature is the origin of motion and cessation of motion,⁶ and since it resides in that which is moved or that which ceases to move not accidentally, (I 31) but intrinsically. Nature is simpler than and also creates the composite forms. But if nature is present in its very own creations and not separate from them nor prior to them, but if it requires them in order to be what it is, even if we grant that it is in some way independent with respect to them, in that it fashions things or rather, as we say, creates them, nevertheless it is not self-sufficient, since it has its essence together with [created things] and it is inseparably present among them, and if its creations exist, then nature does as well, whereas if they do not exist, then neither does nature, due to the fact that nature is completely immersed in natural things and cannot thus return to its native characteristic.⁷ The faculties of growth, nutrition, and the generation of like offspring, in addition to the faculty that is prior to these three, that is, nature, cannot be entirely incorporeal, but must almost consist in a quality belonging to body, and differ from the bodily only to the extent that they furnish to the composite [that is, the living being] its appearance of being moved or ceasing to move from within. On the one hand,

it is the quality of being perceptible that bestows that which appears as the surface presentation or that which strikes perception, whereas the body provides extension, and nature provides the physical activity proceeding from within, whether only as locomotion, or else as nurture, growth, and generation of offspring. Already, then, as such nature is more worthy, as for example, the nature that is present in plant life. But even so nature cannot detach itself from that which is under its ministry, since it gives itself to them as a whole by means of its very substance. There is, to be sure, a certain kind of life that is different from the physical body as such, and yet it is more manifest than the nature in body which has become completely immersed in body, that is, the nature that somehow actualizes it from within, but which itself neither grows, nourishes [body], or generates offspring. Yet this life, too, is inseparable from its substrate and actually requires a substrate, so that it could not be a principle in an (I 32) absolute sense, because it is in need of its inferior. For that would cause no surprise, namely, that a principle should require a principle superior to itself, but rather, it would be surprising if one were to assume that a principle requires its consequents, of which one posits it as the principle.

Chapter 11. The Irrational Soul

■ As the late Professor Blumenthal makes clear in his *Aristotle and Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity* (Blumenthal 1996, 102–103; 106), the later Neoplatonists insisted on a division between rational and irrational soul. As is clear from our text, by irrational, the late Neoplatonists precisely did not mean the vegetative or sub-sensible soul, which Damascius tends to treat as a kind of qualified body, not as actually soul. When Damascius suggests that “there is some cognitive element” belonging to the irrational soul, he may mean that perception is quasi-rational in human beings, since for them, in the words of Blumenthal, the soul in sense perception exercises judgment on “such stimuli as affected, even if only temporarily, the sense-organs. The soul remained immune from any affection and merely took cognizance of what had happened to the organs” (Blumenthal 1996, 121). ■

Following the same method, let us proceed to refute the person who posits the irrational soul as a principle, whether that means the perceiving soul or the appetitive soul. For even if the irrational soul seems to be somewhat more separable owing to its activities, both those that are involved in impulse and those that are involved in cognition, it is nevertheless bound together with the body and so has something that cannot be separated from body, since it is not able to revert to itself, and since its activity is fused with a substrate. Clearly even the [soul qua] substance is such [as to lack the independence of principle]. For if its substance were independent and free in itself, then it would reveal this kind of an activity as well, not constantly attending the body, but sometimes reverting toward itself.⁸ Moreover, even if it always did attend to the body, still it would do so with critical judgment and with self-discernment.⁹

At least, the activities of the majority of human beings, even if they pertain to external goods, nevertheless reveal something separate in that sphere, as these activities [involve] deliberation concerning how they shall obtain external things, or with the understanding that there is a need for deliberation in order to act or to obtain an apparent good, or to avoid its opposite. By contrast, the impulses of the irrational animals are invariable and spontaneous, and the impulses are stimulated together with the sense organs and are impelled only toward the pleasant sensations that arise from sensible objects or repelled by painful sensations. So if the body shares in pain and in pleasure and is conditioned in one way or another by these, clearly the activities (I 33) of the soul proceed as deeply involved with bodies, and they are not purely psychic, but they are also corporeal, in just the way that what extends or compresses the vision is not just color but colored body, and in the way that the capacity to cut does not belong to the iron, nor to the shape, but to both, and that is the axe or the chisel or the sword, as Aristotle says.¹⁰ And in this way perception and desire belong to the ensouled body or to the embodied soul, even if in the latter cases, the psychic element is more apparent than the corporeal element, just as in the previous cases the corporeal element dominates in its spatial extension and in its subsistence. But to the extent that something has its being in another, to whatever extent, so far then, it requires its inferior, and so something like this could not be a principle.

Chapter 12. The Rational Soul and Intellect

Next we see something that is prior to this substance, a kind of separable form that is by itself and reverts on itself, which is characteristic of the rational nature.¹¹ At least, our soul oversees its own activities and corrects itself;¹² this would not be possible, unless it reverted to itself, nor could it revert, unless its substance were separable, as Aristotle too agrees.¹³ This [rational soul] therefore does not need its inferior. Is this then the perfect principle?

No: it does not project all of its activities simultaneously, since it is always lacking the majority of them [at any given time]. But the principle needs to be lacking in nothing, whereas this soul is a substance that is still in need of its own activities.

(I 34) But, one might say, a substance that is eternal and self-sufficient, with substantial activities that do not require anything, activities that always keep march with substance because they too are self-moving and eternally alive, surely would amount to a principle.

[We reply that] the soul is one form, a whole and single nature that is in some ways independent but in other ways dependent. The principle, however, is entirely self-sufficient. Therefore soul, that principle that projects activities which themselves undergo change, could not be a principle, at least in the strict sense.

Therefore there must be another principle before soul, one that is entirely free from change in its substance, life, and knowledge, and in all of its powers and activities, such as we proclaim the unchanging and eternal, the much honored intellect itself, in which Aristotle, when he ascended to this, imagined that he has discovered the first principle.¹⁴ For what still could be lacking to that which subsumes all things in its pleromas, and with respect to which neither addition nor subtraction changes any of the things that subsist in intellect?

No: this too is one and many, whole and parts; in it are first and middle and last. But the inferior pleromas requires the superior, the superior require the inferiors and the whole requires the parts. For co-relatives require each other reciprocally, that is, the first requires the last for the same reason, since none of them can be first by itself. And so the one also needs the many, since it has its being in the many or indeed because this one brings together the many, and exists, not by itself, but with them. Therefore there is much also in this principle that is not independent, and since the intellect as it were generates its own pleromas in itself (I 35) from which the whole is brought together simultaneously, it would also need itself, not only in the way that the product needs the producer, but also the producer needs the produced for the fulfillment of that which as a whole produced it, the producer, as a whole. Moreover, intellect is both thinker and thought, and is both the intelligible-intellective object of itself and [possesses this object] by means of itself, and in combination it is intellect.¹⁵ Thus it is the case that the intellective needs the intelligible, as [the goal of] its native longing, and the intelligible needs the intellective, because it wishes also itself to be intellective, and both together need each singularly, since also attainment arises simultaneously with need, just as cosmic order arises with matter. There is thus, nevertheless, a kind of dependence that inherently belongs to intellect, with the result that it is not a principle in the strictest sense.

Chapter 13. The One Is Not the First Principle

■ In the first part of this chapter, Damascius negotiates competing Neoplatonic interpretations of *Philebus* 23c9–d1, where Plato discusses his idea of the mixed, the principle that results from the interweaving of the definite and the indefinite. Damascius makes reference to an interpretation of Proclus, although he does not cite him. The question is whether the mixed or Unified, for Damascius the third henad, is prior to its elements, the limit and the unlimited, or whether it is subsequent to them. First Damascius suggests that the mixed, according to Plato, requires the two prior principles. Then he hints at the interpretation of Proclus (cf. *Platonic Theology* III 10, 42.13–26) that picks up on another passage of Plato, *Philebus* 27d1, where Plato views the mixed as prior to the limit and the unlimited. Damascius again discusses these varying interpretations in his *Lectures on the Philebus*, paragraphs 103–104:

103. Only a symbolical value can be attached to the differentiation between the Two Principles. For on the intelligible plane there is not yet any differentiation.
104. If the elements of the mixture have the two principles as their causes, while the cause of the mixture is Reality [that is, Being], must not the elements inevitably be superior to the mixture, as the two principles are to Reality [that is, Being]? The solution proposed is that the mixture is inferior insofar as it consists of both, the elements being simple; but insofar as it is one and derived from the One, it is superior. (Translation by Westerink 1959)

In terms of the history of philosophy, Damascius is stepping away from the traditions in which a transcendent principle becomes subject to proof or demonstration. In particular, he does not argue for the first principle by suggesting that it is the source of all things that derive from it. Compare in this respect the argument for the first principle of Plotinus as in, for example, *Ennead* V.4.1.5. Plotinus argues that the first principle is first relative to a system that it inherently transcends. But Damascius precisely excludes this kind of argument: if we say that the One transcends a system, it is then in some way conditioned by reference to that system. ■

Perhaps, then, the intellect must be concentrated into the simplest of beings, which we call the One-Being. There—in the One-Being—nothing is differentiated at all, nor is there any indwelling plurality or order or duality or reversion to itself, since what lack could appear in that which is entirely unified, and particularly, what lack of its inferior [could be there], from which our argument just now gets its start? For this reason even the great Parmenides ascended to this as the most certain principle, since it was most self-sufficient.¹⁶

[We reply that] it is necessary to keep in mind what Plato¹⁷ said, namely, that the Unified is not the One itself, but is that which has the One as an attribute, and is clearly stationed after it. Whereas in our present manner of speaking the Unified is seen as having within itself both that which comes to be made one (I 36) (for even if that which comes to be made one could be engulfed to the final degree by that which makes it one, still it remains Unified) and the One itself. Now either Being is [composed] from elements, as Plato seems to say the mixed is, in which case, it needs the elements that constitute it¹⁸ or else, introducing a mitigation of the simplicity of the One, [Being] is something that functions with One as its measure, and is, as it were, heavy or dense, offering a glimpse of its elements together with itself, but not as distinct, since they are still bound in the one of Being itself, and are still as it were fused, although they have been projected far enough that the One is no longer the One, but the Unified, and is already substance instead of a henad (for that is the way one might defend Plato's doctrine of the mixed most accurately, by taking care not to fabricate the superior from the inferior, but rather making the inferior together with the superior and from the superior and in the superior) and so thus, the One in it [namely, Being] is entirely dependent on the One and each is dependent on the other.¹⁹ If there is a different account of Being

than of the Unified, whereas the whole is Unified and Being, then these elements will require each other, and the whole will need the two (the whole is called "One-Being"). And yet if the One is superior, it will require Being in order to [be] the hypostasis, One-Being. If Being is superior to the One, Being arises as a form that supervenes on the mixed and the Unified, in the way that the property of human being supervenes simultaneously on [the predicates] animal, rational, mortal, and thus the One will be dependent on Being. But if, to put it more correctly, the One has two meanings, first as cause of the mixed, and this is what exists prior to Being, and a second as that which supervenes upon Being (but we shall, if it is required, speak more about these matters later), nevertheless, lack will not (I 37) altogether be absent even from this nature (however, here I do not mean the lack that belongs to the inferior, by means of which the method of ascent [to the first principle] proceeds).

Surely the One would be absolutely self-sufficient, after all of these ranks. For neither does it require what comes after it in order to be (the truly One in itself is separate from all things) nor does it require the inferior element in itself or the superior element in itself (since there is nothing in it other than itself) and it does not even require itself. But it is one because it does not have any duality in relation to itself. Nor must we even speak about the One's relationship with itself in the case of what is truly one, since it is absolutely simple. This is therefore the most self-sufficient of all things. This therefore is the principle of all things, and this is cause, and this is the first of all things whatsoever.

But if these three [epithets] are added to it (namely, principle, cause, and first of all things) it could not be one.

[We reply that] all things will subsist for the One in the One, and this holds for these predicates as well as any others we shall attach, as, for example, the most simple, or the highest, or the best, or that which preserves all things, or the Good itself, or all things, if one is speaking in accordance with the simplicity of the One, since its simplicity is all producing and still prior to that it is the substance of all things and therefore it also is every mode of [being].

Even so, if this is true in the case of the One, then it thus also would be dependent on what comes after it, to the extent that we attribute anything whatsoever to it. It will derive its status as principle from what is dependent on the principle, its status as cause from its effects, and its status as first from what ranks after it, and what is more it will derive its status as simple from its (I 38) transcendence of others, and its status as most powerful from its power with respect to what is subordinate, and its status as the good and desirable and salutary, from that which is saved [by it] and from that which desires it. Indeed, if the One is called all things, then it is called all things by virtue of the anticipation in it of all things, an anticipation that belongs wholly to its nature as One, but nevertheless is the single cause before all things of all things, being no other, but this too, is in the One. Insofar as it is one and alone, it will be most

self-sufficient. If it is most self-sufficient, it is the first principle and the most stable root of all principles. But to the extent that it is a principle at all and the first principle of all things and what all things long for because it is established prior to them, then it will precisely because of this be dependent in some way on those things in relation to which it is. For it has some, if it is right to put it thus, highest trace of neediness, just as again, matter constitutes the lowest echo of independence, because of what matter is in itself, namely, the One in its most obscure manifestation.

And here it seems that the argument is subject to overturning from within, for to the extent that it is one, it is self-sufficient, since it is evidently a principle insofar as it is the most independent and is one. But nevertheless, insofar as it is one, it is also a principle. Again, insofar as it is one, it is independent, though as a principle it is also dependent. Therefore in the way that it is self-sufficient, in this way it is dependent, but not in the same respect, but in relation to being what it is, it is self-sufficient, and as producing other things and anticipating them, it is dependent. Thus the latter too is a characteristic of the One: so that as One, it is either of them (independent and dependent) and not therefore either one of them in the way that the argument that distinguishes them, in naming (I 39) each, but instead it is just One, and it is in relation to this that there are both other things and the state of dependence. And how could it not be this as the One, just as it is all the other things that proceed from it? For being dependent is also one of these things.

We must therefore search for something else, which will in no way possess dependency in any respect whatsoever. It would, being of such a nature, not be true to say that it is a principle, nor even to say that it is this very thing, namely, that which is most self-sufficient, although this was apparently the most reverent epithet, since even this word signified an elevation and an exemption from all need. Nor did we deem it correct to call it that which transcends all things, but [if we call it] that which cannot be grasped in any way by means of intellect and about which one must be utterly silent, this would most correctly accord with our criterion, the axiom that is sought now, nor can the criterion be one that designates something, but only one that is content not to be designated, and in this way does homage to that incomprehensible ignorance.

Chapter 14. Second Method of Ascent: From the Potential to the Actual

This, then, is a method of ascent to the so-called first, or rather, to that which transcends everything that can be posited in any way.²⁰ But there is also this other method, not the one that seeks to value the self-sufficient before the incomplete and inferior, but rather values that which is dependent on the superior in the second position after that which is superior. [What comes to mind]

immediately is that that which is potential is second everywhere to that which is actual.²¹ For in order that something progress to act and not remain worthlessly in potential, it requires that which is actual. For the superior (I 40) can never spring up out of the inferior. Let this preliminary definition serve for us, one that is also in agreement with the undeviating common notions of all men.

Accordingly matter has the material form prior to it, since matter as a whole is the form in potential, whether it is primary matter that is encountered as entirely without form, or else secondary matter, which is established as body without qualities. It is usual for those who investigate [the nature of] sensible objects to focus on the latter as primary, since from their point of view, the sensibles alone are primary.²² It is the common element shared by the different elements that convinces them that there is an unqualified body, for which reason it also becomes clear that the qualities through which the differentiae come about exceed the unqualified body itself, just as forms preexist a given [part] of matter.

What then? Are accidents to be taken as superior to the essence, one might ask.²³

[Our reply is that] it is not at all surprising that the various co-existents reciprocally prevail over each other and that the components that comprise altogether the one that is from all of them should participate reciprocally. Moreover the word "quality" has two senses, the one being substantial, as for example the fire itself (by this I mean the form), and human being, and each of the other forms, in virtue of which the qualified body is each kind of qualified body. [Under this category come also] elements of each form, as for example of fire, its heat or brightness, and of human being, his mortality or (I 41) rationality, or again, with respect to his appearance, his uprightness, or his being able to articulate sounds. And [we mean] in the case of each form, the qualities that fulfill the essence of each kind, by means of which the entire form is rendered as a secondary substrate by the quality that defines it, which thus is named as the predicate with respect to the unqualified body. But the other sense of quality is episodic and accidental, namely, that which, while present in one substance as an essential quality, is present in another as an accidental quality. Above all, this quality adheres in a body that is already substantially qualified, so that it will prove inferior to the essence that receives it, since the latter is already determinative of the specific form and is prior to [the accident]. It is also clear that the unqualified body is first qualified by the substantially determinative quality. When accidental qualities accrue [to a substantially determined body], each form remains and occupies the seat of the body as its substrate, and the change occasioned by the accidental qualities happens with respect to those forms. Therefore, we are reasonable in assuming that qualified body is prior to the unqualified body, and that it is on account of it, since it is already perceptible, that this phenomenal universe also exists.

Now, since of these qualified bodies some have their moving principle within whereas some have it from without, as for example artifacts, it is necessary to add

the thought that nature is superior to the qualities, since nature is assigned the rank of cause, just as art is in respect of artifacts.

Moreover, of those bodies that are moved from within, some are thought merely to exist, while others indeed also take nourishment, grow, and reproduce like offspring. (I 42) Therefore, there is some other cause prior to the nature we have just mentioned, namely, the vegetative faculty. Clearly all the qualities that accrue to a body as a prior substrate are in themselves incorporeal, even if they become, as they do, corporeal through participation in their substrate, so that they are called material [properties] and are disposed by what they receive from matter. And so the qualities, and natures still more, and even, if possible, more still, vegetative life, [all] preserve their incorporeal character [when considered] in themselves.

Chapter 15. Digression: Does Irrational Soul Move Itself?

■ In this chapter and the next, Damascius explores a controversy concerning the seat of the activities that are manifested as the irrational soul, posing three hypotheses followed by a solution. Briefly, the problem is as follows: if soul is the self-mover as Damascius accepts, following *Phaedrus* 245c7 (τὸ αὐτὸ κινεῖν) and also citing *Laws* X 894e–895b7, then how can the irrational soul be said to move itself? If it is a self-mover, it should be capable of reversion, of self-awareness, and of detachment from the objects of awareness. But this is not the case with the irrational soul. Damascius canvasses the following suggestions: (15.2) irrational soul is governed by a cosmic soul; (15.3) irrational soul is moved from itself though not by itself; (16.1) irrational soul is a self-moving substance because it generates its own activities; (16.2) irrational soul is present in a substrate body and forms a hylomorphic composite with body, and so do each of its singular activities. In chapter 17, Damascius presents a solution to the question of how the irrational soul can be considered a self-mover: in fact, the irrational soul does not possess self-motion in the proper sense of the term. ■

15.1. *Is Irrational Soul Self-Moving?*

But since sense perception displays another [form of] life that is still clearer, a life that characterizes animals who enjoy locomotion on [the basis of] impulse, we must posit this life as a principle that ranks before that [vegetative] life and as the producer of a better form, since the self-moving living being is inherently superior to the plant that is rooted in the earth. And yet the animal is not a self-mover in the strictest sense, for the animal is not such entirely, through and through, but one part of it moves while the other part is moved. So this is an apparent self-mover. But above it there must be the genuine self-mover, that which moves itself as a whole and is moved as a whole, so that its trace may be the apparent self-mover. Moreover, we must assume that the soul responsible for moving the body is a self-moving substance. This soul is of two sorts, one

the rational soul, the other the irrational soul. It is clear that sensation signals [existence of] the rational soul. Is it not the case that each is more clearly or more obscurely a perceiver of himself, as each turns toward himself in (I 43) his [practices of] self-care and self-study, as well as in vital or contemplative knowledge of himself? The substance that is capable of these activities through thought and through synthesizing universal concepts would justly be called rational. But the irrational soul, even if it does not appear to meditate on these things or to think with respect to itself, still moves bodies from place to place, insofar as it is previously capable of movement in itself, since it projects different impulses on different occasions.

15.2. *Is Irrational Soul Moved by a Divine, Cosmic Soul?*

Therefore, does this irrational soul move itself from one impulse to another, or is it moved by another entity, as they say,²⁴ that is, by the rational soul that is in the universe as a whole? But this would be illogical, to say that the activities of each irrational soul were not the acts of that soul, but of a more divine soul, although the acts are unlimited and without determinacy, and mixed with a great deal of that which is deformed and incomplete. To say that the irrational activities belong to the rational soul is equivalent to positing that this soul too, is irrational substance, the one that projects the irrational activities, not to mention that it is the universal soul that [purportedly] does this. It is absurd, as well, to assume that a substance is not generative of like activities. If there were an irrational substance, it would have its own activities, activities not bestowed from elsewhere, but proceeding directly from it. Therefore the irrational soul also moves itself with respect to various desires and impulses. If it moves itself, then it reverts to itself. And since it does this, irrational soul is separable and (I 44) not in a substrate. Therefore it must be rational, if indeed it sees itself. For it will see itself when it reverts to itself. When it is concentrating on external things it sees external things, or rather it sees colored body. But it does not see itself, because this sight is not itself a colored body.²⁵ Therefore it does not revert to itself, and it is therefore nothing other than an irrational soul. For neither does the imagination project an apprehension of itself, but only of the perceptible object, as for example a colored body. Therefore neither does the irrational desire itself, but desires something desirable, as for example, honor or the vengeance or pleasure or wealth, so it does not move itself.

15.3 *Is Irrational Soul Moved from Itself? The Opinion of Syrianus*

But perhaps irrational soul moves in this way, not as moving itself, but as being moved from itself to the external world and as it were “darting” toward them rapidly,²⁶ and it is self-moving in this way, because it moves from itself, though it is not moved by itself. For this is how the great Syrianus and his followers

think “self-moving”²⁷ should be understood in a broader sense both in the *Laws* and in the *Timaeus*.²⁸ For this reason, the *Timaeus* says that plants do not move, because they do not share in the self-moving soul, whereas animals do participate, at least those that have local movement. But there is none the less a necessity for all that is moved either to be moved by itself or by another, and the latter is meant in one of two ways, either by a superior reality, as we say is the case with individual activities that (I 45) are truly irrational, or just by something else. For nothing can be moved by that in which it is, since that is body and on the contrary, it is the body that is moved by soul.

Chapter 16. Irrational Soul and the Living Being

■ Another solution: the irrational soul moves itself qua substance that generates its own activities. The irrational soul is self-moving in the sense that on its own volition it moves toward and responds to the external objects. Even so, the irrational soul is not truly separable from the living body. It would be better to say that the composite of body and soul moves or perceives. This kind of self-motion belongs to the composite entity (body and soul). ■

16.1 Irrational Soul Is a Self-Moving Substance by Generating Its Own Activities

Perhaps, then, the activities are moved by substance, and in this way the irrational soul may be called self-moving, because it is a substance that is generative of its own activities. But first, this will be a common feature of every substance, even that which we say is moved by another. And so, for example, fire is in this sense self-moving, because as a substance it generates its own individual activities, and similarly with a clod or a hoe or with anything that is capable of activity. For its own activity always proceeds from the substance [in question]. This solution therefore cannot solve the argument as stated.

But perhaps since being a qualified form [requires] being in a substrate, [the form] must not be understood as acting in itself, but [must act together] with the substrate in which it is, whose [quality] determines the act. Therefore just as that which expanded²⁹ the visual sensation was not whiteness, nor the unqualified body, but both together, so too the activity of perception does not belong to the disembodied capacity for perception on the one hand, nor to the sense organ, since that is a body, but to the composite being that is a single substance from both, such as is combined from form and matter; for the sense organ is not the instrument of perception but its substrate, and perception is present in it, but not as using the sense organ.³⁰ For if it did use the sense organ, then it would move itself prior to the instrument, so that it could also

move the instrument. But as it is, sensation actually arises together with the substrate and has no separable activity. Let us then allow that the composite being is responsible for the activity, but that the activity proceeds in terms of the form, just as the activity of the pruning knife accords with its shape and it is the act of the white body that expands the object of vision in [the perception of] whiteness.

16.2 *Irrational Soul Forms a Hylomorphic Composite with Body*

(I 46) So, what is that which moves in the composite being, and what is it that is moved?

[One answer is that] it is the soul that moves while the body is moved. But there again the soul will move independently, while the body will be moved independently, and the soul in moving must be prior to the body that is moved, since the soul has a separable activity that moves prior to the activity that is moved. Therefore we must not assume that the one is the mover and the other moved, but that the living being has become a unity, a body that is capable of perception or else perception that has become embodied, and which is responsible for activating this apparently self-moving activity. For if there is a substance that belongs to the composite living being, by all means there must be an activity that is composite, one that is appropriate for the entire animal, which after all is a whole substance, in which also there are observed the incorporeal and the corporeal mixed with each other, and just as in the case of that which expands the organ of sight, the composite is present; and so we have an experience that has both properties under the influence of the white body, the somatic one, when we undergo the distension of the sense organ, but the incorporeal one when we receive the experience of sight in an incorporeal way, as when we recognize the color. Just as the agent is a composite, so also is the patient, namely sight, a composite from the incorporeal capacity to see and the underlying body. Therefore we must assume that there is this kind of self-motion present in the optic faculty and in perception more generally, such that it cannot act by itself, since it does not exist by itself, but once it is present in the body and qualifies the body with a more distinctive kind of quality (I 47) and [brings about] illumination, it renders the entire animal as apparently self-moving. Why apparently? Because the mover and the moved [do not form] an individual, but are³¹ like substances that are separated from each other, but in another way they co-arise, just as the rational soul and the animal or the shell-like body and the pneumatic body do.³² In these combinations, one element moves and the other is moved, so that it is not true [in this case] that one element is the substrate while the other element is in the substrate. But when the composite form is of this nature, neither does either element initiate motion by itself (for it has no separate subsistence) nor does it happen that one aspect moves and the other is moved [when they are] in a composite entity (for again,

they would prove to be distinctive in their respective activities, and thus in their beings).

Chapter 17. Self-Motion Defined

But the kind of self-motion according to which the joint entity moves itself by virtue of one of the elements, namely the form, is different [from self-motion as the compound]. Whence also it seems that this [that is, form] is the mover, not because the form does move the other element, but because the composite moves as the form, either by itself or by another.³³

If it is moved by another, then it is either moved by something superior or by something inferior, and again, the same arguments will apply: if it is moved by itself, then the same thing will be both mover and moved, which is something that only holds true for the partless and simple.

[Our reply] is that just as the self-moving is not the authentic [self-mover], so neither is the case of the same thing being moved by itself and moving itself authentic [self-motion] but [only] apparent, because there is one simple thing by virtue of which the composite moves, and also because this [compound] moves as one thing, but there are also those elements by virtue of which it is moved. Moreover, the composite moves according to the whole form, in which is also that according to which [the composite] is (I 48) moved. But the composite on either side [mover or moved] is determined by the reciprocal participation of the elements (so to speak) of the whole form, so that the whole composite both moves and is moved, but it does not move or move itself as the whole, but rather it moves qua soul and is moved qua body, and it is neither moved by the soul nor by the body.

That there is a difference between “that by which”³⁴ and “that as which”³⁵ can be easily clarified: motion is of two kinds, the one arises in the moved, since it is an experience that the moved undergoes, and the other is external and bestows that motion [in the prior sense]. Thus it is moved by the external motion and yet according to which the [kind of motion that belongs to the moved as its experience]. For if it were moved also by the [motion that belongs to the moved as its experience] then this motion would impart a kind of motion from itself, that is as the agent, to the moved. Therefore that motion will turn out to be what the moved undergoes as well as the motion according to which it moves, and we shall proceed to infinity.

Chapter 18. The Degrees and Kinds of Self-Motion

■ In this chapter, Damascius explores the idea that there are degrees of self-motion, relying on Propositions 14–17 of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology* to formulate his argument that self-motion correlates with a varying degree of rationality. ■

Likewise in the case of life, the argument is true on inspection. For the one kind of life is that which makes [something] live, and it bestows life on that which is made alive by it, while the other kind of life is that as which that which is made alive lives, due to the agency of the former. For if this life [as which it lives] also made alive, then this would give another life, and so on to infinity. And so it is with respect to the form of self-motion, namely, the one kind is that by which the apparently self-moving is brought to move itself, while the other kind is that as which it is such apparently, since it is the experience of self-motion and it is inseparable from that which participates in self-motion. Indeed, the particular life that constitutes the self-moving nature is of the following type, since it is soul. (I 49) Soul, too, is twofold, the one that generates [life], and the other by which the animate body is formed as a being that seems to be moved on its own from within—not that there is something present within it by which it moves, but what is present is that as which it moves, which we call being alive.

But perhaps, if one concedes these arguments, he will also think that [these kinds of life] are also shared with plants and with inanimate objects. Indeed, the clod moves itself by internal impulse toward the earth and plants similarly, since there is a plant soul in them through which they are nourished and generate like offspring, and even irrational and rational animals alike grow in a similar way, so that there is nothing that is not a self-mover.

In reply, we shall say that every physical thing and every vegetative form is moved from within, and still more every living being, but not with respect to every motion, but only when the movement is local. [Locomotion] is the most obvious case of self-motion. By virtue of this self-motion we say that the other things are other-moved, if they do not have this internal source of motion. Thus if we use as the criterion for self-motion, the self-motion according to which the rational soul is self-moving, then not even irrational animals will appear to be self-moving, since they cannot revert to themselves. For example, sight cannot see itself. Nor does imagination imagine that it imagines. And emotion and desire direct all their activity toward the external object of desire. Therefore, we were saying that this kind of self-mover acts from within toward the external object, not reflexively toward itself, but simply rectilinearly; (I 50) for this was the form of this life, since it was inseparable from the body, its substrate, which also moves rectilinearly.³⁶ Just as fire moves upward and earth moves downward, due to their inherent natures, and just as plants are nourished, grow, and reproduce their kind by means of the vegetative soul, this soul also being inherent in them, so when it comes to animals, by virtue of the appetitive life that is present within the physical and vegetative body that belongs to them and is substantial with the form of the animal, they are characterized by a self-motion that is entirely irrational. But if someone were to contemplate animals as somehow analogous to rational beings and as generating activities that are analogous to rational activities, and to suppose that these animals also participate in the

first kind of self-mover, and therefore have a soul that reverts to itself, perhaps we could agree that [such participation] would also make these beings rational, except they are not rational by their very self-nature, but only through participation, and their rationality is quite obscure, as if one were to say that the rational soul is intellectual through participation because it always thinks [by means of] common conceptions that are not distorted.

At any rate, we shall assume that the separable does have a certain spectrum, with either extreme dominating at a given time. The one extreme is that which is entirely separable, as for example rational form, and the other extreme is the entirely inseparable, as for example quality. But in the middle there is a nature that leans toward the inseparable, having a small trace of the separable, as well as the irrational soul that leans toward the separable. For it seems somehow to subsist by itself apart from any substrate as support, whence it is a matter of dispute whether this soul is self-moving or extrinsically moved. For it (I 51) reveals a large trace of self-motion but not the genuine kind, which involves self-reversion, and so [the latter] can be entirely separate from a material substrate.³⁷ The vegetative soul, in turn, is somewhere in the middle of these, and therefore it seems to some that it is a kind of soul, while others think of it as a nature. But we shall examine these matters more extensively in other works,³⁸ so for now this much must suffice.

Chapter 19. The Self-Mover Is Not the First Principle

■ In the previous chapter, Damascius applied a Neoplatonist differentiation between the genuine self-mover and the self-mover as expressed through the various gradations of soul, including animal, vegetative, and rational. In this chapter, Damascius invokes the hierarchy of self-motion described by Proclus in *ET* Proposition 14: “All that exists is either moved or unmoved; and if the former, either by itself or by another, that is, either intrinsically or extrinsically: so that everything is unmoved, intrinsically moved, or extrinsically moved.” Proclus elaborates this division in Proposition 20, referring, respectively, to intellect, soul, and body. “Beyond all bodies is the soul’s essence; beyond all souls, the intellective principle.”

Damascius does not argue at length for the superiority of intellect to soul based on the principle of the priority of motion, though again he alludes to Proclus’ argument in *ET* Proposition 20, to the effect that intellect is prior to soul insofar as intellect’s stability reflects a greater degree of unity and hence is closer to the One. But Damascius cannot use this argument here for the reason that he is arguing to a first principle and hence is not entitled to assume at the outset that the One is this principle. ■

But we must return again to our main topic.³⁹ As for the kind of self-mover that is mixed with the extrinsically moved, how can this be the first principle?⁴⁰ It does not bring itself into existence nor does it truly complete itself, but it requires another being for the accomplishment of both. Furthermore, the

genuine self-mover certainly comes before it, in this case, the self-mover that perception, or rather the evidence of appearances, reveals, namely the human self-mover.⁴¹ Clearly, now, we shall grasp all rational form [starting] from this [level of soul], that is, the human, since only from the human rational soul is it possible to grasp properties in terms of their universal aspects.

Is then the self-moving, in the strictest possible sense, the principle, and do we require no other superior form? Our reply is that the mover is always naturally prior to the moved, and it is in general the case that every form that is free from its opposite subsists by itself prior to the form that is mixed with its opposite, and that the pure is the cause of the mixed. For that which shares its substance with another has its activity implicated in the latter, and so what is in this situation will make itself a self-mover in the sense of being both mover and moved, but could not make itself mover alone, since it is not alone; but it is necessary for every form to be alone, so there must exist in isolation also something that moves and is not moved.

[Our reply is that] it would be absurd if, after all, there should be what is only moved, as for example the body, yet if at the same time that which only moves [without being moved] were not prior to the compound [of mover and moved]. Obviously the latter, the mover, is superior to the moved, since even the self-mover is superior insofar as it moves itself rather than insofar as it is moved. It is necessary for the first mover to be unmoved, as the third is that which is moved but does not move, and in the middle of them is the self-mover, which requires the mover in order to render it capable of motion. Now if one wants, let us grant that the self-mover does so from its own agency. Nevertheless, in general if something is moved, then it does not remain to the extent that it is in motion. Whereas if something moves, it is necessary for it to move while remaining, just insofar as it moves. Then where does it get its capacity to remain? For either only its being moved must be from itself, or its being moved and its remaining belong simultaneously to the same whole. Then where does its capacity simply to remain arise? Surely, that arises from its simply remaining, and this is the motionless cause. Therefore, before the self-moving we must posit the motionless.

Chapter 20. Intellect is Not the First Principle

■ In this chapter, Damascius moves up to the first term in the hierarchy of movers, the immobile, or intellect, and here he relies on, without explicitly delineating, Iamblichus' division of the hypostasis of intellect into participating, participated, and unparticipated intellect. Thus Damascius mentions the Unified (his monad, that is, the principle of Being before Being's explicit emergence) as well as the *noeric* realm, the aspect of intellect that is participated in by the soul, insofar as soul has an affinity with the intellectual realm. Damascius also mentions another Iamblichean doctrine that he will develop

much more substantially in subsequent chapters of this work, the three different kinds of reversion, namely, existential, vital, and cognitive, which intellect manifests in relation to its own self-actualization. Damascius uses this great range in the hypostasis of intellect, its multiple aspects and multiply dynamic functions, in order to argue for a principle that unifies intellect, and so vitiates its status as first principle. ■

Therefore let us inquire if the immobile is the principle in the strictest sense. Yet how can it be? For the immobile is all the things in an immobile state that the self-mover is in a self-moving state. Nothing that is self-moving can be first for the reasons previously stated, and each of the elements that are within the self-mover is a particular self-mover; therefore a particular immobile is prior to a particular self-mover. To state it more clearly, leaving aside the other kinds of self-mover, I shall argue for three of them. We observe at least three components in the self-moving soul, namely, a substantial, vital, and cognitive [aspect], and it is clear that each of these is a (I 53) species of self-motion, since in fact the whole is completely self-motive.

Hence prior to each of these kinds is also the immobile correlate to each.⁴² Therefore there is also the immobile *pleroma* consisting of these three forms.

Now, these three are separate from each other; yet still they are united with each other in the self-moving.

Well, perhaps they are entirely united, so that none of the [three forms] can be discriminated? But in this way each is only self-moving, and not immobile, and yet it is necessary for each to be immobile independently [of the other kinds], because each self-mover could not arise first. Furthermore, it will be necessary that the differentiation that applies to the self-moving will arise before that which arises within the immobile. Therefore the immobile is one and many at the same time, is united and differentiated at the same time, which is in fact just what we call Intellect. It is clear that the unified in intellect is naturally prior to the differentiated, as well as of greater importance, for division constantly requires unity, but not vice versa—unity does not require differentiation.

Intellect does not, though, possess the Unified in a way that is free from its opposite. The intellective form as a whole shares its essence to an equal extent with the differentiated.⁴³ Therefore, the qualifiedly unified needs the absolutely Unified, and that which is with another requires that which is by itself, and that which exists through participation requires that which exists through subsistence.⁴⁴ For, in fact, intellect, being self-constituting, produces itself as unified and differentiated at once; therefore it functions as both. And therefore in terms of its nature as unified, the intellect will be produced from the absolutely Unified, or that which is solely unified. And before the unified that reflects specific forms there is that which is uncircumscribed, that is, undifferentiated into forms; [which is] what we are now calling the Unified, which the wise call Being, since it contains the many in one aggregation that subsists prior to the many.

Chapter 21. Being Is Not the First Principle

■ Here Damascius takes up a classic discussion in Neoplatonist literature, again citing what are fairly conventional arguments to make a very general case for the primacy of the One over the principle of Being or intellect. Damascius is now sketching a rough argument that derives from Proclus, *ET* Proposition 1, “every multiplicity in some way participates unity,” and ultimately from Plotinus’ more radical arguments against intellect as first principle, especially at the end of *Ennead* VI.9.1, where Plotinus argues that intellect cannot be the first principle, since it includes both knower and known, and since it contains the multiplicity of all the forms. Plotinus’ task was the more daunting because in forging these arguments against intellect/Being as first principle, he was arguing against the Middle Platonist tradition that saw forms as contents of the divine mind. Damascius relies on the proof for *ET* Proposition 1, where Proclus argues, “a manifold which in no way participates in a unity, neither as a whole nor in respect of its parts severally, will be infinite in every way and in respect of every part.” ■

(I 54) Stopping here, let us catch our breath and consider whether Being is that principle of all things that we are after. For what is there that does not participate in Being? Just when something exists it is [already] stationed beneath Being itself. Now if the Unified were Being, then Being would be second after the One, since only after participating in the One did the Unified arise. In general, if we conceive of the One as different from Being [there are two possibilities]: if Being is *prior* to the One, it will not participate in the One. In this case, there will then be only the many, and at that, an indefinitely⁴⁵ indefinite many. If the One is *with* Being, and Being is with the One, and they are similarly ranked or arise as mutually distinguished from each other, there will then be two principles, and the already mentioned absurdity will result, that they will participate reciprocally in each other, and there will be two elements or parts of something else that comprises both of them, and what will bring them into relation with each other? For if the One has made Being one with itself, in as much as it is one—for this might be said—the One will have its activity before Being, in order that Being might also attain an appellation and revert [to the One]. Therefore the One is by itself and is self-complete before Being. In addition the simple is before the composite. So either [the One and Being] are equally simple, or then there are two principles, or one principle from two, and this will be a composite. Therefore the simple must be before this [composite] and be entirely without composition, namely, the One or, at least, not not one. If it is not one, it will be many or nothing. But the nothing if it signifies the entirely empty set, would be without meaning. If it is the Ineffable, that is not even simple. And if it is many (I 55), it is not simple. The simple (*ἀπλοῦν*) wishes to be without multiplicity (*ἄπολν*) because it is bereft of the many. In general, it is altogether impossible to conceive of anything simpler than the One. In every-way, therefore, the One is before Being.

But in order to progress from these arguments, and in order to complete the ascent, having ascended to the Unified, whatever it is called, [as long as it is understood that] it is entirely Unified, from this we must ascend to the One, [that is] from that which participates to that which is participated.

Chapter 22. The One as the First Principle

■ Here Damascius switches abruptly to an argument for the One as first principle based on the authority of key texts in the Neoplatonist exegesis of Plato's metaphysics, that is, the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* and *Republic* 509b. For Damascius, Plato's *Parmenides* starts, not with the first principle—that is, not with the Ineffable, which cannot after all be the subject of a discourse such as the *Parmenides*—but with the One as the principle of all things. Since the Ineffable is not a principle that can be presented in terms of any metaphysical scheme, Damascius is able to rely on the textual authority of Plato without violating the strictures he has previously enunciated in chapter 1, above. ■

The One is the principle of all things. Plato as well, after he ascended to this, required no other principle in his dialogues. For that other is the ineffable principle, but it is not the principle of rational discourse or of cognitions. For neither is it the principle of lives, of beings, nor of ones, but it is the principle of all things in an absolute way, stationed beyond all apprehension. And therefore Plato indicated nothing about this principle,⁴⁶ but instead starting from the One, he proceeded to the negation of all other things except the One itself. Indeed, he ultimately denied its being one,⁴⁷ but did not deny the One. Moreover, he denied this denial but not the One, and he denied the name and the conception and all knowledge of it, and why ought we to elaborate?⁴⁸ [He denied] Being as a whole and in its entirety, whether [Being] is the Unified or the unitary,⁴⁹ or if you wish, the two principles consisting in the indefinite and limit,⁵⁰ and yet that which is beyond all these things, the One, he never in any way denied. And that is why in the *Sophist* he designates it as One before Being,⁵¹ and in the *Republic*, as the Good beyond every essence.⁵² Still, the One alone was never rejected [in the philosophy of Plato].

(I 56) Either [the One] is knowable and expressible or else it is unknowable and ineffable, or in some ways it is knowable and expressible but in others not. One could indicate its nature through negations, but through affirmation it is ineffable. And again by means of the simplicity of knowledge it can be known, or intuited, but it is unknowable through any synthesis, and therefore it cannot even be grasped by negation. In general, to the extent that it is posited as one, to this extent it must also be assigned a rank among all the other principles that are posited in any way, since it is the summit of those things that subsist in terms of a hierarchy. Nevertheless, a great deal of the ineffable and the unknowable and the nonrelative and what is without place⁵³ are in [the

One] yet with a trace of the opposite of [what is referred to by these designations,] though the former prove higher ranking. But what is free from opposites and prior to mixture subsists everywhere prior to [qualified states] as the unmixed.

Now, either the superior predicates are in the One through subsistence—yet in that case, how shall their opposites simultaneously be present in the One?—or else they are present through participation, and in that case, they arrive from another source, from the first that itself is such a nature. Thus before the One there is the absolutely simple and ineffable, which cannot be the object of hypothesis, and which is nonrelative and inconceivable in every way. It is indeed to this [the Ineffable] that this ascent through discursive rationality has hastened, traversing through the most manifest principles yet omitting none of the intermediate principles that lie between the transcendent and the lowest [manifestations of reality].

(I 57) In the previous [discussion] we progressed by means of characteristics. But we have not yet indicated the vastness, perfect completion, and all-inclusiveness that belong to the first principles, that is, to the Unified, the One, and the Ineffable. Therefore, we must also traverse this method as far as possible.

Chapter 23. Third Method of Ascent: The World as First Principle

■ Here Damascius works within the tradition of cosmology, principally that of Plato's *Timaeus* and of Aristotle's *De caelo*. Damascius quotes *Timaeus* 34b1 and assumes, along with Plato, that the universe as a whole is divine. "Applying this entire train of reasoning to the god that was yet to be, the eternal god made it smooth and even all over, equal from the center, a whole and complete body itself, but also made up of complete bodies. In the center he set a soul, which he extended throughout the whole body, and with which he then covered the body outside. And he set it to turn in a circle, a single solitary universe, whose very excellence enables it to keep its own company without requiring anything else. For its knowledge of and friendship with itself is enough. All this, then, explains why this world which he begat is itself a blessed god" (*Timaeus* 34a–b Jowett translation).

Although this is the basis of Damascius' discussion of the cosmos as living deity, he also introduces some Neoplatonist elaborations of the *Timaeus* conception, elaborations that suggested themselves to the Neoplatonists because of Plato's assertion that the universe, itself a god, is modeled after something he calls "the perfect living being" (*Timaeus* 39e). This tradition emerges already in Plotinus, *Ennead* V.8.4. There Plotinus conceives of the cosmos, not exactly as the visible world but rather as a cosmic life that is characterized by bliss and radiance, as if it were a cosmic dream. Damascius discusses the idea of divine or heavenly pleasures, pleasures belonging to the gods, at *Philebus* 209–210, corroborating what he says here about the possibility of a cosmic irrational soul. ■

Therefore let us take up in its turn the first completely perfect [being], which the gods themselves have rendered available even to perception, for the purpose of indicating its hidden and intelligible and unified and ineffable perfection. This cosmos is a complete world made of complete [parts],⁵⁴ as we see, and what we see is its visible aspect. And yet what belongs to us belongs in a prior way to the cosmos. Surely that world could by no means possess the inferior element that belongs to us, namely the corporeal, or whatever it is that serves as a substrate to the corporeal (the corporeal does not have an independent existence, but it arises in a substrate) but not also possess what is superior [in us], since it is of course more complete than we are.

It will possess, therefore, a nature that is appropriate to that world, not the nature that moves [in a linear direction] up or down, but one that moves with a cyclical motion, for this kind of motion is natural to that [kind of everlasting being].⁵⁵ And therefore it will also have the life that is superior to this life, that is, a vegetative life that will not by any means grow or feed or reproduce like offspring that arise and perish attended by increase or diminution (unless there is some other manner of reproduction, on which here it is not necessary to digress); instead, that life [will be] steadfast and accomplish its native fullness and growth through form and number, not that it will grow, but that it will be already wholly grown, (I 58) and still its generation will be of its native illuminations, a generation that has already given birth to them, and it is this activity that will constitute the analogue of creating and maintaining offspring in that world.

And so it will also possess the irrational soul and not just the soul that is capable of sensation, as they say,⁵⁶ but also heavenly or divine imagination that possesses the objects of sensation within itself, and is ever in good order.⁵⁷ Moreover, it will also have the appetitive soul, which is emotional or appetitive there in a different way: the appetitive because its well-being depends on a divine ease and because it always enjoys the stable [pleasure] that belongs to it as a living being, while it is spirited because it rejoices in the perfection and sanctity of the transcendence that belongs naturally to the universal living being.⁵⁸

Now if the human being is a rational animal, and if the animal depends on the rational soul, it is by all means true that the world is such an animal, though to a much greater extent. The world therefore also moves by means of the self-moving cause that disposes [the world order] truly. Therefore the world moves not just with natural, but also with voluntary circular motion, which is clearly ever in its station and thus never is deprived of its native borne. For this, too, is what the science of astronomical observation reports, that is, the science of the revolution of the cosmos.

Therefore, let it be the automotive activity, manifesting its effects in different venues, that is responsible for the ever-returning circular motion that undergoes its characteristic changes of position, but as for the facts that this motion is always the same, taking place in the same place, around the same

center and with the same relative position,⁵⁹ is absolutely without deviation, occurs in that which does deviate, is unchanging in the midst of that which does change, (I 59) and is still in the midst of what is in motion, what makes these available to the universe?

[It is not the soul, for] the self-moving soul brings about its activities as subject to change, since it both moves and is moved. Whence is the origin of the immobility that belongs to this world? If the world is sempeternal,⁶⁰ then the source of its immobility is that which is always and absolutely unmoved, whereas if it is simply the longest-lived living being (for let us assume this for the moment, from what is available from the sensible⁶¹ evidence) its source is what, in the course of this same time, remains as it is constantly without change, cycling back and forth to the same position from the same position, in one pattern and one order. In this amount of time how has it suffered no change or alteration, unless it was united to a cause that was also entirely unchanging? Therefore, the self-moving depends in all circumstances on the immobile, which provides the universe with its native order and with immobile life.

Chapter 24. The Unmanifest Diacosm Is Not the First Principle

■ This chapter surveys the entire series that Damascius elaborates according to the first method of ascent, moving rapidly from the soul of the all to the unmoved mover (intellect), to the unmanifest diacosm, to the One itself, and thence to the Ineffable. These preliminary chapters serve as preview of the entire contents of the treatise as a whole. In this chapter, Damascius touches on key doctrinal points in the elaboration of the dynamic relationships between the first principles, though he does so in a highly compressed manner. In particular, here he touches on the topic of the unmanifest diacosm, or supermundane abyss, a topic that he returns to in chapter 113, toward the end of the treatise. ■

But as for the soul of the all, since it is the first of the encosmic deities, it is always perfect and always blessed. But it could not possess this nature from itself (since it is this nature that supports that which is subject to change), but rather it participates in the immobile cause that is seated before it. For if the soul of the all were in the state of being ordered and commensurate with itself, just insofar as it was self-moving, then the human soul as well might also be in a constant state of perfection, since it is self-moving, and it is also immortal and ever moving, and yet it is not without change with respect to its activities, which constantly change, given its great distance from that which is unmoved. If, nevertheless, one demonstrates that in general the immobile is before the self-moved, it is necessary also for the cosmic (I 60) immobile to be before the cosmic self-moved, whereas the immobile belongs to the unchanging dispenser of order that is prior to universe, just as there is also the unique and appropriate immobile [cause] that belongs to each divine living being.

So that we may not waste our time in matters that invite so many speculations, we shall assume that the universal immobile is prior to the universal self-mover. For it cannot be that while the inferior is perfect, the superior is only partial. Therefore the immobile cosmos is prior to the self-moving. And by the same argument, the unified and concentrated world is before the differentiated world, since this world is all things in a unified state that the fully multiple or immobile world (as it is now being referred to) is by virtue of differentiation. Indeed, this world is still more things, as many as it would be possible to name.

From this hidden diacosm,⁶² we ascend to the One itself. Do not understand the One as the least, nor as any characteristic, as for example, one form, or one intellect, or one divinity, or many, or even all gods as one god, but rather understand it as a one that is all-great, the One itself without qualification. It embraces all things that are derived from it, or rather is all of those as the One that is before all things. This world is more ungraspable than the so-called hidden world, since it cannot even be called a world, but rather the One before all worlds, and it embraces all things in its perfectly unique simplicity.

(I 61) Since that is the nature of the One's greatness, we must think of the Ineffable in this way, as at once the one container of all things, but also as ineffable to the extent that it is not One, not a container, and not even ineffable. But concerning such a nature, indeed, our cowardice in speaking finds its limit, imploring as it does pardon from the gods for the recklessness that skirts the danger of [trying to express the Ineffable].

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PART TWO

On the One

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Section III. On the One and on Knowledge of the One

Chapter 25. Is There a Principle That Mediates between the One and the Ineffable?

■ In this chapter, Damascius proceeds first by demonstration, then by analogy, and finally by negation, to examine the possibility of the One's functioning as an object of knowledge. In the conclusion to the chapter, he introduces the method of unitary knowledge, or as he also terms it, the concentration of all knowledge. At this point in the argument, Damascius does not fully explicate the theoretical concomitants of this method, though later, especially in chapters 105–108, he discusses the supermundane abyss, unified substance, and the intellect in light of Iamblichus' view, that at root, the identity of the Intellect is the One. ■

(I 62) Again, let us initiate our inquiry concerning the One from still another premise, and ask whether the One must be situated after that which is completely Ineffable or whether, as in the case of other intervals, something should be placed in between the Ineffable and the expressible. In a certain way, the Ineffable is negative—I say in a certain way not because it is at all positive, but because this name or reality is not denial or attribution but complete removal, though the removal does not mean that it is not something, since “not something” is among things, nor is this removal itself anything at all. If we define the term “Ineffable” so that it is not even a term, all that is prior to the One then has such a nature because we can have no conception concerning what is beyond the One. And yet if this is the first thing that can be conceived in any way at all, why do we seek for

more things that are prior to the Ineffable, where there are neither this more nor the One? When dealing with the Ineffable, we must rid ourselves of our own hyperactive doubt and helplessness, and go back to our search for the One, to see whether it is capable of expression in language at all, or whether it must be sought as something in between the Ineffable and that which is capable of expression.

Much has been said above concerning the nature of the One, of necessity, owing to the principle that is even beyond this. For [only by] attaching to the One can we attempt to (I 63) speak concerning that to which attachment is not possible. But nevertheless it is time to develop our principal doctrine concerning the One. This, in fact, must be studied before all, namely, whether the One is in any way knowable or whether it is entirely unknowable.

[First argument for the knowability of the One]: if we are able to dispose ourselves for the resolution of reality¹ from the lowest levels back up to the simplest or to the most encompassing of all, [namely,] to that which it is only possible to conceive as the One, then it is entirely clear that we do know this about the One, and a fortiori, we know that a higher form of knowledge [than the knowledge belonging to us] attains to the One.

The second [positive argument for knowledge of the One]: if we conceptualize the One as a distinct reality and the many as distinct from and opposed to the One, we then have a conception of the One. For example, if the one we have in mind exists on the level of Form, can we then also conceive the uncircumscribed One that is prior to the forms, as for example the all-One,² which exists at the level of the absolutely simple.³ [Another argument for knowledge of the One: given that] each of the forms is also a one that is, though it is not the same to be one and to be a form, (just as Being and One are not the same) we can compress each of these, as we bring together the forms into one form that consists in the uncircumscribed essence of the intellect, just as [we compress] the real beings into the single undifferentiated unity of Being, and again [we compress] the ones into the single unity of the One. And just as you make one point by synthesizing [an] indefinite [number of] points, so by gathering the indefinite [number] of ones together, you make the [One] that is the most comprehensive of all ones.⁴

Moreover, it is necessary that all that is available for our thought be either the many that do not participate in the One, in which case, the many will not cease from becoming indefinitely plural, and consequently, it will not even be possible for us to conceive (I 64) them at all, or the many as participating in the One and thus the One also will become an object of knowledge simultaneously with the realization of the many, since it halts the dispersal of the many into infinity, or else [it is necessary that] that be available as the sole One in a way that is as distinct as possible from the thought of the many. And even if it is not easy to detach ourselves from the many entirely, we are brought closer to the One, and we nevertheless can succeed in purifying our own conception concerning it.

As for knowledge, either it comes about through [intellectual] intuition,⁵ or [progressively] by means of syllogism, which is a kind of weak vision and consists in a dim view from far away,⁶ and rests on the necessity of logic; or else [knowledge arises] in accordance with a spurious reasoning⁷ and does not even achieve contact from afar, but is simply a thinking about something on the basis of other thoughts, which is, for example, also the way we are accustomed to thinking about matter or depravation and non-being in general. So if this is a particular method of knowledge, perhaps we can know the One beyond all things in this way, as Plato informs us, as when he sometimes brings us near by analogy to that which transcends essence, and sometimes reveals that nature to us by means of negations, the nature that, in the end, he denies is, but is instead One, unique, without participation in Being.⁸ From this nature Being arises. And since name, definition, opinion and knowledge are [all relative to] Being, he removes these, too.⁹ If intellection is of the intelligible, and this is the real, intellection also must be removed because it is composite and cannot accord with the absolute.

(I 65) If there is a unitary knowledge, such as the gods have, a cognition that accords with the One and is beyond the Unified, this knowledge will converge with the One in an intuition, whereas the duller sort of thought, such as our own thought, will attempt to grasp the One by means of a false conception. But if ever we too attain an intuition, it will be when, as Plato says, we lift the eye of our soul in its direction,¹⁰ and cast the very flower¹¹ of the cognition that belongs to us and is uniform with the One. But that Plato posits the One as knowable, he clarified by calling it the greatest study,¹² and in the *Sophist* as well, by representing it as before Being, confining his demonstration to the sole conception of the One.¹³

Apart from these considerations, if there is a unitary cognition, as the oracles reveal,¹⁴ then just as the knowledge [whose object is the] many beings is divided [among these] can be compressed into a single conception of the One-Being, so also can we compress the knowledge that is parceled out among the many unified beings that are available for knowledge. Clearly we correlate unitary knowledge and the unitary object of knowledge; for surely deity, insofar as it is participated, will not know other things, and yet be ignorant of itself, or know itself only in terms of Being, but not also in terms of the One, especially [when it knows] by means of that unified intellection that the deity has in itself. (I 66) For, in fact, the intellect on which [individual intellects] depend has the same relationship [to others] as has that which is prior to intellect [with Intellect]. Therefore it knows itself, but it is the One, and hence it will know the One. And in general, just as the intellectual is twofold, so we affirm that the intelligible is twofold, with one aspect that is unified, another that is unitary, one aspect that is beyond substance, and one aspect that shares substantial being. The intelligible is that which is knowable by means of intellection, and therefore the unitary is knowable, and therefore a certain one is knowable, and there are

therefore many unitary realities that can be known. And what I just now sketched, I will state: let there be a concentration of these many distinct forms of knowledge into a single, complete knowledge that [apprehends] the complete One, which is the simple concentration of the many henads.¹⁵

And let us say further, that if a particular one is knowable, then the nature of the One is not such that it refuses all knowledge. As therefore absolute form is knowable, because this particular form is knowable as well, and absolute Being, because this particular being is knowable, so also the absolute One would be knowable, because this [one] is knowable. In fact, in each case if there is something that belongs to a class then it does so insofar as it is a member of that class, as for example, a certain form is such but only as Form, and a particular being such, but only as Being, and a particular one is such, but only as One. If the compression [of knowledge] transcends us, because we have been dispersed in the war of the Titans,¹⁶ what wonder? For we do not even know the forms in the intellect, as Plato himself says in the *Epistles*,¹⁷ but nevertheless, we think that we are correct in ascertaining many things about (I 67) them, though our contact with them is not unmediated, but through, so to speak, transparent bodies, that is, forms that awaken themselves in us.¹⁸

Moreover, surely the knowable originates from the One, as the philosophers tell us (for all things come from the gods, they say), and as we shall demonstrate shortly, when we come to this topic.¹⁹ Consequently, the first object of knowledge can be found among the gods, since the first knower is found there too; where one member of relative term is, there too the other relative belongs inherently. Thus if the first object of knowledge is one, then the first One must be an object of knowledge, since among the real beings, the first object of knowledge is itself the first intelligible reality.

The absolute One is, after all, the all-One. The all-One is not some one, but rather it is [the] One as all, as Linos and Pythagoras²⁰ say, and hence it is also knowable. For the knowable is also one among all things, and therefore this, [the knowable] is anticipated in the One. It is from these and similar considerations that one might assume that the One before all things is itself knowable.²¹

Chapter 26. The One Cannot Be Known

■ In this chapter, Damascius disabuses the reader of the notion that any form of argument, whether by analogy, negation, logic, or based on intellectual intuition, can demonstrate that the One is knowable. At the heart of the chapter lies a deeper argument, based on a discussion of Plato's analogy of the sun and the form of the Good at *Republic* VI 508. For Damascius, the One cannot be known, since (if we are to take seriously Plato's equation of the sun with the Good, which Damascius then transposes to the One) it is that by which all is known. In the final section of the chapter, Damascius tries

to show that the henads (or primary triad variously conceived as the Unified, as Being, as the all-One) are actually the objects of an argument or method of knowledge based on the simplification or concentration of intellect, rather than the One itself. ■

(I 68) Then again, someone might call the doctrine [of the One's knowability] into question after examining the preceding arguments, of which [we shall treat] first the last mentioned: if the One is all things, why would it be knowable rather than unknowable? In fact, there the unknowable is first. Even this, the unknowable, is a certain one among the things that come after the One, since it is logically opposed to the knowable and is a one among the multiplicity, whereas that which is beyond even the One is neither knowable or unknowable. Therefore the One is unknowable, at least in the terms of this kind of argument. Moreover, if [the One] is the first to spring out of the Ineffable, clearly it is least distant from the Ineffable and is still overshadowed by the unknowability of that.

Moreover, if as the One it is all things, then nothing in it can be separate; therefore it is neither knowable nor unknowable, but as One it is simply all and One. If, because it is all things, it is knowable for this reason, then it will turn out to be capable of knowledge as well; this too is one among all things. And yet what could it know? It could not know what came before it, for that is by no means knowable. Nor could it know itself. For then it will possess a duality in reverting on itself and so no longer be one, and in addition, that which is prior to all act and potential will be engaged in act; for [act and potential] arise because of their differentiation from substance, but what is above all differentiation is just this One alone. But neither will it know what comes after it. For it will both be engaged in actualization (I 69), and its actualization will be directed toward the inferior, and this, though it is the first of all actualizations, although even in the lower world the first knowledge is of what is higher, and the second is of the thing itself, and third, of that which comes after itself.

Another consideration is that, if a certain one is knowable, it is insofar as it is a "certain" one, but not as the absolute One. Let there be knowledge of the Unified as the intellectual, or the vital, or as the super substantial one that illuminates Being; still, the absolute One is beyond these as well.

Hence both the arguments taken from compression and those taken from the analogy of Being lead to this One that is seated above Being. For just as Being is the first intelligible among beings, so also the supersubstantial One is the first intelligible among supersubstantial beings. Therefore that which transcends [them] would be unknowable. As for that spurious argument taken from negation and from analogy, as well as the syllogism which forces its conclusion through logical necessity, [to the effect] that someone knows what he does not know—all of these belong to the thought that walks on the void, [a thought that claims] that it knows some things on the basis of others. In general, (I 70) if someone does not know the simple term, he cannot know

the entire premise, and therefore cannot know the complete syllogism. Analogy, too, can treat things that have no being whatsoever, as for example:²² what the sun is to the seen and the seer, the One is to the knower and the known. We know the sun but we do not know the One, and the negative statement takes away what we know, but what it allows we do not know. Thus even Plato does not think that the One is completely knowable. First in the *Parmenides* he says: “therefore it is not known,” thereby removing knowledge [of the One] altogether.²³ Also in the *Republic*, although he appears to make it knowable, nevertheless, he says that the knower and known require the light in order to be illuminated by light.²⁴ But [the knower] grasps²⁵ the object of knowledge, which becomes so to speak transparent upon its illumination. In fact, the object known acts upon the knower, as if it awakened it toward its native act. And so, if the One is knowable, it must be illuminated by the light [of knowledge]. And yet, how could its own light illuminate the One? It is from the One that the light of truth in those [objects that come to be known] emanates.

Now our thought, in attempting to grasp the One, tries to get hold of it as already determined with respect to all other things, and this is why (I 71) thought imparts [to the One] its grasp of plurality, so that even if we compress our thoughts, we still proceed upon the very same conception that is opposed to plurality, whereas our thought ought to [conceive] the One as without opposition, and as a single entirely perfect reality. Moreover, compression [of thought] toward the Unified or toward the all as one is not adequate to the one so conceived, since Being, too, is all things at the level of the Unified, and since the simplest absolute is what is prior to and just adjacent to the plurality (which is why the nonmultiple is called the single), whereas the One transcends the plurality of henads, since distinction arises after it.²⁶ Just as, among the unified beings, that which is completely unified and undifferentiated is the most simple, so too the simplest of the ones is that which in its unity transcends Being, and is unified as a unity, if one is permitted to put it this way. But that which is called One without qualification is also beyond this simplification, so that even the ultimate result of that simplification would be Being, which we can call the Unified.

Chapter 27. Cognitive Reversion Does Not Bring about Knowledge of the One

■ Again, this chapter anticipates major themes in the treatise as a whole. Damascius gives several arguments against knowledge of the One based on a more general critique of knowledge, a topic that he explores more fully in chapter 97 below. For the sake of this argument, Damascius defines knowledge as a kind of reversion (cognitive reversion, in keeping with the Iamblican differentiation between three kinds of reversion, vital, ontic, and cognitive). But the separation between knower and known

entailed by knowledge is impossible if the One is the object of knowledge. More generally, Damascius briefly considers the possibility of any differentiations arising in the One. Again, the question of the origination of multiplicity, duality, or differentiation within the One is a much larger question that Damascius treats at length throughout the treatise. ■

It is worth considering if perhaps even the Unified is not knowable, either. For the knowable is compressed in the Unified and forms a composite with all other things in a state that is without differentiation, so that all is together and there is one composite consisting in the totality, but the known, at least insofar as it is manifest in itself, is not yet a [discernable] certain one.

So much then, for the puzzles that develop from the preceding arguments [to the effect that the One is knowable]. But let us consider the question at hand quite apart from the preceding, and try to say if the absolute One is knowable. If, therefore, the One is just the One in itself and not another member of the totality, (I 72) either through participation (because there is nothing prior to it) or through subsistence (because it is one), or through causation (because it could not contain any cause of any of the things that arise from it, since there is nothing in it other than the One), how shall we say that it is also knowable? For neither is it the same thing to be knowable and to be one, nor if it is another thing, is it still one. If it is knowable, then it is so either by means of participation, and then that which is knowable by virtue of subsistence will be before it; or else it is knowable by virtue of its causality, and so it is not yet knowable, but rather the knowable will be after it and from it; or else it is knowable according to subsistence, but it is not the One that is by virtue of subsistence, but rather the combination will be One-knowable, so that it will turn out to be one by virtue of participation, if that which subsides as its own being is in the combination [of the two].

Moreover, if that One is the totality and if all is One as Linos and Pythagoras²⁷ maintained, and the totality cannot be a particular, but the knowable can be a particular, the conclusion is clear, namely, that the totality is not knowable.

Further, the knowable is an object of longing on the part of the knower. Therefore, knowledge is the reversion of the knower toward the known, and every reversion involves contact. The effect is joined to the cause either through knowledge or life or being. Prior to intellectual reversion is (I 73) vital reversion, and prior to the latter is substantial reversion, and prior to these differentiations is simple reversion and contact, and the latter is either the same thing as simple knowledge or, more true, union is even prior to this, since the One is before intellect and life and substance (and [here] I include unified substance). Union is therefore beyond any kind of knowledge. Therefore, that which reverts toward the One does not do so as knower or as known, but as the One to the One by means of union and not through knowledge. Now it ought to have been

necessary to revert to the first by means of the first form of reversion, but cognitive [reversion] is not the first, rather it is the last, that is the third, or rather [it ought to have been necessary to revert by means of the]²⁸ kind of reversion which is common to all three kinds. Or, rather, it is even prior to the common reversion.

The following question also merits investigation—whether or not it is possible to come into contact with the One by means of reversion; for it is not possible for something to proceed from the One, so that it might then revert after its procession. How could it proceed if it has not yet been distinguished? How could something be distinguished from the One, and not thereby be dispersed into non-being? Whatever transgresses the [boundaries of] the One is nothing. If each thing [that proceeds] becomes one and not-one, in order that the not-one remain and not be scattered into nothing, in as much as it still (I 74) enclosed by the One, then insofar as it with the One it is the One, or rather it, as the One, does not even proceed from the One. Nor does it proceed as the not-one, since the One ever anticipates the differentiation of the not-one prior ever [to its arising], so that it does not even revert toward the One, from which it does not proceed.

Further, that which is distinct is distinct from something that has become distinct, as one thing is different from something different from it. Now if something reverts, it already is distinct to the extent that it reverts, and the One also is therefore distinct from [that which reverts to it], and so it undergoes a division, and so is not only One, but also rather something distinct [from the One]. Therefore it is not-one. But then what could the cause for the distinction be? Perhaps it is the One itself. But how the One could be the cause of division is difficult even to imagine, since the One is the cause of unity, but plurality is the cause of distinctions or what at any [given] time is other (but this is a topic for another occasion). And if the One is not the cause, something else might bring about distinctions in it, and this again would either be prior to the One, which is absurd, for then that which brings about distinctions is prior to the principle that unifies, (I 75) and the inferior prior to the superior, or else it is after the One. And yet how can the cause be affected by the effect (the caused)? As what does that which is after the One proceed? The argument risks being overturned on the same internal contradiction, namely, that every procession constitutes a distinction and also seeks a cause for this distinction as always mediating it, and so on ad infinitum. Therefore, it is not the case that something can proceed from the One, nor can procession originate from the One, but rather procession must arise after this first principle, which also serves to distinguish itself from the things that arise subsequently to itself, and again to distinguish those things from itself, while once more the One will become one with its subsequent elements, and they will not allow of being distinguished from it. So if nothing proceeds from the One, neither therefore does anything revert to it. A fortiori there is no [reversion] by means of knowledge, that is, as

a knower [reverting] to the known. For these remain in the greatest distinction with respect to one another. And yet if there is some distinction from the One, however dimly conceived, it must be this distinction brought about by the first procession; surely, therefore, such a great distinction from the One will not arise, a distinction that necessitates reversion by means of knowledge.

So much for arguments denying the possibility of return to the One by means of knowledge. Who then could adjudicate the arguments that clash with each other about matters of such consequence? The gods themselves know the most certain truth regarding them. But nevertheless we too must make an effort to accomplish (I 76) the labor pains of our questions to the extent that divine providence provides for the truth being sought—that, and our own ability.

Chapter 28. Excursus on Multiplicity

■ In this chapter, Damascius discusses the problem of multiplicity as such, that is, how the One can be the origin of the differentiated world that apparently is separate from unity. In part, the solution that Damascius proposes relies on the opposition between multiplicity and unity not obtaining in the One itself. The illustration of this solution verges on a doctrine of illusion, as in Damascius' metaphor of sunlight and eye disease, where the damaged eye is meant to represent the (faulty) belief that individuals are to be regarded as separate realities in some ultimate way, apart from the reality of the One. In addition, Damascius hints at a doctrine of the henads, which suggests a solution according to which the apparently diverse characteristics of being can be traced ultimately to the immanent One, that is, to the One in its aspect as the Good, source, and goal of all being. Damascius' treatment of the henads in this chapter is not systematic, but several parts of the doctrine emerge. The henads (here he does not call them henads, but rather Ones and gods) are related to the procession of characteristics from the realm of the Unified into the more particular domains. For comparison, readers can refer to Proclus' *ET*, Propositions 113–166. In particular, Proposition 145 outlines some of the features that Damascius' account below shares with Proclus, when it states, “the distinctive character of any divine order travels through all the derivative existents and bestows itself upon all the inferior kinds.” Despite the similarities in their explanations of the functioning of the henads or gods, Damascius does not use the term henad and speaks instead of a processive being, or of the One that is conditioned by a given characteristic. ■

What the procession is from the One to that which follows upon the One, how it is accomplished, and how might one evade the puzzles that arise with respect to it—we shall discuss these topics shortly.²⁹ Now, however, we take up [only] so much, namely, that all things are after the One, for the One is not isolated, but after it follow plurality and difference. And that the latter are not the One is obvious. As a result, plurality and difference are discriminated from it, if not insofar as each thing is One, at least to the extent that each is not one. Yet this

very “not one” is not a negative statement, but a positing of that which is in addition to the One. For this “not-one” is nevertheless One, but not insofar as it is not one or in addition to the One, but because not even this “not-one” can stand apart from the One insofar as it remains rooted in the One, and because even this “not-one” is on account of the One. And therefore for the person who looks into this question, the “not-one” is discriminated from the One by means of its own nature, the nature that belongs to what is “not-one,” whereas the One keeps to itself and does not depart from itself, not even to this extent; since even the “not-one,” that is, whatever is in addition to the One, nevertheless is the One through participation because of its arising as that which is “not-one.” Therefore, the [“not-one”] brings about that it is “not-one,” but the One itself also renders it One, by effecting the disappearance of the differentiation between itself [and the not one] by means of its unity. Therefore the “not-one” is distinguished from the One, because it arises as “not-one,” but the One cannot be distinguished from the “not-one,” however the distinction arises, because it nevertheless makes [the “not-one”] One. So far (I 77) does the One not admit of being subject to distinction, that it does not even detach itself from that which it excludes, but it has pre-anticipated the subsistence that introduces distinction that belongs to the “not -one” before [the differentiation arises], by means of its unifying participation. No such nature could arise without the One, so that participation comes to include subsistence, which means that unity includes differentiation. But it is not this that surprises us, nor does it cause us to disbelieve what has been said, if we conceive the nature of the One as capable neither of creating nor suffering distinction.

Let us, then, examine the same question also by taking the case of the sun, which is the visible guide for truth. The sun can be present to the eye that is open yet does not see because of eye disease, just as it can be present to the seeing eye, whereas the eye that does not see is not present to the sun owing to its native defect. And let us not be afraid of the logical consequences: for such logic dictates in the case of things that belong to the same species, that is, cases where things that are related either enjoy the same value or the same nature. For example, since the form is other than matter, therefore is matter other than form? But otherness is a form, so matter cannot be other. And yet form is entirely distinct from matter, but the matter is not itself completely distinct; rather distinction remains in the form, since it cannot enter into matter.

(I 78) So if something is in this way distinct from that which cannot undergo distinction, what prevents that which is itself distinct from healing its distinction through reversion, so that not only is the One present to it, but also [that which is distinct] too can be present to the One? Obviously [the reversion depends on] the degree of distinction, that is, according to whether something reverts as proximate or distant. For to the extent that any reality is inherently [distinct] from the One, it is able to revert in just this way back to the One. And just as the One remains without distinction with respect to anything separate

from it, so too it remains self-identical with respect to anything reverting back upon it, and ultimately it is without distinction, unique of all things. And just as, continuing to be the self-same [One], it coexists with that which proceeds as a certain characteristic, taking on the designation of that [characteristic], as for example, a substantial one or a vital one or an intellectual one, and though it remains one in itself everywhere, it is designated in the terms of whatever participates in the One (I am not saying at this point that it is divided into the many particular features of the gods, but rather I have in mind the absolute One in each being that is prior to the particular one, although I nevertheless designate the One in the terms of that which is present to it, even if it is without differentiations and is everywhere the all-One), just so, since it encounters the self-same final cause that corresponds to its own differentiation [from the One], each thing that proceeds names the One from the perfection that belongs to it there, and the One thus becomes thus, namely, whatever it discovers and whatever it acquires. Since the One is all things, it is present to each thing as its unique root, and to each thing it manifests itself as a unique final cause. For what all things are in a divided way, the One is these in the One, not potentially, as one might (I 79) imagine, nor yet as the cause of things which have not yet come into being, but if one can put it this way, as the real subsistence of real beings, a subsistence that is single and is the subsistence of a nature that produces all things. Therefore, just as it is present to everything else, so it coexists with that which knows as a cognitive one, but it is prior to the knower as the object known, not by being either term (knower or known) but by being both as beyond either, or to put it more accurately, beyond the union of knower and known. For the One is all things not after discrimination but prior to discrimination.

For in this way it will be all things before all things, not in an imperfect state that is in potential, nor yet causally as [if there were] not yet all things, but rather all things according to their undifferentiated subsistence, which is not the Unified before all things, but rather the super-Unified beyond all things, being all things by means of its own unity such as they are and the way that they are as they arise in differentiation. The One is all things in the most authentic way. For differentiation is what obscures that which is differentiated from the One, because of the very nature of differentiation. Instead each thing is more authentically itself in the one coordinate system of all things, and when it abandons this it becomes more fragmentary and inadequate, granted that some particulars are more inclined to greater distinction, others to lesser, so that they become manifest everywhere in different environments. But concerning these [differences], we have not the occasion for pursuing a more extensive inquiry. (I 80)

28.1 *All Things Are a Symbol for the One*

Now the One is all things before all things and is known and knower, and it is each of the other things, not in the way that I am talking about them, and

not in the way that each thing is itself, for these things are all in a state of differentiation, and they are mutually discriminated from each other, but rather as One that co-exists with each of the things that are distinct in a manner unique to that with which it coexists. For example, the one of humanity is more truly humanity and the one of the soul more truly soul, and the one of the body is more truly body. And in this way, too, the one of the sun and the one of the moon are more truly moon and more truly sun, and yet the One is none of these things that have become distinct, than which the One more truly is, but rather it is One as seated before each thing. Thus please, if you will, refer even the one that coexists with each thing and appears as parceled out, to the universal, undivided, absolute One. For perhaps the One is not even divided, but remains the same for all things and for each thing as unique to it, not divided into it, since the existence of all things in the One does not require division.

Does the One know? No: knowledge belongs to differentiation. So then is the One not known? This too is a mark of differentiation, if the following is true, namely, that “knows” is opposed to “is known.” None of these predicates accords with that, nor yet does the designation “One” accord with that, nor the designation “all things.” For these things all imply opposition and they divide our consciousness. For if we look at the simple, that is, at the One, we completely dissolve the vast and complex totality of the One. And yet if we conceive of all things together simultaneously, we obscure the One and the simple. The (I 81) reason is that we are ourselves divided and that we focus on discreet characteristics, and, although we nevertheless yearn for any knowledge of the One, we tend to confuse everything, thinking that we might in this way get hold of that great nature. Nevertheless by keeping watch over the plurality of all things which is [an aspect of the One that] is present together with the confined uniqueness of the One, and by taking joy in the simple and the first, with a view to the mark of the highest principle, in this way surely we can apply the [designation] “One” to that reality as a kind of symbol of its simplicity, as in fact we apply the [designation] “all things” as a symbol of its containing all things, whereas we can neither conceive or name that which is before or above the One and all things.

Is it surprising, therefore, that we have this experience in regard to the One, when even the most distinct knowledge of the One proves to be unitary, a knowledge moreover that we cannot apprehend? Yes, and even with regard to Being itself, our experience is similar. For in trying to apprehend Being we must let go of it, and run after its constituents that are known as limit and the unlimited.³⁰ Yet even if we think about Being more truthfully, that is, as a unified pleroma of all things, then its aspect as all things carries us into multiplicity and its unified aspect obscures its completeness.³¹

But neither should this cause any wonder, for in fact, in our desire to see each of the forms, we chase after their elements, and by searching for the one

in the form we nullify its contents. But each form is one and many simultaneously, not one or many in different respects, but entirely such through and through. Still, it is impossible for us to grasp the (I 82) form altogether, and we should instead be content to approach it accompanied by the division that belongs to our own thoughts.

Chapter 29. Unitary Knowledge

■ This chapter illustrates what is perhaps unique in the work of Damascius, his use of predecessors' material as a background for an original exposition of contemplative wisdom. In this case, Damascius uses traditional metaphors of the radiant circle (Plotinus), sunlight (Plato), and inner sanctuary (Plotinus) in order to illustrate crucial doctrinal points as well as to orient the reader. The model of circumference and center illustrates how the root of each real being is the Unified, that is, the third henad. As we shall see in more detail below, however, for Damascius, the Unified as one of the three henads (and following on Iamblichean doctrine) has as its root the One itself. In other words, it enjoys a fundamental identity with the One. As a result, Damascius makes clear that the experience of knowing the One, or union with the One, is not that of an individual knower coming to enjoy contact with the transcendent. The implications of this experience are that the true self is not other than the One. Damascius never puts it so clearly as when he writes, "we have completely become the light itself, instead of an enlightened eye." Perhaps in saying this much, he is taking issue with Proclus' doctrine of the One in us, a stance that suggests that there might be some ultimate differentiation between the One and the self. The second part of this chapter (29.1) looks at the matter of how this knowledge is achieved and focuses on the effort needed for the ascent to the One. Here Damascius invokes Plato *Epistle* II, 313, insisting that it is just the effort to ascertain its nature that prevents us from knowing the One. Damascius suggests that *Chaldean Oracle* fragment 1 as well as the Plato passage teach us to abandon any effort to know the One, any activity on our part. ■

(I 82.3) Scrambling ever up the steep ascent³² into that which is ever less multiple, at the same time we become aware in some way, even in our current state of division, of that which has a unique form. Thinking [this] division to be of no worth in comparison to the flood-like³³ apprehension of that, we could not even intuit this, unless the trace of this flood-like intellection were stirring up something within us, and this is just that light of truth that suddenly³⁴ kindles as if from fire sticks rubbed together.³⁵ For as our divided conceptions are concentrated and exercised against each other, they resolve themselves in that summit that converges into something that is unique and simple, as if into a convergence, such as when, in the center of a circle, the terminal points of the straight line from the periphery press into the center.³⁶ So in this way, although there is division present in us, while we press into the unity, a trace of that knowledge of the form in us is stirred up beforehand, just

as in the case of the center. [The center] is without dimensions, and yet the single convergence that strives toward the center of the circle equally from all sides offers a dim indication [of the center]. And in the same way we strive toward Being, first by means of each form that we encounter as a separate thing, and then we become aware that it is not just undivided but actually unified, and so we fuse the many in each, if one may put it like this. Then taking all the forms that are distinct at once and dissolving their circumference, as if making many bodies of water into one unbounded body of water, except that we do not conceive of that which is unified from all things as one body of water, but rather as what is prior to all, more like the form of the water (I 83) before water is [something] distinct. And this is therefore the way that we simplify ourselves back to the One, first by concentrating [our thoughts] and then by letting go of what has been concentrated, into what is beyond simplicity, the transcendence of that One.

Then having made this ascent do we encounter [the One] as something known, or in our desire to encounter this have we returned to the unknowable? Each of these is true. It is true that we encounter the One as knowable from afar, and when we have become one with it, then we transcend our own ability to know the One and we are resolved into being the One, that is, into the unknowable instead of the knowable. Now this contact itself is, as it were, of the One with the One and so beyond our capacity to know, whereas the former is like that of the knower with respect to the One.

And how, indeed, could it be known, if it is One alone? If [we mean] that the knowledge offers itself as an opposing reality, the One is not knowable, nor yet is the One knowable by means of spurious reasoning in the manner that has been written about [by Plato],³⁷ that is, in the way that we know matter, even though matter does not possess the character of being an intelligible object. The knowable is a particular form, that is, one of the real beings, whereas matter is not being and formless. As we come to an understanding of the curved by means of the straight line, they say, so we intuit the unknowable by obtaining clues from the knowable. Nevertheless, this does constitute a mode of knowing. So then, the One as well is knowable to the extent that it does not abide while knowledge advances, but instead it appears from far off as something knowable and grants familiarity (I 84) with itself. And to the extent that [the knower] advances toward [the One], it is not the case, as with other relationships between knower and known, that what approaches [the One] comes to know it better. In fact, the opposite occurs; it [that is, what advances] knows the One less, since knowledge is dissolved by the One into unknowing. And this is reasonable, since knowledge demands differentiation, as I said above, but differentiation as it approaches the One collapses into unity, so that knowledge disappears into unknowing. Perhaps this is what Plato intends by his analogy.³⁸ We attempt to look at the sun for the first time and when we are far away, at least, we succeed. But the closer we approach the less we see it. And at last we

see neither [sun] nor other things, since we have completely become the light itself, instead of an enlightened eye.

Is the One then unknowable due to its inherent nature, if the unknowable is something other than the One? The One wishes to be by itself and does not tolerate being with another. That which is contradistinguished from the knowable is the unknowable, but that which is beyond the One is entirely ineffable, and we confess that we have neither knowledge nor ignorance but rather transcendent ignorance with regard to that which, by its proximity, overshadows the One as well. For since it is nearest the principle that is inconceivable, it as it were abides in the sanctuary³⁹ of transcendent silence.

(85 I) Consequently, Plato's words⁴⁰ concerning the One are overturned from an inner contradiction, for it is near the complete reversal of the first principle, and yet it differs from that because it is absolutely one and because it is [all things]⁴¹ as the One. But that⁴² is also One as well as all things simultaneously, while this is beyond the One and all things, being simpler than both, whereas that transcendent principle is not yet this. To the extent that it has emerged from the Ineffable it is the One, but it is not the determinate one (for this is completely knowable), but rather it is the One-all, nor is it all things as subject to determination (for they are even more knowable, given that they are already a multiplicity); instead, it is the One that is simultaneously all things, which from its [nature as] the One contains the simple, thoroughly purified from multiplicity, yet from its [nature] as all things it refuses the determinate and confined [predicate] of the One. And of these characteristics [one and all things], each is knowable, and the combination is also knowable, since it consists in the two. But that which is prior to both is what we indicate through that [combination], and this is not, in itself, capable of being known, although through the image of the combination it can be known as prior to the combination [of the One-many] in just the way that the combination of the [One-many] is after that principle.

And if it is acceptable to speak in terms of differentiations, then [we can say that] the truly knowable is what is contemplated by means of a certain [given] determination, since it then is [by that determination] already a form, and as such it is subject to knowledge that defines it with an (I 86) appropriate limitation, and that is why knowledge arises from [something differentiated]. And yet there is something utterly opposed to this [kind of contemplation], because it is entirely Ineffable and eludes any grasp [of knowledge]. There is also something in between these extremes, and of this, one aspect is on the side of the knowable, which is like the Unified, but just here it escapes the knowledge that determines or attempts to limit it. The other aspect is on the side of the Ineffable, which is like the absolute One or the totality in the mode of the One, which offers only the slightest and most obscure hint about its own nature. And if there is something still in the middle of these, when we have examined the domain of each of these, we shall know it.

29.1. *The Attempt to Define the One Obscures Knowledge of the One*

But for the present we are speaking about the One that has such a nature, attempting to put the official seal on our discourse, to the effect that it is not what we say it is, nor do we know it as One and as all things together, but rather, that which our labor pain delivers from these [the One and the many], it is just that, and I am speaking of cognitive labor pain. Knowledge of One advances until the onset of labor, but struggling to emerge as a product and as endowed with an explanation, it falls short of the One, and [emerges] among its offspring. Proclus the philosopher refers to this in his *Monobiblos* as the ineffable axiom,⁴³ namely the axiom that accords with the knowledge in labor with [the One], just as he calls the axiom in accord with knowledge that has already been articulated, the expressible axiom. This is the cause of the constantly ambivalent examination of and decision about the One, [wherein it is] sometimes [judged] to be knowable, sometimes to be unknowable. In one way it is the former; in another it is the latter. This is why Plato in the *Letters*⁴⁴ prohibits the question, “What kind of thing is it?” concerning it, (I 87) and blames this for all evils, that is, the division of what belongs to the One into quality and essence. Actually, we experience this division as a titanic [rending], though it is this experience of division that we attempt to lead back up to what is most exalted, and to the whole that is least subject to division.

Now if particularity and quality must be removed from knowledge of the One, so too must the One be removed, since this is an aspect of all things; moreover, we must remove all things, since all things also consist in particular beings, since each one of all things is a particular, and thus collectively all things consist in particular beings. And yet if the One is known neither as the One nor as all things, what could it be? Leave off, my friend, and do not apply the question, “What is it?” to the One, since it is exactly this which prevents you from attaining to knowledge of it, in that you imagine that it can be called a particular being, whereas if you remove particularity and quality, what it is will be apparent to you insofar as it can be. For this is what it is: the not a particular being and the not a quality, but it is prior to these, [and is that] which is neither possible to say (for each name represents a particular being and refers to a particular being) nor easy to conceive. For every thought is a particular being and is of a qualified particular, and even if you gather all thoughts together simultaneously, then you have particular beings and qualities, for thoughts are of qualified particular beings. Consequently, too, in the case of intellect, insofar as intellect is that which contemplates particular qualified beings, it is in labor and struggles to bring forth a conception of that nature, nor can intellect produce that conception, but rather, just the opposite: it turns that labor within itself and directs it toward the most simple and that which is entirely without compass and completely unqualified with respect to any sort of quality that serves as a limiting condition in general for all things simultaneously and each

thing in particular. And this is just what Plato⁴⁵ and the Oracles urge us (I 88) to do, if somehow we are able, that is, to forget entirely our own conceptions and to make the running leap toward these labor pains that have the capacity to be intimate with that principle, but report back to no one, except that they remove the obstruction that stands in the way of this projection⁴⁶ and that obstacle is exactly the “what kind of thing is it?” and the “thinking of [the One] as something.”

Now if one compels this projection to teach us concerning that principle, it will project a secondary or a third conception in place of itself, a conception that, in alleging that the predicates that belong to the One all together at once are [on the contrary] distinct, appears to reveal that principle saying, for example, at first that the most simple is a principle, and then that that which is first is [the principle] and then that which embraces all things, and then that which gives rise to all things, and then that which all things seek, and then that which is the most powerful. And either it will enumerate all of the effects of which that is the cause successively, or else it will mention the most powerful and most reverend of all, using the language we have already alluded to, and especially [calling it] One and all things, for the aforesaid reasons. And yet, as all this is being spoken, some greater conception than this will attempt to get hold of that principle, deprecating that which is divided and multiple in this attempt to articulate the principle, and will compress all things into a single and unique nature, thinking it correct to prefer this nature to the previous one, because it is unified rather than differentiated. But the first labor pains of the faculty of knowledge, remaining within as they do, and not proceeding, will not even accept that concentration, since that concentration is pregnant with the fullness [of reality] and has not yet delivered it, whereas its own labor consists in trying to deliver the absolutely simple and the fullness seated above all, as One, and this One, although it is itself unknowable, in turn delivers the knowable, if it is right to put it this way, without adding anything extraneous to that One. Its nature, (I 89) since it is not absolutely Ineffable, transfers the object of knowledge that corresponds to this struggle, to an intuitive mode of knowing that is not completely articulate, not that this labor pain arrives at knowledge, nor does its object of knowledge actually become knowable.

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Section IV. On the One and All Things

Chapter 30. Three Questions and Answer to the Third Question

■ The One-all and the Unified now follow in Damascius' exposition of the first principles. Damascius comes close to what was apparently Iamblichus' own metaphysical structure, a correspondence that we learn about from our treatise, chapter 50, below: "This argument claimed to come to the aid of Iamblichus . . . since one might say that this position implies the following conclusions: the henad before the two principles was all things simultaneously before all things, but all things equally, and the first of the two principles is itself all things, but in the sense of what tends to have more of the form of limit; the second is likewise all things, but in the sense of what tends to be more unlimited."

Thus we have Damascius' three henads, the all-One, the One-all, and the Unified, the last equivalent to the first manifestation of intellectual being. In addition to Iamblichus, the language that Damascius uses draws on Plato when he refers to the Unified as "mixed" (*Philebus* 23c). In this chapter, Damascius also poses three questions concerning the relationship between the One and all things in the terms of the second and third henads. He begins, as he usually does, by addressing the questions in reverse order. ■

Since, then, the One is all things and there is nothing that the One is not, as we maintain, let us then inquire into this first, how the One is truly all things, and second, if it is all things equally, and third, what is the difference between the One's being all things and the Unified's being all things. For each of them is all things in an undifferentiated way.

[Reply to the third question]:

I am speaking here not of substantial Being but, rather, of unitary Being. Unitary Being is all things in the One that is established prior to Being, and that, in its rank before Being, could also be considered as the Unified, since it anticipates the character of the mixed, prior to its [distinctive emergence]. That is, the [One] already manifests the most unified aspect of the many and the first birth pang of the multiplicity, or rather, of the mixed consisting in the multiplicity [of Being]. Before [the Unified], the multiplicity is manifest, as is the One itself. And it is from these two coming together in it that the [mixed] projects the uniquely characteristic aspect of Being that is unified and mixed, and so this character forms the subsistence of Being, and not the One or the many, but the mixture of these is revealed in the third god,¹ which is precisely this same mixture or mixed, which we call the Unified, or, indeed, Being. If this [Being] is all things, still it is all things in a unified mode, since the multiplicity is all things before [Being] and is more properly all things than [it is] the One. For the multiplicity is all things insofar as all things are a plurality, but the One is all things insofar as all things are one and all things are in the One.

(I 90) One might raise the following objection: if the One is all things and is not just the One, the solely One will be prior to it [that is, to the One-all], since it has a simpler conception than the One-all; for all things function as an addition to it [the One]. And if one wanted, he could disagree with the person who poses this question by claiming that although multiplicity is the One-all, it is One as subsistence, but all through participation; but the One is only the One, and not yet all things. Nevertheless, it is perhaps truer to say the following, that the plurality is in the One since it proceeds from the One but as it were causally, not as something distinct from the One in which it is, since there is no distinction there, and that the One is such prior to all things what all things are subsequent to the One, and still all things are more the One than they are all things; indeed, the very cause of all things is that all things are the One. In a different way, then, the One is all things prior to the plurality, but in itself it is only the One and the most simple of all, since just this is the ground of its being most simple, that it is the most comprehensive. And therefore, too, it is all things.

Chapter 31. Answer to the Second Question, Is the One All Things Equally?

How could it be otherwise? For it is as the One that [the One is] all things, and there is nothing that it is not, as the One. But being [all things] as the One is a more equal [way of being all things] than being all things equally, if it is possible to say this. Now [all things that] proceed from the One are ranked as one thing prior to another, whereas there, they are without rank since rank exists

in terms of distinction. But [there] rank does not even exist in the cause, for then distinction too would be present in the cause, and the causes would be distinguished as well, unless rank and distinction were there but not in the cause, but rather in a way that surpasses being in the cause. For they are in the One, which is to say, the perfectly One, and therefore the One is all things equally.

(I 91) Why then do some [predicates] belong more to the One, while others belong less, as when we say, for example, “the One itself,” “that which is all things at once,” “the most simple,” “the first,” “the all-transcendent,” “the good,” and as many other things as can signify the unique principle through indication?

Any intelligent person would say these things about the One. But no one would say that it is one of the less valuable things, such as the lowest principle, or the effect or matter, or any of these things—no one would dare to allege them unless he were insane. The reason for this is that none of these distinctions is true in the case of the One, not the first nor the last nor any of the things in between. And yet seeing the ranking of these principles, and their relationship with one another, that is, that some elements lead and others follow, and that some order while others are ordered, [we] wish to indicate something about [the One], using our store of knowledge for that of which we remain ignorant, and we attribute the more advanced in rank to it; we attribute causation to what is prior to causation, and attribute the procession of the first elements to that which has never proceeded, just because these first elements have least of all proceeded.

Does it then follow that the One produces some things first and other things as secondary elements? In this way, rank will appear within it.

[Let us rather say that] if the One creates all things together, they do not proceed simultaneously, since one aspect advances itself as first, and another as last. And yet how will the superior elements become separate from the One prior to the inferior? [We reply that] the first [do so] because they are superior with respect to their own self-subsistence—and yet in that case, they would not separate more, but rather least of all, through that same power. If something (I 92) proceeds because of an innate deficiency, surely the secondaries abandon the One first, as we observe in the case of the weaker souls, which more easily detach themselves from Intellect, and second to them and even then, with great difficulty, do the better souls. But the procession from causes takes place according to power, and some things are more independent with respect to their own self-subsistence, while others not only do not have the power to produce themselves but in fact entirely subsist in dependence on others. And if that principle produces them as well, it will produce what is more like itself before what is less like itself, and it [will also produce] what belongs more to itself, not because this principle precedes the series, but because the series proceeds from it, and so do all other things.

Such is its nature, but instead of [naming] it, we name the things that are like it. But whatever is produced is unequal, whereas that which produces is equal with respect to all [its products], and still more than equal. It is One alone, both in itself or as all things, and also as producing all things. For whatever one predicates of the the One is in the One.

Chapter 32. Answer to the First Question, How Is the One All Things?

Now it is time to solve the first inquiry posed, namely, how is it that the One is all things? For perhaps it is not possible for the One to be all. What is more, what need is there for the One to be all things? Surely it is sufficient for the One to be only the One, in order to be the cause of all things? And if it is the cause of all things, then it could not be all things. And if all things [implies] many things, then the One could certainly not be many. Therefore, it is probable that those who say that the One is all things have spoken in defense of their conception, a more common idea, which posits the One as something that belongs to [the set of] of all things. But it is not a thing, rather all things are the One, (I 93) and they are more the One than they are all things. "The beginning is half of all,"² they say, but in this case the beginning is everything, or more truly, the beginning is more than everything, as in fact the disciples of the Pythagoreans are in agreement with us.³ In reality, if we maintain that the all is the principle as well as that which is derived from the principle, whereas the principle is that which preserves the equality⁴ among its derivatives, then the principle is half of all, but if the principle is more authentically all things and its derivatives are a kind of imitation or a kind of suspension⁵ from the One, this is also true. If the principle were not the anticipation of what is derived from it (for the causes that are present in the producer are not identical with the producer itself, rather the producer is that which must bring forth the causes that [subside] in itself), then the principle would be more than the whole. If what we say is true, then the One cannot be all things in truth, but all things [arise] after the One. Nor can we locate the causes of all things in the One, so that at least in this way it could be all things, that is, as the entirety of causes. By no means therefore is the One all things in actuality; it is just that we think of [the One] as all things in order not to think of it as the most inferior, but to speak of it as that which encompasses all things and as the greatest, nor do we mean by greatest and most encompassing the universe, but rather that which is the most simple, nor do we speak as if [the One] were an element among the things in the universe, as for example the outermost arc of the fixed sphere, but rather in the sense that everything enfolds into the One's simplicity and no longer consents to be the totality.

Now if this is well said, it is also correct to defend the position that the One is all things. For the Unified of every plurality is a co-aggregate. [And if the

Unified]⁶ is an all as undifferentiated, just as the plurality is an all as differentiated, and if prior to the unified of each thing, there is a one that is each thing, then as many things as the Unified is, (1 94) so many things the One is. Indeed, the One is so many things because it has proceeded into so many things. Nor has the One descended into a one, but into a unified, nor has the Unified descended into a unified, but into a distinct totality, and that is obviously where we situate all things. But just as the circle and all the rays deriving from the center converge in the center, so in the Unified is the entire multiplicity of distinction. And according to the same analogy, the center itself and the lines converging in the center and all things equally become single in the One. And in this way we say that all things are the One, and that the One is all things, and still more, because all things are in the One. And yet all things are not exactly the One, while that One by all means is all things.

Chapter 33. The One-All Is Both All-Inclusive and Determinate

■ Here Damascius is considering the third henad, the Unified, and struggles to fit a Platonic passage into the ongoing argument. In order to explore the idea of the One, Damascius uses *Philebus* 64a7–65a5 as a backdrop, where the discussion is, after all, not the One, but the Good. In that passage, Socrates attempts to assemble the components of the Good conceptually, in pursuit of the cause of the mixture of the limit and the unlimited, the life of intellect and the life of pleasure. For Damascius, following Iamblichus, Proclus, and Syrianus (whom he cites in his own lectures on the *Philebus*), Socrates in this passage analyzes the Good into three monads: beauty, proportion, and truth. Damascius also works with the language of *Philebus* 23, using its triad of limit, unlimited, and mixed. Yet this terminology then shifts to One, many, and One and many. Hence the One is called “cause of unity” in this secondary sense. The text here also becomes involved in matters of competing Platonic exegeses, the history of which can be traced in Damascius’ own *Lectures on the Philebus*.

Chapter summary: the One can only be understood imperfectly. Differentiations arise in terms of fundamental antitheses that are more or less due to our own conceptual activities. Hence our notion of the determinate One corresponds to our determinate notions. In fact, we can have no proper conception of the One that is both inclusive of all things (perfect) and, at the same time, determinate (perfectly simple), or both of these combined. ■

Next it is right to consider the question of how our conception that attempts to reveal [the nature of] the determinate One differs from [our effort to grasp]⁷ that One which we were just discussing, which is incommensurate with our own conceptions. The common conception conforms to the One that is available to us, a conception that is differentiated from the underlying realities that are [other than the conception] and so obviously is not adequate to the indeterminate One. But if this conception of the One is removed, then we have no

other means of grasping it, so that it is even meaningless for us to call it One. Further, we are unable to conceive of any principle simpler than this One that suggests itself to us, so that this will turn out to be the first principle. Now the Good is also a candidate for the first principle of all because it is impossible for anything to be superior to it; thus the Good well might be the principle of all things. And therefore our conceptions result in equating (I 95) the Good and the One.⁸ And yet how can the first be bounded by determination and contradiction? And how can the first be a form? A particular one of the many forms constitutes the one [form] or the [form of the] Good.

Moreover, just as motion and stillness constitute a single antithesis, and again otherness and sameness, and [so with] many other such antitheses, yet there is in each of these a superior and inferior element, whereas it is only in a ratio of two similarly ranked things that there is the better and the worse, and again, the opposites participate reciprocally in each other, as is shown in *Parmenides*, in such a way that the one and the many participate in each other as well.⁹ Therefore the One is not a principle because this One unifies the many, whereas on the contrary it is One as that in which the many are unified. The one that is in the many is participated, whereas the One that subsists as independent is before the many, and therefore [this One] is before all things; therefore this One is the principle of all things. And even if the many are opposed to the One, nevertheless it is not that the many enjoy the same rank as the One, but they [are opposite in] the way that effects are related to cause.

Apart from these considerations, if the One is that which brings together all things (for to the One belongs the property of making one, and of being the cause of the mixture),¹⁰ but that which makes one and that which brings together all things is prior to and also superior to that which is collected or made one, clearly the One is the principle of all things, just because it is contradistinguished with respect to all things in the way that cause is contradistinguished with respect to effect, and this is what we are familiar with as One.

But is nothing else one, as for example the so-called generic one?

We must say that the one as genus is a one with which we are familiar in the sense of a one among all things, in the way that the many are one, by which I mean one form, the form (I 96) of Good or of Beautiful. In any case, the determinate concept corresponds to a determinate reality. We must understand that¹¹ One not as bringing about unity, but as bringing about the many. For it is actually the cause of multiplicity, cause of the good, cause of beauty, cause of the whole, and there is nothing for which it does not function as a cause by virtue of its unique simplicity. If it brings about unity, then it cannot be called One in the strict sense. If the epithet "One" does not belong to it properly, then we are entitled to call each one [by a different name], that is, not only cause of unity, but also cause of multiplicity, and if you wish One and many, or rather all things before the many and before the all.

What then? Does not the One bring together all things, and does not Socrates in the *Philebus* make that the cause of mixture?¹² Certainly, but his assignation rests on just one characteristic, that is, the One as cause of unity, or as unifying. This unifying property was required there since limit, unlimited, and mixed were [all] one as well. In fact, the one ought not to be the cause of the mixture only, but also of its ingredients, as it seems. That Socrates does not intend this one but rather something of higher station and ineffable, he makes clear when he dismisses the One on the grounds that it is entirely hidden, whereas he introduces the three monads in the threshold of the One as signs by which to recognize the three aspects of the One.¹³ Indeed, it is an easier matter to gain a conception of this formal one, and it is easier to conceptualize the [one as] unifying and cause of unity, than it is to conceive truth, beauty, and proportion.

Moreover, the ingredients of the mixture are not just limit and the unlimited, but also the one and the two, for if the former were the only elements, they would be the same [as the one and the two], in just the way that the one is taken as an element. But what element is still to be sought addition to these? The other elements as well as the one are the prior constituents, but the (I 97) question is how the mixed arises from these elements. Therefore the mixed is both the elements of all things together at once, as well as the joining of the elements, and so it requires the cause that is [at the same time] all things, in order that all things might arise as one from all things, just as that cause is before all things. But how could they participate in this, unless the ingredients were commensurate and in sympathy with each other, and thoroughly illuminated by the light of truth?¹⁴ For these properties, like anticipatory traces, were causes of their [mixture as a] common reality, but not of all things.

Moreover, the cause of the mixture is the cause of the all and not just of mixture, since the cause of mixture appears to bring about the One alone. Or rather, neither mixture nor the unity belong to the One; to the One alone belongs the One, which in fact is the cause of mixture and of concentration, and of unity, and of distinction. Mixture exists in both elements, whereas unity and commonality and everything of this nature are a combination of both, not just unity, and not just distinction.¹⁵ Unity [on its own would] be without a coordinate system, whereas distinction [would be] without multiplicity. Unity wishes to be One and a trace of the One, and therefore it proceeds from the One being, just as distinction proceeds from multiplicity alone, whereas their combination is from both the cause of unity and the cause of multiplicity, which in turn exists before both [the one and the many].

Again, if someone calls this too the One before all things through want of a particular name (for there is nothing particular in the case of the One, nor does anything particular belong to that), still, this One will differ from the determinate One. The latter unifies the elements that are already differentiated, although it does not confuse their differentiation nor does it remove their

delimitations. Consequently these elements remain such as they are, but (I 98) they are then unified in that same way with each other. But the One before all things, since it too is one, reveals a unity that is prior to every delimitation, and it is not even distinct from the others, but it is as it were the undifferentiated root of the entire hypostasis to which each thing belongs. And since this is so, the [more] familiar one is the determinate one or the formal one, which is clear from the fact that we recognize this one as one of many, at the same level of reality as the many, or the Good or the Beautiful. But as for the one that has drawn together and includes all things, this clearly is not the formal one or the determinate one in general, as is clear from the fact that such a one would be one of the included elements, just as the many be would at once differentiated and unified. True, the determinate one undergoes some form of conditioning by the many, either because the many underlie it due to its inherent characteristic of being a systematic cohesion from many, or else, because the many are opposite, in the sense that rest moves and movement is still.¹⁶ Now the One is entirely simple. Therefore it is not even right to call it One, because the One that we conceive both is and moves and is still and is other and same, or so we think, so that the One is composed of many through participation in these forms, whereas it is one due to the subsistence of its unique character. Thus the first puzzle¹⁷ raised was most true, namely, that we can have no conception of the One that is both perfect and unique. And therefore it must not even be called One unless, in the same way, it should no less be called all things. Socrates to be sure proved this very point because he revealed three monads in the threshold of the One, namely truth, beauty, and proportion. The last named preserves the order among all things, the monad of beauty offers the sympathetic mingling of all things with each other, where as the monad of truth offers the true subsistence of all things. And then again the One is all things at once in an ineffable way.

Section V. On Procession from the One

Chapter 34. On the First Differentiation

■ The first part of the chapter makes a *prima facie* case for procession, relying on the authority of Plato's treatment of the form of the Good, and on the succession of henads from the One that Damascius has already outlined. But the bulk of the chapter is given over to an analysis of the first principles, beginning from the One but descending to unified substance or subsistence, throughout which Damascius denies the possibility of any differentiation arising. The final part of the chapter returns once more to Platonic texts, to the *Republic* and then again to the *Philebus*, where Damascius attempts to show that Plato simply defers any discussion about the origins of differentiation from the One. ■

(I 99) What follows after this discussion is an inquiry into whether there is a procession from the One into its subsequents, and of what kind it is, or whether the One gives no share of itself to them. One might reasonably raise puzzles about either position. For if the One gives no share of itself to its products, how has it produced them as so unlike itself, that they enjoy nothing of its nature? How can it be the cause of them through its own nature, since they do not participate in that nature? Again, how do they revert to it, and how can they desire it, when they are unable to participate in it, since the One is in every way unparticipated? And how can the things that proceed be maintained if they are not completely rooted in their own cause?

Does not Socrates say in the *Republic* that the truth is a light¹ proceeding from the One, connected to the intelligible and

intellectual? Therefore Socrates knows that this light has come from the One and also that it participates in the One. But if even matter bears a final trace of the One, certainly what is prior to matter has various kinds of participations in the One, that are nevertheless distinctive for each being (I 100), according to the degree of the reality of each. [Another argument for procession] is that], for one who investigates the question, the One is manifest in all beings. For each individual and universal, each mortal being and each sempeternal being, and each entity either bereft of quality or endowed with quality, does not just belong to the many, but also [to] the one prior to the many. Prior to the divisible there is the indivisible, prior to the distinct there is the Unified. The all of each being is the co-aggregate of all things that is prior to all things, which we refer to as the Unified, but we designate as Being, and prior to the Unified, there is the One-all that is stationed in the One, just as Being is all things in the Unified, and as all things that are in [a state of] differentiation are in that which is distinct. Therefore in each all there is an analogue of the One before all things, and this is the procession of the One into all things, the perfect reality that is in the One that is prior to the reality of each thing, or rather it is the root of each reality.²

But if the One proceeds, one can inquire in what way it proceeds.³ For what will be the source of distinction in its case? Every procession takes place together with distinction, whereas multiplicity is the cause of every distinction. Distinction is always the cause of multiplicity, whereas the One is before multiplicity. If the One is also before the One in the sense that the One is taken as one without [others],⁴ then a fortiori the One is before the many. Therefore the nature of the One is entirely without distinction. And therefore the One cannot proceed. All things proceed from the One into another nature, though, of course, the One has produced them, and yet the One itself does not proceed into anything, nor does it share any part of itself with anything. It is necessary that that which is given as a share (I 101) is subordinate to that which gives it, and what is given is not that which gives it, but is like the giver, and not even that in an absolute way, but is in some measure like that. But self-extension or measures or anything else of this nature, are discerned where there is multiplicity, that is, they occur together with distinction and as an outflow or change in the same thing, even if no otherness befalls it. Yet that nature is before any multiplicity of any kind, or any trace of multiplicity. For when the many arise, then procession too finds place, whether that procession involves similar or dissimilar orders. Therefore the One is entirely without procession, nor does it emit an illumination from itself into any being that belongs to the all, for illumination too is distinct from that which illuminates.

Again, not even Being can proceed, the Being that we posit as entirely unified, that is. This Being that is prior to any differentiation associated with substance “rests, sacred, without movement,” as Plato says.⁵ The Being that is absolutely unified has come to rest and in no way suffers any differentiation;

therefore it could not make itself distinct within the procession of the many. For it could surely not be distinguished as belonging in the procession of whatever is prior to the Unified, since they would [already be Being] nor of course into the procession of what arises after it. How could the second act on the first or the effect on the cause? Therefore not even Being proceeds into many through subordination or through division or through any kind of procession at all.

Thus Parmenides says: You shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is.⁶

That is why Parmenides also said that Being is One. Therefore one cannot say that Being proceeds, since it cannot be cut [into many] either. A fortiori, then, neither can the One proceed.

(I 102) Moreover, whatever proceeds and whatever comes to be in individuals as a measure or trace of the One, is prior to that which arises through a procession from other origins. Hence [the beings that proceed from the One] are either entirely unified with each other with the result that the One is not cut off from the One (but on this alternative all things will be one, and all will be nothing other than the One itself) or else, these individuals are distinct from each other. Now, either they are uncaused and arise spontaneously, which is absurd, or else they are from a cause. And again, either their cause is the multiplicity after the One, in which case the procession will not be native to the One, but to multiplicity, or else their cause will be the One, and yet how can the One be subject to differentiation? Or perhaps the cause is something prior to the One; as for example we think is the case with the One that is called all things before all things, in the sense that it is not one from among all things. Rather it is all things before all things, as we were saying, whereas what we were in search of was the procession of all things. For that One is neither capable of making distinctions nor is it subject to distinction. Nor is it many, nor does it cause the many, nor is it even One, nor again does it cause the One, so that neither does it proceed nor remain nor revert, since it is all things precisely insofar as it is beyond all things.

In addition to these arguments, if the measure of that nature proceeds and is in individual beings or in individual phenomenal existences, clearly it imparts the defining nature to each thing. If it imparts nothing to the perishable and mortal, how can a cause for these be defended? And yet if it does bestow something on them, it is not the same that it bestows on eternal or on perpetually existent beings. Therefore what it imparts is perishable and mortal. And yet what destruction could arise from the One, or from that which is not even One, which is not even capable of being indestructible? The sempeternal and eternity itself are many times removed from the One. (I 103) Therefore, the same difficulty remains for us in the case of the first being, as well. For this, too, is prior to eternity, so that it must be prior to the eternal, and how much more therefore will it be prior to the sempeternal. It is as

remote as possible, accordingly, from that which is perishable. And so it could not be the case that the echo of the One in any individual perishable being is itself perishable.

But perhaps the echo of the One functions like matter⁷ (since it is on the this side of the other beings,⁸ and is so to speak, a kind of matter or is matter itself; in that case, the one is somehow matter, whereas Being is prior to matter). It is both perishable and imperishable potentially, while it is neither of them in act. Still, our discussion is not about the echo of the One that has come to reside here, but about the One that is before matter and before all that is in potential, and finds its place among the Forms themselves.

Clearly the intermediates prior to the ultimate forms participate in the single principle that governs the wholes. Perhaps, then, these intermediates are imperishable, and at different times different of the perishable pleromas converge around them, changing in proximity with what cannot change.

But if this were true, then there could be no particular participation belonging to each individual, as for example the participation of this particular reed writing these things, or as for example of this particular paper having these things written on it. Participation in a particular good is requisite, unless the intermediates have not proceeded from the principle without differentiation.

Another question: does the perishable insofar as it is perishable participate in the One or not participate in the One? For if it does not, then the One could not be the cause of the perishable, whereas if it does, then what the One imparts will also be perishable, and the same syllogism can be formulated concerning the imperishable, as well. Perhaps participation belongs only to beings that are sempeternal, as for example, when we speak of the participation that belongs to the wholes?

(I 104) In the first place, as has been said, not even the sempeternal belongs to the One. And then again, what is the reasoning here; would there be participation in some elements of the One, while not in others? And yet the One is entirely beyond both perishable and imperishable.

Perhaps, then, all things do participate in the One, but the participation is just single, without division, being present as a whole to all things, as for example the light of the sun is present as the same light to all things,⁹ even if it is not present as a whole, since of course sunlight is divisible and corporeal. Because the One is beyond indivisible being as well as beyond totality, it likely is participated by totality, while differentiation belongs to the lower order, to that which participates in the One, and not in the participated. At any rate, this is Plotinus' solution: Plotinus holds that this is how we should understand Being, namely, that it is present as a whole every where universally, in each and every individual member of the multiplicity.¹⁰ But even if participation is itself without divisions and there is a single participation by which all things participate in Being and in the One, since the manner of participation is the same in each

case, nevertheless, as participation, it both proceeds from subsistence and is differentiated from subsistence.

What, then, differentiates the second from the first? For it makes no difference whether the One is differentiated from the One or whether the many are distinguished successively in terms of their differentiation. That nature [in any case] denies this differentiation. Is participation in the One no other than its [own] subsistence, since the One does not bestow on its participants anything other than what it itself is?

But this relationship is more appropriate to matter, and to composite elements more generally. For these too bestow themselves on that (I 105) which is composed of them, becoming a kind of matter for what is composed of elements. And even if one does not agree with this, still matter possesses nothing beyond itself that it may bestow upon the world, and so it bestows itself.

[We respond to this objection as follows]: matter is taken here in the lower sense, whereas the One bestows itself on each and all in the superior sense, that is, not as matter, nor even as form, but as the primary participation in the primary cause, which is to say, as the subsistence abiding in the participants. This subsistence refuses even to be differentiated from them, even if they proceed from it to the extent that they participate in the multiplicity.

Therefore there is no procession from that subsistence, either: rather the procession is generated from multiplicity, whereas all things arise from subsistence as one, and again, as Being, just as the root alone is before the growth of the branches, and is already the tree as a whole, which [arises] from the crown of the root. Again, it is like a center in which all the terminal points of the many lines [converge] and all the lines are together simultaneously in the One prior to the spatial distance that belongs to the indefinite extension of the lines. The distance arises after the center, and the center is not its cause, but rather the cause is the flow of that which is in contact with the One.¹¹ There too there is a variegated cause that originates the processions, in the sense that substantial procession is from the substantial cause, and again, unified procession is from the unified cause.

These things, to be sure, are sacred and beyond the ordinary: nor do they agree with our conceptions, which do not share this nature, for our conceptions constantly invent the idea that all things are products of the One, and that the trace of the cause is immanent in the effects, and is not only present as transcending the effect. [We imagine that] this, the trace of the One, is substantialized along with Being. Since if the light of the sun (I 106) is universally available for participation, still there is already a sunlike luminosity in the eyes that belongs to them inherently and not as something they share with the sun.¹² Indeed, it is by what is native to us that we have a share in the universal. Does not Plato himself say that there is a ray of the soul, that belongs to the soul, and it is this that we must lift to the light in order to touch the truth?¹³ Yes, certainly, and he also says that there is a universal participation that emanates from the single principle of all

things, which he called truth.¹⁴ It [truth] is not like the sun but like the light of the sun.

Did Plato perhaps suppress a more accurate inquiry concerning these things because of the masses when he posited the cause that brings about multiplicity as [present] in the same entity and so found scope to distinguish the many from the One?

But the argument before us sees the single first principle (which Plato actually named) as occupying its own place, if you will; and the cause that generates multiplicity as occupying its own place. But that Plato purposefully omitted this differentiation he made clear by not positing the pluralizing cause as cause of the mixed, although he accepted many elements [as present in it] and assumed three principles instead of the One, and perhaps did not even posit the One principle that we are now speaking about among [the three], but only posited the principle after the two principles, in which the mixed arises. For this is one, and the division of this gives rise to the three monads, but [he was] not [talking about] the division of the first principle.¹⁵ Yet to these considerations, if need arises, we shall return once more.¹⁶

Chapter 35. On the Origin of Distinction

■ In a continuation of his first argument concerning procession from the One, in which Damascius posited that there can be no procession without distinction, Damascius now considers the second of the henads, the One-all. In some sense, this principle functions as the equivalent to the indefinite dyad or to the principle of indefinite multiplicity, the *apeiron*, and yet, as Damascius is at pains to point out, these functions cannot strictly belong to the henad as such, since it represents but a limited way of viewing the One. ■

Still our thoughts do not articulate the first principles accurately, whence they assume that there is simply the same cause for unity and division, not realizing that the principle that introduces distinction (I 107) is other than that which preserves beings in a state that is free from distinction, and that this principle first distinguishes itself from the One, and next it becomes the cause of this [distinction] for others. But if the One is the cause of all, it nevertheless makes all things one, and yet again it does not make at all, nor does it even act, since actualization differs somehow from that which actualizes. Nor does it exercise power, since power is, as they say,¹⁷ an extension of substance, but the One refuses to be substance. For Being is third from the One in the mixed, that is, unified substance, and it also subsists in the unified mixed. Of this principle [we shall speak] later.¹⁸

What I am now saying is that the single principle is to such an extent removed from making distinctions that it does not even unify. Nor does it create

anything particular. Unifying is a particular thing, just as distinguishing is. But the One makes each thing One-all, and not even each particular, but rather, of the "each," the One is a multiplying and distinguishing cause, but that which is prior to each thing makes all things One, so to say, nor does it in reality make all things. For all things are [when there is already] distinction, where too there is also a totality. But the One-all is in the One above all things, in which all things are One. But if this is so, then it would be the second principle after the One, and what again will divide cause and effect?

[We answer that] the One that is common to all proceeds from the cause of division just because it is participated. For that One is also a many. Everything that is common is inherently multiple, even if it is not multiple in a numerical sense. Perhaps therefore the cause of division in itself, whatever it was, produced itself first from that invisible perfect and undivided cause, and then distributed the universal one to the others as well, a one that was without distinction, that is, in the way that something can be undifferentiated after this first distinction.

(I 108) But then this itself must be studied, namely, what is the relationship of the [cause of differentiation] with respect to the single cause? Assume that it is capable of differentiating itself from the first; in this case, the One will thus be the cause of nothing, not even of that which subsists after it, and before the other [hypostases]. But even if the second were the cause of its own differentiation, still what relationship can it have to the first? Does it participate at all in the same reality or not? If not, then it is cut off from that and there will be two first principles, or rather, one: that which brings about distinction in all things. But that which is before this is already detached from all things. Now if it does participate, something will come from [that first principle]. And yet what will that which has differentiated it be?

[We reply that] just as the second differentiated itself, so also it differentiates its own participation from what is participated. But in that way we beg the question as to whether the nature of the One, which is One and of the One, manifests any differentiation. Or else [we accept that the One] will not still remain purely One, since it suffers some effect of the secondary principle, into which it has proceeded. When the One comes to be amid the multiple then it is affected by many, and hence is transformed by means of what receives it. And so the secondary participates, and yet that which is subsequent to it also participates by means of it in the one cause in a similar manner.

(35.2) If the One does not give, how can the secondary or tertiary receive [it]? And how, if it produces nothing from among all things, is it nevertheless a cause? We answer that, just as it is possible for something that actually has not done anything, simply by means of being [itself], to produce, so it is possible for the (I 109) One by being One to produce its subsequents.¹⁹ In fact, to be is to actualize the activity that belongs to substance, wherefore the One [acts] by means of [being] One; moreover, producing too is an activity, so that, since the

One is only One by nature, the other things, as it were, produce themselves. For they are capable of producing themselves in general, because the One is, and it is because they breathe in [the One] and are rooted in the One, that they are able to produce themselves.

Now we have run around the circumference of a great circle, and yet we are still caught up in the same doubts as to whether something has come from that realm into the other things, or whether each thing is and produces itself through participation in that. For if each enjoys no benefit from the [One], why then does anything require the One for its own reality? In general, we still long to see what we ourselves have from that universal origin. If that is the first principle, it still has some lowest trace, such as we say that matter is, [since matter too] is one thing that is all, bereft of all other attributes. If ultimate and first are such, that is, nothing apart from the one, and if this [that is, the one] too is all things and before all things, then surely such a nature will be discovered as well in the intermediate *pleromas*.

Chapter 36. The One Is Neither In All Things Nor Is It Before All Things

■ As Damascius has already introduced a conception of the One as all things, without, however, emphasizing the One-all as a *henad* at this point in the argument, he now discusses the relationship between the One and all things. The arguments that are sketched in this summary of the puzzles involved in solving this problem are examined more extensively in the chapters to come. ■

With these problems facing us, let us continue the argument, taking up the question from the beginning, here enlisting the aide of a saving deity.²⁰ Surely the One, since it is all things and not just the One (in its simplest aspect it is all things, though this very simplicity is the resolution of all things and is before all things) is not the one that unifies, since the one that unifies exists by way of a distinction. Nor yet is [the One] the cause of multiplicity for the very same reason, nor yet is it *per se* the cause (I 110) of particulars, but it is the universal cause without qualification and it is the cause of all things, though it does not bring about either the variously distinct things all at the same time, nor does it bring them about as unified, since there is the same cause for the former and the latter, [a cause that is] prior to both. Neither, therefore, is it productive of anything unified or differentiated, but of all things, without qualification, that subsist in any manner. Therefore, its nature is neither differentiated from anything, nor yet is it united to anything, nor yet does it interact with anything at all. For then it would no longer be all things, but it would instead be that by which it came to be differentiated. It did not arise as something particular, for it refused the particular. Therefore, nothing divides

itself from it into each thing in any mode that is particular to a [distinct reality] whatsoever.

But there is perhaps a single participation,²¹ common to all things, which proceeds from the One to all things. In that case, participation is distinct from subsistence, but there is not yet a differentiation of anything: not of a cause, not of subsistence, nor even of participation. Therefore nothing proceeds from it [sc. the One], since nothing remains in it that can proceed, since remaining is always prior to every procession. But differentiations have not yet arisen in the case of the nature that has no differentiation.

But do not all things participate in it [sc. the One]? Yes, I say, by all means.

Does it then give them something or nothing?

Yes, I say, it gives them the most valuable of all, itself as a whole in subsistence, but it does not give them any participation from itself.

Therefore doesn't the One come to belong to whatever receives it, and no longer to itself?

No, the One does not belong to itself or to its recipients, nor is it (I III) independent, nor is it connected, nor is it in subsistence, nor in participation. For all such states arise within differentiation. But it is entirely without differentiation, and does not belong to all things or to anything. In truth, it is not in all things, nor is it before all things, for these too are differentiations. Instead, it is simple and without marks and this itself, in turn, is the One-all. We cannot name it univocally, because it is both the case that the one is other than all things and that all things are other than the one.

Around that, therefore, and after that the other things bring about for themselves the various differentiations that arise in the cases of the various intermediate causes that are from it. Therefore it is neither participated nor unparticipated. But it [subsists] in a manner different from both, before both, and it preserves all things and completes them and brings forth all things together according to the unique all-productive actualization that belongs to it, which must neither be called productive nor perfective nor anything else of this sort. For these states arise when there is differentiation. It is all-embracing and yet [contained] in a single nature. All things there depend on it, and it is this benefit that they get from it, that they are dependent on it.

Is nothing from it like it?

Certainly not, for neither was it possible for it to stand apart from itself in a mode of descent, when there was manifestly no other that would stand apart from it, nor was it lawful for that undifferentiated nature to come to be in a state of difference with respect to itself, nor again could the simplicity of all things proceed into a duality.

How can matter be its limit and its lowest trace?

But it is not so:²² that One is not even defined as one, such as we affirm matter to be, nor do beginning middle or end apply to it—all of these are

defining characteristics. Nor does it have (I 112) anything in potential or act, nor, in short, anything at all that belongs to matter. For matter itself is one of the elements that belong to what comes to be. Therefore it is determinate and so is far from the indeterminate nature, since it is from the former that matter originates with its defining characteristic, and hence [the realm of] becoming. As such, this origin is not among the firsts nor among the intermediates, but among the last traces [of the One]. All things are defined in terms of that [first principle], and the last differentiation of all is separated off after all things as the sediment of all things. We may have occasion to discuss the [causality of the One] again, and in time dissolve the doubts that proliferate. But now so much must be said, that this principle arises before and checks its emanation into the ultimate matter by virtue of its transcendent lack of differentiation that belongs to it from its perfect simplicity.

Section VI. The Causality of the One

Chapter 37. Questions about the Cause of Differentiation

■ In this section, Damascius continues to discuss the problems of the origin of multiplicity, of procession and differentiation from the One. The aporetic overview of this chapter forms the backdrop to the next four chapters, each of which continues to explore the relationship of multiplicity to unity, by approaching the question through appeal to Damascius' predecessors, Iamblichus, the *Chaldean Oracles*, and Plato. The structure of the aporia is to the effect that if nothing is from the One, how is it the cause of all things? If the One is not, what then is the cause of the differentiation? ■

Then if nothing is from the One, how is it the cause of all things?

[We reply that] as a differentiated cause and in terms of the differentiated conception that is applied to cause, the One is not a cause. For it cannot be the efficient cause, since other causes are prior to the efficient cause, nor can it be the final cause itself, as one might think, for this too is just one of the causes and is differentiated from the others.¹ Nor, again, can it be the three causes simultaneously, as a perfect cause in one, since the three causes too will be differentiated from the many things that are not causes, but there nothing is differentiated. And yet that One before all things is the cause of all things, just as it is the cause of causes, (I 113) although the One is not this as other than its [own] unique simplicity, but as the [conception of] One originates in the things below, so too does the [conception of the One] as cause.

What does [the One] cause, if in fact it is wholly a cause?

[It is the cause of] all things, I aver, and not cause of some things but not others, nor cause in one way but not another way, nor cause of just those things we designate as subsequent to it.

Has then something arrived [into this realm] from that realm?

Yes, very much so. Indeed all things have thence arrived, but not as that, but rather as what is subsequent to that nature. And thus too the generation that arises from that is dissimilar, whereas before it, there is the similar generation because it produces beings that are more intimately related and proceed from each whole, but not from one of the causes that are differentiated in it, as is the case with the dissimilar procession.² And it is even more universal because it is [generative] of all the gods.³ However, the dissimilar procession is not of all gods, since, for example some of the gods are called virgins or demi-gods, whereas the similar procession is ubiquitous, and [the god] that does not produce in this line will be without issue, which is only the case with pure matter, if it happens at all. Therefore if the procession of all things from that One is dissimilar, clearly, then, the similar will exist before the dissimilar, but this has been shown to be impossible.

[Our reply] is that first, it is not permissible to distinguish the two kinds of processions in the One. Since it is absolutely without differentiation, it could not give rise to a proliferation from itself either as differentiated or as similar or as dissimilar or as both simultaneously, but rather the proliferation that belongs to [the One], if it is permissible to put it thus, (114) is the undifferentiated proliferation that is prior to both [similar and dissimilar]. Second, if one wished to distinguish the two kinds conceptually, he would conceive the generation of all things from the One as each kind simultaneously: as all things are in the One, it produces all things through the similar [procession], whereas since the One is prior to all things, it produces all things through the dissimilar [procession]. The One is all things and prior to all things at one and the same time and as one and the same thing. Therefore, it brings about the similar procession and the dissimilar procession as the same and at the same time. It is all things and it produces all things, and this is [the One] that brings about the procession of the similar. Yet it is also before all things and [that which has produced]⁴ all things, and this is the One that brings about the dissimilar procession. Again, in a different way, as entirely simple it brings about the dissimilar procession of that which is not simple, and as that which transcends the simple it brings about the same procession of the not simple as the procession of the similar.

Does the One then produce, for if so, then this is its act. Prior to the act there is power, and prior to power there is subsistence.⁵ [And yet there is no subsistence there],⁶ nor, a fortiori, power, nor, with still greater reason, is there activity. Such things [exist] in [the realm of] differentiation, and they are distinguished from each other; thus subsisting, power, and act are not in accord with that which is absolutely without differentiation.

[We answer that] these [i.e., subsistence, act, and power] do not belong to the One in the way that we [ordinarily] attribute them. In the same way that we still refer the One that is not the actual one to the One, and in the same way that we attribute all things to the One for the various reasons that we have mentioned so frequently, so we would also speak in the case of acting and having power and being, in a way that [preserves the awareness that the] three are one, and undifferentiated from each other. It does not produce by its existence, as someone might say, since this would then be a form of production contradistinguished from (I 115) others, nor is it the case that because the One is, therefore the others are, for thus the One will be the cause of nothing, if it does not produce them, but rather, the One is the cause of all things just in its prolific simplicity that is before act, before power, and before subsistence.⁷

Is the One a cause at all, and is it differentiated from its effects?

[We answer that] both cause and effect are differentiated after the One, [proceeding] from the cause of differentiation, whatever that may be. But that One is just the One-all. And if it is a cause as well, it is so in the sense that the cause will be in all things, and it will be all the effects whose source it is, because this too is included in all things. But that arises prior [to this differentiation] as neither cause nor any of the effects, but as absolute and undifferentiated, as the One-all of all things.

Therefore, is the One-all differentiated in this way at least, that it is such, and as such is differentiated from things that are not such?

[We reply that] if the things that are subsequent to it are also differentiated from it, then the differentiation is not from it: rather, that which proceeded has differentiated itself from that, just as the person who shuts his eyes has distanced himself from the sun, though the sun has not become distant.

If the One is not, what then is the cause of differentiation? For all things cannot be the cause of it, since all things have separated themselves from the One?

[We reply that] the [cause of differentiation] is one of the things that proceeded from the One, [a thesis that] the argument will, in due course, reveal. Therefore [let us stipulate that] that first distinguished itself from the One, and then the others [followed]. Let that therefore be the first to undergo differentiation under its own agency, even though the process must begin from itself, arising from its native activity: yet it is still distinguished. Clearly, the distinguished is distinguished from that which is already distinguished.

(I 116) But this is not necessary: for in the case of shutting our eyes, we stand apart from something that is not distant, even if the light is refracted. From the god who is everywhere it is we who depart because of the unfitness [for receiving him] that belongs to our present life. And again the form is distinct from the matter though the matter contains no differentiations in itself. For differentiation is itself a particular form, and they say that the form is other than matter, although matter does not exist as something different from form.

The image too is like the paradigm though the paradigm is not like the image of itself.

This reply is not reliable: for by the same proportion that the likeness of the image is diminished, to this degree the likeness of the paradigm exceeds that of the image. The image of things that are in the same order is equal with respect to correspondence, but the image of what is better or inferior, though it corresponds, does so with excess or defect. If, therefore, the image is not equally like the paradigm, but defectively, what prevents the paradigm from being like the image, but to excess? That is, if it is true that the image imitates the paradigm and in this way is like it, then the paradigm also assimilates the image to itself, and in this way is like it.

[Again, one might respond that] these examples would fit better in a different context. But [in the present argument] surely the form is not other than the matter because the matter is not other, but just because the form is not matter. Otherness allows one to discern sameness, and likewise sameness allows one to discern otherness. Form and matter are not in any way the same, but matter is not able to be the same in any case, and so there is no otherness in them with respect to each other. Yet we must admit that matter and form are entirely separate from each other. Further, the separated corresponds to the separated, so that all things are also separated from the one nature, which is in its turn separated. Therefore it is in this way that this nature is also differentiated (117) from all things.

How, then, did the One undergo any differentiation? Surely it did not undergo differentiation as a result of anything that is subsequent to the One, which we could call the cause of differentiation. How can the One, which we agree is entirely without distinction, be distinct from that which is already distinct?

[We answer that] just as we cannot say that things in which there is no otherness present that is common to both things are others, so we cannot speak of things that are distinct from each other or differentiated, if there is no common name or reality present in them, namely, distinction or differentiation. The author of distinction or differentiation does not correspond to its effect bilaterally, but is related as the maker is to what [it causes] to happen. The effect is differentiated from the cause as a participant in the differentiating cause, and yet the cause is differentiated from the effect as producing it from itself and also being the author of difference. It is in this way that we hold that likeness of the image and of the paradigm correspond. But as for what is beyond every differentiation, no one could say that this is subject to any differentiation at any time. When something is distinct, then it cannot be entirely distinct, since it, too, contains a kind of one that it also shares.

Therefore, there will be something that belongs to the second from the first and is like that—a situation that we do not admit.

[Our answer is that] if the One is itself both in the second and in all things, as we were saying, then it could not be at once shared and distinctive. For the common and the particular just are forms of differentiation.

Chapter 38. Chaldean and Iamblichean Language Concerning the Cause of Differentiation from the One

■ In the aporetic discussion of the previous chapter, Damascius attempted to analyze the origin of distinction in the One by suggesting that, in the end, distinction can only be “introduced” by something that already is distinct. As the examples of sunlight and eyesight show, it is only from the perspective of distinction that distinction can be acknowledged. In this chapter, he comes a little closer to accommodating the perspective of distinction, using in the first half of the chapter the Chaldean language of subsistence, power, and act, to show that the One does indeed cause all things. In the second half of the chapter, he rehearses an Iamblichean solution to the problem of how the many arise from the One. ■

(I 118) How can we express or compose these simple and truly immobile images⁸ of that transcendent truth? Now, either there is nothing after the One, and the One is alone and independent, or if others do arise after the One, then by all means they are differentiated with respect to it.

[Our reply] to this question must [start from] what is below for some indication, though of course this indication will also be obscure, since our birth pangs swell toward the One always, and yet they can never give birth, but they contain their giving birth in their very labor. Bearing in mind that our labor is a kind of indication, let us admit a differentiation of a certain kind, most lacking clarity, and the least lucid of all distinctions. This, I say, is the first of all such differentiations, one that is almost swallowed up by the undifferentiated, namely, that differentiation in which the second can appear to be a power of the first, and yet this power is entirely fixed in its subsistence, a differentiation the Oracles have already hinted at.⁹ Someone might even be able to conceive a differentiation that is more like the One than this, which arises along with that which is prior to all subsistence and all power. So, too, we can say that the second is after the One, but that the second is more the One than it is after the One, and that it is more the One than from the One, and one can add whatever forms of hyperbole he might invent.

Therefore are the others that are after the second also present in the same way to the One, and what about the lowest forms: are all things of the same rank with (I 119) respect to the One? Surely that would be impossible, and so the One, even if it is not adequately distinct from the second, is distinct from the others, and especially from the lowest forms.

[We reply that] all things have proceeded simultaneously, first, middle, and last, and they are not yet related to each other in this way, but they are all together as One, and they are all related to the One as effect to cause. The rest of procession and order arises from other causes and belongs to all things from these. These, too, are from the One, but they are from the One in the manner of being present in all things. And therefore only the One is the cause of all things, whereas, in the case of all things, a distinct cause functions for a distinct

effect. That the One is the principle of all things simultaneously its perfection reveals, and so does its lack of differentiation, the fact that it is no more this than that. Yet what most of all reveals this is the longing that all things have for this cause, as the cause of all things. It could surely not be the case that there is an antecedent cause of a particular thing, but no cause of all things taken together as all things. And, if there is a cause for all things, then what other cause could there be besides the one that we are now contemplating? [Our answer involves the solution of a cause] that differs from all things to just this extent, if it is lawful to so put it, that all things are all things in every sort of way, whereas the [cause of all things] is all things in the simplest possible way.

This doctrine is consistent with the [teaching of] Iamblichus, as I can show by pointing to the fact that Iamblichus says that the way of ascent to the One is not available to each thing by itself,¹⁰ unless it first coordinates itself with the all, and so returns back to the common principle together with all things. If all things naturally tend to the principle (I 120) simultaneously, and each particular cannot separate itself from all things, clearly all things have also proceeded simultaneously from the One, though not as individuals, but as arising from one another. Nevertheless, if all things arise simultaneously, still, some are far while others are near. Yet these differentiations, too, are made only after that nature, but then there was not yet far or near.

This, then, is how one can speak of the highest things on the analogy of the lower things.¹¹ But to speak in labor toward what is truer, neither are all things differentiated from the One, nor is that differentiated from all things, but then again neither are all things and the One, one with each other, nor are they the same, nor different, nor like, nor unlike nor one, nor many, nor in the same order, nor in a different order. Even being before all things does not accord with the One, and therefore neither does being after the One accord with all things. Therefore neither does first nor second, nor cause, nor effect belong to all things. These things arise relative to one another when there is already differentiation. But the One is without differentiation, though not in the sense of being undifferentiated as opposed to differentiated, but it is entirely simple and is at the same time all things in an undifferentiated way. It is all things as the One, and yet that One is all things and not just the One.

Chapter 39. Doctrine of the Chaldeans Applied to the One's Procession

■ Damascius elaborates the Chaldean doctrine hinted at in the previous chapter, with its differentiation of power, activity, and subsistence (referring to *Or. Ch.* fragment 4) as the primary differentiation of the first principle. In fact, here as elsewhere, Damascius anticipates the structures that are actually more relevant to his exposition of the third henad as seat of the intelligible triad. ■

Let no one raise the following objection: if the others proceed from the One, they are separate from it, and the One therefore is separate from them, whereas if the others are unified [with the One] they have not proceeded.

It is not in the way that we think that they have either proceeded or not proceeded (in fact the manner [I 121] of that unified procession, a manner that we cannot yet conceive, is entirely different, since we in our conceptual thinking are divided into remaining, procession, and reversion, whereas that manner of procession is beyond the differentiation implied in these divisions) nor is it necessary that the others be unified [with the One] if they are not differentiated nor differentiated if they are not unified [with the One]. The One is without differentiation before both differentiation and unity; the others are in the opposite [condition].

Nor in turn should anyone inquire if the One produces while the others are its products, since if the One acts, then it is also has power and it also subsists. All things are then three things, and not one, namely, subsistence, power, and activity. But it has been agreed that the One is before activity and power and subsistence: it is one and not three, and the three are, as it were, the One before the others arise; it is we who, in our need for thinking and explanation, nevertheless maintain that the One produces. We must purify the manner of its production, since it is not of the same order as our thoughts, and it is not accomplished either through activity, power, or subsistence, but by being one before three in a way that is not capable of being expressed in language.

Neither should one say that any participation emanates from the One, arising either uniquely for each individual, or as a single universal participation¹² that belongs to all things so that what has proceeded from the One participates in it, and that this dispensation bestows a part of itself on what has proceeded, nor, if none of the above is true, should one deny that all things have their being from the One, and that there anything common between the other things and the One. And yet, if there is something common [between the One and other things,] the One will be in them, and not by itself, or else these will be in the One and there [will be] nothing besides the One.

[We answer that] this class of puzzle, one must admit, carries weight in the (I 122) case of those things that are produced or proceed in a state of division. But just as we placed the procession of that which is from the One neither in unity nor in division, so also the perfection from there and the participation of that is neither as if it gave something from itself, nor as if it put a stop to its giving, nor yet as if it shared something in common with other things with the gift of its very own illumination, nor as if it were completely isolated, nor as if it were entirely in community with them. These antitheses occur in a state of differentiation. But the One is, as has been said many times, undifferentiated, so that at once all these things can be said to be in the One, and again nothing by itself distinctive is [in the One], or what is more true, is that it is not even all things, but it is One before all things, simplifying all things together.

Chapter 40. The One-All and Its Relationship to All Things

What about the light of truth that is sent forth from the One, according to Plato?¹³ That Plato avers these things concerning the One in very close agreement with our own intuitions, he makes clear in other passages, but especially when he determines to assign not just truth alone but also beauty and proportion to the threshold [of the One].¹⁴ Nevertheless, however, [one could object that] Plato is not taking up the One that is absolutely before all things, but the One on which Being immediately depends. Therefore, he says that the light brings together the knower and the known, which is to say, the intelligible and the intellective, as if the light were rooted in the intelligible and thus affirmed the truth of the thinker and the object of thought.¹⁵ But this problem must be examined at another time.

(I 123) If, therefore, we were to say that truth is the light of the One, we shall say that the light from it is the procession of the divine henads, as the philosophers agree.¹⁶ Therefore, do they not have something in common with each other, these henads, according to which all the gods are and are said to be one god? Yes, I agree, but this is using language as if we were speaking about [the gods being] “in relation to” One or “from” One; and so there is multiplicity here, as well. If the One is also without differentiation as a single root of the many gods, this is not at all that One nor a participation of that One, but it is the root that precedes that which proceeds, while proceeding together with them, as it were the monad, if one can say this, of the divine number.

Now if someone brings matter forward as the last trace of the One, he will go entirely astray.¹⁷ For matter is differentiated with respect to form, and the lowest is differentiated with respect to the first, but the nature of the One is before all these differentiations. And form, as well, is everywhere found with matter; whence therefore the Form proceeds, the matter also is from that same order. We [shall return to] this topic later, as well.¹⁸

But what about what has been said in addition to all the preceding puzzles, namely, that the compression of all things in each thing, which is prior to everything in each thing, while it is analogous to that One, is not like an image or a light from that, but rather it is the crown or root of what proceeds, and it has proceeded with [all that proceeds], in such a manner that [this concentration] is inherently from that, just as the single root is common to all [branches]?¹⁹ But the One is not a root but before all things, nor yet is it the root alone but it is (I 124) all things together with the root. The One-all therefore is before all things, and all things come from it, since it is at once root and branch.

But how could the root, whether one or the many roots, be an echo of the One, since we have agreed that it is the root and branches, and agreed that the One-all is undifferentiated before all things? Moreover, the root is differentiated with respect to the branches, just as the crown is differentiated with respect to all the rest. Thus, the illumination from there is not that which,

before all things, has the nature of the one [the quasi one] in each of the multiplied beings. No, since this quasi one would be itself multiple through its position, and so in some way differentiated from that which illuminates.

Nevertheless, it is not because in this way the others do not participate in it [the One-all] that they can participate in it in no way, [nor] shall we then assume that the One is cut off from all things. For we must reject soundly the second group of puzzles, those that argue against the ordinary way that others participate in the One, but are unsound when not qualified. For we allow that just as our intuition of that hypostasis is *sui generis*, so also is our intuition of its procession. That is, it is neither unified nor individuated, neither similar nor dissimilar, but is before both alternatives. So, too, concerning participation: it does not come about as the presence of the One or as an illumination that has become separate from the One, but it is before both alternatives. To say that what is given is either individual or universal will not be apropos, since what is given is also prior to both of these. Nor again is there a given or a not given, since these are opposites, but the One-all is prior to every (I 125) antithesis, even that of contradiction, and a fortiori of every other antithesis. Therefore it is neither perishable nor imperishable, but it can correctly be said to be before these arise, if there can be any correct way of describing it. And yet how could there be, since there is neither anything individual about it nor yet anything universal? We do not compare ourselves to it in any way, since it has no characteristic. Instead, we compare ourselves to something that comes after it, since neither do we become one with that, but only one with the one that is after it, whereas that, in addition to being One and all things, to put it thus, is also prior to One and all things.

Chapter 41. Conclusions about the One

■ We are unable to grasp the nature of the first principle, despite our efforts to concentrate our scattered intuitions. Hence we cannot call the One cause, beginning, or the end of striving. All such epithets belong to our own projective determinations. The One is the cause of all things as well as entirely simple, but simple in the way that it is simultaneously all things, and all things in the way that it is simultaneously simple. ■

What does Plato mean by the “ray of the soul”?²⁰

This ray touches on the light that comes from the One, and yet it does not touch on the One.

Yet why not? Does not the light from the One touch the One?

In the terms of the analogy, it does touch on the One, but in truth, it never does.²¹ That does not submit to contact with another, since the point does not submit to such contact, either.

But how does the light arise immediately after it?

It arises insofar as it appears first before others, or because it has not emerged completely from that sanctuary. But concerning the doctrines of Plato in general, there will be [more] later.

Still, the second is after that, whatever it is, and proceeds from it together with all things in a way that is entirely undifferentiated, but without there being any antithesis to differentiation, but since it is in itself a second principle, it projects different conceptions in (I 126) us concerning both itself and that which is from it. Clearly our conceptions need to correspond to reality insofar as possible. And yet what we supposed about it, we attempted to surmise [when our thoughts were] far from the nature of the simplicity of the One that is before all things. Yet still our desire presses us to awaken our naturally divided condition of mind in the opposite direction. Or rather, we are striving to harmonize our scattered intuitions with the One-all, which none the less and even more, is that which contains all things in itself, or to say it better, is that which subsists as all things, or to say it still better, is that which does not even subsist, but is beyond this as all things. And that is why such great clamor has come about, since divided reason is always in danger of scattering the One into many, or of destroying its inherent nature, and power, and activity.

And now we draw the conclusions to these arguments, namely, that the One cannot be spoken of in terms of differentiation, or expressed by means of the following epithets, not even if they could all be said simultaneously, such as that it is cause of all things, that it is first, that it is good, most simple, beyond being, measure, desirable, end, beginning. All of these epithets are determinate conceptions, but no determination belongs to the One, not even the determination that is the opposite of determination, lack of determination. If there is some [determination] before all these things that could signify every one of them, this alone could bring that to mind. For being One and all things simultaneously, it is both, since it is One before the One and before all things, and thus there is no appropriate conception that is both all perfect and single at the same time, and a fortiori, no appropriate designation.

But, nevertheless, [this principle] demands some kind of address such as we are at a loss to (I 127) apply. Consequently, too, it is this knowledge alone that we allow that we have of it, according to which we dishonor whatever belongs to us as applicable to it. Furthermore, as many things as we assume concerning what is subsequent to the One, these we say [share] the same dishonor [of being inapplicable to the One] as well, and we hold the One neither to be something among all things, nor all things simultaneously, since we hold it to be the cause of all things as well as entirely simple, nor yet so simple as to be one among all things, nor yet like simplicity itself (for this is one among all things), but simple in the way that it is simultaneously all things, and all things in the way that it is simultaneously simple: and again, it is neither all things in the way that all things are many, nor as the whole from the many, but it is all things as One before all things.

Chapter 42. The Three Henads as Remaining, Procession, and Reversion

■ Here Damascius discusses the nature of procession as such: if there is a second after the One, then the One must be distinct from the second. And yet how will the One undergo such differentiation? Differentiation only arose from a relative point of view; whence first and second have their origin. For the same reason, no remaining of the One, no procession, and no reversion can be distinguished. Nevertheless, the first moment can be *likened* to the cause that remains, while what proceeds from it in the first degree can be *likened* to the processive cause or principle of authentic procession, and the third from the One can be *likened* to what reverts. ■

Now since the One is revealed to be such, next would follow the inquiry concerning the identity of that which proceeds after the One. And yet this subject must be postponed.²² Yet considering what proceeds after the One solely insofar as it is from the One, that is, after it, we must inquire, first, if it is distinguished from the One, and next if the One remains, while the former proceeds, since that which remains must always be before that which proceeds, and finally, if the second proceeds while remaining or does it only proceed? But we must begin from the starting point.

If then the second is distinguished from the first, it must be true that the first is distinguished from the second, since what is distinct is distinguished from something distinct. If this is so, then either the One undergoes this differentiation from the second, with the second functioning as that which differentiates itself, but [in that case] how can the cause be altered by the effect and how does it undergo any [change] at all? Or it is from itself that the One [undergoes differentiation] and in the process of dividing the second from itself it divides itself from (I 128) that. And yet how can what is not even unifying introduce divisions? In short, how is it distinguished from the second? Or [how] even is [the second] brought into unity with it, that is, [the One] that does not tolerate either division or unity with anything?

If it is not differentiated, how will there be on the one hand the cause, and on the other, the effect? And how could it not be the case here that the parent is entirely indistinguishable²³ from the offspring?

It is less perilous to say that the first is without unity and without differentiation because it is both one and many beyond being, and it brings about all things, as has been said above, in a manner that is not of the same kind that our [conceptions can grasp] and it is separate from all things, yet is present in all things in yet another such way. Differentiation starts from the point that transcendence as well as interdependence begin, and in general whence first and second have their origin. But we say even this concerning those principles, wishing only to indicate something concerning that which is utterly undifferentiated. And therefore neither does any of the others, nor does the second,

appear either to be distinct from the One or to be one with the One. For if it were one with the One, then the One would be the One as Unified. And so just as we hold that it is impossible to say that the One is other or the same, since otherness and sameness are not yet there, so neither is the One unified or differentiated, because there is not yet unity or division. For the same reason, no remaining of the One, no procession, and no reversion can be distinguished.

We are, therefore, no longer justified in trying to inquire into the remaining [entities, that is, remaining and reversion in the case of the One], but later we shall again inquire where the following arise, that is, [about the origin of what] remains, or proceeds or reverts among the (I 129) [the first causes] and whether these three are the same thing taking the hypostasis as a whole, or whether they are three hypostases. If one prefers, as if feeling one's way in the darkness, still to try to see these moments by means of analogy, and not through indication, but more vividly than the truth afforded by indication allows, then let this be the analogy. The first [moment] can be likened to the cause that remains, while what proceeds from it in the first degree can be likened to the processive cause or principle of authentic procession, and the third from the one can be likened to what reverts. If we separate these moments as we intuit them, then we shall know that the analogy is appropriate for them. Except that we must begin our search from the question as to whether that which remains is other than what has been posited from the beginning as the One-all. For this is not subject to differentiation. But someone could say that the remaining is first of what comes after the One-all, since there are three things.

The one moment can better be alluded to in terms of remaining, the next in terms of procession, and the last in terms of reversion. Again, if one wished to take these as indications that correspond to the three moments, it would suffice to say that that is the One-all with respect to the indication of remaining, just as what has proceeded first from it did not remain the first, but proceeded from it, while that in no way proceeds, while the Ineffable is before it, for which there is no expression available, not even in terms of indication. Therefore nothing proceeds from it, not even the One-all. But what does not proceed could be said to remain as it were by analogy, since even remaining could be said to derive from what does not proceed. But since this too proceeds from it insofar as it is after it, then it will require the positing of something that remains before this procession, since we hold that remaining is before proceeding. Therefore we shall search for yet another, and this will go on indefinitely, or else we shall make the One-all that which remains, which we posted as remaining before procession, since if this did not come before that which proceeds in any way at any time, then that which is after it could not be the first of that which proceeds at any time.²⁴ So much, then, is the extent of this inquiry.

Section VII. On the Merits of Iamblichus' Position Concerning the Number of Principles

Chapter 43. On the Number of Principles before the Intelligible Triad

■ In this chapter, Damascius introduces us to one of Neoplatonism's central dilemmas, caused by the tensions between a One that is utterly transcendent versus the One conceived as first principle, source of all subsequent stages of reality. The significance of this discussion cannot be underestimated, as the various ways of conceiving the first principle, in terms of an ultimately negative theology or in terms of an attributive (or kataphatic) theology, have informed theological inquiry in Christian, Muslim, and Jewish traditions, largely echoing Neoplatonist formulations. Even beyond the scope of traditions that are arguably influenced by the Neoplatonist negotiation between the first principle's transcendence and fullness, this question about whether the ultimate reality must lack attributes, or, on the contrary, provide the foundation for all possible qualities, is at the heart of theological inquiries almost universally. One parallel example is the eighth- to ninth-century Indian philosopher Shankara, and his differentiation between *nirguna* (without attributes) and *saguna* (with attributes) Brahman or God, a differentiation that gave rise to competing worship traditions in India.

To return to the conceptions of the One that we find either in Damascius or in Iamblichus, the following diagrams will illustrate the comparison that Damascius apparently makes between his own understanding and that of Iamblichus. When Damascius discusses the relationship between the elements of the intelligible triad and the second one in Iamblichus' scheme, it can be confusing, since he also discusses the relationship between the three henads that he recognizes or the three Pythagorean principles that he

TABLE 2 Iamblichus' Scheme

first one
monad (second one)
dyad (limit, unlimited)
intelligible triad (one-being)

TABLE 3 Damascius' Scheme

<i>Ineffable</i> One—with three aspects		
<i>Henads</i>		
One-all	All-One	Unified
<i>Otherwise named</i>		
Limit	Unlimited	Mixed
Monad	Dyad	Many
		<i>Intelligible triad proper</i>
		Being, life, intellect (Proclus)
		Subsistence, power, intellect (Chaldean)
		One, many, mixed (Plato)

purports to find in Plato's *Philebus* and the One. In other words, whereas Proclus posited a kind of dyad after the One consisting in limit and unlimited, Damascius posits a triad after the One, in which the first two appear as well as a principle that forms their unity. Moreover, all of the principles that relate to the henadic realm share all of the characteristics of each other.

Iamblichus' scheme is as shown in table 2 and Damascius' scheme in table 3. ■

(II.1) After this, let us propose to inquire into whether there are two first principles before the first intelligible triad, the one that is entirely ineffable and the other that is independent of this triad, as the great Iamblichus held in the twenty-eighth book of his most perfect work, *Chaldaic Theology*, or whether (as the majority of his successors thought) the first intelligible triad is [immediately] after the Ineffable and unique causal principle or whether we should descend even lower than this hypothesis and say with Porphyry that the father of the intelligible triad is the one principle of all things?¹

What the oracles mean is the subject for another occasion, whereas for now let us pursue a more philosophic method, which is our customary way, for these questions.

(II 2) Accordingly, how can the independent and sole universal, entirely ineffable cause of all things be numbered among the intelligibles and be called the father of a single triad?² For this triad is already the summit of beings, whereas that principle transcends all things. Moreover, the paternal intellect³ comes into contact with this principle in a manner particular to it, but there is

no particular characteristic belonging to that principle; further, the triad is intelligible because of its own intellect, whereas that principle is entirely ineffable. Finally, from what he has gone on to say to us, he [Porphyry] would say that the father of the triad is either more universal or is the One-all.⁴ But not even the One-all has the equivalent stature of this hypothesis, and still less can it equate with the more universal.

Perhaps it is better to agree with Iamblichus: if [we posit] the monad and the indefinite dyad, and the triad after these, which [all together] constitute the members of the entire intelligible triad, as the Pythagoreans maintain,⁵ the One would be before these, as those eminent philosophers maintain as well; or if there are limit and the unlimited and the mixed, the One subsists before these, as Plato has it (he also says the One is the cause of mixing for the mixed);⁶ or if there are father and power and intellect, then what is prior to these would be the one father before the triad.

"In every world there shines a triad over which a monad rules," the Oracle says.⁷ If this [is the structure present] in the worlds, how much more in the super-mundane abyss,⁸ for it would be least appropriate for that to begin from multiplicity. If, therefore, before the triadic is the monadic (II 3) form, and before this is the completely ineffable, as we maintained, the consequences are clear.⁹

Chapter 44. Arguments on Behalf of Iamblichus' Position

- 1. The One is prior to the monad that is itself the ruling element of the triad. The monad is number, but the One is before number.
- 2. The monad is derived from its association with remaining (*monas, mone*), the dyad equates with procession, and the triad equates with reversion. But the One is their source and prior to these three moments.
- 3. There are two principles that arise as antitheses, whether father and power, monad and dyad, or limit and unlimited. There is also a third nature that is common to both. And there is a principle that is prior to the three. ■

[Moreover,] if the One-all is the second principle after the Ineffable, and yet the second is no more "this" than "that," but all things equally, and the ruling element of the triad is rather subsistence, just as the second is power and the third is intellect,¹⁰ it is clear that, both in the case of real beings, the one of the triad must be assigned a place before the monad, as well as in the case of every number. Each number is one number, though each number is not a monad. The one that we were talking about is a monad, whereas the [absolute] One will be before it, and the Ineffable will subsist before the latter. Therefore the monad

will be the first element of the intelligible number, being the third principle. Or, as was said, the one is the one alone, and after it again will be the monad ruling the intelligible number.

On behalf of Iamblichus' position, one can also employ to great effect the previously stated argument, which places after the One-all, the principle that remains, for which the name and reality of monad are also quite suitable (since monad, *monas*, is related to the word for remaining, *mone*), so that the dyad is linked to procession and the triad to reversion, while (II 4) these [names] are used not in reference to multiplicity, but in a manner that is unique to their nature. Nor will it be correct [to say] that the principle of remaining proceeds in any way, but rather it comes to be through its own agency, solely by means of remaining, after the One-all. Therefore it has not proceeded, nor is it right to speak of procession in its case. Indeed, it is only after the principle that remains that the principle that proceeds, arises. Procession originates from this principle first, just as reversion is from the third principle, which is why the latter is also the first intellect.¹¹

After these points, let us take leave of these names whose [discussion] we have anticipated and say that there must be, after the unique principle of all things which has already been posited by means of affirmative language, a language that is to some extent purified and that affirms that the first principle is the One-all, again there must be after this principle, another principle which is no longer the One-all, nor all things equally, but all things in a manner particular [to each]. After this principle, there must yet be another, having its own unique characteristics and situated beneath the latter. For each principle is all things, because each intelligible principle in succession is still all things, and perhaps each diacosm is all things, until the level of the *noeric* (intellectual) beings. Nevertheless, all things are there in an undifferentiated manner, and they are situated either in the Unified or in the One, so that one must discern some other differentiation among the intelligible principles themselves. Therefore after the principle that is without qualification One-all, we must situate the principle that is one in all things, and yet not without qualification, so that we must also add a certain characteristic, clearly, that it is the most revered and universal of all; next, it is so for the third principle as well: it must have another characteristic that is less exalted and secondary by nature. The latter will function (II 5) as an antithesis with respect to the prior, which I imagine the ancients understood when they named them, some calling them limit and unlimited, and others the monad and indefinite dyad, and the Oracles call them father and power.¹² If, therefore, these principles, whatever they are [called], tend toward a unique characteristic, that principle inclining toward nothing, but being absolutely all-One, would be the single common principle before these, and before this is the Ineffable.¹³

Chapter 45. Arguments on Behalf of Iamblichus and contra Iamblichus

■ The first half of this chapter contains Damascius' concluding exegesis of Iamblichus' position, and in particular the fourth argument in support of Iamblichus: the two kinds of procession, the procession of similar and the procession of dissimilar orders, lead us to infer the existence of two principles that, respectively, give rise to these distinct processions. This argument refers to a topic that Damascius will elaborate below, namely, the idea of horizontal versus vertical procession. The procession involving dissimilar orders gives rise to vertical procession, and can be illustrated by the example of soul proceeding from intellect. The procession involving similar orders gives rise to horizontal procession and can be illustrated by the example of world soul proceeding from the hypostasis soul, or of individual intellect proceeding from the hypostasis intellect.

The second part of the chapter begins Damascius' critique of Iamblichus' arguments on behalf of two Ones before the intelligible triad in reverse order. ■

45.1. *Critique of the Fourth Argument*

■ Damascius once more rehearses his ongoing critique of ontology as being in any way adequate to the task of describing reality, and especially criticizes arguments about the nature of the highest principles on the basis of analogy from the lower orders, the intellectual or rational. ■

And yet one might also establish the same position from what follows, employing the evidence of things as they stand in a lower order: observing that among real beings there are two orders contradistinguished¹⁴ and coordinate with each other, the one superior, they say, and the other inferior, the one uniform¹⁵ and the other multiform,¹⁶ from these we are led to two principles, whether the one and the many (which I call "contradistinguished") or whether other principles, [if] someone wishes to posit them. Be that as it may, for either of these orders, there is a principle possessing its unique characteristic, inasmuch as it is the principle of something that also possesses a unique characteristic, and from this principle the common element is present to either the principle or order, as for example, to the uniform principle, there is the characteristic of the one, and to the multiform principle, there is the trace of multiplicity. For even if the two orders [originally] diverge from one common nature, the principles must be distinct before the orders. If the orders possess (II 6) something in common with each other (for they are not entirely separated), then at least, according to this argument, this common element proceeds from a single and uniquely constituted principle. Now I am speaking strictly here, not through indication, and I am drawing on the [evidence] of principles distinguished in intellect, or rather, in the soul. Therefore, since this

is the state of affairs here, it is necessary also to pose, prior to what is here, (that is, in the intelligible) the cause of these things, insofar as is possible through indication. Therefore we shall proceed from the undifferentiated and from the uniform principle to the single principle before all things, which we posited as the One-all, because we lacked a proper name for it. And in place of the two coordinate (contradistinguished) principles [we proceed] to principles that are in some way opposed to each other, analogous to the coordinate principles, whatever one wishes to call them: we shall not dispute the names with him, if [the names] possess some indication of or analogy to those transcendent principles that are situated beyond the whole series.

Therefore, ought one to posit two principles beyond the intelligible triads, and in brief, beyond all realities whatsoever, as Iamblichus alone thought, as far as I know of all our predecessors, or should we follow all of Iamblichus' successors? A god perhaps knows the complete truth concerning these exalted matters. If I must state my views, the above [arguments] do not sufficiently demonstrate the matter that confronts us.

(II 7) If we were to infer from determinate concepts and words, postulating such things also about the transcendent nature, we would correctly prove that the One is necessarily before limit and the unlimited (for each of them is one, and among things that are determinate, this is necessarily the case). But the consequence will be impossible, if we posit only that limit and the unlimited are there. Why not also posit the monad and the indefinite dyad, as some assert, or else the father and power? Surely we have a conception of each of these, and they are no less significant than "limit" or "unlimited." Therefore, instead of two or three principles we shall immediately create a proliferation of principles, indeed as many as are universals for determinate realities, and if not all genera, then at least those posited by other philosophers, and what is even more difficult, is that we shall posit the principles as themselves determinate. How, then, will the summit of the intellective world differ from any of the genera differentiated in intellect?

[Our reply is that] in that case surely not only limit, but also rather the common form of the entire rank of unique types, and again, not only the unlimited, but the common form of the shared character of this genus, must be assumed in place of either of the principles.

Again, in that case determination will be there as well as contradistinction, so that either of them will not be the principle of all things, nor yet will each be all things before all things, but rather, either of the principles will be all things belonging to either series and be the principle of all things, or rather either principle will be the principle of this rather than that, and the one will be more in the One, the other more in the multiplicity. Therefore, it will be necessary also to assign a prior cause of the more and the less and in general of the (II 8) contra differentiation that is present to anything belonging to the same order.

Apart from this argument, we shall [end up] assigning not only to the One a place before limit and the unlimited, but also to multiplicity, or whatever we

ought to call the cause of multiplicity and distinction, for since each of the two is one, together they are two, or not one. What then will be the cause for them of this common character? This cause must come before both of them, since they [must] belong to the same order, if it is not the case that the one of them proceeds from the other, that is, if the second [does not proceed] from the first, of necessity together with the properties called into existence with it. For the second produces itself first according to its own inherent character and also begins to produce the other characteristics as first beings.

Moreover, if these principles are taken from among the determinate beings, the One will truly be [numerically] one, and using this conception of the one we assign it a place before the two principles, the monad and the dyad. But if the one is differentiated, how will this one differ from the genus? For the latter one is also all things that have its particular property, namely, the one. Therefore how can [the One] be all things absolutely as well as in such a way that it transcends all things? If we employ these conceptions, wishing to grasp the One as the absolutely simple and transcending all things, in the case of all things, to avoid the lowest one or the one that can be construed as one particular determinate entity, and in the case of the One and all things to indicate the unique principle of wholes that is beyond all things and transcends all things, clearly we must also search out the subsequent principles, running up from the differentiated conceptions to the most complete possible, not, however, coming to (II 9) rest in the determination belonging to our conceptions, nor yet being complacent, nor projecting this conception onto the transcendent. For example, if someone wanted to present the intellection that belongs to intellect as simple, and compared it to the thought present in soul, he would employ illustrations both with regard to the intellectual, using the example of the gaze of sight, and with regard to the discursive, using the example of the reception of hearing, and then it would be necessary to let go of the examples and approach the truer conceptions concerning them. Meanwhile, the other would question the person trying to illustrate by means of example, and ask whether, just as there is a common¹⁷ sense perception that takes precedence over sight or hearing, so too is there a common form of substantial knowledge that belongs to both intellectual and discursive thinking, and [ask this] unaware that discursive thinking proceeds from intellectual thinking, as an image proceeds from the paradigm. In the same way, people who employ differentiated concepts and things to suggest [the nature of] the complete and undifferentiated principles, could not justly be asked to make the realities present in these determinations coincide with the transcendental principles, as for example, when [someone says] that things here are many, therefore the transcendental principles are also many, and not just two or three, and that things here are coordinately related to each other, and therefore assumes that those principles are also related coordinately with each other. [Or, for example, if someone says] that the one is before the limit and the unlimited among things here, and therefore also before the

two principles there, is the unique station of the one. And since it is also the case that different philosophers employ different names in order to allude to the two principles, each group speaking correctly, but taking up a different viewpoint, this itself can testify for us that we should not project these conceptions onto the transcendent, (II 10) but should rather be led by analogy from these conceptions to the first principles.

Chapter 46. On the Pythagorean, Chaldean, and Platonic Methods of Referring to the Intelligible Realm

■ The monad, limit, subsistence, and so forth, are different from each other but they are, just as the One itself is, symbols or indications that manifest a unique nature. Such language can be tolerated if it is understood as expressing indications, but not if this language is used *simpliciter*. In this chapter, Damascius continues to counter the fourth of the arguments assigned to Iamblichus, employing what might be called a broad ranging polytheist ecumenism that anticipates Damascius' survey of non-Hellenic theologies in the last chapters, 117–119, of the present work. Here Damascius cautions that it would be unwise to look too literally at the metaphysical or cosmological schemes employed in various traditions to indicate the nature and number of the first principles, since this kind of language is invariably symbolic, suggestive, and applies, in any case, literally only to realities that exist within the realm of duality, not in the realm of the One itself. Determinate concepts and structures cannot be invoked to prove anything about the nature of the transcendent. Conclusion: it is not incorrect to posit these principles, but we must keep in mind that they are named differently by different philosophers, depending on the perspectives they adopt. Rather, we must use these differentiations as indications of the transcendent nature. ■

As, therefore, monad and limit and father and subsistence and aether, if you like, are all different from each other among the determinate realities in this world below, just as their names in fact indicate, yet in the higher realm they are all illustrations or symbols that belong to a unique nature, so too is the One [such a symbol], even if it is different from each of these [symbols], and yet there, the One is also a manifestation of this same nature. In a similar way, let the many function as an indication or illustration of the other nature that is assigned a place after the one just discussed. One can also think of this principle as the unlimited or the indefinite dyad or power or chaos, or whatever other name promotes a more accessible representation [of its nature].

Someone might ask: must there not be a unique principle before the two principles, since they are opposed to each other, whereas the one is prior to antithesis?

[We answer that] in the first place, they are not opposed to each other as sharing the same order, as for example limit and unlimited, for this opposition is of elements that are contradistinguished; if they are opposed, it is as

cause and effect, as the whole intelligible cosmos is the cause of the whole intellectual order. And then if we also agree that the unique principle that we have discovered as the Ineffable in our previous research, exists, yet still, Pythagoras called the principle "One," which is in fact our second principle, and we call it "One-all," and after this [for Pythagoras] come the monad and the indefinite dyad. But I would suggest that in their desire to indicate the principle beyond all things, different philosophers employed a different word, or rather sacred word¹⁸ to be truthful, (II 11) some calling it simply "the One," and others calling it simply "God," others "Time"¹⁹ or "Occasion" or "the Good." But we assume that it is essentially ineffable because it is [beyond every intellection].²⁰

Rather, the Egyptians hail it as the Ineffable, since they call it "unknowable darkness," and invoke it three times as "darkness."²¹ Thus too Pythagoras, wishing to apply a name to it in view of his philosophical teaching, [called it the One],²² which is why he designated the principle that followed it as the monad, saying that this too was a symbol of the principle, but not a proper name, since in fact the monad is always present along with number, and number is among the differentiated things, but it is not present in the undifferentiated *pleroma* of real beings. But Plato's use of terminology is the subject of disputation. In the *Sophist*, for example, he ranks the One as before all things,²³ in the *Republic* it is knowable,²⁴ and in the *Parmenides* he appears to deprive the One of being: for it seems that he denies "that the One is,"²⁵ although it is through this thoroughgoing negative language and the complete denial of knowledge that he indicates that it is Ineffable. But [Plato's views on the One] would be better examined on other occasions. However, he clearly places this one in the second hypothesis, for which just now we used positive language and called it the One-all. But that One, which Pythagoras placed before the monad and Plato placed in the first hypothesis, is a symbol of the ineffable principle, since different philosophers named it differently.

(II 12) If someone were to say²⁶ that the One-all is the One as all things equally, and that the elder of the two principles is subsistent rather than paternal or having the form of limit, just as the second is rather the opposite, but that either of the two is nevertheless the One-all, the person who says this is still caught up in differentiations, attributing more and less to the transcendent and trying to delimit them by means of differential characteristics, for example as remaining or proceeding or subsistent or potential, a practice that one could tolerate if they were said as indications, but if they are used *simpliciter* or absolutely, a terrible confusion will result. Indeed, it will be shown that even the foundation of the intelligibles [that is, intelligible being] is all things equally, and yet it already contains a kind of distinction in itself. Let the one who [uses these epithets] be aware that we too presume that the Ineffable is all things equally before all things in a way that is entirely Ineffable.

Chapter 47. Critique of Iamblichus, Continued

■ In this chapter, Damascius discusses the three arguments sketched in chapter 44 in support of Iamblichus' position, again in reverse order. The reader will recall that these arguments concerned (3) the synthetic principle before the dyad, (2) the One as prior to monad, dyad, and triad, and (1) the One as prior to number. ■

Moreover, as for the argument that is in third place, the One-all is a term used of the One itself (since in the case of each principle, "the all" is added in order to manifest its perfection), and as such it will govern the unique series that gives rise to the the uniform [procession], just as the multiple will govern the opposite series.²⁷ The multiplicity also constitutes a principle, not the form as such. Nor is this principle a singular unique property, but rather is the principle that is all things in terms of multiplicity, just as the One-all rather inclines toward the remaining and uniform nature of real beings.

(II 13) Now let the person who thinks about the difference between the One and the monad also remember what was said, that neither the monad nor the One are there in truth, so that neither can the difference between them be assumed there, but it is possible to refer either the monad or the One to the same hypothesis or indication.²⁸

If someone assigns procession to the second principle,²⁹ and remaining to the principle before it, and before both of these principles, the undifferentiated, still even this person is caught in up in the determination of thoughts, because, although he discriminates procession and remaining among those principles, he does not also simplify these aspects by virtue of the perfect method of indication, and yet this person will agree with us in saying that the second principle is processive, and that the one before this is stable and remains, which we call the One-all, since it does not proceed from the Ineffable through procession, but through remaining. For that was the Ineffable, but the One that remains is no longer the Ineffable, in our view. Not that it has proceeded, but procession belongs to the dyad, and the One is beyond every procession. The One is always indivisible, nor can it be multiplied at all. Instead, it dissolves the multiplicity, and does so for anything to which it is present. Therefore the One does not (II 14) proceed in any way, since it is perfectly one. If at any rate the One is exceeded by the Ineffable, its declination does not consist in its procession; rather, there could not even be a declination. The One unifies all other things with each other and with their native causes, and insofar as it is owing to the One that all things are one, the One has not even separated itself from the Ineffable. Therefore the One, once assumed, is shown nevertheless to be ineffable.

Insofar as it has this nature, it in no way proceeds, nor does it remain (for remaining is something other, in addition to the One), but if [we are speaking] according to indication, then let it rather remain. But what remains,

our objector remarks, either remains in itself, in which case the One will have two aspects, or it remains in what is prior, in which case there will be something expressible in the Ineffable, since remaining is something that can be expressed. Or else it remains in what is after itself, which would be more difficult, since this principle is not even available to all forms of soul. But we shall maintain that the One is not what remains, but rather it is remaining itself, in terms of analogy. For it is the cause of remaining for other things (if someone can call it this), but it itself does not remain. I do not allow that the One is prior to what remains in another or in itself, nor does it provide remaining alone, nor does it subsist in remaining. But just as the One and the limit and subsistence are also called aether, so also they could also be called remaining, by analogy.

(II 15) If someone insists that the two opposing principles in the procession go forth from the unique principle by inclining toward the aspect of either [the uniform or the multiform procession], or [wants to] attribute to the transcendent principles the divisions between lower beings that are separated off from the single monad that unites them, then if this position implies that he divides and distinguishes them as two after the One and as derived from the One, such an antithesis is untenable. If [one] places one principle above all things as unique, and then another after this as itself embracing all things, and thus not as entirely Ineffable as such, and then another, subordinate to the latter, a principle that adds itself to that which is consequent upon the [second], then in this way we agree that the unique principle is the Ineffable, and that the principle that has the form of the one is after it, and the third multiform principle is after these, but the latter does not oppose the former as the multiplicity opposed to the one is among determinate things, but rather as dyad compared to monad, and as power compared to subsistence. Or more truly, not even in this way, (since power is something that belongs to the substance, whereas the dyad is quite detached from the monad), but as a second complete world is compared to a prior complete world, that is, the unified world compared with the differentiated world, except that each principle is the One-all, but the one is as it were one, and the other is as it were the many.

(II 16) But we shall discuss these points later, as soon as and insofar as possible. But now, to summarize with regard to the conclusions of Iamblichus' doctrines, we say that we too begin from the unique principle of all things and we assign the two principles after the One by analogy with the double rank, which parts into two from a single fused nature, although these two ranks are not contradistinguished, or rather the first is not yet willing to proceed from the Ineffable, and instead is swallowed by it, and the other has already proceeded and achieves its specific nature solely through its declination, because proceeding is co-substantial with the second nature. Therefore, it is also the cause for all things of their being differentiated as anything whatsoever, just as the other principle is of their uniting by means of their native causes. Therefore, each of the two is the principle of all things, but the one is the principle of all things uniting with each

other in breadth and depth (which is why is it called the One, by indication) and the other is the principle of things whose distinctions proliferate in all ways and in all forms. Let no one then say that the one rules one order, and the other a different order, but each of them rules both orders and that which is unified before both is also somehow a result of both, the one as paternal, the other as maternal.³⁰

Now if there is a need to explicate our position in and of itself, leaving aside the arguments that advocate for it, but taking into account the positions of other philosophers as well, namely, that the principle before all things is single and unique, and that after the (II 17) unique principle, there are two, limit and the unlimited, or however one wishes to signify and indicate their nature, let us begin the argument from this point.³¹

Chapter 48. Summary of Arguments and Evidence Concerning the Position of Iamblichus

■ The first part of this chapter is a general discussion of the third henad, the Unified. In effect, the Unified does function as the apex of the intelligible triad, and yet, as Damascius attempts to show, here it is considered more under its aspect as the incipient principle of multiplicity that begins to emerge in the realm, not of the One, but of Being, and yet is not quite outside of the realm of the One. Damascius also includes a doxology of the various ways in which One and many or limit and unlimited are characterized by Plato, Pythagoras, Syrianus, and Proclus. As part of this discussion, Damascius examines the implications of his conclusion that the One cannot be the origin of multiplicity or of procession. To the extent that the One is opposed to the many, we are still in the realm of what must be seen as subsequent to the first principle. It is in this sense that Damascius alludes to a tradition that accepts the One-all as equivalent to the One, a tradition that we see reflected, for example, in Proclus' *Platonic Theology* III 7, 29, where Proclus cites the *Second Letter's* "cause of all beautiful forms" in association with his own first principle.

In order to appreciate the implications of this discussion, it is necessary to take into account what Damascius says in conclusion to his assessment of the argument under consideration here, that many and one cannot oppose each other in the realm of the truly One, when he writes at the end of chapter 49: "If the opposition of the One with respect to the many again demands the One before the One, we could not then accept the opposition there, but only below, among the differentiated beings, from which also we derive the apparent opposition among those transcendent principles." ■

The Unified is one thing, the One is another, as Plato³² shows and as the common notion also requires. The Unified is what has become subject to the One, though the One in itself alone transcends the Unified. Yet the Unified is not entirely detached from the One, since the Unified participates in the One. The following therefore have something that is observed to obtain in the midst of their duality, as it were a binding of extremes, namely, listed in order: the Unified, relationship,³³ the One, and beyond the

One there will be a unique principle, the Ineffable. The so-called two are the One and the relationship, which is the same as power (for power is the first of all relationships). The third element is intellect or whatever we [wish] to call Being. This demonstration has been recorded both by Syrianus and by Proclus in their *Commentaries on the Parmenides*.³⁴

For the [protasis] "the One is"³⁵ placed at the beginning of the second hypothesis signifies the [intelligible] triad. You might more closely grasp the nature of the triad from the nature of the Unified: the Unified is not only One (for then it would be the same as the One of the first principle) but it is also not One. Therefore, it is also not only not One. For it would not then be the Unified, since that just means, what is subject to the One. Just as, because it is not one, the Unified has the purely One as its prior, so too, because it is One, and not purely not one, it is subject to the One, (II 18) which is why it is Unified by nature, because its character is situated in both [one and the not-one], if one may put it this way, so therefore the purely not-one will be before it, which gets its name by virtue of its own unique hypostasis, which is not the same thing as the nothing (which does not have a hypostasis) but is a nature that manifests what is not one among real beings, through which also the first being is not one, just as it is one on account of the One, and Unified through itself. Now some will say that the not-one is the unlimited, others chaos, and others the indefinite dyad, and still others would call it multiplicity. Hence the One is said to be mixed because it is unified from the One and the not-one. We shall say more on this topic later, as well.

For now, let us once more say that Being is either one or many or both.³⁶ Being is not one, because the concepts of "being" and of "the One" are not the same. But it is certainly not many, because of the same consideration. Therefore with regard to both Being and real beings, we say that they are both one and many. If Being is both, it is not both in its subsistence. For one and many are not the same thing, nor can something be one in its subsistence if it is accompanied by the many, nor can it be many, if it is essentially conjoined with the One, as if it were a particular element [composed] from both by participation. Thus, just as the One is before it as subsistence, so also is the many. And yet if the One is other than the limit, and the many is other than the unlimited, it will also turn out to be the case that there are more principles than we would wish. If the unlimited and the many come to the same thing, then also the limit and the One will come to the same thing, insofar as determinate entities are [able to] indicate the nature of indeterminate entities.

Now just as the limit seems to be opposed to the unlimited, so also the One seems opposed to the multiplicity. If the One is before the limit, then the multiplicity also will be before the unlimited, whereas if the One is before the monad, then the multiplicity as well (II 19) will be before the indefinite dyad. Yet if the One is before the intellectual father, the multiplicity will also be before the power. Therefore the first joint existence of principles is the One and the many, but all

the other principles either reveal that it alone is the unique joint existence, or are stationed subsequently to it, and the two principles before Being [will turn out to be] many, a conclusion that not even those who maintain this doctrine accept.

In addition to these points, the One, which is one, does not proceed at all by its nature. For neither being subject to distinction nor bringing about distinction belongs to the nature of the One, since distinction is opposed to unity. So if, in fact, unity belongs to the One, distinction would belong entirely to the multiple. These are therefore two principles, and in this way they will come first in the procession of all things, apparently arranged in opposition to each other. And yet the principle of the One is not before every antithesis, at least in terms of determinate conceptions; neither therefore is it [before all antithesis] through indication, in terms of indeterminate conceptions.

Moreover, everything that first acts as either cause or effect also turns out to be a cause of other things being disposed with the same quality. The first form of beauty is the cause of each beautiful thing, and the first beautified is the cause of others being beautified, and the same argument applies to all things. So if something first introduces distinction or is first distinguished, then this would become the cause of either process for other things; the first multiplicity and the first multiplied thing would be the cause of being multiple and of being multiplied. And other applications can be made in the case of the One. Therefore, if everything brings about that which it is itself, initiating from itself its own proper activity, so that it is also acted on by itself, the form sought in each case would be one, the first thing that acts and is acted upon. And if the agent is one thing, and that which is acted upon by the agent is another, these two principles would be distinguished by virtue of (II 20) acting and suffering, as, for example, the first beautiful that makes beautiful, and the first beautiful that is made beautiful. But the argument that we just now discussed applies to either [the cause or the effect]. If, therefore, the One alone by virtue of its nature is without procession, the many would initiate procession, as first to proceed. And just as the dyad initiates all procession according to the Pythagoreans, so power does in the Chaldean system. For this principle is the first to separate from its own subsistence. And yet what would be the cause of this distinction, other than multiplicity? For what is it to be subject to distinction, other than becoming many instead of one?

From our review of these principles, our first conclusion is that the One does not proceed. For if it did proceed, then it would itself be the beginning of all procession, so that before the One we shall require the principle that does not proceed, but remains, and so on *ad infinitum*. The multiplicity, or whatever one wants to call it, is the cause of all procession.³⁷ Next, we must conclude that a multiplicity manifests distinction of itself, and so would be the source of distinction, either by multiplying itself and dividing itself, or by being in itself purely multiplicity as well as introducing distinction, and so multiplying and subjecting other things to distinction. Whichever position one takes, this itself

would be the beginning of procession. Therefore, all who assume the existence of two principles wish this to be the second principle. Therefore they hold that the One is first, since the One is opposed to the multiplicity, and that this couple is that commonly discussed as the two intelligible principles subsisting after the One principle.

(II 21) Therefore, if someone were to assume³⁸ that there is a single first principle before the intelligible triad, and that this single principle is in fact the all-One (that is, on the terms of this system, also the Ineffable), and that Plato says as much in the *Philebus*,³⁹ positing the two principles, limit and the unlimited, and the One before these, which is also present to the mixed in a manner that is ineffable, for it is so ineffable that it can [only] be known from the three monads that remain situated on its threshold; were he to think, further, that Pythagoras also held this view, when he placed the One in front of the monad and the dyad called the indefinite, and that this is what all the philosophers who placed the single principle before the two thought—if someone following along with these blessed philosophers should say that the two principles have been set up in opposition to each other, but that before any opposition the One must subsist, he could use the common conception as additional evidence, as well as invoking the Homeric saying approved by Aristotle⁴⁰ that does not esteem the rule of the many, and lays down one king of the universe. For it will be necessary, according to this argument, for the truly One itself to be the principle of all things whatsoever. Therefore Plato, according to this argument, also often makes this One the principle, as in the *Sophist*⁴¹ he has the One before all things, and in the *Parmenides* in the first hypothesis he takes all things away from the One, even Being, but allows the One alone, stripped of all other things.⁴² If then someone, calculating the merits of this view and at the same time withdrawing from the position of Iamblichus, were to assume that the One is the single principle before the two, we shall counter against this person by employing what has been (II 22) said, namely, that the many are opposed to the One, and the unlimited and the indefinite dyad are relegated to the same position and equated with the many, in the way that the monad and the principle of limit amount to the same principle of the One, and the One becomes one of the two principles, and the second principle becomes the prior cause of all procession, and the One somehow already manifests in a subliminal way the tendency in beings to remain, because it is by nature without procession and opposed to differentiation, which could not even arise without procession, and as many other points that one could adduce from what has been said, against this thesis.

Chapter 49. Another Defense of Iamblichus' Position

However, we must still say in reply to this [criticism of Iamblichus' position] first, that the One is not completely ineffable, but it simply cannot be expressed of by

means of an argument, that is, [it can be expressed] neither through affirmation nor denial, but perhaps through simple intellection, nor can this be discursive or intellectual reasoning (for this kind of thinking relates to specific kinds and syllogism), nor yet can it be generally substantive thought (for substance is not in truth simple), but rather it must be [expressed] through the unitary kind of knowledge and with the flower⁴³ of the attempt to gain such knowledge. But for us, or rather for the blessed spectators,⁴⁴ it gives itself simply to be an object of speculation, and this until [the onset of] labor pains only (despite the great quantity of whatever has been said concerning the One before this point) since it cannot be known completely by unitary knowledge, because what is simply One and nothing other than One, is not even knowable. If, in addition to being this, it were also knowable, it would not still be strictly One. Nevertheless, this kind of purification is capable of approaching very near to its nature. And while it is near, it wipes away a definite knowledge of [the One] (II 23), and in its approach becomes silent and becomes unity instead of knowledge. I have already touched on these matters.⁴⁵ But it is obvious even now that the One cannot be the entirely ineffable principle. For the latter again is entirely without position and cannot be assigned any place among beings. The One, however, even if it is all things, is all things by being One, and it is subsumed under the category of the One, and so it is, as it were, the summit of all things.

Apart from these considerations, if someone wishes to apply a name to that which by nature has no name, or if someone wishes to speak about what is completely ineffable, or to give a sign for what is signless, nothing prevents him from assigning the highest of designations and of intellections to the unique and ineffable principle as if invoking the most sacred symbols,⁴⁶ and so to call that principle, "One," in accord with the well-known common conception, which holds that the principle of all things is one, but [one should] know in a more accurate way that this name for the transcendent is not suitable, but rather is appropriate for the elder of the two principles, if indeed it is appropriate for this, as has often been said, by indication. Perhaps the common conception that belongs to all people may be adequate to this principle as truly one, yet if is adequate to this, still it does not reach to a principle that is more universal and so quite rightly fit to be called a principle. But it does not arrive at the Ineffable, if the Ineffable is unrelated to our conceptions and if it is thus the completely inconceivable. If the opposition of the One with respect to the many again demands the One before the One, we could not then accept the opposition there, but only below, among the differentiated beings, from which also we derive the apparent opposition among those transcendent principles.

PART THREE

On the Intelligible Triad

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Section VIII. Limit and Unlimited

Chapter 50. The Dyad as Second Principle after the Monad

■ Here Damascius appeals to the authority of Plato, Pythagorean philosophy, the Chaldean Oracles, and Iamblichus, to discuss the structure of the principles that are prior to the intelligible triad. Limit and unlimited, the principle of multiplicity, and the principle of unity, are contradistinguished, and yet the Unified possesses its own nature and is not just the convergence of the two principles. For Iamblichus, there is a henad that is all things before the two principles. It seems that for him, the first of the two principles is also all things, but in the sense of what tends to have more of the form of limit; the second is likewise all things, but in the sense of what tends to be more unlimited. ■

(II 24) Let us now say something about this subject, opposition. Should we then, as virtually all philosophers and even some theologians hold,¹ that the dyad should be placed after the celebrated first principle, also place the dyad here, speaking now as we are attempting, quite literally? And why not, someone might aver. For what ought to have proceeded after the One, if not the two, and after the monad, the dyad, and in this way for the remaining number to proceed? This, at least, is [what Orpheus] has in mind when he brings in aether and chaos after Chronos.² The gods [that is, the *Chaldean Oracles*] reveal the father and the power as the sole dyad after the one god, and almost all traditional theologies agree in doing the same.³

But apart from [the weight of tradition], the argument itself demands [this view], since Being is from the limit and the unlimited,

as Plato⁴ says in the *Philebus* and Philolaus says in his *On Nature*,⁵ and in general, since the concepts of “one” and of “being” are different, Being could not be the same thing as the One. And yet Being participates in the One; therefore it possesses what is not one, as well. And this, as was said, is either nothing, which is impossible, or many. If one likes, there are only two, limit and the unlimited. If there are more, perhaps as many as the kinds of being that subsist there in a seed form, since if someone wished to assume that all number is in the monad,⁶ nothing prevents this. Therefore Being is many. And of these many, some derive from the limit, some from the unlimited.

(II 25) Someone⁷ might aver that perhaps it is necessary to posit prior to [the intelligible] the causes of the One-being and the dyadic structure of the elements inherent in it. Therefore the dyad of the principles [limit and unlimited] is distinct as cause of the aforementioned dyad [that is, One-being], in the same way that the One is distinct, that is, the One before the dyad (Iamblichus places [this one] before both and assumes that it subsists prior to the dyad as cause of the One-being.)⁸ In fact, to summarize, if we divide the real beings in their totality into the Unified and that which is subject to any distinction whatsoever, even if these are contradistinguished with respect to each other in the relationship of cause and effect, the same thing will result, according to this view. For from the two orders and so from the single whole division, we shall advance to two principles, prior to which there is the unique summit, being the cause of the two principles in terms of a single nature that they share, as well as those principles that grow out from these in two directions, since there are two opposing channels that diverge in the case of every opposition. For this was the doctrine of the person who advocated the principle that Iamblichus posited in between the dyad and the completely Ineffable. Further, he added that if it was necessary for the two principles to be participated by Being (he lets unified being be before essential being), what participated in Being were the first elements of Being as mixed, that is, the limit and the unlimited.⁹ And that is why Being is unified in its own nature [because the two elements] have jointly entered into one, whereas everywhere elements are contradistinguished, so that also the principles [that is, the limit and the unlimited] of these elements [that comprise being] also contain some element that is contradistinguished. Therefore the One (II 26) as their cause is prior to the contradistinction. This argument claimed to come to the aid of Iamblichus’ hypothesis and to defend the opposition, however [construed], of the two principles, since one might say that this position implies the following conclusions: the henad before the two principles was all things simultaneously before all things, but all things equally, and the first of the two principles was itself all things, but in the sense of what tended to have more of the form of limit; the second was likewise all things, but in the sense of what tended to be more unlimited.

Moreover, to visit the same issue from a lower perspective, since all real beings are both unified and differentiated, one of the principles is at their

summit as Unified, the other as differentiated, another is before both as all things without qualification. Perhaps it would be better to put it this way, that one of the principles is of all things as remaining—the principle that has the form of limit; [another is of all things as proceeding—the principle that has the form of the unlimited];¹⁰ and another is of all things as reverting, the third, which is situated in Being. But before these there must be the highest common apex of all principles, which is absolutely One as the summit of all things, but not of all things as they are in some way or another, but only of all things as real, *simpliciter*. And again, if someone were to say that two or three principles together with the third principle were all things absolutely, how would they differ, being equally all things? If they differ as being all things more or less, what would (II 27) determine the more or less in them, since there would be nothing like a formal difference? In general, the more and the less are observed in terms of a single property and yet, there again, there is a single principle, but not several principles, of the single property.

Chapter 51. What is the Cause of the Dyad?

■ There is a single principle before the two: this is the absolute One, which Iamblichus places in between the limit and the unlimited, or if one likes, the one and the many, and the completely ineffable principle. This arrangement raises the question: what is the cause of the dyad, that is, the two principles of limit and the unlimited? If their cause is the One before the Ineffable, why does the One not possess these characters as intrinsic to itself? ■

In addition to these arguments and ones like them, we can readily say that these conceptions are all derived from determinate entities, yet applied to principles that are indeterminate [and] before all things. So, for that matter, are the concepts of the One and the all, one could say. But we attempt to purify our conceptions as much as possible from what is determinate, and conform them as much as possible to the indeterminate, speaking of the One and many simultaneously, abrading the partial aspect of the One by means of the addition of all things, and dissolving the composite aspect of the all by adding the unity of the One. There the contradistinction must be viewed differently, that is, the contradistinction of all things, taken together [and] contradistinguished in any way whatsoever, whether of the same order, or whether of causes and effects. For all things share a commonality at the most general level of distinction, and thus there are two prior causes for whatever is subject to differentiation and channeled into two divisions, and these causes are also in a way contradistinguished, but it is necessary that before the two that are so contradistinguished there be also a single cause of their combination, and of the entire order of those things that are [thereby] synthesized, [that prevails] through the final stages of the two divergent orders arising on each level, since

the law among those beings is for the whole to proceed before the (II 28) parts, and the Unified to proceed before the differentiated. In fact, there is a single principle before the two: this is the absolute One, which Iamblichus places in between the two principles and the completely ineffable principle, and the two are the limit and the unlimited, or if one likes, the One and the many, but the One that opposed the many is not the One before these two, which is also without any opposition.¹¹

If someone should thus extend these principles, both making the two principles oppose each other and stationing the principle of the One before both,¹² the first question for him with regard to what he last said is, what is the cause of the middle rank, which has its own complete nature. If [the cause] is the One before the two principles, given that they each have a nature, the cause will itself be co-natured, so that it will not be the absolute One, but that which is co-natured from the two, even if it is before the two. Now if it is a one that is absolute, it will be the cause on each occasion of the one of like nature, but not of the principle that is co-natured from the two. Whereas if the composite of the two principles is what arises when its two natures participate respectively in the One, this will be the principle of the whole order of the co-natured; it will be necessary to have this one as prior to the two taken in the sense of their being co-natured, and before this the unqualified One, and from this the two principles. And so in either way, the intermediate principles between the Ineffable and the so-called two principles will turn out to be two in number, and no longer one, as per Iamblichus.

Yet [one could object that] the simplicity that belongs to the first cause and the integrated nature that is now being completely purified are not different, but the same. There is a single apex for the twofold contradistinction. (II 29) This will be my answer: there is a single nature that synthesizes the dual procession in an identity. But even if the division is of a unique procession, and the division is in a One that is without parts and subsists prior [to the division], and is compressed into one unitary nature, this does not lead us to the absolute One; what should we think about the monad that is the origin of the two co-ranks? Surely, that would be the One in its greatest simplicity? Why, one could reply, do we not say that all things are in that, and that it is nevertheless one? But if so, then one must say that the One is also the integrated nature of the two ranks, on which also all the other things depend, or to which all things are subordinated.

Chapter 52. Seven Questions Concerning the Intelligible Dyad; Questions 1–4

■ In this chapter, Damascius discusses the implications of Iamblichus' emphasis on the principles of limit and unlimited.

First objection: it is better to ascend from all things in an integrated state to the One beyond all things, and not from a single contradistinction.

Second objection: the emphasis on the limit and unlimited does not yet contain the aspect of procession from the One that can be described as all things.

Third objection: there is danger of an infinite regress. What accounts for the differentiation between the One and the two principles? We require a principle to account for this first differentiation.

Fourth objection: every differentiation requires multiplicity. But the source of the first differentiation can only be the One. ■

[Our reply is that] first, it is better to ascend from all things in an integrated state to the single simplicity of the One that is unified beyond all things, and not from a single contradistinction, even if all things are in it. For [the One] would then contain all things in itself according to two characteristic properties alone. Instead, it is all things in the most complete sense that must undergo simplification toward the single cause of all things.

Second, this generic contradistinction does not yet embrace all things. This contradistinction, because every antithesis constitutes a division, does not embrace the procession that is from both of these principles and that shares both natures, nor the concentration that goes before each division at every point. But before every division the indivisible is seen, which is not the One, but rather a source of the things that are divided from the One, as the monad is divided from every number, being other than the absolute One.

And then he¹³ (II 30) says (but this does not persuade us) that one of the principles is, as it were, the monad; another, as it were, the dyad; another is constituted as what is one before both. For, he says, indeed, this is also what Pythagoras teaches.¹⁴

[We reply to this remark of Iamblichus that] Pythagoras revealed the existence of the ineffable principle in his One, because he had no other name with which to convey it. But we are now devaluing the [name,] “One,” and we do so in comparison¹⁵ with the [exalted] position of the transcendent principle, since it is evidently more sacred through its being venerated by us by means of one sole [name], the Ineffable, if one may be permitted to say this. For so, at least, the Egyptians called that principle “unknowable darkness,” and uttered this name three times, and also called it “darkness above all wisdom” and also “the great secret,” thereby magnifying our own experiences, rather than actually trying to reveal that nature.

And certainly the many are before the monad and the dyad, and generally before all number, as Plato shows in the *Parmenides*.¹⁶ [There he shows] that [it is necessary] to ascend from the more venerable principles to the first principles, and so clearly that [it is necessary to ascend] from the One [to the cause of the One]¹⁷ and from the many to the cause of the multiplicity. And it is also useful to see how we have ascended to the two unique principles before the monad and the dyad; we could hardly ascend to them from the monad and the dyad, or

from the One to the one principle before the One. The One is contradistinguished from the many, and this entire differentiation is prior to the differentiation of the one and the many. But I have made this point as a digression in the argument.

(II 31) Again in the third place, in reply to the initial argument [that is, for Iamblichus' dyad], it must be said that we are in danger of leading to infinity these two channels of the procession that arise in the case of every contradistinction. For even this is a contra distinction, namely, that of the one before the two with respect to the dyad [that is the source of the] streams, and it will also require us to conceive another element before this, and again perhaps to posit another before this.

Fourth, every differentiation is the product of multiplicity, or at least, of the multiplying dyad. Therefore, taking into account the entire differentiation, however we refer to it we trace it back to that principle which introduces differentiations and which brings about multiplicity, but the summit of it, which we call One-being, though it is not in fact one, but rather a monad or combination of the opposition that functions as a monad, [we trace back to] the absolute One, which itself wishes to be the limit or the all-One. For just as contradistinction is an offspring of the principle considered as unlimited, so too it's being co-natured will be the offspring of the same principle considered as limit. We designate the one as the order associated with limit, and in the same way we designate the other as the order associated with the unlimited. And most important among these designations are those that especially take the form of a principle, such as the one and the many. But as for being co-natured or contradistinction or differentiation in general, in Being, they are unified through concentration, since there [in Being] they are not yet distinguished, but there is only a co-nature that consists in a resolution of all things before any division, whereas it is first in intelligible intellect that division or differentiation or multiplicity of any kind is manifested. For the intermediate order, as (II 32) has been said previously, means something like the potential for distinction, and is manifest in becoming distinguished, but as not yet possessing any distinction, so that even the first contradistinction that is actualized begins from the third diacosm of the intelligible order.¹⁸ And it is the first differentiation and the Ur-differentiation. Moreover, it is revered as the Source of Sources.¹⁹

Chapter 53. On the Three Henads: Questions 5–7

■ Fifth objection: we must ascend from the divisible to the indivisible. The One resolves the division between the antithetical principles, since it is the summit of these principles, without itself being subject to differentiation.

Sixth objection: the Unified or Being is called subsistence and Metis. It contains the seed principles of all worlds. ■

[As our] fifth [response we add that] we ascend to the indivisible from that which is everywhere divided, so that we can also be led from the division that all things share to the indivisibility that all things share. And this is the concentration of all things or, to speak more accurately, the unity of all things. That which is all things in a unified and undifferentiated mode, just as the fount which is the source of all streams is an undifferentiated unity, would be that very unity that we often posit as [belonging to] Being. That which is subject to the One, but is not the One, would be Being, since it is both one and not one, although these differentiations do not yet exist [in Being]. And therefore it is appropriate to call it, and only it, the Unified. Now if we ascend from the all embracing differentiation that [separates] all things to the all-embracing unification of all things, and from the multiplicity inherent in all things to the unity of all things, it is clear that in attempting to ascend to what is beyond these things we shall more greatly become detached from every opposition, and in a way that we [move] from the perfectly undifferentiated world of the Unified to the perfect world that it is incorrect to call undifferentiated: for it is not even Unified, but it is even a more simple multiplicity or unlimited or dyad. For the Unified has a trace of the many and the one, but if these things are not yet discriminated in it, then that (II 33) principle is simply many, since it is the dyad and the unlimited by itself. The multiplicity conceived without the One is indefinitely indefinite and thus it is the unfathomable chasm of the unlimited. The indefinite is also one, but according to participation, whereas its subsistence and as it were unique trait is the pure many or pure unlimited, but it is not the many as the mere addition of elements, so that it could also become Unified [in the sense of being] constituted from the many things that are mixed by the one, but it is one-many in its unique nature, whereas before the many the One itself is one in the way that it is one alone in its particular nature and as one alone in its subsistence, while nothing belongs to it by virtue of participation. And therefore that principle is also called "subsistence,"²⁰ because it is alone by virtue of subsistence. But the second principle participates in the first and then projects its own subsistence, which brings about multiplicity. And therefore the dyadic character is first manifest in it, as is the processive character (because this principle first proceeded) as is the chaotic²¹ character, because it first yielded to the principle before it, and first departed from the One in a certain manner.

Therefore the Unified is not yet either of those principles, nor is it the mixed. For the mixed presupposes at least two individual characteristics as well as a single uniting principle. Therefore it is in the third remove from the first, in which there are two participations, that of the one and the many, brought together by the single subsistence of the Unified and Being, and the triad is already the third element. But the third is the perfect world and single root of the many beyond either of the two (one and many), being a yet greater world, or rather being (II 34) the cause of perfect worlds, as cause of worlds that are Unified, and a cause of worlds that are multiple and particular, and a cause as

well of the first world of all worlds, which is also the hidden world, named for the absolutely hidden principle, since there is not even a seed of the divine worlds that emanate from it, but it is yet beyond the seed principle, since the concentrated single and undifferentiated nature in it is prior to any seed. And that is why the theologian celebrates Metis as first “bearing the seed of the gods,”²² which is also called the source of all originary diacosms by the Oracles.²³ It remains so far distant from that oppositional ranking that arises in terms of differentiation because it is the unique co-natured being and unity of that entire opposition that arrives together with the labor that produces the differentiation of the intelligible shadow. If such is Metis, Metis when in gestation has much more this nature, or to put a finer point on it, this is the nature of the intelligible middle rank that conceives Metis. Before this order is Being itself, which is the true hidden diacosm. And still more greatly complete is the cause of Being. But it is no longer a world, but rather the cause of a world insofar as the world is also one, since that principle is also many and one, though in an undifferentiated way.

And so let us also bring in the “sixth generation”²⁴ of our demonstration, namely, that each of the three principles is all things and also before all things. But the third principle is all things in the unity of all things, while the first is all things in the One, as a unique and perfect simplicity, and the intermediate is all things in all things. For even in itself it is all things as many, which is to say, all things, since it is not some things, for some things means some of the many. But it was simply many, so that it is all things, yet all things neither as divided nor as Unified, for it is all things not as participating in, but as being itself manyness. And so it is all things in subsistence, just as Being is all things in one way in participation, but in another way as Unified in reality, just as the One, while it is one in reality, is yet all things as cause, if one can say this. Not that the One is also the cause of all things (for so it will once more not be one) but it is simply one as containing all. So that it will also be appropriate to distinguish [the three] by their names. The one is the One before all things, the second is all things, and the third is the One-all as unity.

So much then can be attempted as an indication of the two principles that are called first.

Chapter 54. On the Symbolic Nature of the Henads

■ In this chapter, Damascius criticizes the Iamblican dyad, that is, the limit and the unlimited. He also anticipates the Iamblican doctrine, more fully developed in chapter 70 below, according to which the summit of the intelligible order, Being, cannot be an intelligible object. Consequently, neither can the designations that imply differentiation within the realm of the One prior to the intelligible domain have anything but symbolic value. ■

Obviously, these principles do not belong to the same rank, even if this is often said in terms of certain indications made from things that are more knowable, nor are there two [first principles] since all number is lower [that is, comes later], just as the monad itself is later, nor are [the two] distinct from each other, for even in the third principle there is not yet (II 36) differentiation, but only an antecedent unity of those things which will become distinct from [the third], nor yet does otherness divide them, since there is no sameness in them. But as the gods [the oracles] have revealed, speaking, however, a human dialect, the three principles are related to each other as intellect, and power and father; or as subsistence and power of subsistence, and intellection of the power. But it is also entirely clear that neither are these things spoken truly concerning the first principles. For, in fact, the differentiation between these principles becomes manifest in the third diacosm of the intellectual order, intelligibly, which is to say, latently, but in the Unified they are unified. For there is no differentiation between cause and effect among the transcendent principles, and Iamblichus thought that the differentiated principle that governed them did not even exist at the summit of the intelligible order.²⁵ There is a unique intelligible continuity of all these principles, and this continuity is not in opposition to differentiation. Again, there would [have to] be another division before both continuity and differentiation. Moreover, unity is prior to all things in the intelligible order, since it is from the One and is, as it were, fixed around the One. In fact, to the extent that the pluralized is hinted at there, this means that the One itself is not the Unified, and yet the pluralized must also nevertheless be seen in the single form. For neither can unity be called the antithesis of plurality there (for the plural will be present along with it, even if it is contradistinguished), but there is a unique unity before both plurality and unity [there]. And yet if this is our view concerning the intelligible order, what does it further imply concerning the two principles (II 37) that subsist before the entire intelligible domain?²⁶ Must they not, with even greater reason, be unified, or rather since they are before any Unified, are the two not entirely one? How, then, are they two? Not as the dyad, for there is not yet number there, nor yet is there any differentiation there, for there is no monad nor yet is the One itself, which is called One, there, nor yet are the many there, since these (the many and the one) are contradistinguished with respect to one another. Nevertheless, we must use these names as a catachresis and apply them to those principles, since we possess no adequate designations for them. We do not even have concepts adequate for these principles. In fact, the intelligible realities are incomprehensible by means of our own thoughts. According to Iamblichus, the summit of the intelligible cannot be realized through the viewpoint of intellect, but intellect must compress its native intellections into the intelligible object, if it intends, in this concentrated state, to fathom [the intelligible object] which is absolutely concentrated.²⁷

Therefore, we must not say that there are two principles, or that there is just a single principle, as if we could count them, but rather must intuit them through their characteristic property, which we say is of the dyad and of the monad. It is a dyad because it is dyadic and a monad because it is monadic. In this way, the principles are both one and many, not in terms of an inherent quality, nor number, nor in terms of quantity, nor a quantitative nature, nor because of the principle of quality nor any qualified nature, but by being beyond all and every such conception. Each of these conceptions is partial and determinate, and we cannot be content with them (II 38), but we must also employ conceptions that are of a different kind to indicate the transcendent nature. No concept can actually succeed in alighting on the truth, but we compel our speculation to escape from all thoughts toward the unconditioned and that whose nature is greater, since, in saying that there are two principles, we assign the one a station beneath the other as [its] procession, although there is neither a dyad there nor any procession.

Perhaps it would have been better, if this too were allowable, not to render the two as two monads, but to make the two principles a dyadic one, just as one might think of the one of the dyad. But not even this method can actually reach those principles, since this kind of one is a one something, since one of the numbers is present to another of the numbers. Thus it is better first to take up the one common to all things, and having made this bi-form, in the sense that it embraces all things both as Unified and as discriminated, so to bring it into agreement with the nature of the two stated principles. From this position also we shall attempt to reveal or indicate them as far as possible, both from the two conjoint ranks, purified from below and brought together at the highest point toward the single twin origin, and then in a more splendid manner, from the complete pleromas everywhere and the complete worlds as both multiplied and brought into unity, with these worlds always subordinated to those pleromas, and so escorting us with great steps into the perfect exposition and demarcation of the first principles. But perhaps also grander and more reliable for their indication is the way that leads from all things whatsoever that have ever been and have ever been considered as causes or as effects. As many times as someone might wish or be able to conceive things there in some way, let her not conceive those things in the same way as these things [here], nor think of that which is there as having the nature that the latter suggest, but she should consider the principles and causes (II 39) [there] as still more lofty than [what is here], since what is here does not reveal what is there, I mean [they cannot make manifest] the name or reality of the principle or the cause. These determinations [that is, the name and essence of the principles] are made at the lower boundary of the intelligible order according to intellect, whereas in the intermediate rank they are determined but still in the birth pangs of the differentiation of all such principles, while at summit all things are concentrated into one, which is the unity of all things.

Thus the two principles are before that unity: immediately before it, there is the second in the birth pangs of all things, while the other principle is beyond the second, in the simplicity before all things, according to which the one can be imagined, just as the many are imagined [as emerging at this point] in the birth pangs of all things. The first principle is the One-all; the second principle is the all-One—if it is permitted to delineate them. The latter, although it is in itself all things, is somehow one nevertheless by means of the first principle, whereas the former, although in itself it is one, nevertheless is somehow all things insofar as [it] advances before the second, while the third has the one from the first, as well as all things by virtue of the nature of the second, with the following consequences: [the third] is a multiplicity by virtue of the second as well as a unity by virtue of the first; it arises as the first synthetic principle but it is completed as the unity of all things; this principle projects from itself the unity that we call Being, by means of whose nature the One is also Unified, just as the nature of the principle it is all things, and the nature of the still prior principle is prior to all things.²⁸ [The first principle is the all-One before all things,] while the second is the all-One that is all things, and the third is the all-One that is of the form of the One and all things, that is, the Unified. But we shall return to these subjects again, when we discuss the topic of the third [henad], a topic that immediately follows.

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Section IX. On the Third Henad

Chapter 55. Questions Concerning the Third Principle

■ Having completed his discussion of the One, the two henads after the One (limit and the unlimited), and the relationship between the One and the One-all, Damascius now begins to address the third henad, or Unified. The first question involves Damascius in a clarification of the Platonist tradition concerning the origin of the third henad, the Unified. Much of this discussion is of a highly scholastic nature, where Damascius works extensively with the formulations of Proclus and Syrianus in their treatment of the central passage from Plato's *Philebus* 27. Evidently Proclus and Syrianus accepted the fundamental dyad, limit and unlimited, directly after the One, but then interpreted the *Philebus*'s mixed as Being, as if it were itself composed of two elements, the limited and the unlimited, that constituted its parts. Moreover, Being is said to be "generated" rather than an *ekphansis*, or manifestation of the henadic realm. Damascius in general tries to infuse a new approach into this tradition by positing an independent nature for the third henad, here not yet considered as Being, but rather as an aspect of the One, an approach that involves him in subtle negotiations concerning the origin of multiplicity within reality as a whole. He now poses the following questions concerning his third principle, that is, the Unified: why is its rank third? What is its nature? What are the constituents of the mixed? In this chapter, Damascius makes clear that his position is a departure from Proclus' interpretation of the *Philebus* (for which see Proclus' *Platonic Theology* III.9.42, quoted below in note 5). ■

(II 40) Let us now come to the third problem in our discussion, or rather, to the third principle of all things. It would seem that there

is something from this [third] principle that pertains to the two first principles. Let us by all means investigate the Unified, which we have always ranked as third, and [inquire] what it is, why we rank it third, as well as why Plato and the other Platonists designate it as “the mixed,” as did Philolaus even earlier, in addition to other the Pythagoreans. It is not only for the reason that Philolaus [specifies] that Being is the concretization of the limited and the unlimited¹ but also because [the Platonists] placed the third principle after the monad and the indefinite dyad as the unified triad. But everything that is Unified is mixed, since in fact the Unified is a trace of the one and the many. Therefore, we must inquire from which [principles] it is mixed. As Orpheus says: “Then great Chronos fashioned the shining egg with the divine aether,”² [where] the word “fashioned” shows that the egg is an artifact and not naturally conceived, but every artifact is mixed from two principles at least, that is, matter and form, or from (II 41) elements analogous to these. Another question is whether the mixed is superior to the elements from which it is composed and whether the elements [in the mixture] are from prior principles that are of the same kind in terms of their nature (for this is what Plato seems to think).³ And [finally], we must puzzle over the questions associated with these issues, in whatever manner it is possible to grasp matters of such consequence.

One might, before all, first inquire why the Unified is not immediately after the One, for it is the Unified that first is subject to the One; therefore it is after the One.

[Our reply is that] after all, the Unified also requires being many; manifest together with it is a multiplicity that is, as it were, swallowed by the One. Therefore, the principle of the many is a multiplicity (for it is many) and also participates in the One.

Consequently, is this principle the Unified, a principle that wished to be indefinite, but was restrained by its participation in the One? No: the Unified wished, as it were, to be the mixed, but there is nothing that is composed of both subsistence and participation. The participation of another in something and subsistence by oneself could not be the elements of anything. For then the subsistence would subsist before [the whole], as an element analogous to matter, but as subsistence it would be something in addition, like a form that comes to be present to one elements, that is, the element of participation. Yet generally elements are of equal rank, but the participant and the participation do not belong to the same rank nor do they arise from a single contradistinction.

(II 42) Apart from these considerations, there are two elements [of the mixed] at the very least. The second principle is, as we saw, the dyad, in the sense of being the dyadic one, and both many and unlimited in the sense that it was both plurality and unlimitedness, though each element [of the dyad] is one, but [each is] many and unlimited by virtue of its nature. There, there are not yet elements of the Unified. It is when the One acts on more than [one] that it gives rise to the Unified. But the One does not unify something else, which is

already single and simple, but rather unifies that which is more than one, although the many are not yet there. The more come into being through participation in multiplicity. And multiplicity is divisive, but the divisions are unified, and they are subsequent to the principle that brings about multiplicity. Therefore, multiplicity makes its first appearance in the third principle, which is why the unity of the many is also in this [third] principle first, but that principle is the Unified before all things. Prior to this the second principle participates in the One, since it also has become one, although it is many by virtue of its nature and so does not possess unity, for unity is where there was differentiation of the plural elements. As for this point, one could not think the matter otherwise.

But of what kind do we say the many in the third principle are? That is, they are elements of the mixed, but what are the elements, then?

This much is easy to say, that they are participations from the first principles, the one and the many, which have proceeded in the third, or if you like, limit and unlimited, or monad and indefinite dyad, [which have proceeded] in order to bring about the hypostasis of the unified triad. The triad will exist (II 43) by virtue of its own nature and not as the combination of plural elements, nor as a number, but nevertheless it will be such because it is from the monad and the dyad, which are also such.

If someone were to make [the above] assumptions, then first, we shall require yet another principle before the two. If these principles are the origin of the two, and the mixed is prior to the elements, it will be necessary to introduce a principle for the mixed that has the unique character of the mixed, and is itself called "mixed," as a kind of indication [representing] its nature, which subsists prior to the true "mixed" (so too, with the one and the many we also assign some other version of the one and the many before the homonymous elements in the mixed) and before the mixed there will be the two principles once more. The entire mixed has something that possesses the form of the one and something that possesses the form of the many.

But in this way we shall go on positing principles before principles indefinitely.

The philosophers⁴ themselves, however, who make the limit and the unlimited elements in the mixed, and put the mixed before the elements, as Plato also does, and beyond the mixed [according to them] are once more the limit and the unlimited, as the two principles of the elements, these philosophers do not nevertheless think that it is right to make the mixed another unique principle before the two principles.⁵

Next, [under this arrangement it is] still not the case that either of the two principles is divided [from the other] such that each is a principle of one of the elements [that constitute the mixed], that is, one as the principle of the limit, and the other as the principle of the unlimited. Rather, each of the two is the principle of all things, the one is the principle of all things as differentiated and many and indefinite, or however [one likes to express it], (II 44) and the other

is the principle of all things as unified,⁶ and as ones, and as informed by limit. In general, the principle of the many, since it is the source of multiplicity, introduces a differentiation among the elements, whether the elements are [merely] the two, as in the case of the first principles, or whether more, or whether [the elements consist in] the *pleroma* of the absolute plurality in the third [henad]. But the principle that presides over the one that contains and determines the unity before the multiplicity is the mixed, insofar as the mixed is composed of the multiple as parts, and of a whole, that is, the One.

Do the participations in the two principles bring about the mixed? For the argument once more reverts to the question of whether or not the one and the many are elements [of the third], a position that the philosophers come to, but that we do not accept.

[We answer that] the third [principle] is one by virtue of its participation in the One, but it is also many, that is, a manyness, as it were, in the procession that shares the form of the second principle, but it is not yet the mixed, rather the mixed is produced from the first principle in a procession that shares the nature of the One, and from the second principle in a procession that shares the nature of the dyad, and, insofar as it is called the mixed, it is from both principles in a manner that reflects its distinct nature, because it is mixed from the principles that are not themselves mixed, just as it proceeds in a manner that shares the nature of both principles because it is [the] One-all and [the] many-all. But since the participations run in parallel courses to each other, because they belong to the same rank, the one is multiplied and distinguished into many, while the many are united and have come to enjoy the same nature. The former experience is the experience of union, since it is an experience of the one in the multiplicity, (II 45) whereas the other experience is the experience of differentiation, since it is an experience of the many in the one. And so unity and differentiation arise in the third principle, from which the mixed comes to be realized as a whole.

Furthermore, in its own self-constituting procession, the mixed projected from itself the elements that belong to opposing orders and has kept them distinct within it. In fact, the whole divides the parts both in it and from itself. It is the same for the elemental nature, which precisely is the mixed, insofar as the mixed has subsistence prior to the elements, because it is superior to them, yet it differentiates its elements in itself and from itself, since the undifferentiated always subsists prior to the differentiated.

Chapter 56. The Mixed Is Not a Combination of the Two Prior Principles

■ There are not two constituents of the mixed, one unifying and the other multiplying, as is true if we look at Proclus and Syrianus, who locate the mixed in the intelligible

realm. Instead, the mixed has its own function as the intelligible summit of all things. Damascius will later consider the third henad, the Unified or mixed, in its aspect as the seat of intelligible Being, but in this chapter he still tries to isolate the Unified in terms of its function as the channel by which all things pour forth from the One into the possibility of Being. In another sense, Damascius distinguishes between the Unified as subsistence and the Unified as substance. The mixed fuses the unity of the first henad with the all possibility of the second henad, to create a third nature that is the peer of the first two henads insofar as the first henad must contain all things and the second henad must belong to the One. Hence the third henad expresses just this realization of the all in the One and the One in the all, which is in turn a fundamental feature of the reality Damascius attempts to discern. ■

If you contemplate the elements proceeding from the first principles⁷ in the following way, you will not be far amiss from my own speculation: the One would produce the unity of the mixed, I mean the mixed itself, whereas the celebrated principle of multiplicity would produce the many that comprise the elements [in the mixed]. Just as the principle [of the One] brings the principle [of the many] into subsistence, so the unity [of the mixed] also arises as a factor in bringing about the multiplicity [of the mixed].

But [says the objector] the elements are on the one side or the other, either limit and unlimited, or one and many, which belong to opposing orders. What, then, is the cause of their [opposing] natures? Again, does the superior effect come from the superior cause and the inferior effect come from the inferior principle, and again, are there two principles of the elements that come to be differentiated as opposed to each other? Or, are the elements merely homonymous with respect to the prior principles, but actually different in terms of hypostasis? (II 46) Or rather, are the elements produced as an analogy of the two principles, but it is not, in fact, the case that the one is from this principle and the other from that? Or does the mixed itself bring them into being and also distinguish them in terms of its own single but twin nature? For the mixed is one and many and, to put it simply, is Unified, but, because of its trace of multiplicity, it produces the many, while, because of the domination of the one, it produces the one. But if you wish, [I will grant you that] the second principle is responsible for this differentiation in the third [the mixed], but it differentiates the many by virtue of itself, while it differentiates the one by virtue of the unity that coexists with it, from what has been called the One. And so there are actually two elements that are co-natured and yet this co-nature must be prior to the dual nature. Insofar as it is co-natured, the mixed is also from the higher principle. Or perhaps each of the two [elements of the mixed] is from this [second principle], but in the one case, it is as itself, and in other case it is as presence of the one. Or perhaps again each of the two is from the first, but the one is as itself and the other is insofar as it has anticipated the second principle. But each of the two has the nature of the one in the mixed,

both the multiplicity of the elements and the unity that is before the elements.

Is it rather the case, then, that the mixed must be constituted from these two, of which each of the two is all things, the one principle as the compression of all things, and the other as the differentiation of all things, and a third that is mixed as a whole from both principles? As the intellect as a whole and all form are neither the many belonging to the mixed nor the one alone, but rather both together, (II 47) so too in this way, the first mixed would be not one of two, but rather the composite.

[We might object that] this arrangement leads to an infinite regress: for the composite will be something contradistinguished with respect to each aspect, and again we shall be required to search for another composite, since there is also the whole, alone, prior to the parts. And again, if the whole is from the whole and the parts, we shall require yet another wholeness. If the whole is in turn from this wholeness and the two other aspects, we shall require a third, and this to infinity. If we need a stopping point, let us stop at the first wholeness, saying that whole and parts, as well as the elemental together with its elements, are one sole thing.

Do we not then conceive of the whole as one thing and the parts as something different, and again of the composite as something different, the composite which is not composed of elements nor of parts nor is it a whole, nor is it a composition, nor therefore is it even mixed? For this will be like composing something from effect and cause, since this too would be a kind of composite, or from craftsman and instrument, or from paradigm and image. This kind of conjoining can only be observed in certain relationships but not in the coordinated whole that belongs to substance.

If this composite were in one [reality], just as, for example, the Unified and differentiated are in intellect, how would not intellect, although one, itself be composed of both, and also composite in just the way that the Unified projects that which is distinct from itself? For this kind of composite would seem to be in between two others, that is, something that consists of elements of both but is before the elements, something that is from both cause (II 48) and effect, and yet with nothing common in its substance, but rather consisting only in an intermediary relationship, and this too, however, extending from the cause into the caused that belongs to intellect, which constitutes itself as the whole but is composed of two *pleromas*, that is, the Unified and the differentiated. For intellect is the whole but those respective elements are not parts, rather they are *pleromas*, in which one *pleroma* is actually composed of the other *pleroma*, in the way that heaven is related to the subcelestial domain. In every instance, the *pleroma* that is prior [to the subordinate *pleroma*] differentiates and functions as a cooperating cause to bring about the secondary *pleroma* from the separate causal principle. Nevertheless, that which arises from both of these causes is still composite. Yet to the extent that it is composite, it is a

whole, and those causes are it parts, even if they are in some way more whole. For in fact, there are two sources for the world, namely, heaven and the subcelestial domain as a whole, or all that is mortal and all that is immortal, since even the material world consists of three material worlds,⁸ functioning as its parts that keep a proportionate ratio with respect to the whole.

This kind of a synthesis is not a composite, nor is it a whole, nor is it from elements, nor is it from parts, but it is rather the procession of a series that progresses through descent of the primary and the intermediate and the ultimates. And thus it has a complete order that becomes manifest with it, and yet it is not the relationship of part to a whole, nor of elements that belong to a reality that is mixed from elements, but just as has been said, it exists as the co-nature of the two secondary terms with respect to their superior terms, and of the products to the producing causes. Such a progression is not yet apparent in the first mixed, since being first, it has not yet descended into a first (II 49) and second pleroma. If so, then the first too would be mixed, and the second as well will be likewise mixed. In fact, each of the two in the intellect would be the mixed, since the intellect is mixed from the mixed. But in fact, the mixed was the simplest of all, wherefore it appeared to be mixed from elements alone, and not yet from parts, since division into parts is multiple. For parts exist in terms of difference with each other, but elements are eager to be more collected and even blended, since no particular characteristic is manifested in the mixed, something that, on the contrary, form does create, since each form delimits itself in terms of its own unique aspect. But parts are intermediate, they are indeed subject to partition, therefore they are called parts, but they are eager to dissolve the divisions by virtue of their *nisus* toward the whole. It is with reason, then, that forms show up in the third order of the intelligible world, parts are in the intermediate order, and the elements are in the summit, in which neither is any distinct nature differentiated in truth, but rather all things are swallowed by the unique unity of the mixed, since, there, neither are the many elements yet differentiated into this or that, but rather, just as is the case with the completely Unified, the multiform manifests through the simplicity of the first mixed. For it is only a many, but not many things, as one water that can be divided into many [channels]. Such is the multiplicity there, and yet this too is concentrated and hidden by the unity of the mixed.

(II 50) Therefore, there are not two pleromas that [compose] the mixed, the one that is unity, and the other that is distinct, just as in intellect, but rather there is just the whole and it is unmixed to the extent that it is the first manifestation of the mixed character. For the mixed is not a composite of many elements mixed into the one and the same entity, since this would not even be appropriate for the mixed element of our individual soul, nor, there, are there even multiple particulars that become manifest together in one reality. For we draw these ideas from intellect and apply them to the mixed. But just as we contemplated the many in terms of one perfectly complete character, which,

although unique was also all things, so in this way too [we contemplate] the mixed as one simple character that is also without composition, and yet is still all things in the simple, except that it is all things in the unique nature of the mixed [that consists in] all things. That is, the mixed, properly, is all things, but it is before all things that are properly called all things in terms of the differentiation of all things. The mixed was all things without determination in the Unified principle of all things. The second principle too was all things, but in a yet simpler way. For it was not only without determination, as the Unified is, [which still exhibits] coordination and fixity, so to say, but rather in the indefiniteness of the many that was absolutely without coordination, and is the indefinite that is superior to any determination. Indeed, the containing of all things [that characterizes the Unified] is in itself a kind of determination. Once more, however, even the first is all things, but this too is even more simple than the indefinite and indeterminate principle, but is nevertheless all things; in the simplicity of the One by itself (II 51) prior to the indefinite, when the One has not yet shed itself into many, but rather is with far greater reason, independent of the Unified coordination of all things in the mixed; in this first principle, the Unified comes to be in the, as it were, fixity of the pouring [out] of the many and the indefinite nature, which we conceive as a kind of flow from the One,⁹ which when it comes into stability, we call the mixed and the first Unified. Therefore whatever things we previously catalogued as distinct in the mixed, so that we could indeed contemplate it as the mixed, we now collect them altogether into one conceptually, that is, into the undifferentiated and unique property of the mixed, which is the true intelligible summit of all things. I beg the gods for their forgiveness for the weakness of these conceptions and still more for weaknesses of style. Without either the counterthrust of dialectic or the necessity of metaphorical language, we could in no way even indicate anything concerning the highest principles. May this [attempt or indication] receive favor from the gods!

Chapter 57. Pythagorean Analogies for the Third Henad

■ In this chapter, Damascius concludes his discussion of the One as Unified, concentrating again on the Unified as the source of the proliferation of all beings. As a part of this discussion, he incorporates a Pythagorean excursus on the meaning of the monad, using Pythagorean ideas to illustrate what he means by the trace of multiplicity that characterizes what, Damascius insists, is still an aspect of the One considered in its totality. After this discussion, Damascius will turn to consider the Unified as the ground of intelligible Being, and no longer as a function of the One. ■

In the same way, even if one holds that the two principles are limit and unlimited, as Plato holds,¹⁰ in that case too we observe that the mixed arises from

these, in the sense that we freeze the flow of the indefinite by means of a restriction that takes the form of limit, and fix it as another unique characteristic, that of the limited, in which we find both the limit and the unlimited. Therefore, the limited is neither limit nor the unlimited, but it is both at once. Let us bear in mind, therefore, that as the Unified is simple and without composition, so also the mixed is from limit and the unlimited in the sense that it is before them both. The division of these principles does not yet arise there, and the mixed is such before the two [are qualified as such]. (II 52) The same argument will apply both to the composite nature of the mixed which arises when we contemplate this composite nature in our own weakness, and to the purified simplicity of the mixed, even if one makes the monad and the indefinite dyad the two principles, yet contemplates the Unified triad as from these two, still the Unified triad is not composed from three things, but it is itself the one of the triad, and therefore has one distinctive triadic character that contains all things in this very one.¹¹

Thus from the [view point of] the first principles, we shall reveal that the third is that which is beyond all things that are said to be either Unified or mixed. From below, that is from the point of view of that which proceeds from the third, we can be led up to it through simplification, that is, from all things together simultaneously, because it is the summit of all things, and yet we too are always enfolding and contracting the many differentiations into the many unities, and the one differentiation that is before the many into the one unity that is before the many, and again the one contradistinguished differentiation, whatever it is and in whatever manner it is, into the single, simple, entirely undifferentiated and noncomposite summit, the unified summit that compressed all things. If you wish, I call the unity of all things the mixed, since this is before all things that are mixed in it; indeed all things are mixed in it. Therefore it is all things before all things, just as the monad is all number as well the indefinite number that is always being added to. For the number that advances from the monad could never unfold the number that is concentrated in the monad. And therefore, in this way, too, the mixed is from limit and the unlimited, because it is super simplified and transcends in this way all things that are subsequent to it, and it comprises the limitless arising of what limitlessly arises from it. (II 53) Nevertheless, it is still in the truest sense a monad and is not the principle of number, since this monad is many times removed from the latter, but it is a monad in the manner of indication, just as the one indicates the nature of the first principle and the many indicate the nature of the second. The monad is a merging of the one and the many before number, just as that monad is the merging of the two principles. This, too, is the nature of the intelligible number, as it seems to us, namely, it is like the monad itself. But let us take this up on another occasion.

But that the monad contains both the one and the many is obvious to everyone, since every number contains the one and the many. [The monad] is the

first number, but in a concentrated and undifferentiated way, and so too the one is more distinct in it and the multiplicity is more precise. The absolute multitude there is also the unlimited, and so too it is also all number, whose unlimited genesis, unfolding, could never discover the end of this unfolding. And so too the monad is mixed from the things that are said to presubstist in any manner whatsoever in the mixed, I mean all things that are subject to differentiation from it and are after it, are within it as undifferentiated in the unique nature that unifies them, a nature that produces all things, but does not encompass the many causal principles of what arises after it, since there is no differentiation of the many causal principles, but instead it is itself the unique causal principle that brings all things about, or rather there is no causal principle other than itself. For this is the nature that is well known as the fount of all things, not of all things because of a single cause that it contains in itself, but rather because of its own subsistence.

(II 54) Then is the multiplicity there unified, as if unified from [many] forms? [No], since this mixed is the mixed of intellect.

Then is it unified from parts? [No], since this [mixed] is the concentration of the whole, or if you wish, [the mixed] of the intermediate principle.

It remains, then, that it is unified from elements. But first, that will not be the absolute mixed, since it is the mixed from elements. Then second, perhaps there is some [one] thing that arises from the many [elements] or many things [that arise from the elements], and not still elements or parts or forms, but just many. For each of these is many. And therefore there must be something they all share in virtue of their manyness. Third, once more, the principle of many was only the source of manyness, and yet it was not the source of elements or again of parts, or of forms. Therefore, if there is in fact a multiplicity in the mixed, still it is a pure multitude, and it is not qualified as a multitude of forms or of kinds, nor of parts nor of elements.

But if one agrees to this, then neither will that pure multitude be the absolute mixed, nor will it be the single undifferentiated source of all things, nor again will the causal principle of the many be the absolute cause [of the many], but it will only be the cause by which all things are many. And yet this [mixed] was said to be many only as an indication of its nature, not because it, to the extent that it was many, was from the many, nor because insofar as it possessed elements, it was from elements, nor yet insofar as it was anything else, because it was composed of these others, for these were first differentiated in intellect, I mean the first causal principles of these [elements, forms, parts, and so forth,] which is why I am being precise about these causal principles in the present discussion. But that mixed is equally from all things, from many, from elements from parts, from kinds and from forms, since it is from all composites and wholes, as was said, but (II 54) just insofar as it all things before all things. If one were to make this a mixture from the two principles, as it if proceeded from them, in the manner of a child from a father and a mother, the first of all

offspring, then this would not be far from what we can speculate, insofar as it is possible, about that third principle, insofar as it is called the mixed. If one supposed that it is one as composed of all things, or all things as composed from many, even then we would have an indication of the principle in all its complexity and its transcendence.

This, then, is a reality that does not deserve to pass without discussion, because the trace there of the multiplicity is not the differentiation of the Unified, but it is the differentiation of realities that are still simpler, of the many that arise in that way that the Unified is already composed from them. But the differentiation of this principle is a unified many, and it arises after the first unified. For that mixed was undifferentiated in this way, and as it were it was still the One as Unified. But we shall return to these topics again in a more precise manner.¹²

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PART FOUR

On Being as the Unified

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Section X. On the Unified Substance

Chapter 58. On Being and on the Mixed

■ In the course of the next nine chapters (58–66), Damascius provides us with a catalogue of scholastic considerations on the topic of Being. Thus initially Damascius is concerned to justify his own treatment of Being as seated in the third henad, the Unified, but as not precisely identical with that henad, insofar as the henad is actually a face or aspect, if you will, of the One. To this end, he begins with a doxographic survey that shows the relationship between Being and the Unified in various authors, including Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Chaldean theologians, Proclus and Syrianus, and an obscure personage named Strato. He proceeds to an extended meditation on the meaning of Being in the sense of substance, again locating his discussion in the scholastic disputes of the Athenian academy. Here he focuses on topics such as etymology. Finally, the section concludes with a return to the language of subsistence and its relationship to Being considered as substance.

The purport of this chapter is to study various approaches to Being, or the Unified, or the mixed, as it is variously called. Damascius makes reference to Plato's greatest kinds (being, motion, rest, sameness, otherness) as well to Plotinus' treatment of intelligible substance as a kind of hall of mirrors, in which each substance contains all of the others. The chapter ends in a digression that once more recapitulates the limits of discursive thinking, in this case using the example of the notion of "body," which, Damascius shows, can be ambivalent depending on the referents. Is body primary body—that is, one of the elements? Or do we distinguish body in terms of species form, genus form, kingdom form, or as organic or inorganic? ■

(II 56) Now once more from the beginning, let us say what the principle is, not according to its definition as the mixed and the Unified, but insofar as it is Being and substance, and state what are the true conceptions, based on which the philosophers say that it is first substance and absolute Being.¹ For even if we do not refer the third principle immediately to genuine Being, as the Platonists, but before this, to unified Being, nevertheless, why is the third henad said to be Being itself and the first substance?

Before all, one must distinguish what the terms signify. Being is also said to be one of the genera of being, which is opposed to not being, and is contradistinguished with respect to the other genera. This being has the character of form; rather it is among the five simple forms, together with the other four genera.² Also in the *Parmenides*, before the hypotheses,³ [Plato] assimilated this form to the generic forms. In another sense, Being is also said to be the entire pleroma of kinds,⁴ since we call it uniquely substance, as for example Plotinus does.⁵ And it has this sense in the *Sophist*, when Plato has the many subject to the one.⁶ Being is also the term for the entire hypostasis before soul,⁷ (II 57) in the sense that Plato calls this substance in the *Republic*, and he makes the kind of soul⁸ progressively correspond to substance. For so, too, he deems it right to call the soul, with respect to this first substance, first generation.⁹ Being and substance also designate the summit of the intelligible all, which is simply the intelligible world. In the *Sophist*, Plato demonstrates that it is unchangeable,¹⁰ and in the *Parmenides*, in the second hypothesis,¹¹ he takes [substance] as the first being with the designation "One-Being" and he has all beings arise from there, including those said to be, to become, or not to be, as he says in that dialogue. He refers to Being as substance starting from the [second] hypothesis.¹²

Whence can we begin—according to which conception of Being—our ascent to the Unified? Perhaps from the meaning of Being qua genus, just as from the meaning of One qua genus we ascended to the absolute One? In fact the latter, [generic] being is simple being, and this conception of it, as generic being, is adequate to the first being.¹³ But that [prior] Being is all things, and the substance that consists in all things would accordingly be a more appropriate designation for it, since it is not being as an individual, but rather it is a complete world.¹⁴ For just as this substance is all things together, so too the third principle is all things in an undifferentiated way. In this way we could be led up not from one of the things that proceed together with it, but from all things that are differentiated after it.

But perhaps it is necessary also in the case of this principle to combine what is simple from the one genus [of Being], as well as the completion or fullness from [its character as] the substance that embraces all things. In this way, by virtue of both characters, we could correctly call the unified (II 58) principle substance and Being. Before every multiplicity is the concentration of the multiplicity. There is a formal concentration in the case of the forms, a generic concentration in the case of the genera; the concentration of the parts is known

as the whole. [There is] an elemental concentration of elements; of absolute multiplicity, there is unity or the Unified; of the many beings, the concentration is the One-being. Of beings, too, there is a single fount and summit, but for simple beings there is absolute Being, whereas insofar as they are many and discriminated, their summit is the One and the Unified. Therefore, if beings and the many are the same in terms of their matter, while beings and the many are different with respect to their essence, so also their summit is single with respect to their matter, while insofar as they are the many, their summit is the Unified, and insofar as they are beings, their summit is absolute Being.

Therefore are not Being and the Unified the same thing?

[Our reply is that] Being considered as genus is not the same [as the Unified]. But [Being and the Unified] are the same, insofar as what is referred to is the Being that is composed from the [greatest] genera. Or perhaps the Being that is composed from the genera is called Being (*on*) from genus (*genous*), just the immobile is called *stationary* from *stasis* or *moving* from *movement*, and the same or other from sameness and otherness. Therefore Being is both one and many from the consideration of the [various] genera. But the Unified was [composed] from the one and the many. As a result [one is dealing with] the same thing, that is, the mixed as a whole, but it is viewed and called differently according to the distinct elements.

What then? Is the Unified [itself] an element [of the mixed]? No, since neither is the stationary or the mobile, lest we [end up] multiplying it. For it is necessary to come up with a term that describes the whole according to the modification it manifests from each genus. But to turn these modifications into elements is to do nothing (II 59) other than to make participations subsistences. And so we shall proceed into infinity, at that rate, for every subsistence will also have some participation in another participant, since both whole as well parts are elements. And so these aspects oppose each other. In fact, the mixed, insofar as it is formed from these aspects, is subject to division [when considered in terms of its aspect that consists in parts] but is indivisible [when considered in terms of its aspect that consists in the whole]. Thus the mixed is viewed according to each of the [elements] mixed in it. The indivisible is everywhere before the divisible, and the concentration of all things precedes the division of all things, whereas the originating point of each thing is the pleroma from which the rest proceed. It was in this sense that we assumed the Unified to be the one summit of all things, the complete nature and single producer of all beings, concerning which we are asking whether it ought to be called Being.

Of principles in this order, there is properly no name, nor is there any conception, since names and thoughts belong among things that are divided. Because they are names, they consist in a certain kind of distinction, distinctions that are based entirely on specific form. But the Unified is entirely indivisible, and all things are concentrated in its singleness. How then can the narrow

particularity of names or related conceptions be adequate to reveal or grasp the simplicity that unifies all things and is the unique substance before all [beings]? And since we do not even possess a common name for the forms that are subject to division, nor for the lowest forms,¹⁵ taken together, nor do we project a concept of these things that is adequate to capture them in brief, as a class, we can hardly [discover a conception that is adequate for] the height of the summit that contains all beings. Why is it necessary to elaborate, since we are not even capable of naming a single one of the particular co-aggregates, except [to say that] it is an aggregate or mixed or something of this nature? Take, for example, the case of our body, which is a composite of the four elements—which of them will the body have as its proper name? Body is present in each of the simple elements. But the whole body is called either earthly or watery or pneumatic or airy, or fiery or hot, from one of the particulars in it, but the body itself has no common name, though it is common, except perhaps the name, human, or the generic name, such as animal body, but one body might be a mixture of vegetal body another perhaps of the [inorganic] or [contain] parts that are [inorganic]. Perhaps too there is a single humanity that is one of the many particular properties in the mixed, but this humanity comes to be present to the mixture, as form to matter. And so matter by itself has no name. What is astonishing, therefore, when we conceive certain of the forms without names, as for example when Plato says there is a generic [form] of heat and cold?¹⁶ Thus, too, the mixture of elements cannot be named.

Moreover, the common characteristic that supervenes on the mixture and brings the mixture into form functions like an element of the whole composed of form and of matter. This characteristic is simple, as the individual element is. For if it is not, it is still a particular characteristic of the mixture, according to which each of the so-called synthetic forms is called, (II 61) by virtue of the opposition between kinds that are more elemental or simple. But the particular property of each kind is simple, whereas the other, [the complex] is a mixture of the other genera via participation of prior elements or like elements. The same thing is true in the cases of intellect and life and Being itself. Of these, each is all of them, but one is uniquely distinguished by life, another by Being.¹⁷

Is Being then not also a simple property, as for example, substantiality, and is not vitality the property of life, as intelligibility is the property of intellect?

[We answer that] rather, it seems that there is an intermediate between the elemental and the composite in the case of every form, as for example the entire intellectual order. For the elements undergo a transition from one state to another, and then function like matter with respect to the property that is bestowed by form, whereas the property itself forms and unifies and assimilates the elements to itself, since it is compatible with all the elements and extends itself to coincide with them by means of its unique simplicity. And therefore the property wishes to be more perfect than any one of the elements.

For each element belongs to the distinguishing property and acquires its identity from that, and all the other elements are also disposed according to it. For example, the four elements come to exist as disposed in a human way or an equine way or lunar way or solar way. But the whole from both [elements and property] is the form or the kind or the mind or the animal or life or being, which we assume is first of all things so constituted.

One must not imagine that we are speaking here of a composite being in the case of properties and elements, but each form is one and many, since it is one as manifesting a unique property and many as the (II 62) collectivity of things that we call elements, which proceed from their one and remain in their one. Intellect leads forth the multiplicity of kinds and forms within it, beginning from its own co-aggregate. In fact, each form in imitation of the entire intellect generates its own multiplicity of kinds and forms within itself. And the other forms do likewise, being many as proceeding from the One, but elements as from the Unified, and parts as from the whole, and kinds as from a composite being, and forms as from intellect. But we shall return to this topic later.¹⁸

Chapter 59. The Unified as the Summit of Beings

■ In this chapter, Damascius again emphasizes the limits of conceptual thinking, in this case using the metaphor of visual distortion in order to call attention to the inadequacy of the very meaning of the word “Being.” His topic, broken off because of this digression on the limits of discursive thinking, is once more the relationship between the Unified and Being. Here, as well, he continues his doxographic survey from chapter 58 (where he discusses Plotinus and Plato), focusing on Iamblichus’ doctrine according to which the intelligible, and hence Being itself, is to be considered in the sphere of the One. ■

Recurring to the present argument, we say that there is no single name for the complete pleroma, but it is acceptable if we can just name the bare properties. In fact, we can scarcely know these, as they shine through and advance from afar, narrowing into the discriminated and, as it were, individual, condition of our own understanding. I imagine the same thing happens when the mountains from afar are extremely small and still indistinct to our eyes, or else the rays of stars or sun or moon that come to meet our eyes converge into a narrow and dim perspective that is commensurate with our condition, given that the light is an emanation of the luminous bodies from the greatest possible distance.¹⁹ Something like this is the condition of the eyes of our soul, I imagine, with respect to the radiant brilliance of the forms.

Is it that these simple properties, insofar as they manifest themselves, are contracted and partial realizations of the complete pleromas that are in that realm? Perhaps these properties are such in us, not that these simple

properties are in us alone, but that in the pleromas²⁰ they are richer (II 63) and clearer, whereas in their simplicity they shine through and in the process overwhelm the coexistent properties by means of their own illumination, and therefore, insofar as they reach us, being so distant they nevertheless prevail in some way, although the other properties are extinguished and do not manifest themselves. Thus in the case of the mountains and the other objects viewed from a distance, the more general features prevail, whereas the specific details are obscured.

Let us therefore take up the proposition from the beginning, that the summit of beings, which we refer to as Being or substance, is not designated [as such] from a single character,²¹ which, has been said, shines forth, since all such [distinctive] characters exist in distinction. But this [Being] is all things as well as the principle of all things, as well as the principle before all things; as the Unified, it is the principle of everything that is distinct, that is, of beings and living beings and knowers and of anything whatsoever that has existence. And just as these are all things in their differentiated conditions, so that lofty nature is all things in an integrated way, as a concentration of all things. But by means of indication it is called Being, in terms of one of the aspects that come after it and are from it, but this has itself received the second rank after the One. This name, ['One'] was appropriate for the first principle.

Let this be our method of ascent: just as [we ascend] from the distinct conditions to the Unified, so [we ascend] from all things that are in any way, and from beings that have received any form of appellation. (II 64) Still, there is one fount that is without any differentiation, since it is the root of the beings that have become separate from it and exist in a state of differentiation, this [principle] that never departs from the One, and therefore unifies that which grows from it as [a root] unites myriad branches. There is also a kind of stem from the root, that is not yet the branches, and although this stem too is envisioned entirely as a part, it is nevertheless not yet the branches.²²

Iamblichus also often maintains the position that the intelligible expresses its being in the One and around the One.²³ The One is not this [one] as subject to determinations, nor yet that which our own conceptions project, as if it were one among all things. Rather, according to the indication that leads us from this conception into the One before all things, and into that which is the single, simple nature of all things, so the Being that constitutes itself from that [One] and around that [One] is none of the many things, nor is it united to any of them, nor is it what can be seen purely in terms of Being. As far as indication [can reveal it, Being] is also this, namely, that which concentrates all things together and is stationed as all things before all things that are determinations of it, as has often been said. And in the way that we call [beings] all things, so we call that being, Being before all things. If [we say that] beings are [all things] from the One-Being, we [also say that] the One-Being is from this Being, because it also is in it in a state of concentration. For the totality has no special

name of its own, since every name picks out a particular and seizes on a particular characteristic, just as the definition does. Therefore from these [kinds of beings conceived separately], one must ascend to the unique summit of all beings, to (II 65) the unitary summit from the henads that are discriminated from it, and to the summit that is the origin of substance from the substances that are [descended] from it.

Chapter 60. On the Third Principle in Relation to Unity and Multiplicity

■ Here Damascius continues the discussion of how Being is equivalent to the third principle, the Unified, through a study of plurality and unity as they are transmitted from the first and second principles. In effect, Damascius repeats the strategy that he has already pursued above, namely, insisting that the Unified is neither one nor many, but tends to express multiplicity when it is seen more in terms of Being, and tends to express unity when it is seen more in terms of the One. ■

(II 65.3) We shall now examine how the third principle, considered as Being, proceeds from the first two principles, according to us. We showed previously that the Unified is the one and the many, and how Being is first constituted, that is, how being (*on*) became hypostasized by becoming concrete as being (*einai*), while either of the two principles prior to being took refuge in non-being in the higher sense: the second principle [took refuge] in the indefiniteness of plurality, as it were pouring itself into what was limitless and nowhere capable of stability, or rather, refusing to come to rest owing to its longing for the indefinite nature, whereas the first principle [took refuge] in the absolute and in the partlessness of the one, refusing to be other than the one, since it was not willing even to be being. And consequently the third principle, first to constitute itself and to strive to constitute the hypostasis of Being,²⁴ furnished the principle through which all that subsists is neither simply one nor simply many, but rather one and many, or rather, unified as well as multiplied. The Unified is thus the appropriate [designation] for this third principle, since it contains within itself the trace of the multiplicity, nevertheless. In the third principle, the one could not remain unaffected by the many, but it was somehow divided in terms of its relationship to the many, nor could the many preserve their natural expanse into the indefinite, but they were checked by the divine necessity of the one that constantly (II 66) defines that which is present. But the Unified came to be from both, and it is subject to being both in its constitution and in its subsistence.

Moreover, the many by nature produce the differentiated elements in a different manner, whereas the one leads these into unity. Just as the second principle is immediately after the first, so too the many that proceed in the realm

of the One proceed from it and by it, by which they are joined together and recalled into unity, since the second principle is also seated in the first. The principle that is from both is neither simply the one nor simply many, but one and many. This is what we call Being, since it is distinct from the one and distinct from the many, and comes as another, third element after these, although it has no special name of its own. Nor yet are the principles that constitute it called by means of specially designating names. Just as those principles are designated by means of indication through terms belonging to what becomes discriminated after them, so also the third principle itself is referred to by the titles, substance and Being, because as first unified, it is one and many, just as it evidently possesses each of the beings.

If the Unified is Being, and if each of these is of two kinds, that is, either unitary in the sense that it is Being and Unified through its characteristic property, or [else] it is Being and Unified from itself and in its subsistence, then what distinguishes each of these from the other? How could the first Unified be different from the first Unified, that is, the unitary from the substantial? And how could the Unified also exist according to subsistence since, when being is subject to the One it is called Unified, but it is not subject to the One beyond being, but wishes to be the One in itself?²⁵ [It has two aspects in the way that] body is twofold, (II 67) [having] that aspect which extends in three dimensions, and that which is entirely without extension and bodiless, but nevertheless it is body according to its paradigmatic characteristic. The same is true of soul: in part it is called the first source of becoming,²⁶ but it is also at the same time intellect and god, insofar as it subsists according to these characteristics. The same is true of the paradigmatic form (as for example, justice itself or beauty itself), which is either an intellectual form and a substance or an anticipation that exists in a god, and so is a god, as Parmenides says.²⁷ And yet the latter is not a substance but is a super-essential One,²⁸ even though the unitary is still beautiful and just in a way that anticipates the formal essence, and in the same way the whole intellect is in one way substance, but in another way it is a henad manifesting the intelligible as its property, and life too is like this, and therefore Being and the Unified are like this, since Being can be unitary and the Unified can be substantial, but each of them is mixed and has many components.

[But we say that] the mixed is also associated with an isolated characteristic, and the same is true of the composite. Not that there will be many there, since it is just one, but the one itself accords with the character of the plural, and the multiplicity will be unitary, just as the one of each number is a triadic one, not the simple one, but still simpler than the arithmetic one. Now multiplicity is also simpler than number, because it is from many simple elements, in that number is composed from many monads, whereas multiplicity consists in a plurality of henads. By contrast, the monad is at a far remove from the henad, since we can understand the monad as a specific form as well as the number

associated with it; and again, that [henadic] Unified and the many that are in it and the (II 68) mixed [subsist] in accordance with a sole characteristic. Moreover, this sort of one is third from the first and therefore a triad, and therefore it is the mixed. But Being in itself is also unified [regarded] as a hypostasis, and the many are already differentiated in it, if not as numerically many, nevertheless as a multiplicity, and even if this plurality is not dispersed, still the many are in Being as sharing its nature and as absolutely unified.

If the Unified is conceived as many in any way, what would each [constituent] of the many be? Each could not be a monad, because the monad is isolated insofar as it is a monad, since the monad is in some way Titanic.²⁹ But each of the many in that principle is not even be content to be itself, but also wishes to be all the others, or rather one instead of the totality, that is, the one that contains all things. For they are the first fragments³⁰ of the One and therefore they are immediately surrounded by unity and are co-natured with the One, so to speak, before their differentiation. They give birth to that principle alone [the Unified] and that is the whole [extent of] differentiation for the multiplicity that is there.

But is it still One, and therefore no longer the Unified?

[Our answer is that] the Unified itself constitutes the labor pains of the One [that is about to give birth to] differentiation, and it is nothing other, it would seem, than the One pregnant with the many and therefore standing outside the One.

What follows? Is each of the many in that realm another Unified? But in that realm, there had not yet appeared any division of the Unified. For it was necessary that the One subsist prior to the elements divided from it. Therefore, each of these is one. (II 69) And if this were so, then the entirety would also be one and not Unified. For neither are the many points the same thing as the line. And in general, this one is either perfect in itself or imperfect. If it is imperfect how can the imperfect have proceeded from There, and from what? And if perfect, how, if there are many gods, is the third principle revered as the one god insofar as it is Being? And how is Being many substances, since we say that Being is all beings without differentiation?

Further, one could ask how the plurality will be conceived prior to what is termed the mixed. The common term is always prior to the unique terms There, and the Unified or Being is before the distinctive [beings] everywhere and of every kind. The procession³¹ from the more imperfect into the more perfect belongs to the order of becoming and that, too, of the lowest degree.

Let us reply, first invoking God to assist us and to excuse our reply, which constantly strives for the single truth of those realities, but is distracted through its native weakness by different conceptions [of the Unified] on various occasions. Therefore let us say that that Unified, the first, is the most unified, so that it neither contains distinction in any way nor is it distinguished.

It is not therefore one and many in the sense the many are after the one, nor is it mixed in the sense of being the one composed of many, but it is one nature that we unable to call either one or many, and so we folded the many and the one together and placed them in the Unified. The Unified manifested itself as many to the extent that the one transcended it, and [as] one to (II 70) the extent that it transcended the distinction into many, which is nothing other than the Unified, since it refuses to be a composite nature, as someone might assume, but rather it is an intermediate between the one and the many [subsisting] in a state of differentiation. And therefore it would have the trace of distinction, though not actual distinction. For what would need to subsist as an intermediate between that which is already differentiated and the absolutely One, other than that which is still One, and the One as still undifferentiated? This would be the Unified. And consequently it appears to be the first being, insofar as the conception of being is neither something absolutely simple, nor does it deny that which expresses plurality in any way, as is the case with the One, nor however does it admit distinction, since Being is only one and is absolute Being.

“For being draws near to being.”³²

Parmenides says in his poem. And therefore he calls it one, because it alone is subject to the One, as Plato says. But it is none of the many things, since it is Being itself. Therefore Being, like the Unified, is immediately after the One and before all that is subject to differentiation. Since such is our hypothesis concerning the Unified, no longer do the puzzles have any scope.

Chapter 61. On the Chaldean Designation for the Third Principle

■ Damascius conflates two interpretations of fragment 4 from the *Chaldean Oracles*. Damascius equates the One-all with subsistence, the all-One with power, and the intellect or act with the Unified. In other words, he moves between construing the Chaldean intelligible triad as referring to the three henads that he has been expounding in the first sixty chapters of this treatise, and as referring to the intelligible triad proper. Nevertheless, here Damascius continues to distinguish the Unified considered qua subsistence and qua substance, now using fragment 4 in the lower sense, as referring to the intelligible triad, according to a doctrine that he refers to Iamblichus' lost work, *On the Gods*. ■

Let us now adopt another perspective to demonstrate the relationship between the third principle and substance or Being.

We define Being as that which has power and activity.³³ For that which is, it would seem, but has no activity, we deny (II 71) has being. Therefore, the first principle can be seen in terms of subsistence, as the Oracles say,³⁴ while the

second is clearly said to correspond to power (speaking in this way). Therefore, the third additionally will embrace activity, and will thus possess subsistence, power, and act. [The third principle] therefore will be called substance and Being. Thus [it will also have the epithet] triad. And that is why substance is subsequent to subsistence, because it is endowed with both power and activity, whereas subsistence is before these, since it is itself the underlying cause of all things, just as power is that which bestows power on all things. So, too, the third principle is that which actualizes all things in act, and by this very fact it brings forth every substance simultaneously, as well as every power and every act. And yet every substance is prior to power and act. These are from substance, so that absolute substance ought not to have power or act. Certainly, substance does not possess the power and activity that come after it, which we assume are extensions of it (since there is not yet division there). But as for that power and or activity that are one with the power and activity before substance, being inherent in substance, according to which substance generates and projects its power and activity after it, this power or activity someone could allow as coexisting with the first substance. And therefore, before substance there is just power and subsistence, and before power there is subsistence alone, nor is there power of any kind or act, but only what is the simplest [aspect of Being], subsistence.

Is subsisting other than Being, as the philosopher [Proclus] seems to establish, and even (II 72) Iamblichus himself, everywhere, but especially in his book, *On the Gods*?³⁵ [Let us reply that] Being (εἶναι) derives its name from substance (οὐσίας), whereas substance, even if you assume that substance is before power and act, becomes substantive from three characteristics. [And these three are] the subsistent nature, which we sometimes call subsisting (ὑπάρχειν), or also sometimes, “it is” (ἔστι) and Being (εἶναι), the power-nature, which is the generative nature belonging to subsistence, and the act-nature which already reaches for what is external to the extent that it manifests its function. Consequently, from these three natures that are separated conceptually, we ascend to the simpler, in the manner of indication, into the first principles: we ascend to the first principle from pure subsistence, but we have reached here also from the one and from limit and from the other pluralities; from the power that also subsists, we [ascend to the second, and from the act that also has power,] to the third.³⁶

Thus subsistence is other than substance (οὐσίας), since it is a single characteristic, which, when bereft of other properties, [is useful] for indicating the first principle. But to speak in terms of the hypostasis, then subsistence would be the same as substance, which in fact subsists together with power and act. That which is prior to [power and act] is also prior to every subsistence, and it is just one, as has often been stated. But subsistence and power and act derive their reality from Being and exist in the first Being, except that in Being power and act are in subsistence, just as we said, whereas in the

second order of intelligibles, they are in power (since all things tend to become an extension of the limiting differentiation), and in the third order power and subsistence are in act, as this is already the limit of the intelligible world and in a certain way exhibits an outward-going tendency. And therefore it is the first act of the intelligible intellect. And yet what could function as the first act of all actualities, except that which returns to the first from the third? The act of the second is not yet act, since there is not yet a standing away from Being, but as it were only the possibility. Likewise, of the first there is not even the possibility of standing away, but only Being (*εἶναι*), which does not need any power or act.

This is the way to view these things under the form of thought that attempts to explain discursively or to make more apparent. But to speak in a way that is more in accord with the Ineffable and in the mode of indication, the hypostasis of Being, which is the hypostasis of the third principle, has the three aspects in accordance with act, since the characteristic of bringing to actuality is in this hypostasis first, even if that factor has also a co-nature with subsistence. This factor [act] is what determines the nature of the third principle. Power determines the nature of the second principle because it is the first extension of [the One] and has not yet proceeded into act. But the principle of the One, in the language of indication, is first conceived as subsistence; for the One is what brings all things into subsistence, though nothing brings it into subsistence. For it could not then still be the One, if in being itself, it also were to participate in what could exist before it. And therefore it is clear because of all this that Being is the third principle.

(II 74) In the same way also, the first intellect is the third principle in the well-known Chaldean triad.³⁷ The first intellect, separated from its cause, turns back toward it and actualizes the first act. For what is in the course of procession has not yet separated. And hence it does not require reversion. Reversion is a correction of separation. And therefore, if the third is the first to attain to act, and this means, to revert to the cause, and intellect does this, the consequence is clear. And if intellect is the third principle, it is the first intelligible. But the intelligible is substance, and therefore the [intellect] is the first substance, which the Chaldeans call subsistence. If the first is subsistence in the language of indication, then clearly also the third is intellect by indication as it is related to that intelligible. If the third is the first intellect, then this first proceeded from the One and reverted toward the One, and this is the first Unified.³⁸ And if the third first fled the principles that poured over the boundaries of Being, that is, the definite and the indefinite, and it has become the first determine one and, as it were, fixed into an hypostasis (this is the hypostasis of Being), then this third would be the same as the first Being which is called intellect in the language of indication. Therefore it is also called substantial intellect, not because of intellection, but because it is characterized by Being. And if Amelios wishes to speak of an "intellect that is," then he is talking about this intellect.³⁹

Chapter 62. What Does the Word "Being" Denote?

■ In this chapter, Damascius surveys some approaches to the topic of Being, using doxographical and philological considerations. He is concerned here with how Being is distinct from other words that denote existence or states of existence, such as hypostasis and subsistence. ■

Let us now inquire from the beginning what we mean when we say Being, and what its defining character is. What else shall I say, (II 75) other than that which indicates the being of each thing? For it is not possible to conceive of properties other than through the properties themselves. And they are more clearly known through themselves than through others. For the term "human being" signifies more what the actual reality is than the definition, "living mortal rational being." And in the case of the simple genera, it is not yet easy to define them by means of elements. Some properties are simpler, such as those belonging to the first forms, and others are more composite, such as those synthesized from the prior. So, for example, "living being" consists of the genera of being, or however many [species] are composed from these genera. Therefore Being (*on*) will be whatever provides Being (*einai*) to each thing, as well as that according to which it is a being (*on*). And just as the word "is" (*esti*) links verbs and nouns, so Being is the link among all the forms, as it were the root of every form, from which and in which every form develops or is situated. Except that the One is a root yet simpler than this.

Concerning the order of forms or of genera, it is not now our task to conduct an inquiry. But Plato in defining Being attempted to render it familiar on the basis of the characteristic of act. For he says that what is capable of acting on or being acted upon is what we call Being.⁴⁰ And then, wary lest he make motion the foundation of Being, since he demonstrates that Being is "stationary, sacred, and motionless," or not able to grasp the double nature of this act that functions both in acting and in being acted on, or [to grasp] what is common to both, such as is the capacity that either one of them has for proceeding prior to (II 76) the other, Plato settled on the notion of power and defined Being as this, power, as if someone could recognize power from [the nature of] act. This kind of power remains within, whereas that which proceeds toward the outside is act. And substance in this sense as a whole remains fixed, because its power prepares it for change. Strato⁴¹ must have had this [Platonic conception] in mind when he declared that Being is remaining, since he saw that power was an extension of Being. But it was also necessary to see that even if remaining is one of the properties of Being, nevertheless they are not the same, since the concepts are clearly discernable, and [we] recognize that Being and remaining are distinct. In fact there must be some-

thing still prior, whether this [itself] remains or changes. In fact, remaining is antithetical to being changed. Remaining and staying immobile are the same thing, whereas what is antithetical to Being is either nothing or not being, which Plato everywhere opposed to Being. Therefore if someone also defines Being as hypostasis (*ὑποστάσις*: that which underlies), essentially he is doing what Strato did. For subsistence (*ὑφεστάναι*) derives its name from stasis (*στάσις*). If he makes hypostasis signify something unique, then let him say whence this meaning derives, unless it derives from [the word] “it is” (*ἔστιν*) since this word means precisely “Being.” Again, therefore, it is defined by means of itself.

But perhaps one should say that subsistence [is Being]. Since, in fact, substance (*οὐσία*) is subsistence (*ὑπαρξις/ὑπάρξις*), as we say. If the reality must be pursued by means of the name, then this name could signify a second principle (*arche/ἀρχή*) subordinated (*ὑπο/ὑπο*) to the first. And perhaps Being (*ον/ὄν*) would be the (II 77) second principle after the principle of the One, which is ranked before it. If according to convention we pick out [subsistence/ *ὑπαρξις/ὑπάρξις*] as signifying Being, we shall not be able to explain whence it has come about that subsisting (*ὑπάρχειν*) is formed after the word, Being (*εἶναι*), so that no longer do I prefer to make Being known by means of subsistence (*ὑπάρξις*), but rather the opposite [subsistence by means of Being].

Perhaps the word “Being” (*εἶναι*) alone expresses the nature of the reality as well as its conception, since other things are named from characteristics that accompany or accompany the thought of Being, and while There they are [not yet] distinguishable, in our own thoughts they are distinguishable. For example, [in the case of] subsisting (*ὑπάρχειν*) and (*ὑφεστάναι*) underlying, the latter is used when the procession [of Being] has not yet been brought about, while the former is used in the sense that Being is ranked beneath (*ὑπο/ὑπο*) the first principle (*arche/ἀρχή*). And one might find this out also through experience with any other name, especially the less familiar terms. For example, (*τελέθειν/telethein*) to realize completion, is named because Being hastens (*θεῖ/θει*) toward its end (*τέλος/telos*) and because its end is not something distant. Consequently, there is a dispute concerning the end (*τέλος/telos*) of desire, whether it is for Being or for the Good alone. Desire for well-being accords with both [formulations.] And again, *πέλειν (pelein)*, to advance, is named because Being advances toward (*πελάει*) and wishes to be the neighbor (*πέλας/pelas*) of the One. And again with preservation (*σώζεσθαι*): Being is such that it is appropriate and because it is sound (*σῶον/so-on*) and because it lacks nothing since it is all things. And again, *τυγχάνειν (tunchanein)*, to happen, if in fact it is used to mean “Being,” taken by itself [and not with a supplementary participle], is used because prior to all things, Being obtains (*ἐπιτυχῆς/epituches*) the universal end and is fulfilled by the good. But enough of these [etymologies of words that denote “Being”].

Chapter 63. On the Kinds of Being

■ This chapter is a *tour de force* of the five highest genera, the *megista gene*, of Plato's *Sophist*. Damascius perhaps indulges his fondness for etymological explanations, à la Plato's *Cratylus*, to the maximal degree. ■

(II 78) Whence, however, is the term, τὸ ὄν [Being]? Perhaps it is derived from the source that Socrates in the *Cratylus*⁴² conjectures, that is, from “going” (ἰέναι)? For Being moves (ἰόν), and still more precisely resembling [Being] the word “I go” (εἶω), must be written with a diphthong [ei]. And so Homer says: “We went (ἦγομεν) as you bid to the wood.”⁴³ In the participle form, this verb could become both τὸ ἐόν (that which is) and τὸ ὄν (that which is), which means that Being signifies what by nature can act, that is, that which acts, or as Plato says, that which has power.

What follows? Can Being alone act?

[We answer that] the Beautiful and the Good [can also act], and the one and the many, taken as kinds, and rest and motion. In general, each form has a power and an act, but perhaps it is because each form is a Being, and something actualizes itself insofar as it is a substance.

But motion and rest both act, albeit in terms of a kinetic or static act, respectively, and so each has a capacity that is unique quite apart from substance or Being.

[Our answer is that] the name and reality of Being are common to all the kinds [of Being], although not in terms of the conception of the unique genus that is being and which we call being in contradistinction to the other kinds. Rather, [each genus is called Being] in accordance with the act of each of the kinds, whether it is said with respect to the power of each, or with respect to the aspect of each that is subject to becoming. That is, [this predicate is used] for that aspect which shows Being as something that has come to be, as a dream once appeared to me⁴⁴ (II 79), saying that Being is that part of each thing which is in act and that this act is already common to all things, since it is just the substance that we are accustomed to conceiving in terms of the differentiation of power and act. For if the act of each of the forms and of each of the kinds is unique, why is there not also substance according to a common meaning, since there is a power and an act that belongs to [each form and genus]?]

[One answer might be that] perhaps also substance itself is named from Being, because act is movement⁴⁵ and comes from movement. And perhaps also power is a movement, since each [act and power] is an extension of Being. But does rest too act and have power? Rather, rest participates in movement, just as it also participates in Being and so is substance by participation.

But first the kinds participate in each other in terms of their own hypotheses, which are prior to power and act. Again, they participate in sameness and otherness, one and many, finite and indefinite, by virtue of their natures as substances [that are] prior, and thus also in rest and motion. Therefore their participation in movement is not solely by means of the acts and the powers [that belong to them.]

Once more, both powers and acts participate in the other genera and especially in Being itself. Or rather, each substance participates in each and all of the substances; power participates in all the powers, and each act in each and all of the acts. (II 80) Further still, substance is contradistinguished with respect to act while power, intermediate between these, is said to be with respect to either of them. Motion is defined only in opposition to rest, and there is no intermediate term between motion and rest.

Moreover, we do not project the same conceptions when we hear [the words] “to be moving” and “to be acting.” In fact, in thinking [the thoughts] “being stationary” and “being quiescent” and “being asleep” and all such forms of activity, we do not conceive them as motions, but rather the opposite, since being stationary is the opposite of being in motion. If acting applies to both, then it cannot be the opposite of being in motion. And if we also say that being in motion is the universal term, what shall we call being stationary? For one must always contrast rest with motion. And if power is motion, then what is rest? For there is nothing that is distinguishable from power and act other than substance, in at least a certain sense. Therefore substance is rest, which amounts to the position of Strato, although it does not appear well considered.⁴⁶ If substance generates power and act after it, and if motion is one of the many genera, so too, will rest be, and therefore it will be contradistinguished with respect to Being. Therefore it is not that power is some sort of product or extension of Being, since power participates no more in Being than Being participates in power. Each of the beings is what it is by itself, since all things arise in the reciprocity of harmonious association with each other. Therefore Being participates in motion and in rest, and therefore motion is not derived from Being, nor is movement an act of Being. For how could an effect transmit something to the cause, or what is generated to what generated it?

Chapter 64. Power and Act

■ Damascius alludes to scholastic disputes concerning the differentiation between *kinesis*, process or motion, and *energeia*, activity or act. The dispute stems from Plotinus’ criticisms of Aristotle’s definition of process, found in *Ennead* VI.1.15–22, and from the reiteration of Aristotle’s position by Iamblichus, though Aristotle is not mentioned in the text here. Damascius attributes the position that Being is act to Proclus and Syrianus at the end of this chapter. ■

(II 81) Apart from these considerations, producing is an action; therefore could being affected be an action? But being affected is also a motion. Perhaps [we should say] that that which receives action has its action in just this, in its receiving action, since this receiving action is its work, just as someone could say of matter that its only work is being passive, but there is no acting in addition to this. Activity is the fulfillment of one's native work, and potentiality is readiness for the work. But if this is the act of each thing, that is, the fulfillment of its natural work, how would we inquire about work itself, whether it is something other than what accomplishes the work, or just that. If it is this last, then substance too appears to be an act, so that also rest and every form and genus, and not just motion will be work, and the argument will demand another production of work other than work, and again another act other [than act]. And therefore act is not motion, but rather substance. In the previous case, the work of motion will be to set beings in motion. And there will also be an act belonging to motion, which will be the rendering of this work. If this rendering is itself the work, then perhaps it is absurd to say that the act, being a fulfillment of the work, is itself the work. If the work is in the fulfillment of the work, and the work is itself that which fulfills the work, as for example dance is the act of dancing, there will still be a completion of this act through which the act is also produced. Every act that belongs to something is for the sake of something and is not primarily the end.⁴⁷

Next, even motion moves. Motion is that which distributes this characteristic, as rest distributes stability. Therefore motion will act, just as rest will act. Therefore act is not motion. And motion just insofar as it is motion is nothing other than (II 82) motion, while act conveys that the work that is completed, just as its name [implies]. There are as many acts as there are agents, as, for example, the act of the human being is the human qua agentive, and of the horse, the horse qua agentive. For how could the entire form together with its act be a movement that in itself is just movement? Someone will say that [act] is not movement qua property, but that it is motion in the sense that motion is a composite form, even if the act is brought about more through motion through the dominance of the latter. But the act can also be something composite, namely, the act of composite beings, while the act of simple beings is simple. In general, motion possesses an act, a simple act, not because it is identical to Being [but because it is a genus of Being]⁴⁸ and a composite act, understood as form.

These things have been said out of proportion to [their importance] because of my disagreement concerning them with the position of the philosophers,⁴⁹ who are often accustomed to saying that motion and act are the same thing. Nevertheless this must be said in addition: if act is not movement, then it is the case either that it is a form itself and that the other forms become actual through participation in it, just as everything moves and comes to a stand though motion and rest, or else it is the case that act extends through each of

the other forms, as a kind of procession of each from itself into itself or to another. And one might raise the same questions concerning power.

Chapter 65. Participation in the Unified

■ Damascius discusses the relationship between Being and the Unified here, attempting to show that a holistic approach to the nature of Being, according to which all of the genera of Being coexist and mutually imply the others, will help us to understand the way that this more differentiated expression of the third principle nevertheless reflects the unity of the One. ■

(II 83) If one [chooses] to go with the second hypothesis,⁵⁰ how could this property, namely, Being as power or coming to be actual, be present to other [kinds of Being]? For each, being oneself, having power, and becoming actual is different. And yet, if the first hypothesis is true,⁵¹ then act and power are not the procession of any [of the forms].

[We remark that] <the> procession is a unique property, just as differentiation is, and whatever has some distinct manner of being conceived is certainly a property. [Such a property] is a different reality, and this reality [comes from] a unique principle, and cannot arise spontaneously [without being caused]. Care must be taken, then, [to determine] whether there is a difference among the things themselves, and not just among the names.

Again, even the philosophers say⁵² that power originates from the first power, just as subsistence arises from the first subsistence, and act from the third principle, or the mixed, because act is manifested in this principle, as third, since it proceeds after power. And the [third] clearly does not possess motion, since the genera of Being are not yet available there.

Therefore are act and power and subsistence in the first mixed? But [the mixed] is the Unified. We answer that one must agree that these [three] are also unified, and that no extension had yet emerged, but these three are enfolded and unified with each other, or rather they are not yet even divided, and the three are in one principle referred to as “the mixed,” as was said previously.

Therefore we say that to be (*εἶναι*) is the act of Being (*τὸ ὂν*), although this word, to be, signifies rather the nature of Being. If to be also brings about Being, it does this by (II 84) simply being, and not by making. The activity of the intellect is evident, although it accompanies substance and it, as it were, comes into a stability along with substance, just as the activity of Being is substance itself, and in the same way [the activity] of life has a trace of separation, since we say that life is living, and living seems to be something other than life; the act [of Being] is nevertheless the same in the case of life, since it signifies being life. But at the [echelon of] souls, some [have their acts] accompany substance, but others emanate from substance, as in the case of

immanent forms, substances have also emanated outside. But this involves another argument.

Now as for Being (*εἶναι*), it is the same thing as Being (*τὸ ὄν*), in the sense, however, that Being is the act of substance, while power is compressed in the middle [of Being and act]. But being is one of the genera. This is how we think of Being, since the fact of something's being in a determinate state is from [generic] Being, whereas we named Being in a higher sense than [generic] Being, as an indication, as has been said, or rather, we [used this name] as a derivative from determinate substance, with respect to which the particular act and power are distinguished. Therefore, it is also clear that the genus, being, is unified being, and in the case of the genus being, the fact of being is the same as Being, and act is the same as substance. Therefore, the Unified cannot be excepted from the summit of the Beings, or from the intelligible unity, as we were saying, [since that would be mean] it is excluded from the genus as well, but that was already the form of Being or something very like the form. Just so, we can conceive of nothing simpler than the property of [being] one. This one qua genus is something already distinguishable from the other [genera], and it is also composite, if it is one of the genera or forms, but it is singular because of its nature, in the same way that movement is a different genus and rest is a different genus. In this way, Being is unified by its (II 85) nature, and Being (*τὸ ὄν*) is the same as the fact of being (*εἶναι*), but nevertheless being is one of the several genera, and it participates in them as something distinct. And yet, however, it can be argued that [generic being] is not truly unified being, because it is distinguished relative to other beings and it undergoes differentiation with respect to them. Therefore it is [not only unified but] also divided.

[Generic Being] reciprocally participates in the other genera, so that the other genera also become manifest together with it, just as Being is reciprocal with respect to the other genera. How then can it be unified in the strict sense? For in this way, this One is caught being in reality not one, both because it participates in others and because it is distinct with respect to the others. But nevertheless, Being itself wishes to be one in the terms of its own nature that uniquely shines forth. And therefore it seemed most suited inherently for indicating the substance that is all things, or rather the cause that is beyond substance in the all producing simplicity. Therefore, this Being that is most unified of all the genera could most rightly indicate the unified principle at the summit of all beings. And yet perhaps since the principles embracing all things are also all things that are from them, each thing is divided out, distinguished, and exists according to a different characteristic. That unified summit There does not exist in this unified here, as something distinct with respect to what is separate⁵³ (for in this way it could not be perfect) but it does exist in that which is above both divided and undivided, and what is above all things, to put it more truthfully. It comprises all things in itself, since even the One before all things is indicated not as something distinguished with respect to the other things, nor

yet as simple relative to something composite, but as that which has “snatched itself up” prior to all things.⁵⁴ (II 86) [It is before] the composite, and the simple and the many and the one that stands in opposition to [all] these things.

But since we can have no ready-to-hand conception for these transcendent realities, we should be content to indicate something about them from the conceptions we do have. It is necessary that our own conceptions be far inferior to the independent stations of the highest-ranking principles, concerning which our speculations take place. Thus if the One is simple, still it is [conceived as existing] among the genera [of Being] or as among forms and according to a single characteristic, for example, the form [of the] Good, or Beauty, or any of the other forms. In this way too [we conceive] the One, the Unified, and Being.

Someone might maintain that the Unified is a unique [property] in addition to Being, and that Being participates in the Unified especially, and that therefore it is the participation of the One that brings about the Unified, just as the multiple comes about through the participation of multiplicity. If this is so, then Being would be first, and participate in the many and the one, and especially in the One. If the mixed also arises from somewhere, and there is such a subsistence through which each form is mixed, the Unified would also be something unique, that is, the summit of the mixed. But how could the mixed not be [conceived] as simple, since there are mixed individuals, as for example human being, horse, and animal in general, and substance that is mixed from the genera, or to summarize, the class of composite[s], from which being comes about for the other composite [substances]. Here I am talking about mixed and composed according to the property manifest in the form or the genre which is (II 87) simple, which could be called “the property of being mixed,” in contrast with simplicity. But we shall return to this subject later.

Chapter 66. Conclusions Concerning Being

■ In this chapter, Damascius concludes his discussion of Being as substance by returning to the language of subsistence and thus emphasizing the relationship between Being and the One. Therefore, he ends by alluding to the Parmenidean language of One-being and so reiterates the limits of conceptual thinking when approaching the topic of Being, which, after all, manifests within its own nature, the nature the of the One. ■

Going back to the beginning with effort, let us say to ourselves that, as in our dream,⁵⁵ that which is in act in the case of each thing is Being, and by virtue of which not only is [generic being], being, but also each of the other genera is being; movement insofar as it is movement [is being] and rest insofar as it is rest. For each of these kinds is substance, and allows act as well as power to be

predicated of the kinds insofar as either of these is from substance. That which each kind is, is in act, and is already according to a subsistence specific to each one. And with respect to the kinds, that which is in power is prior to that which is in act, and not after it, just as they are [found] in substances that progress from the less complete to the more complete. Therefore “in act” means the subsistence that is already specific to each kind in which it subsists.

But before these qualified beings is absolute Being, which is also Being in absolute act. For the latter is established first in its own act, as the Being prior to it was established in its own power, and the Being still prior to this was established in the pure subsistence, to speak purely in terms of indication, since these properties are co present with each other, that is, subsistence and power and act, and substance is this, namely, subsistence as potential or as actualized, which means substance in act or together with act. For what does “in act” mean other than substance together with act, as the word “in power” means together with power? Therefore the words “in act” really come to the same thing as “Being that achieves actualization,” and thus first manifests act.

(II 88) But these three are still unified There, that is, act, power, and subsistence.⁵⁶ In that realm there is pure subsistence that, in its purely subsisting, possesses both Being as power and Being in act. For it is by being that subsistence has power and act, and the three are just Being. And what wonder if the summit of beings is like this, when being as generic also seems to be this way, as has been said? Perhaps, however, Being is such in terms of the specific character that it possesses as a unique property, as for example, the simple One, although it is not simple, but that One is in the undifferentiated, completely perfect hypostasis before all things, since these aspects prepare to undergo differentiation in the middle rank of the intelligible world.

Therefore it is in the third order, first, that substance tends toward power and act, to the extent that it does so. And that is why intellect is said to know and to turn toward the intelligible object and to achieve dominion over the intellectual and in general, those beings that emerge from intellect. And yet the activities only become concrete together with substance and cannot depart from it, but they are acts nevertheless, since every intellect is like this, being “in act in its substance,” as Aristotle says.⁵⁷ But in the summit of beings, power and act are swallowed by subsistence, although they are nevertheless one. And therefore subsistence is not isolated, but it is already substance, as has been said earlier. And why would it be unexpected, if not even subsistence is evident in that? For in that realm nothing that is differentiated and partial is manifest clearly, but there is a single complete concentration that transcends all things, which we do not yet know because it is not possible (II 89) for intellect to know perfectly and in a way equivalent to that subsistence. But making attempts to grasp it by means of the intellect as we are naturally disposed to do, we divide it, or rather we are divided around it, and again, from the beginning we gather it into an indication of the unique summit that is all perfect and before all

things. That which we think is these is neither Being nor yet substance, since [Being] does not even possess the properties of these things, but it is beyond these things, just as it is beyond other things, so that it is not even intelligible.

What then can it be? It is surely not even One, in the first place, because even the One is differentiated. If [one refers to it as] the One by virtue of indication, how would the third principle differ from the first of the three? For that principle too would be the One in the same way. Perhaps one should just refer to it as the Unified. For how will it not be the case that it is something intermediary between the One and Being, which someone could call the Unified, in the absence of a proper name for it? For why are there intermediaries of all the others that differ by means of their whole class throughout procession, but no intermediary between substance and what is beyond substance, or between One and Being? Since Plato, it seems, also understands this and in the *Parmenides* calls [the third One] One-Being⁵⁸ as a whole, through absence of a unique expression, intending to situate the intermediate relative to the extremes, in the way that he recognizes the soul as being in the intermediate position relative to the [extremes] on either side, saying that it is in between the indivisible and the substance that is divided about bodies, and yet this is a single nature as well, and it is not a composite, it seems, of the extremes.⁵⁹ And therefore also, the One-Being is not a composite, nor yet is it the two, that is, the one that is prior, and the one that is subsequent, as the philosophers interpret [Parmenides] but it is a single nature in the midst of both, between the One and (II 90) Being, a nature that has already lowered itself from the simplicity of the One, and does not yet manifest the co-aggregate state of Being.⁶⁰

Section XI. Intelligible Being

Chapter 67. Exegetical Considerations: Iamblichus and Plato

■ In this chapter, Damascius reviews the doctrines of Iamblichus in terms of his exegesis of Plato. That is, he considers the Neoplatonist interpretation of Plato's *Phaedrus* and especially of the *Parmenides*, as well as of the Orphic poems, concerning the status of the intelligible world vis-à-vis the One. This chapter is the source for an important fragment from Iamblichus' own lost *Commentary on the Parmenides*, and helps the reader to see the influence on Damascius of Iamblichus' practice, not to call it a doctrine, of metaphysical ambiguity, according to which the highest station of a given order belongs to the lowest station of the immediately preceding order. Thus intelligible Being is not outside the ambit of the One, so that the Unified is not an intelligible object, but can only be approached through unity, or what Damascius has called unified knowing. Perhaps it is the metaphysical ambiguity of Iamblichus that influences Damascius' own tendency to oscillate between treating the henads as aspects of the One as well as anticipations of the intelligible triad. However, citing Iamblichus as he does, Damascius then proceeds to an exegesis of the *Parmenides* 143a4–b8, on the topic of the One-Being. And yet this level of Being, that is, the second hypothesis, necessarily refers to the intelligible realm, not to the henadic realm. Not only that, but for Proclus and Syrianus, the One-Being of *Parmenides* 143a4–145b5 refers to the summit, as Damascius evidently quotes Proclus, of the intelligible-intellective order, firmly in the realm of the third intelligible triad, but at the lowest member of the triad, intellect. For the correspondences between the *Parmenides* and the orders of the intelligible world recognized by Syrianus and Proclus, see the Introduction to *Platonic Theology* I. lxviii–lxix, and also Lloyd 1982, 18–19.

There is a puzzle, however, with regard to the interpretation that Damascius elucidates here. Essentially Damascius points to the puzzle when he begins the chapter by asking how Being is both the Unified as well as the intelligible order. This puzzle deepens because the subject under discussion here is the One-Being of *Parmenides* 143. So Damascius somehow equates his conception of the Unified as a kind of compromise between the One and Being with the much lower level of the One-Being as understood by the Platonists to refer to the summit of the intellectual triad, or lowest order of the intelligible domain. Damascius seems aware of this difficulty, if not equivocation, when he writes: “and perhaps the final result of the Unified is in labor with the intelligible object,” at the end of chapter 67. The sense, then, is that there is a kind of *apoteleutesis*, or outcome of the Unified, a Unified as it were on a lower level. And again, Damascius admits to his equivocation when he writes: “Although many of our positions apparently contradict themselves, in all probability the dispute concerns the name alone.”

The strain that exists in what Damascius is doing here can be illustrated by reference to what he says in the next chapter: “If in other places either Plato or another inspired human being indicates that substance is the summit of the intellectual order, there is nothing absurd [in the suggestion], since pure substance manifests itself in this order even according to Iamblichus. But this would be the intellectual summit because it is intellectual substance.” Here Damascius is referring to another Platonic text, *Phaedrus*, 247c6–d1: “for the souls that are called immortal, so soon as they are at the summit, come forth and stand upon the back of the world.”

For Damascius, as for Proclus, the text of *Parmenides* 143b1–8 introduces otherness into the intelligible realm, “Then if being is one thing and one is another, one is not other than being because it is one, nor is being other than one because it is being, but they differ from each other by virtue of being other and different.” “Certainly.” “Therefore the other is neither the same as one nor as being.”

Hence, this part of the dialogue must refer to the intellectual, or third triadic member of the intelligible triad, which represents its most extreme development. Thus Damascius says in the next chapter of our text: “There is not yet otherness [in the Unified] but where this too [otherness] has a place, because unity has relaxed its hold in the procession, there substance is contradistinguished with respect to the one as the vehicle is to what is conveyed, and this is the origin of principle of the intellectual realities insofar as they possess their being in terms of distinction.” The summit that Damascius refers to is actually the One-Being, a kind of offspring of the Unified at the level of intellectual Being.

The Unified

Being equates with the Chaldean term Subsistence, subdivided into its own triad
= **Noetic Triad**

Life equates with the Chaldean term Power, subdivided into its own triad= **Noetic/
Noeric Summit or One-Being**

Intellect equates with the Chaldean term Act, subdivided into its own triad=
Noeric Triad ■

Therefore, why do we call Being the Unified, which we say is all things? And why do we also call it intelligible, as anticipating both the intellectual and the

perceptible in the way that the “power belongs to the cause?”¹ Nor yet is the Unified, as has been said above as well, that which we conceive as not yet subject to differentiation, and as opposed to differentiation, and as that which is before all things, according to indication.

And how is Iamblichus’ interpretation of the intelligible different, when he says that it subsists “around the One” and never emerges outside of the one, from recognizing it as what we call the Unified and the One-Being, since it is not yet Being, nor does it still [remain] One, since its station is intermediate [between One and Being]?

Further, after the One-Being, Plato² sets substance in opposition to the One, distinguishing them in the summit of the intellectual order, where he reveals the divine otherness together [with them]. Accordingly, Plato was not able to define what comes prior to these, as if one of these were the One, and the other of these were Being, functioning as a substrate for the One, but the combination of them was One-Being, not as a mixture of either element, but as in between the two and, as it were, the entry of the One into Being. Certainly, although he assumed a division, he did not separate the whole into One and Being, and [instead] made each of the parts One-Being. If he says that the parts of the One-Being are the One and Being, still, a little later he clarifies that the One is not without Being nor is Being without the One.³ And if he seems to define each of the two as participating in the other, still he makes this reveal the intermediary that has no name. (II 91) [It is] as if someone were to say that the indivisible aspect of the soul that also participates in the divisible is different from the divisible aspect that also participates in the indivisible; in fact, however, each of them must be conceived in terms of a single, unmixed nature that somehow exists and is simple with respect to both the divisible and the indivisible.

If we call [the Unified] intelligible, we shall mean something other than what we mean when we say that Being is knowable: the knowable is defined in terms of knowledge, whereas [the Unified] is all things and cannot be distinguished in opposition to anything, yet is not the One alone that [entirely] escapes intellection. Moreover, the Unified must be intelligible in just the way that Being is. And yet Being is not evident even There, since all things There are without differentiation. The intelligible is also like this. Being being and being intelligible are not different for the Unified, since otherwise the Unified would not be truly Unified. But either everything, including the intelligible and the highest ranking realities are engulfed by the Unified, or else the intelligible and the highest-ranking and most esteemed realities resemble it more and derive a likeness from it, which is why these things appear to be themselves in reality non-beings. And perhaps also in the *Phaedrus*⁴ Plato suggests this, when he says that the souls standing on the vault of heaven behold the things above the heaven, which is the colorless and formless and intangible realm,⁵ which he with reason also calls the “meadow of truth,” and

says that the soul feeds on that meadow, since in that realm truly is the intelligible substance. And he says these things still more clearly (II 92) in the *Cratylus*.⁶ Making “heaven [οὐρανός]” “sight seeing above [ὄψιν ἄνω ὁρῶσαν]” and evidently, as “first,” it is clear that by that which is seen by the sight and is the first visible, [Plato] means that which lies immediately above it.

It seems that Orpheus⁷ as well, recognizing Kronos as intellect (as the whole myth surrounding him makes clear and especially the epithet, *agkilotmetis* /of crooked heart), [and recognizing] Night as first substance and for this reason addressing it as “nurse of all things,” represents Night as having reared Kronos in particular, meaning that she is the intelligible object [known by] intellect, since “that which is the object of intellect is food for the subject of intellect,” according to the Oracle.⁸ And this is what the Theologian says: “Night reared Kronos from among them all, and raised him up.”⁹

Since if Zeus swallows down the intellect before Night, still it is in the midst of her that he also [swallows] the intellect next to her. And perhaps [the poet also means that] the final result of the Unified is in labor with the intelligible object. Let so much be enough of this [argument to the effect that the Unified is the intelligible Being].

Chapter 68. Is the Unified Intelligible Being?

Someone might be able to maintain the opposite hypothesis as well, by saying that after the transcendent substance, what could be posited other than substance; and as for the Unified, what could one say [that is was] other than Being, as subject to the One, as the Eleatic Stranger says in the *Sophist*.¹⁰ And how is the Unified not just the concentration of all beings and all substances, and a single substance as well as the concentration of all substances, just as we were saying?¹¹ And so it is also One-Being, because it is Unified, since it is also a particular being, subject to differentiation. If it is the Unified insofar as it is a henad and Being, and if the composite of the two (II 93) [exists] as a single intermediate nature, yet it is still true that the One has descended [in the Unified], whereas Being, inasmuch as Being is the first reality, is most informed by the One, so that is not easy to distinguish between the vehicle and what is conveyed, or rather the possessor and the possessed, because everywhere the first realities are especially like those that precede them.¹² Therefore, Plato called the composite¹³ not One and Being but instead One-Being, and indicated the inexpressible unity of Being unified with the One. Plato, by saying that Being and the One are not the same, showed that Being participates whereas the One is participated.

Moreover, in the first hypothesis Plato¹⁴ removes Being from the One and assumes [the One] without Being, and then he removes the One as well. And

just as in the first hypothesis he removes those two, so also in the second he assumes these two [that is, the One-Being]. Therefore the One and Being are conjoined with each other as two realities, but they are so homogeneous with each other that neither one possesses anything that would introduce a differentiation. There is not yet otherness [in the Unified], but where this too [otherness] has a place, because unity has relaxed its hold in the procession, there substance is contradistinguished with respect to the One as the vehicle is to what is conveyed, and this is the origin of principle of the intellectual realities insofar as they possess their being in terms of distinction. And therefore each of the realities in that realm is one and many, and therefore substance has become pure in this order, having been in a way stripped of the One, and the many subsist as well at this same level. But prior to this, the multiplicity was in the Unified in a trace state. And so Iamblichus also represented the intelligible as remaining in the One, because the intelligible was more united (II 94) to the One and more conformed to it than to Being.¹⁵ Surely nothing in the Unified is distinct, neither substance nor intelligible object nor any other thing, and the Unified has its Being in this, in being all things in a compressed state. And the true intelligible object in the Unified is just this in it: "for it is all things, but all things in the manner of the intelligible,"¹⁶ as the Oracle says. The Unified gathers all our intellections into one and brings about one concentrated perfect and signless intellection that is truly unified, such as Iamblichus intends by "the intellection of that intelligible." If in other places either Plato or another inspired human being indicates that substance is the summit of the intellectual order,¹⁷ there is nothing absurd [in the suggestion], since pure substance manifests itself in this order even according to Iamblichus. But this would be the intellectual summit because it is intellectual substance, and this intellectual substance is distinguished in itself as well as subordinate to the One, as other than the One, as it manifests the substantial and unitary difference there.¹⁸

Although many of our positions apparently contradict themselves, in all probability the dispute concerns the name alone. For if we say that substance is [substance] that is already distinguished [as such], the Unified cannot be this substance, since this is after the Unified, coming to be both many and one. But that, as the Unified, was One-many. And if someone calls this Unified substance as well, in terms of the indications already elaborated, it is not a contradiction to assume that before the substance that is divided into many by means of otherness, there is a completely Unified substance that is free from otherness. And therefore when differentiation has not yet manifested itself, the One did not appear to be separate from (II 95) Being, but as it were fused with it. And this is the mediation between One and Being that was sought, the fusion of the two.

But perhaps the many are intermediate between the One and Unified Being, since they are still one and not yet the Unified, but rather many as one

and in a unity that, as it were, participates in the One, to the extent that they are characterized by multiplicity. But the Unified is intermediate between the One, however it is characterized, and determinate substance.

Or perhaps instead of all this one should say that, most truly, the One called the supersubstantive is neither Being nor One in reality, that is, the One that is distinguished vis-à-vis Being as the vehicle is to the conveyed, nor the one that is generally contradistinguished [with respect to other forms of reality], nor yet is it both, that is, what [Plato] says¹⁹ is both Being and One, but the Unified is before both, contemplated as their synthesis in a unique simplicity. And just as this One [the supersubstantive] is one, so that [One-Being] is unified, not that the One or Being are the Unified, but the Unified is before both, just as that [Unified] is one. For since this is the ruling principle of either of the two, it anticipates each of the two insofar as it is simple, and in the same way, too, the Unified anticipates the aspect of Being and One [that is] unified and of like nature with respect to each of them, since it is before both, but also constitutes the unity of both. Therefore the One before both is both in the simplest way, that is, in that which is absolutely beyond Being, but the Unified before either Being or One is both Being and One in the sameness of both that transcends both. Thus after these, the third reality is the synthesis of [these] as different realities, and therefore otherness also manifests itself.²⁰ Above there are two [Being and the One], but these [subsist] in that which is unified before both, whereas in the highest [there is] that which transcends both, but is still in the One (II 96). After the One-Being, Plato discriminates substance and one from each other by means of a definite separateness that begins [to be manifest].²¹

Chapter 69. On the One-Being

■ The conclusion to Damascius' discussion of the third henad, considered as an aspect of the One and not yet in terms of the intelligible triad, is perhaps astonishing. At the end of this chapter, Damascius suggests that the purport of his exegesis all along has been to suggest that the Unified correlates with the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides*, insofar as it suggests a reality that is neither One nor Being, but is prior to both as the One-Being. In suggesting this conclusion to his own discussion of the henads, he once again alludes to the position of Iamblichus, for whom the Unified or, rather, intelligible Being, is not outside of the ambit of the One, and for whom, as will be shown in the next chapter (70), the Unified is not an intelligible object. ■

Therefore, the intermediate reality is neither One nor Being but One-Being as a unique nature [that subsists] as the Unified and anticipates both One and Being, as they are differentiated in later [stages]. Neither should one say that this intermediary is simply substance nor is it simply the One, but rather the midway point with respect to either of them that appears to be the other of

the two, or One that is simultaneously Being and Being as simultaneously One, or the combination One-Being in a kind of mixture that is prior to the elements discriminated by means of division, so that it is substance and one simultaneously. We do not possess a single name unless one should say "unified One," and [under this sobriquet] the One and the Unified (which was the trace of Being) arise together. But neither is the One in this as participating nor is Being in this as subsisting. That which is prior to the Unified was neither [One nor Being], but the Unified itself is both together in a unique simplicity that belongs to both. And so each of them anticipates the Unified and also derives from it, the One and Being, the one leading and the other following, remaining separate from each other through a certain otherness, (II 97) just as all things proceed from the demiurgic²² intellect simultaneously, that is, every bodily form as well as the soul for whom it becomes the vehicle, and even the intellect that accompanies the soul. If these three are in the demiurge causally, why cannot the one and being be in the Unified, not because of causes that serve to define them (for there was no definition there) but in a unique causal aspect of the Unified as their true subsistence?

And so I will venture, summarizing, that that which is called One by indication is not in fact One in truth, and the many that are spoken of, by indication, after the One are intermediate and, as it were, a development of the One toward the Unified and a descent of the first principle into the hypostasis of the third principle, whereas the highest stage of the Unified is this third principle, since it is the Unified of the entire Unified [order]. After it, [the third principle] is the differentiated aspect that is a trace manifestation of the Unified, both as a whole as well as of its parts, as if someone were to call it the birth pang of the Unified, or as the preparation for it. But after this intermediate there is the basis of the intelligible, which is also that which is perfectly differentiated from the nature of the Unified. And so those unified realities that are there, to whatever degree they are differentiated, those are also unified, since neither the One nor Being is absent from any of the divisions, as Plato's *Parmenides* says.²³ And this is how (II 98) the intelligible intellect must be contemplated, as subject to intellectual differentiation, that is, differentiated into unified beings, but not into forms, unless [one] does not substitute singular paradigms for specific paradigms. This topic can be understood as [has been explained] above.

But that Plato²⁴ clearly endorses this hypothesis, which posits neither [One nor Being] as first, and posits the conjunction of the two in the Unified as second, and either of the two as the third, he clarified by denying both the One and Being of the first, and compressing the One-Being in the middle, and differentiating Being and the One in addition to these [first two principles], together with the otherness that introduces differentiation of every kind and manner. Now we could hardly escape in this manner the ancient aporia,²⁵ for how, indeed, can we

assign the Being which we also consider to be the perfectly Unified the first place, as substance prior to intellect and life, when there is no differentiation there, and yet life is differentiated from intellect and substance from life? How indeed can there be differentiation, when there is as yet no difference? Moreover, how can the first completely unified be differentiated with respect to another? And therefore it is clear that substance, insofar as it is just substance as distinct from life, when life is viewed under just this property, of [being] life, manifests itself together with a certain otherness, but that the truly unified is neither life nor intellect nor substance (except that the philosophers sometimes say this by analogy or in terms of a causal trace), but rather the Unified is all things in an undifferentiated way and all things in terms of the transcendent unity before all things. And so the Unified is not differentiated in opposition to anything, since it is the all of that which is differentiated (II 99) and is [subject to partition] within our own thoughts. One should bear this in mind concerning the Unified, that is, before the One and substance, to the extent that one is able.

If we assumed in what preceded that the third principle was unified as [constituting] Being and represented Being in two ways, first as substantial and the second as Unified, now at least by folding the two into the One before both and assigning the differentiated pair a place beneath the intelligible, we appear to agree with Plato and we have dedicated the most sacred of our thoughts to the intelligible and to the completely Unified which is sewn about the One, according to Iamblichus.²⁶ And yet what we then concluded we can easily transfer to what we now think: for all that was said then was concerning the first mixed. But the first mixed appears in our present argument to be prior to the One and to Being, as a sort of combination of the two.

Chapter 70. Iamblichus' Doctrine Concerning Intelligible Being

■ The position of Iamblichus is that the Unified cannot be comprehended by any intellectual approach, much less by discursive thinking. Damascius explores here the question of whether the Unified is intelligible because it possesses the ability to fulfill intellection (although of course this intellection will be unified), or whether it is unintelligible. The argument of Iamblichus is to the effect that there are three primary reversion, that is, those according to substance, according to life, and according to knowledge. Since the Unified is before any procession, it is before any reversion, including the intelligible kind. Hence the Unified cannot be the object of intelligible reversion. Iamblichus, however, also concedes that the Chaldeans maintain that knowledge of the Unified can arise because it does not oppose or approach the intelligible as something other, but this knowledge abandons itself in the intelligible object. It is knowledge that one can revere as truly intelligible, because it contracts itself into the unconditioned nature of the intelligible.

Damascius begins with a citation from an otherwise lost Iamblichean *Commentary on the Parmenides* (Dillon 1973, fragment 2a) and ends the chapter with citations

from the *Chaldean Oracles* (nos. 1 and 2), alluding to another Iamblichean work, the *Chaldean Theology*. Thus the chapter is aporetic, divided between arguments for and arguments against the knowability of the Unified. Along the way, Damascius introduces some fundamental principles that operate in his own theory of knowledge, including the Iamblichean doctrine of the three kinds of reversions: substantial, vital, and intellectual. However, the importance of his chapter lies not so much in the doxography as in Damascius' attempt to convey the nature of unitive knowledge, just as he attempted, in chapter 23 above, to convey a method of "unknowing" in the approach to the One. ■

(II 100) Since, in our pursuit of this argument, we have naturally arrived at the most sacred and most unified summit of the hypostasis of the [intelligible] realities, however it is divided, let us now investigate how we can conduct a just discussion of its intelligible aspect.

One must agree, following the teaching of the great Iamblichus, that the Unified²⁷ cannot be comprehended by opinion, discursive reason, the intellectual aspect of the soul, nor by intellection with the aid of rational argument, nor again can it be apprehended by the perfect watchtower of the intellect or by the flower of the intellect, or in general by any application of the mind, either by way of pursuit or by way of comprehension; it cannot be known in any such manner.²⁸ In the first place, we must ask Iamblichus whether we shall say that the Unified is knowable, and is this the intelligible aspect of it, that it possesses the ability to fulfill intellection, although of course this intellection will be unified and prior to all conceptual content, since this intellection is the ground of thought and exists as a single (II 101) intelligible simplicity, or is the [Unified] unknowable since, as he says, it is permeated by the ineffable principle (that is, the Good) and it is capable of being filled with intellect as well as generative of intellect, since it is stationed in the place of the Good with respect to it, and desiring to be that which intellect desires, but not intellect as the subject of intellection, but rather as Being. Iamblichus evidently wavers between each position, or rather fosters our own ambivalence concerning the single intellection that belongs to this principle, and the argument, if it is adequately weighed, has great pull in either direction.

Our immediate answer is to say that Being is knowable, but that the Unified is beyond Being and the One that is contradistinguished with respect to Being, situated as the latter is [in] the Unified, which we posit as before both [Being and the One]. Therefore, it is not knowable at all, because it is not even Being in an absolute sense.

Moreover, if what is before substance is knowable, then substance too would be capable of knowing, so that it could revert to the knowable accompanied by knowledge. But that which possesses the faculty of knowledge, that is, intellect, is at a third remove from substance, and life is intermediate between both,²⁹ and itself in some way knows substance, since it has an intellective

capacity in addition to its intelligible capacity, and because it is after the intelligible object. Perhaps substance, too, must be thought to have some capacity to know since it originates from the intelligible, if the Unified is intelligible. Therefore, the knowledge that belongs to intellect naturally reverts to substance through life. For intellect belongs to substance and not to the Unified, nor is it present in the Unified.

(II 102) Third, then, is [the consideration that] if the Unified is intelligible in the sense that it is knowable by the intelligible intellect, it will be intelligible before every other reality. Therefore, intelligible intellect will know the Unified that is prior to it. Therefore, intellect will not itself be Unified. Knowledge is an act that is distinct from substance, even if it accompanies substance. And in general, the knower exists in terms of a great differentiation from the known, and yet such a great differentiation could not arise in the Unified. At least intellect, standing apart from substance, tends to return to substance by means of knowledge. If the Unified could be capable of knowledge, it will not be just the Unified, but also the knowable. And so it would not be Unified; the knowable, too, would be something separate in it. If it is not knowable in itself, but it has the knowable as something indistinct from other aspects, it will not be known by itself, but contact with it or reversion toward it will be union only.

Further, there are many reversions, though there are three primary reversions, that is, those according to substance, according to life, and according to knowledge. The latter brings about that which is capable of knowledge, the middle brings about that which lives, and the first brings about that which is substantial and that which supports being knowable. But the Unified is before all these things, nor therefore will it contain any reversion, neither that of the knower, nor any that is knowable, nor the intermediate reversion. And yet perhaps the Unified cannot revert, since it cannot even proceed. But every return is of what proceeds and so, reversion comes after procession. But the Unified is so incapable of division that it is both before substance and the One, at least, the One that is prior to substance. (II 103) But in addition to these arguments, knowledge wishes to circumscribe and to demarcate the knowable, and every thing so circumscribed is a form. But the Unified cannot be circumscribed, and therefore is perfectly unknowable.

However, if someone assumes that the Unified is unknowable, the argument presents difficulties. Already, in a way, we think that we ourselves have an intuition concerning the Unified, to the effect that it is prior to substance as well as to the One before substance, since it is the combination [Being and One] that is prior to both. If it is not yet we [who know it], yet at least the divine intellect knows the Unified absolutely, and knows what its unique nature wishes to be, prior to both substance and the One.

Next, just as the Unified is prior to substance and prior to One, so too that which can be spoken of as absolute knowledge is before unified and substantial knowledge, since it is before both as single nature that is unified. And since life

is twofold, that is, substantial and unitary, life as prior to both is life absolute, just as there is the absolute hypostasis is prior to both [kinds of life].

But there is no objection to saying that the combination is substance, according to another signification.

[We answer that] the combination is in an absolute sense hypostasis, but is likewise the substance that is on the summit of the Unified, just as unified life is in the intermediate position, and in the third place is what is termed unified knowledge. And this is truly the intelligible knowledge as well as intelligible life and intelligible substance, each of these having the intelligible component in common, and this [component] is [equivalent to] the Unified: "For it is all things, but in the manner of the intelligible,"³⁰ (II 104), as the oracle says, and this means without determinations and as unified. Therefore, there is also an intelligible knowledge, and this is absolute knowledge. For it is neither unified nor substantial but before both, and this is the same as saying, before all things, since the division between the one and substance is the primary division. And therefore also, that is absolute life and absolute substance owing to [their] unity and substantiality. So then this intelligible knowledge is of the absolute intelligible object. And the absolute intelligible object is before the differentiation between the intelligible unity and the substantial intelligible object, and so also the Unified is known by the unified knowledge.

Moreover, if the Unified is absolutely unknowable, the One before the Unified is still more unknowable. And so in what way shall we say that that ineffable principle differs from the Unified or from this One?

[We reply that] these are also entirely ineffable. Yet we also think that the Unified differs from the One in the way that we discussed above.

And apart from these considerations, the Oracles also clearly reveal that the intelligible is capable of being known, and do not confine themselves to the statement that the intelligible is both the object and subject of intellectual activity. The philosophers sometimes explain these words differently, saying that the object is prior to intellect, but not as the knowable, but as the desirable, and they say that intellect is filled from this, not with knowledge, but with substance and with the whole and with intelligible perfection. And this is also the view of Iamblichus as well as his followers. But this view is not always consistent, since in other places they leave open the possibility that knowledge is in the intelligible and around the (II 105) intelligible, as Iamblichus agrees in his *Chaldean Theology*.³¹ And the Oracles also testify to this position, in the verses where they address the Theurgist:

There is an intelligible, which you should contemplate with the flower³² of your mind. For if you incline your mind toward it and contemplate it as something, you will not contemplate that. It is the power of strength, shining from all sides, flashing with the intellectual rays. You should not use force to contemplate that

intelligible, but rather the subtle flame of subtle mind that measures all things, except that intelligible. And I ask you to contemplate this not with intensity, but carrying the sacred backward turning eye of your mind extend an empty mind to that intelligible, until you learn the intelligible, since it is fundamentally beyond mind.³³

These verses clearly concern this intelligible as well as the knowledge that will be capable of knowing it. They explain [that] the knowledge that will comprehend the intelligible can arise because it does not oppose or approach the intelligible as something other, nor does it seek to appropriate the intelligible, but this knowledge abandons itself in that, in the direction of simplification into it, and with the intention of becoming intelligible rather than intellectual.³⁴ Nor is there any differentiation that could separate [intellect and that reality], but unified knowledge presses to be led toward that unified, denying all differentiation, both that of itself and that of the intelligible [considered as] object, not that it refuses to accept a real determination, but that it does not even seek as if that were a real determination. (II 106) This is knowledge in the absolute sense, primary and most authoritative, because it most shares the same nature as the knowable, but it is not of the same nature as the intellectual, but knowledge that one can revere as truly intelligible, and as concentrating itself into the undifferentiated nature of the intelligible.

Once you have donned the garb of the all-covering strength of the crashing light,
arm intellect and mind with triple pronged strength,³⁵
then cast the entire token³⁶ of the triad into your imagination,³⁷ nor
wander with distraction into the empyrean channels,³⁸ but be
concentrated³⁹

the oracular god says, and things like this, concerning this kind of knowledge. Whence one should take care not to circumscribe this knowledge, as if one could apply the notion of formal knowledge to the Unified. For this kind of knowledge is not the kind that circumscribes the intelligible, but is rather circumscribed by it and defined by it, to the extent that it fully offers itself to the vision.

PART FIVE

On Reversion

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Section XII. On the Differentiation of the Unified

Chapter 71. Is There Knowledge in the Unified?

■ This chapter has two different aims. In the first part of the chapter, Damascius sketches an outline of the third henad, considering it now in terms of the three intelligible triads, where each member triad represents an increasingly lower order of divinity. The whole system results in the intellective reversion associated with knowledge being nine times removed from its object, which is Being in itself. This structure forms the foundation for the second part of the chapter, in which Damascius asks if there is knowledge in the Unified. No, there can be no knowledge in the Unified, since in the Unified the knowable is consumed by unity, whereas knowledge implies multiplicity. In fact, the Unified can only be known by knowledge that is itself the Unified, which is not the same as saying that the Unified is knowledge. But the unknowable is also in the Unified and the Unified is more unknowable than it is knowable. Even if knowledge implies differentiation, this differentiation is itself unified in the Unified. ■

What then? Is not knowledge a containing of the object of knowledge and so a circumscription? No: every knowledge is determined by the object of knowledge rather than itself determining the object of knowledge, and unified knowledge whose object is the Unified does not coalesce in any other way, except by co-simplifying itself through unity with that, or rather to put it more correctly, by letting go of itself and shedding itself as a whole into that, and by means of its own ungraspable nature it struggles to catch the (II 107) ungraspability of that, and by doing this it brings about its own intelligible nature, by which it comes to belong to the intelligible.

The character proper to reversion is not foreign to the intelligible. For even if the intelligible is unified, still it has a unified procession in itself, which is, as it were, the gestation of the downward procession. In fact, remaining is the cause of remaining and reversion is the cause of reversion, albeit a hidden cause. To summarize, in relation to that which is called the One before it, the Unified is the offspring and has proceeded, to the extent that it is legitimate to say this, insofar as it is possible for there to be a procession from the One, but in relation to the principles that are in some way distinguished [from each other], the Unified still remains near the One and shares the nature of the One. It proceeds only so far as it remains in the One and nowhere proceeds from the One.

And if the Unified is substantialized in its remaining in the One,¹ just as the middle class of gods is substantialized in the procession from the Unified, and [just as] the class of intellectives is substantialized in the return to the Unified,² still, just so it is possible to contemplate these things [as in] in the remaining, since there belongs to the Unified a first and a middle and an ultimate, which are in the cause and are entirely hidden, and this is exactly what we mean when we say "in a unified manner." Therefore, reversion of the Unified as well appears as intelligible truth, but perhaps not as intellectual reversion, since the intelligible is not knowable, because the knowable as well is concentrated in it, and is, as it were, swallowed, along with (II 108) other things, by unity. A fortiori, therefore, there is no knowledge in the Unified, since knowledge is at a far remove from the intelligible object. Therefore knowledge seems to be in the third rank, [in terms of its distance] from the Unified. But knowledge is also third in rank among reversions, there being vital reversion before it, and before this substantial reversion, and we say that the self-constituted accords with the latter, but the self-living with the reversion before this, and self-knowledge and "know thyself" correspond to the outermost form of reversion. And the three reversions are analogous to each other, as intellect is to life and as life is to substance. Therefore, knowledge is ninth removed from first substance, which we say is the knowable.

And yet by what argument could one attempt to establish this kind of differentiation in the Unified? But perhaps this must be said in reply to this kind of argument, that it is we who are divided with respect to the Unified, desiring to know just how vast it is, and its complete nature, but we do not yet project intelligible intellection, since we do not even project intellectual thought, nor even the lowest kind of intellection, since not even our discursive thinking is pure and appropriate, yet being such, it hopes to glimpse some of the truth from afar and in this hope it anticipates the end of its entire effort. But as for the intelligible, "it is all things, but all things intelligibly,"³ as the Oracle says. Therefore the summit of the intelligible is substance, that is, the substance unified from the One and substance but is before both, whereas the intermediate member of the intelligible order [is next] before life and before the one

discriminated as life, namely, unified life homonymous with each of the terms beneath it, but not either of them, since it subsists before (II 109) them. And so the third [member of the intelligible triad] is the intelligible intellect, which is a unity of intellect and of the intellective one, synthesized and before each, to which there belongs neither any unitary knowledge nor any knowledge that characterizes the dependent intellect, but it is itself single and unified, before both, nor if it were in any way differentiated could it still be adequate to the Unified. And so also the intelligible is not knowable by means of any unified knowledge or in any way by intellect that corresponds to substance, but only by the knowledge that is unified, just as has been said. Therefore the Unified is not the knowable aspect of the lower substance, nor of the One that precedes it, but the Unified is knowable before both and is in reality the absolute object of knowledge, and so it belongs to absolute Being. And this is the nature of the Unified, since it is neither unitary Being nor is it as it were the vehicle of the One to which it belongs.

But is being the Unified the same as being knowable? If that were true, would not the Unified be knowable per se? And if it is knowable per se, how is the knowable not differentiated There?

Our reply is that the [knowable] must not be subject to differentiation, since all things are unified There, but it must nevertheless be one and one together with all things, not potentially, but actually, in the concentration that is before every differentiation. Because of the knowable being one in this way, all things are knowable in this way. And that is to say that every form is knowable as a whole in terms of the property of being knowable. And that is to say [the form] is whole is by the [property of being] whole, and the form of good and beautiful [are] so by virtue of the [properties of the] good and the beautiful. Therefore is [the Unified] unknowable by the [the property of the] unknowable? For that which is beyond all differentiations is least knowable and most unknowable. As a rule, generators cannot be (II 110) circumscribed by what they generate and are super-unified above the substance of what is subsequent, but they are not, surely, beyond knowledge alone. Therefore, there is something that is also unknowable in the Unified, and the Unified is this more that it is the knowable. And yet the Unified is as we say the first intelligible, and therefore it is most intelligible.

[We answer that] the Unified is most knowable by means of the kind of knowledge by which it can be known according to its nature. But much of that kind of knowledge is unknowable, whatever that knowledge is and whatever its nature happens to be.

Both the knowable and the unknowable are present both in Being and also in the One, and before Being and the One, the unknowable and the knowable are present conjointly in the Unified. Therefore that which is capable of knowledge is also there in the Unified that possesses unified and substantial knowledge, but is prior to both. Just as the knowable is unified, so too the knowledge

that is in the same rank, that is, the intelligible knowledge that belongs to the intelligible, is also unified. If knowledge occurs together with some differentiation, then the differentiation too is unified and is of the Unified. For there the first and the second and the third are in the intelligible mode. So if the third reverts on itself and if it knows, why is that surprising? It is certainly not necessary that, in order for substance to be capable of knowledge, the Unified also be capable of knowledge, prior to substance. It is not the case that, since, as the Oracle says, "it is all things, but all things intelligibly," that all things are also in each of the determinate entities. (II 111) All things are partial expressions of the Unified in their intrinsic differentiation, the One, substance, and life, the one of life, intellect, the intellective one. And yet it is not the case that substance is life because of this, that is, because life is also in the Unified according to the analogy of the Unified that is prior to both. Nor therefore is substance intellect, nor yet is it more capable of knowledge simply because the third aspect in the Unified is capable of knowledge. The object of knowledge at the lower order manifests itself from the object of knowledge at the higher order, and the subject of knowledge likewise, from the subject of knowledge, and the middle term, from the middle. Such might be a reply to these puzzles, insofar as [such reply] is available.

Chapter 72. How Did the Unified Become Differentiated?

■ In this chapter, Damascius sets out the basic premises for his examination of differentiation. The Unified does not admit of any differentiation, first because differentiation can be said only to arise at the level of form. Second, though, the Unified can be considered the source of the intelligible realm, and so is distinguishable from the intelligible. Still, the Unified is not distinct from the intelligible. Differentiation is a nonreciprocal relation. Damascius illustrates this principle from principles derived from Aristotelian metaphysics. On this chapter, see Dillon 1997, p. 371. ■

Beginning from another point, let us once more speak about the object of knowledge and about knowledge, and (still prior to these) about remaining and procession and reversion. After these arguments, the questions arise: what is the function of knowledge and what is the nature of the object of knowledge? And still further after these questions, we can ask if there are remaining, procession, and reversion in the Unified. And yet before all these issues, we must inquire how first it happened that one thing became distinct from another thing. For the first distinct or the first distinguishing, this will be the topic of our argument. Now as for this distinct thing, it is other than that from which it is distinct, because that also is distinct.⁴ But this is not yet the first distinction, but the first distinction is third from the Unified, since the distinct is an intermediate term.

(II 112) How, then, did the Unified first become distinguished? For it is from the Unified that the first distinctive was distinguished. Perhaps it is [only] in the case of equally ranking entities that the reciprocal correspondence of relatives is true. In the case of these, the reciprocal correspondence of hypostases is also true. However, in the case of cause and effect, it is not always correct to convert them mutually. The effect does not bring about the cause *qua* cause, and conversely, the cause both brings about the effect as an effect and is itself the cause of the effect. But even if the hypothesis of one of the terms does not imply the other, still let them be relatives in the category of homonymous relationship, in the way that the equal is equal with another equal. Certainly the differentiated differentiates itself from the first [differentiated], when it has brought about the differentiation in itself, and not in that [from which it is differentiated] by means of subordination. Just so the material body is differentiated from the immaterial body because its form inclines it toward matter, whereas the immaterial body nevertheless is present throughout the material body and itself does not undergo differentiation. And so the body is distinct in this way from the intellect because of mind, although intellect takes its place throughout all the secondary substances, and soul does the same. Or perhaps this is true, and the intellect is nevertheless distinct from the soul and the soul from the body by virtue of the difference in their hypostases, so that once more the distinct is distinct from that which is distinct, even if the manner of distinction is different in each case. For example, the beautiful is different from the just, since this is a different real being. But otherness is not the same as the beautiful, but rather it is the same in terms of its class that reveals a particular property. In the way that the forms differ from each other, in this way too the completing genera also differ from each other.

(II 113) Yet the one of two is not always other than the other of two, but it is so whenever either of the two is a form. Certainly, the form is different from the matter, though the matter is not different from the form, because otherness does not complete matter.⁵ Otherness is a form, but matter is formless. And therefore the form is distinct from matter as well, although the matter is not distinct from the form, because differentiation was a form and it could only come to be present in the forms. And so, too, There the first differentiation of form proceeds from what is beyond form, which remains undifferentiated. That which transcends form cannot be subject to any form, and such too is the nature of its differentiation. Therefore the distinct is not [in every case] entirely distinct from that from which it is distinct, since the first distinguished and the final could not be thus [completely] distinct.

What follows? Does not each of the two stand by itself: on the one hand, this is [constituted as] only matter; that is [constituted as] only form, and again, this is [constituted as] only Being, whereas that is [constituted as] only intellect, and none of these is the other. Well, to the extent that the first exceeds the second by virtue of the differentiation between their natures, so far the first

is discriminated and confined within a transcendence that cannot be compromised with respect to the second. It will be of no importance to us that the manner of the distinction is different. For example, the immortal is distinct from the mortal and the mortal from the immortal, but the actual distinction is not the same in either of the two, if the distinction is in the latter immortal, but in the former, mortal, and in the everlasting the distinction or otherness is also everlasting, whereas in the (II 114) temporally limited each of these is also subject to time. And so it is with respect to the ungenerated and the generated, or the paradigmatic and the imitation, and the rational and the irrational. For all things are in each according to the unique nature [of each]. Therefore this is how distinction [functions] everywhere and so does otherness, and so for sameness, even if the latter also seems to bring about a synthesis. If human being and horse are animals, nevertheless the animal is different in each of them, so that also the form of sameness is different, whatever it is, in human being and in horse. Thus [sameness] is formal in form, material in matter, which is to say, in potentiality, and in the super formal it is super formal, and this is to say, in the cause.

[No, this is not always true, for example if] one of [a pair of] relatives is in potential, so too is the other relative, and likewise [if one of them] exists in the cause [so does the other]. Their being in act occurs together with being in subsistence, for these arise together. And again the cause and the effect are thus, co-arising.

[We answer with] the example the actuality of matter; its being in potential with respect to the form was the act of matter,⁶ whereas There, being in the cause with respect to the form was the subsistence of the cause that compresses differentiation within itself. If differentiation is compressed, then also that which is called being differentiated in it is compressed. For if they were discriminated from each other as first and second, then there would already be differentiation in differentiation, as something separate, so that also what we call being unified would still consist in a differentiation. The differentiation in it, being subject to determination, has simultaneously distinguished, along with itself, (II 115) other things. For how is it in violation of our rule, if there is just a delimitation of the genera or the forms as distinguished in it [that is, the Unified], but a denial that any differentiation of any sort can be in the Unified.

Chapter 73. Transcendent Differentiation

■ Here Damascius responds to the aporia treated in the last chapter and reinvestigated in the next chapter, namely, how distinction can arise in the Unified, which as we have seen, is the source of the intelligible triad. Damascius solves the problem by positing a kind of transcendent differentiation, according to which the only thing distinctive about the Unified is that, paradoxically, it is subject to no distinctions. ■

But in general we agree that [the Unified] is subject to distinction because we posit one aspect [of the Unified] as unified, and the other as distinct. How then can the Unified be distinguished? This expression seems to be a contradiction. And the puzzle is still greater, if we compare the Unified to the One as that which has proceeded from that which brought it forth. Perhaps, though, this is exceptional in the nature of the Unified, namely, that it does not undergo division with respect to the One, nor procession from the One, but is about the One and the Unified consists in this alone, in not belonging to itself, but belonging to the One.⁷ In cases where we assume that the distinction belongs to only one [of the comparanda], clearly the corresponding use of the word "distinction" in the other member of the relationship furnishes a great difficulty for those who investigate it.

Perhaps, therefore, since the nature of relatives is varied and extensive, the sort of configuration that obtains between them is such that they become equivalent in their correspondence, but the very fact of their corresponding renders them not equal. For example, that which is different differs from something that is different. But the former might have its difference as a form, whereas matter has a difference that is without form, so that the difference between them is both formal and without form. And so it is when the image brings about a comparison to the paradigm as if it were to something like itself.⁸ For the likeness is in common because this property, likeness, can be applied to anything, but the (II 116) likeness is nevertheless not the same, but rather for the one it is paradigmatic, for the other it is a copy.

In this way, too, the Unified is unified with a particular unified, so that if it is unified with the One, the One will also be unified, and therefore not One.

[We answer that] the Unified can only be called Unified in terms of that relationship, that is, insofar as it is joined with the One, since the One transcends the Unified, and in this way the effect is joined to the cause, not in terms of the common nature of relationship, but through a true difference between cause and effect. The relationship that exists in the cause is the cause of the relationship in the effect, as one nature is the cause of a different nature. But, at any rate, it is quite simply in the Unified that the Unified is Unified, as if unified with a Unified, however, and the Unified is distinct from that which is differentiated, as, however, something unified. For this distinction involves the difference of a Unified with respect to what is distinguished, and this amounts to that which is undifferentiated with respect to what is differentiated. Thus the indivisible is divided from the distinguished, but is distinct to this extent alone, insofar as it can remain without differentiation and insofar as it contradistinguishes itself from the distinguished.

To this extent, this kind of a differentiation keeps the Unified away from distinction, so that it actually maintains the Unified as not subject to distinction, or rather as distinct from the distinct, and this means, in turn, without differentiation. Therefore distinction is common, according to the name and the

function of the relationship that appears to be universally applicable, although it is not in reality the same relationship, but there are times when differentiation applies to that which is distinctive, other times to what is without division, times when it is itself distinguished and other times remains without distinction. If we call this last kind of differentiation distinction, as if it were one among other [equivalent] differentiations, then we must be excused. These names belong to the order of what is distinct and specified. (II 117) And therefore we say that matter is divided from form, and in thinking this, we are correct, although the name is not accurate. And this concludes the topic of differentiation.

Chapter 74. Puzzles Concerning Procession

■ Here Damascius critically examines a tenet of Proclean metaphysics, *ET* Proposition 30: “All that is immediately produced by any principle both remains in the producing cause and proceeds from it.”

It will be worth citing Dodds’ own commentary on this proposition by way of background to the discussion that follows in Damascius’ critique. These comments were already cited by Dillon 1972 on p. 372. Dodds writes as follows:

This paradox . . . is a necessary consequence of the attempt to reconcile transcendence with immanence by the Neoplatonic theory of causation. If the procession is to be timeless, and if reversion is to be possible, the lower can never be cut off from the higher; but if individuality is to be real, and if the higher is not to be infected with plurality, the lower must be actualized as a separate being, not simply a part of the higher

Here is the sequence of *aporiae* that will be examined in the chapter:

1. Is it necessary for that which proceeds to proceed by remaining in its producer?
2. What is it we mean when we say, “remaining in the cause?” Something must be either first or third, so that it cannot be the processive if it is still that which remains.
3. Does remaining mean that what proceeds keeps the nature of its cause? In that case, the prior will proceed together with what proceeds.
4. Does remaining mean that what proceeds has its origin in the cause? But this is absurd: cause must be prior; effect is subsequent.
5. Perhaps the cause remains while the effect proceeds? But now the whole idea of remaining in the cause is trivialized, and amounts to no more than the tautology that the first is not the second, and so forth.
6. Perhaps what remains proceeds together with what proceeds. But then how can we say this about what has already proceeded? For if it still remains, it will not yet have proceeded.
7. Perhaps one part remains and another proceeds. But what has proceeded does not remain nor does what remains proceed. Solution: much of the problem

has to do with perspective. Wherever remaining prevails, there differentiation is obsolete, and wherever procession prevails, there unity cannot manifest itself completely. ■

Now since the distinct has proceeded from the undifferentiated, and since we say that everything that proceeds brings about procession through remaining, and again reverts back to that from which the procession emerges, and in general that these three are aligned with each other, remaining and procession and reversion, come and let us also pose the following problems concerning them, and first ask whether it is necessary for that which proceeds to proceed by remaining in its producer, and before this, what is it we mean when we say, “remaining in the cause?”⁹ It certainly does not mean the same thing as when we say [remaining] in a place, nor in an order, nor in the first cause. For how could anything have completed its procession at all, if it yet remains in the cause? For now, let us discuss the procession of that which has proceeded. For it will be possible, if we investigate this middle phase [that is, between remaining and reversion] to see the same things in the distinction that is operating.

Is it the case that, while it is still the first term, and insofar as it remains the first, that it has already become third, and that insofar as it is [the third] it has proceeded? But that is impossible, since it is either first or third. Or does “remaining” mean this, namely, that it does not stand apart from the character of its cause, (II 118) but keeps this character while it embeds¹⁰ its own nature, insofar as it proceeds, as for example, human being [remains] in the living being, and life remains in substance? For life is a qualified substance, and so intellect is a qualified substance and a qualified life.¹¹ The individual is a growth upon the universal, or develops from it, and so that which has proceeded remains in the nature of its producer.

If this is true, then it must be said, not that what has proceeded remains in [the prior] but that the cause proceeds together with what proceeds. And since this has proceeded, which we say is [in] common with its cause, either it proceeds by actually remaining itself, and so on ad infinitum, or it is not necessary that what proceeds, proceeds while it yet remains, so that not even its own unique nature necessarily remains. If what is common [between cause and that which proceeds] also remains, then at least as for that which we say has completed its procession, this does not remain. But what was sought was whether or not what proceeds remains, but not [whether] what remains [remains]. I am not [going so far as] saying that it is not certain that something of the same nature proceeds from its cause, and yet we shall shortly show that this, too, contains its own difficulties. Perhaps the demonstration will show that it is not always true, nor will it obtain in all cases, even if it obtains at least in some.

Perhaps, therefore, what proceeds or what has already proceeded has its causal principle in the producer. And this is what it means that it remains in

the producer, that it has in itself as its root the producer from which it stems. Indeed, the growth from earth shoots forth remaining in the earth by means of its root.

But this appears [to be an] absurd [suggestion] if we examine it closely. The causal principle is not that which is produced from (II 119) the cause, but rather one is subsequent and the other is prior. For the cause of the second is seated in the first. In fact, a certain substance that belongs to the cause is the cause of what is caused, and it is not a part of the latter, but of the former, nor is it analogous to the root, but to the reason principle of the whole plant, since it is pervaded by the nature of the earth. And if this seems true, the same counter-arguments will obtain. For neither does what remains proceed nor does what proceeds remain. For neither is the effect in the cause nor does the cause proceed from the cause into the effect, nor is the effect any more the cause, but rather, it is from the cause. Therefore one must not say that what proceeds remains, but rather that it is the cause of what proceeds that remains.

Perhaps, though, one can still say this, that the product proceeds while the [cause] remains, or rather not the cause in an absolute sense, but the cause that remains in the cause. And since what is from the cause has the same form as the cause, in some way what remains is itself called what proceeds, and it is the same in terms of its nature and its form, but it is actually not the same, especially not in its hypostasis.

If this is someone's supposition, first, it will extend the interval between the produced and the producer, if there is nothing common for them as a hypostasis, and if the elements that proceed are not contiguous with those that produce them, but if the former are generated from the latter as one human being is by another, as separate [beings].

But second, if one argued generally, but did not maintain as [strictly] true, that what proceeds necessarily remains in its cause, this postulate would not be true, but would only appear to be true, since the sameness, or commonality of the relationship would also be [only] apparently [true].

(II 120) Third, the argument is not very impressive, if it amounts to this, that the first is not the second, nor is the second the first, or that the begetter is not the begotten and the reverse, or that the latter remains while the former proceeds, and that neither of the two can simultaneously proceed and remain.

Perhaps, then, what proceeds is such that it cannot be overcome by either term, either by remaining or by procession alone, but it has something that remains and proceeds together, which we say is the effect. The conjoint [remaining and proceeding] belongs to the nature of what is engendered. For it would be correct to say that what proceeds remains, if the same thing could simultaneously proceed and remain.

Now, if we should say this in the case of the middle term, which has its being in proceeding, but not in the fact of having proceeded, [then perhaps it is

acceptable]. But what has proceeded is already separate and it is detached from the first as the third term, so how could it still remain in the first? For there is a contradiction if what has proceeded has not proceeded. Or else one could say that it has one [part] that remains, and another that has proceeded. For it has fixed its head above but it then extends to what is lower.¹²

But in this way both the previous¹³ arguments will come [back] to us, that what has proceeded does not remain, nor does what remains proceed, and in addition, that which we say has its being in having completed its procession has not proceeded as a whole, nor can we say that what has proceeded (II 121) by remaining remains as a whole, and it is not different from what has its being in the process of proceeding, if either of these is taken as a whole. If by a different part it remains and proceeds, in addition to what has already been said, it will be divisible, since it will be distributed from above to what is below.

[We answer that] it is our thought that has separated elements that cannot be separated, although one must conceive of them as they must be [in their nature], and not as we think about them, and one must compel human conceptions and train them to simplicity and expansion, as far as possible, into the truth that accords with the realities.

Therefore I say that what has proceeded remains as a whole in what engendered it according to the very fact of its having proceeded, because what has proceeded in its very own nature is most like and of the same nature with what produced it and is actually it in the third measure, so to speak, of descent. Moreover, if one form is different from another form, then the transmission involves [things] of the same nature, and the difference is not of the degree that we attribute to them, based on the differentiations between things here. Intellect is related to life in the way that soul is related to intellect, and the way that life is related to substance, namely, so that for a person looking, at first glance what is second would seem to be what is actually prior [to the second], especially in the case of what is nearest, but also for what is more remote, even if it is the last [member of a series] of things proceeding from the one unique producer. Not one product is foreign with respect to what produced it, nor can it be unrelated to it, nor can it fail to be contained by its generator, because it belongs to that generator. If (II 122) the difference in names or the differentiation within partial manifestations misleads and insinuates an absolute differentiation also among those prior elements, this has no effect on the truth of those. For absolutely every thing that is generated There has proceeded from its parent insofar as it is itself, but insofar as it is from the parent, it remains. For [proceeding] from the [parent] is not an accident, but [the parent] is essence of what proceeded, and the essence of that which has proceeded is itself no less subsequent to the first. For this is a true offspring of that, just as if the son could be most similar to his own father, the one absolutely a son, and the other a father, whereas the form [of both] is virtually identical.

If generation There appears to introduce a new form, it is still important to realize that distinct things in that realm share one nature with each other in their form more than identical things do here. Therefore, it is both the case that intellect qua intellect has proceeded from Being, and so it is third from the first, and yet the first is also near, although the intellect occupies the third rank. The third itself is also the triad that constitutes the nature of the intellect. And whatever and of whatever kinds the first consists, so many and of that kind are what constitutes the second, in a certain way. Still unity prevails in that realm, but in this one, differentiation.

To summarize, if, in the case of things belonging to the same order as well as contradistinguished, we speak of simultaneous unity and differentiation, sameness and difference, then, a fortiori, in the case of parent and offspring will we say that that the same things are different, and speak as if they are distinct from [each other] and at the same time identical with [each other]. Therefore, to the extent that the same things are also one [with their priors] they can rightly be said to remain, but again, as other and as distinct, they have proceeded. Each thing therefore remains and has proceeded as a whole, until the final elements that have proceeded from the (II 123) first originators [of the procession], but there is a more and less, wherever remaining prevails, and where differentiation is obsolete, and wherever procession prevails, where unity cannot manifest itself completely. From these things we, too, can be seen [to be] misleading concerning the first elements of the processions if we speak of absolute difference, since not even among the lowest orders is difference absolute.

Now every thing that has proceeded remains within the nature and boundary of its native causes. But as for what does not remain, that is, that which never is that from which procession is said to occur, neither has this proceeded. For who could say that what in no way is has proceeded from that which is?

Chapter 75. What Is the Nature of Reversion?

■ Damascius continues his explorations of the logic of procession, remaining, and reversion as they are outlined, for example, in Propositions 34, 36, and 38 of Proclus' *ET*. Proposition 38 informs us that every effect remains in, proceeds from, and reverts to its cause. Proposition 36 indicates a doctrine similar to the one that Damascius outlines below, when he discusses the two processes of reversion and procession, from below to what is above, and from what is above to what is below. Damascius touches on some of the difficulties that arise from Proclus' formulations concerning the process of reversion. Reversion is part of a unified triad, in which the three moments act together to define the nature of an hypostasis, but at the same time, reversion is also a dissolution or undoing of the very effects achieved through the process of procession. How is it possible for reversion to assume these very different functions? Damascius also points

out that “reversion” is ambiguous between something’s achieving its own definition from an inchoate state, and something’s returning to a higher source or to its cause. For a discussion of Damascius’ treatment of the ambiguity of the term “reversion” as it is revealed in *ET* Proposition 158, see Lloyd 1990, 127–130. ■

Therefore, let there be procession on the one hand and remaining on the other, and let each of them always share in the same nature with each other, as has been stated.¹⁴ But what does reversion bring in addition to [procession and remaining]? What is the nature of reversion and what benefit does it provide for what has proceeded? That it is a term that pertains to the latter is obvious, since it seems to be a return, for every return is of what has proceeded. In the case of what has not yet proceeded but still remains in the first, what need would there be for a reversion into the first? In fact, remaining is superior to reversion. But why would what is superior need the inferior?

That [reversion] belongs to what has proceeded, is [so], but what is the nature of reversion? What else could one say, than the return of what has proceeded into its source? It is the opposite of procession and as it were a correction of that, as well as an undoing of procession. Therefore soul (II 124) undoes its own procession by means of reversion. If this is true, then the soul will not be in a completed state of procession, since soul undoes this, if it reverts.

[Can we then say] in the case of the soul, sometimes procession is involved, and at another time, reversion, but in the case of eternal things, both happen simultaneously and to the self-same thing? Is it not a characteristic of reversion that the offspring become like the source, just as their differentiation is [characteristic] of procession? Procession introduces differentiation, and reversion brings together and leads the third term into the first, just as [procession] leads the first term into the third.

Come now, let us inquire what our doctrine is. We say that what has proceeded reverts while it yet continues to be that which has proceeded. Therefore, what reverts becomes closer to the producer than what has proceeded in it. But it takes on in addition the capacity to revert after the capacity to proceed (assuming that both of these capacities belong to it essentially). But whatever subsists as a prior condition is superior to what is acquired later, so that the ability to proceed is also superior to the ability to revert. Therefore, it does not approach the source more insofar as it reverts than insofar as it has proceeded. If reversion is a reestablishment of remaining, then it would actually be remaining, but after procession, reversion would not signal a third term, if it achieves nothing other than remaining. However reversion is conceptually different from remaining. With regard to remaining, the offspring wishes to be just as its parent, just as in terms of procession, it (II 125) [wishes to be] just what the offspring is subsequent to its parent. However, in terms of reversion the offspring desires the source, while it remains itself and the source remains within its own limits. What is capable of desire is attached to what it desires, as

one thing that desires another, but the other always [arises] after procession. Perhaps, therefore, reversion is a desire that belongs to the third term because it longs for something. In remaining there is not yet desire, since what is capable of desire is not yet distinct from what is desirable. Nor yet is there desire in procession that has been completed, since completed procession is differentiation, and differentiation belongs to two things, so that the one can be capable of desire, and the other is desirable, or rather that the third term standing apart from the first, comes to desire the first later, out of longing for its ancient nature. And so reversion does not bring about remaining, but only the distant enjoyment of the generator, as what appears desirable. Therefore procession is fairer than reversion. It brings about being for the third term, whereas reversion brings about its cessation.

But that, as desiring, is eager to become just like the object of desire, so that the third term also longs to become the first term, and it becomes [it] through reversion. But it becomes first through remaining, by its very remaining in the first. The first has this before procession, but it has the other by means of reversion after procession. But it is absurd, as has been said earlier, that what it already has, this it receives back, and even stranger, that it does so through the realization of what is inferior. But perhaps it is not that which it was itself that it receives back by means of reversion, but rather a kind of image of it, which appears inferior to procession? But nothing wants an image,¹⁵ nor does it want something (II 126) inferior to that whose reality and enjoyment it already had previously. It would be as if someone having complete health would then wish it to be worsened, or as if someone possessing theoretic virtue would long to possess civic virtue.¹⁶ Therefore, what remaining provides is not the same in its form as what procession offers. For neither are remaining and procession the same in form. What, then, in addition does something acquire by means of reversion that it did not have through remaining or through procession?

The following inquiry belongs naturally among these puzzles, which posits that remaining is of two kinds. For it is not just what proceeds that realizes something through remaining, but also that which has reverted realizes something; the former [realizes] reversion, the latter procession. For there are two movements, one is from above to below and the other is from below upward.¹⁷ And between the two movements that oppose each other, the physiologists say that there are two periods of motionlessness.¹⁸ In fact, we would just now say that reversion is not the undoing of procession or its destruction, but that by remaining in the act of having proceeded [that which undergoes this] brings about reversion. So one must only agree to two kinds, rest and motion, or if you wish, I can call them remaining stationary and traversing a distance. Or else there are four kinds, procession and return and two kinds of remaining, remaining below and remaining above, with one kind presiding over what will revert, and the other over what will proceed.

(II 127) But what then does contradistinction of the three, namely, remaining, procession, and reversion, [amount to]? Perhaps someone will say that the three have been distinguished by reference to the first One by means of three relationships with it, [since the first One is that] in which [remaining takes place] and from which [procession occurs], and to which [the third reverts]. It is clear which mode appropriates which relationship. But I would say that the one [that is, the first term] is twofold, in one way it is above, and in another way it is below. In its lower form it remains and awakens from [the lower form] by means of reversion and stretches back to its prior self by means of procession. On either side, remaining is in the middle, but sometimes it projects procession, and sometimes it projects reversion.

The following question is rightly connected to such topics of inquiry, namely, whether reversion is of two kinds, one the reversion of something toward itself, and the other the reversion toward what is prior to itself. What does either of the two give to the substance of what is reverting, and what is the difference between [the two kinds]? And [we must ask whether] sometimes one form of reversion [occurs] and sometimes another? And also why procession and remaining are also not of two kinds, the one in what is superior, and the other in itself, and again in turn, the one kind of procession being from what is superior, and the other from itself? If the three actualities are ranked commensurately, the others are disposed in the same way that one is disposed.

Moreover let us ask about this as well, whether the others are manifest where one [of the moments] (II 128) appears. And also if all three kinds belong to third term, or whether, if the three kinds belong to the third, but to the second, there are two kinds, remaining and procession, and to the first there is one kind, remaining. For it seems that remaining belongs to the first uniquely, but procession to the second, and reversion to the third, because it is of what has already proceeded. We have distinguished their characteristics starting from what is above, and let us put [the preceding down as] what appears to be the case [to us], but may God lead us to the truth.

Chapter 76. Resolutions for the Preceding Puzzles

■ Although he does not present examples of triads that reflect this pattern, Damascius now explains each moment of the dynamic theory as involving a relationship between two static members of a given triad. That is, remaining is a combination or mixture of the first and third elements of a triad. He suggests that it is not so much the case that there are two kinds of reversion, self-reversion and reversion to what is prior. Instead, every case of reversion involves a single entity viewed under the lens of two distinct relationships. Reversion involves both self-determination (self-reversion) and assimilation to the cause, where a being realizes its most perfect state. Damascius keeps the level of the discussion very abstract here and is more interested in the logical problems the idea presents than illustrating how reversion works in various contexts. Damascius

further innovates by pointing out that the entire Proclean system of causation is plagued by a similar ambiguity (that is, procession and remaining likewise involve two distinct relationships). Procession is like reversion. What proceeds still is what it is, since by being differentiated from the first it is differentiated in itself. What remains, remains both in itself, and also in what is before it. ■

Therefore, remaining is the nature of the first when it is mixed with the third, whereas procession is the third's departure from the first. But neither of these is without mixture, nor is the departure something isolated and completely detached from its native cause, nor has the nature of the first absorbed procession in the third [that is, reversion] nor does it permit what proceeds or what is said to have proceeded to transform into another kind. It is from both elements, so to say, that the third was brought to completion as a true scion of the first, and as what bears that [original] nature in its own transformation. Reversion is a consolidation and a circumscription of the third when contemplated by itself, as neither remaining nor proceeding, but rather as the unity of the two elements in each other and as the reversion of the processive into the remaining, in which the mixture of the two elements occurs, and such a mixture gives rise to the character and the form of the third. And therefore reversion belongs only to the third. And yet, reversion of this third [term] is said to bring about its character, namely, the upward tension of what proceeds toward what remains, (because what is (II 129) capable of procession in the third term reverts to what in it remains), and it is also the upward tension of the third toward the first (because in the first, what proceeds does so as what remains).

You observe that in the third [term, that is, reversion] the three [terms or moments, that is, procession, remaining, and reversion] are, as it were, elements mixed with each other as substance, and the whole contains the three, and realizes itself in three ways, by remaining in itself, proceeding from itself and reverting toward itself. For the three elements belong to its substance, and each acts in a way that affects the whole as well as all the others. Thus the whole and the parts remain through the principle of remaining, and again proceed through the principle of procession, and revert through the principle of reversion. And so the third also remains in itself according to the character of remaining that is mixed in with it, and proceeding from itself it reverts back to itself.

But the third is also said to give rise to the three activities with respect to the first. What, then, is the difference?

[We reply that] the differentiation of the third is twofold: one is the differentiation from the first, since it is third, and the other is the differentiation from itself, since it is multiplied in itself and becomes not simply third, but triadic according to the triad manifest in it. But each triad is also a monad, the monad that is entirely before [the third]. So then as the triad the third proceeds from itself, and as the monad it remains in itself, and it reverts [to itself] as the

unity of the triad with the monad.¹⁹ If someone should say this, he would not hit far from the truth, if he said that the triadic in itself is the cause of reversion, since reversion, too, is third. But the dyadic is the (II 130) cause of procession, since procession is second. And the monadic is the cause of remaining, since remaining is first of the three. But this awaits another argument. With respect to the first, then, the third remains in itself, because it does not entirely separate and not in every way, and it reverts, because its separation connects to what does not become separate, by means of the reversion we have spoken about.

Therefore, is reversion single or double, the one toward itself and the other toward what is before itself? [We answer] that in terms of the subject, it is single, but in terms of its relation, it is double. Insofar as it has encompassed itself, as has been said, by means of reversion, it has reverted to itself. Insofar as it is constituted by itself as circumscribed and perfect, it is like what is before it, because that too is perfect by itself before the term that reverts, since it has received a unique nature that is its own, and because by remaining, the third brings itself into being in relation to that first (for this is also a form of reversion), and still before these reasons, because the offspring was brought to pass just as the creator willed; by simply being what it is, therefore, it has already reverted both toward itself and toward what is before it.

Procession is just like reversion. For what [the third] is in itself proceeds from itself as what is divided in it and it also proceeds from what is before it. In each way, it still is what it is, and in fact it has proceeded in either way, and yet it also proceeds from the cause in both ways. For that which has completed its procession is a whole by itself in terms of both [proceeding from itself and from what is before it]. For by being differentiated from the first by the third differentiation, it also shows itself to be differentiated in itself.

Likewise also, remaining is the same for the subject, but differs in relation only. That [the third] is not entirely different from its cause has brought about that the third itself is not entirely different from itself. Therefore, by means of the same remaining element it remains in itself and also in what is before it, and by means of what is processive it proceeds from itself and from [what is before it] as well, and it is by what is reverting in itself that it is in a state of reversion both with respect to itself and to [what is prior to itself]. And this is the third element, according to which the processive is bound to the remaining element. Therefore, it is from these three elements that that which has proceeded is constituted, but not insofar as it has proceeded, but just as it is this very thing, as for example, the intellect. The three moments are also present in what is proceeding, and not just in what has already proceeded. And they are present in what remains, prior to what proceeds, but in this they are undivided and not separated, whereas in the third they are completely distinct, and in the middle term they are in between, only capable of being distinguished.

Chapter 77. Two Questions Concerning the Three Moments of Remaining, Procession, and Reversion

■ First question: if the three moments are all present in each moment, how can the first proceed, since these moments are not distinguished in the first term? Answer: since the three moments are not yet distinguished in the first, it is only in the third term that any of these differentiations apply.

Second question: what if the first moment reverts to what causes it? Answer: the question has no scope since the division into the three moments did not obtain at the level of the subsistence. ■

If the [three moments] are not differentiated [as such] in the first term, the first could not rightly be said to remain, either.

[We answer, that the first] contains an element that remains could not be said, since the first has in truth no delimitation, yet insofar as it does not proceed, it could be said that the first does [remain] by analogy to the third or even the second. Moreover, as (II 132) what proceeds is relative to what has completed procession, [the first] could be said both to proceed and to remain, whereas neither [procession or remaining] is real [that is, in the first]. In the first, the three moments are not even yet distinguished. Now it is in the third that the three moments are distinguished from each other. It is therefore with the third term strictly speaking that first remains or proceeds or reverts toward what is prior to itself. But it reverts to what is next to it, which was the second, according to the transformation and realization of the third from the second; in other the words, the transformation is, as it were, from what is differentiated, but it reverts in the mode of what is without differentiation and first, reverting to the very summit. To cite an example, intellect has the triple relationship, [and reverts to] both life and Being, according to its genesis from that. But we shall come back to these topics again.

In the first, when it has become the third, the three moments become manifest and proceed throughout the entire succession. But when I say “third,” I mean, for example, that if they appeared in the first intellect, the three moments are also in every intellect. Nevertheless, remaining prevails at the summit, creating the other moments, reversion prevails in the third term, and procession in the middle. And so in every intellectual triad the first is more remaining, the second is more processive, and the third is more reverting.

In these cases, double procession is not a good supposition, since remaining just means not departing at all from the generating cause or its nature, whereas reversion means circumscribing one’s hypostasis by having completed the act of procession together with (II 133) remaining, so that the same thing has both proceeded and not proceeded, nor is each one completely separate, but there is something that involves both that [comes about] by means of the

power of reversion. But since this is the nature of the third as a whole, what other remaining could it possess relative to this procession or that reversion, unless the third is relative to what comes after remaining and procession and is a product of them? What produces in its own form and in its own order from itself the things that are from itself would have its remaining character from the remaining that comes to be a substance along with it. Unless we refuse to say that productive causes remain, but only that what is produced remains in the productive causes and in themselves, or that remaining belongs to the productive causes because they must be seen as not proceeding together with what is produced.

What about the following? Does not [such a third], since it has this nature, revert to the first as a whole, or again bring about reversion as a whole? If it first should revert to what generated it, it is necessary for it to have proceeded, and not to remain, as the question [assumes]. If someone could say that it remains in the state of having completed its procession, he could say that this procession amounted to a fixity or intensification of having proceeded, but not to the kind of procession that is contradistinguished from remaining and reversion, since, in fact, to revert is to proceed. For there is a course, but it is not a course that moves away from the source. If someone contemplates the participation of each moment in each [moment] (since even the remaining element proceeds into the (II 134) third, but if it proceeds then it also reverts) [then] in this way, too, procession has something that reverts, if proceeding itself has proceeded. And also, reversion will have some sort of character that remains, if in fact it is processive; and if these assumptions are granted, we would rightly agree. The three moments are in a single order and will participate in each other, so that [the initial] objection has no scope, since division into the unique properties did not come about at the level of subsistence. Therefore, the lower remaining is a participation in what has been called the transcendent remaining.

What, then, are the distinguishing [features] of the three moments? For procession and remaining are opposites, since what they mean are proceeding and not proceeding. But what is reversion in addition to these things?

[We answer] that proceeding reveals only an interval and a transformation, but not yet any aggregation or consolidation of the character in which what has proceeded becomes established and is contained. So this is what reversion, coming into play, has introduced. Thus to be revealing of the interval or transformation from one being into another, is typical of the processive, but remaining belongs to the form of the generating cause, and reverting conforms to the [nature] of what is generated. As for the questions as to whether the generated participate in their generators, and in what way they participate or fail to participate, we shall investigate these after this. For the present, the only necessity that has been demonstrated is the division of the three moments, with [two] on the extremes, and one in the middle. For something remains in its productive

cause, reverts as having been produced, or as what it is, and proceeds into this [which it is] from that [which caused it].

Chapter 78. On the Subtypes of Reversion

■ In this chapter, Damascius expands on *ET* Proposition 39: *πάν τὸ ὄν ἢ οὐσιωδῶς ἐπιστρέφει μόνον, ἢ ζωτικῶς, ἢ καὶ γνωστικῶς*. “Every Being reverts either substantially or vitally or intellectually.” As Dodds points out in his commentary ad loc., Proclus allows for substantial and vital reversion precisely because self-reversion was characteristic of intelligible beings only. Yet since all forms of being have an inner *nisus* toward the good, even animal and lower forms, Proclus allows for the reversion of all things to their causes. This aspect of the doctrine, that there can be reversion in the case of non-intelligible beings, relates to theurgic correspondences and the sympathetic chain of being that reverberates throughout the cosmos. For Damascius, however, this doctrine relates to the triad of Being, life, and intellect that exists at the lower end of the Unified henad. Therefore, intellect is actually at a lower stage of reality than Being. Consequently, intellectual reversion is actually the most distant form of reversion, given that it preserves the differentiation between that which reverts and that to which it reverts, more than any other form of reversion. Intellectual reversion involves both self knowledge and knowledge of the cause. Substantial reversion is shown by that fact that something self-subsisting must exist, that is, something that is not based on the support of another substance. Constituting oneself is reverting toward oneself substantially. (Cf. Proclus *ET* Proposition 43: *πάν τὸ πρὸς ἑαυτὸ ἐπιστρεπτικὸν αὐθυπόστατόν ἐστι*, “All that reverts toward itself is self-constituting.”) And there will be also the self-living for the same reasons, that there is what makes itself live and does not just receive life from another. ■

(II 135) Now since these are the general divisions, let us apply them to the intelligible realities. Each—remaining, procession and reversion—is divided in three ways, since each is either substantial or vital or cognitive.²⁰

That it is possible to revert by means of knowledge is obvious. For that which knows itself and what is prior to it, exists. And that it is also possible to revert substantially is shown by that fact that something self-constituting must exist, that is, something that is not based on the support of another [substance].²¹ Either an infinite regress occurs if there is nothing self-constituting, or we shall posit what subsists from another as coming after what remains utterly outside hypostasis, as subsisting neither from another nor from itself. And we shall remove from consideration what is [based on] itself, since it is the mid-point of its own nature, just as we agree that the self-moving is intermediate between the immobile and the other-moving. For if something that subsists in dependence on another is superior to what does so from itself, still there is something which is inferior as well, as is true to say in the case of corporeal natures, and there must be something superior by nature, if there is also what

is inferior. But that there is the self-constituting we shall investigate later, both whether it is and what it is, and in what order it becomes manifest.²² As for this very fact of constituting oneself, this is reverting toward oneself substantially. And there will be also (II 136) the self-living for the same reasons, for it makes itself live and does not just receive life from another.

Now these are the three reversions that are revealed when [we speak of reversion of the third] toward itself. But how does it revert to the first? The cognitive reversion to the first belongs to the third, because it knows the latter. And how does the vital occur? Perhaps though the substantial reversion makes itself more easily understood. Actually, we were just saying that the third, since it has proceeded and has come to be by itself and has confined itself to its own limit, by this very fact has already reverted to the first, having become this other sort of thing in the third order, as that one was in the first. For example, as the first was absolute Being, so this [third] is absolute Intellect, and as that was unified substance, so this is undivided intellect, with whatever concentration is appropriate to intellect, not the kind appropriate to Being; and yet this is why, when intellect has entered into its natural limit, it is assimilated by the first limit that appears for all things. This, however, is substantial reversion of the intellect to Being. And what would the vital reversion be? Since life arises after Being and the union between life and Being is unmediated, that which reverts vitally to Being enters into the union with which life itself joins Being before all other things. And so the substantial reversion to that makes what has reverted like that, and vital reversion brings about its sole conjunction with that, unmediated and vitally, whereas cognitive reversion is more distant and proceeds from the third order to the first. And yet this uniquely is the reversion of the third as the third, and of intellect insofar as it is intellect. For the distance (II 137) between Being and intellect is vast, as is the distance between knower and known, since the seer is] in a profound division from the seen. And life is very near to substance and comes immediately after it, and the living is not distant from the substantialized. But concerning these matters we shall speak again, in fact, directly.

Chapter 79. On the Assimilation of What Reverts to Its Cause

■ Now Damascius develops the remarks in chapter 78 above concerning the intelligible triad and the three forms of reversion, that is, what happens when intellect reverts to Being, to life (vital reversion) and to itself (intellectual reversion) and speaks of “pleromas” in the sense that, as stated above, each of these three reversions gives rise to a distinct pleroma, namely, the *noetic*, *noetic-noeric*, *noeric*. ■

But for now we have given an account of the reversion of intellect to Being, that is, of the third to the first. But we shall also give an account of the similar

reversions of the third to the second, that is, of intellect to life. Intellect has knowledge of life, if, at least, it also has knowledge of Being, and it has this in the same manner, although intellect will enter into the limit of life, which is its substance, and because of which intellect becomes intellectual life, just as intellect becomes intellectual substance because of its assimilation to Being, just as intellect is intellect according to its own third characteristic. Consider now, if you please, that the intellect, although it is third, is by itself altogether three natures: Being and life and intellect, as collected and distinguished and separate. Insofar as intellect lives and is becoming distinguished in some way, to the extent that there is the separate in the midst of what is becoming distinguished, it assimilates itself to life and is rooted in life, and this is the substantial reversion to life. But what would the vital reversion to life be? It is one thing to be situated at the limit of life and to become life, and another thing, being intellect, and established in itself as just what it is, to touch life as the third contacts the second, and to live rather than to be life, and to long for life, but not already to be living.

(II 138) Now we can use the same scheme of the three reversions everywhere, wherever [the elements] are situated or of whatever number [the reverting terms are], or toward whichever presubstantial realities they revert. What reverts does so toward each of the realities that precede it, whether they are near or far, and [each] is assimilated to the entire entity to which it is reverting. [And this assimilation takes place] either by means of the native qualities that are flowing into [those which revert] from the things to which they are reverting, or [these qualities may be] from pleromas or elements, or they may come to be co-substantialized together with that which receives them, or they may be imported, having come into being in some other way. Or [the assimilation takes place] by means of the various constitutions belonging to what is doing the reverting, since they properly belong to it, and have not arrived from above, and have in some other way proven to be structured like those natures that belong to still more primal elements, toward which reversion is accomplished by likeness. The argument already advanced seemed to support both doctrines, sometimes assimilating intellect to Being by means of what has already proceeded, that is, to the third term, and sometimes leading intellect to what is unified before it, by means of its indwelling unity, and by this I mean the undivided ground of Being.

But whether either of these doctrines is true, or neither or one or the other, or all of these are true in some way, I shall consider again, in the argument concerning participation.²³ For now I shall define this much very succinctly, and state that it is different to be the thing itself, and different again to come to be like another, by means of what one oneself is. For example, intellect by itself, by remaining by itself, in terms of its reversion to itself has circumscribed (II 139) itself in a substantial and vital and cognitive manner. That which is intellect has also proceeded from life, and from thence is in possession of all

the things that are from itself. Therefore, it is as a whole and is completely turned toward its cause, not because it belongs to itself but because it belongs to [the cause]. And so it longs to join the cause that produces it and to be in some way that, insofar as it is able, and yet to see it as stationed before it and as separate. And it is like this both in relation to Being and in relation to each of the productive causes, and even if there are many such productive agents, it is the same with respect to each.

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Section XIII. On Knowledge

Chapter 80. Ten Questions on the Nature of Reversion as Knowledge

■ Here Damascius uses a favorite method of organizing his aporetic work, that is, posing a series of questions that he then answers in reverse order in a series of chapters. As we shall see, below, Damascius will answer these questions through chapter 85. Perhaps most important, chapter 81 contains a disquisition on the meaning of knowledge examined in the terms of Damascius' understanding of cognitive or intellectual reversion. However, the whole discussion is important as a continuation of Damascius' critical inquiry into Proclus' theory of causation, and in particular, his isolation of the third term, intellect, as the subject of reversion. The ten questions Damascius answers in reverse order are as follows:

10. What is knowledge?
9. What effect or benefit does knowledge, intellectual reversion, have for either knower or known?
8. What is the purpose of knowledge?
7. Since the intellect can revert to what is prior to itself, how then can it also know what is prior to itself, that is, Being?
6. Do life and Being also revert, or does only intellect revert, and when it reverts, is it only able to revert on itself, since every form of its reversion will be a form of intellectual reversion?
5. Why is intellectual reversion, as self-knowledge, not self-constitutive in the way that vital and substantial reversion cause either Being or life?
4. Why do we separate cognition (intellectual reversion) into the three terms, knower, knowing, and knowledge, but not so for the other forms of reversion?

3. Are there also forms of substantial and vital remaining and procession, or is only reversion, that is, involving the third term, intellect, subject to these distinctions?
2. What elements revert—only the third, intellect, or also Being and life as well?
1. To what does the triadic scheme of remaining, procession, and reversion apply? ■

After these puzzles, the argument seeks to know, first, why it is that we have divided each of these three [moments] into just three [kinds]. That is, [we distinguish] reversion and procession and remaining and say they are substantial, vital, and intellectual. For it is also possible to speak of them in terms of a triad [but to say that the triad consists in] undifferentiated, subject to differentiation,¹ and completely differentiated, or else in unified, multiplied, and some middle term, which someone might designate “unitary.” And it is possible to consider them in many [other] ways, as well. In each order there is a uniquely corresponding remaining, procession, and reversion. Moreover, there is also a unique and correspondingly named procession, reversion, and remaining for each form, and not only for these [members of the intelligible triad], Being, life, and intellect.

An objector might ask about the nature of this triad [cognitive, vital, and substantial] and about the (II 140) origin of its contradistinction. Knowledge is contradistinguished with respect to the knowable. And let there be, if you like, some middle term, as for example that which can both know and be known, still this is not yet “life.” Nor again is “the known” exactly the same thing as “Being,” since in general, many other things are knowable and in particular, every form is knowable, so that intellect is also [an instance of] “the known.” So then why do we distinguish intellect as “capable of knowledge” from Being as “knowable?” And why is substance contradistinguished with respect to intellect, so that we assign to life the middle place between them? Since if life is motion, what is the corresponding rest that is distinct from motion? Perhaps we can [posit] intellect [as rest], in which case substance appears to be outside this antithesis, or else substance itself is rest, and intellect is outside the opposition.

[First question:] First then, as I said, we must inquire about this triadic division.

[Second question:] But second, we must inquire whether the term that reverts is in all cases the third element, as the argument originally seemed to suggest² (since it maintained that reversion was [the reversion of] the third term to the first term), or whether the second term also reverts to what precedes it, in the way that [the argument] posited intellect as reverting to life, which is situated immediately above it, and in the way that someone might want to claim that life reverts also to Being, although we say that what has not proceeded does not need to revert.

[Third question:] Third after these is the question of whether reversion alone is contemplated in three modalities, or whether also remaining and procession are also substantial and vital and cognitive, insofar as remaining is [involved when each term proceeds] from itself or (II 141) remains in itself, and insofar as procession is [involved] when something proceeds from what is before itself or remains in what is before itself.

[Fourth question:] Fourth, why do these three aspects apply to cognitive reversion, namely, knower, known, and knowledge, but not to substantial reversions or to vital reversions? Or if there are three aspects, what would they consist in?

[Fifth question:] Fifth, why is the self-cognizant precisely that which knows itself, while the self-living or the self-subsisting is that which makes itself live or exist? It must be said that the characteristic property of every kind of reversion is the thing's coming to converge with itself, whereas bringing to life is not [likewise a characteristic property]. For [bringing to life] belongs to life or to what brings to life, but not to reversion, since the latter means only this, self-reversion. Likewise, the capacity to produce substance is foreign to reversion. Knowledge of oneself does not entail the capacity to bestow knowability or knowledge, and yet we should have attributed a bestowing capacity to this term as well, since we did so for the others.

[Sixth question:] Sixth, then, in addition to those already mentioned, is the question of why, when it comes to reversions toward the prior realities, is cognitive reversion the same as reversion toward oneself, since that which reverts only knows the prior realities, just as it only knows itself, in the reversion. But vital and substantial reversion do not function in this way, since what reverts to itself either substantially or vitally makes itself live or be, but does also not act upon what is prior to itself in any way at all.

(II 142) [Seventh question:] Seventh, then, we must inquire how [intellect] knows what is prior to itself. Does intellect know what is prior to itself by knowing itself, just as it brings its own substance into likeness with its producer by establishing itself within the boundary of itself, as we maintained?³ And as intellect reverts by means of substance and insofar as it has proceeded to what produces it, so too is it by means of knowledge of what has proceeded, which is its own nature, that it comes to know the nature of what has produced it? Or is it that by abandoning its own nature it comprehends its prior and yet states that the latter is superior to the former, insofar as it discursively formulates the difference? If so, then cognitive reversion is superior to substantial reversion, since substantial reversion is completed within the boundary of what has proceeded, whereas cognitive reversion is completed within the boundary of what has produced it.

[Eight question:] Eighth, what is the end of knowledge, and what comes about for the knower from its object? Is the form of the object of knowledge something that comes to be in the knower, or does that which is in potential for

the knower become actual in knowledge? And [how is the result] either venerable or useful, either way?

[Ninth question:] The ninth question worth investigating is whether the knower has any effect on the object of knowledge, or whether the object of knowledge has an effect on the knower. In either case, the naturally inferior, or effect, will act on what is superior to itself, or cause, since the knower is superior to certain objects of knowledge while it is inferior to others.

[Final question:] Tenth and finally, we must inquire what knowledge is, what the object of knowledge is, what the knower is, and whether it is present everywhere together with the third term [that is, intellect or that which reverts], or also with the second term [life, or procession], or with also the first [Being or remaining], insofar as it is first. The first intellect is cognitive, because every intellect is cognitive. And to the extent that it belongs to the area of the inquiry at hand, we must also raise a puzzle concerning life and substance, both as to what either of them is, and how each differs from knowledge.

Chapter 81. On Intellectual Reversion or on Knowledge; Reply to Question 10

■ Here Damascius reviews the relationships between the members of the intelligible triad in terms of the Proclean distinction between the undifferentiated, that which is beginning to be differentiated, and the completely different or distinct, which are correlated with Being, life, and intellect, respectively. In defining knowledge as the reversion of intellect to the first, second, or third term (that is, to itself) of the intelligible triad, Damascius attempts to show that knowledge actually implies a distance between subject, intellect, and object, Being. In fact, intellect never actually grasps Being as it is in itself because knowledge is a relationship that has no place in the realm of the undifferentiated. It is only as intellect reverts to it that Being can be considered available for knowledge. ■

Now then, proceeding in reverse order from the last questions and advancing to the first, we must consider what it is necessary to say in reply to each problem.

As for substance, which we are now contrasting with life and with knowledge, we shall say that it is neither life nor knowledge. If, indeed, the three should be ranked in the same order, as forms or as classes or as parts, whatever order one specifies, nothing would prevent them from participating in each other. In fact, though, we mean to say that substance is the first, life is the second, and knowledge is the third [in rank], and that the one is their cause, another the caused, and another is both, in relation to one or the other. Therefore, the first members do not participate in the second, so life is beyond knowledge, while substance or Being is beyond life.

Moreover, in this way we are not saying that the [three] are kinds, or forms, nor are they any kind of partial hypostases, nor do these names intend to signify

hypostases of the sort that are subsequent to the first principles. Rather, they are complete worlds, in fact the first worlds of all that seem to be their synonyms or homonyms, just as the first intellect presents itself to us, which encompasses all the (II 144) intellective diacosms. Life,⁴ too, is the completely perfect world before [intellect] and it is replete, as life, with all the things that intellect contains, as intellect; so that the substance that our argument treats is also a whole world, most senior of all the worlds, and most encompassing of all that have been designated through their assigned names. It is therefore not surprising that intellect participates in life and substance: wherever it manifests, participation is there, ahead of us as we advance. But life could not participate in knowledge, since knowledge depends on the third element, on intellect, or to use to use a more generic term, on what proceeds. As for substance, it could contain neither knowledge nor life, since it is neither in a state of having completed procession nor is it in the process of proceeding, as it is life that belongs to the middle term, or to what proceeds. Therefore substance is a perfectly complete world that gathers all things in the undifferentiated, and intellect is a perfectly complete world subsisting in the differentiated aspect of its nature, and life is a perfectly complete world that gives birth to all things in the aspect of the middle term that is subject to differentiation.

The first world is uncircumscribed, and it contains all things without being contained by them, yet the third is contained in as much as it is in the state of having proceeded, and it has come to contain all the elements within itself, as many as have proceeded and are distinct in it, whereas the middle term, which [has its nature in accordance with] life, is neither fixed in the indeterminate nor co-arises with what is contained, but it [lives] a dual life and, as it were, is in motion from that world to this world. This is the origin of the name "life," because it is set in motion and because it is a substance that surges.⁵ When the specific life is brought to bear on each form, (II 145) it introduces this kinetic, surging element. In this way, too, the motionless nature of Being, having descended but little, loosened its undifferentiated fixity and projected a procession and a trace of differentiation, but once it has already proceeded and become differentiated and established in its own form, this nature is circumscribed within its own differentiation, and also it both discriminated and circumscribed the most universal and most venerable principles in it. The nature of Being is not differentiated with the differentiation that pertains to all things, but with that which is near the One, and to summarize, with the first differentiation, that is, of the first realities. This is why, since the nature of Being has acquired a distance from the principles that are prior to it as well as from itself (for it is differentiated in itself), because of this, Being obtains knowledge as a correction or mitigation of division. For knowledge belongs to things that are either distant from each other or from themselves, and that are divided by means of otherness. Without otherness there could be no knower, no known, and no intermediate term, that is, knowledge.

It is reasonable [to assume] that these distinctions have come to subsist in what has proceeded and is thus differentiated, just as the other differentiations take their rise from there, and from as many other relationships as have been differentiated. While these other relationships entail a certain connection between the members of the relationship, yet knowledge especially unites the knower and the known. Knowledge extends the knower toward its object of knowledge through [the knower's] desire for the truth, and it also establishes the known in the knower through the (II 146) lightning flash that leaps into the knower from the known. This knowledge in fact is the [aforementioned]⁶ cognitive reversion of the procession to the producer, and [happens] just insofar as the one is differentiated from the other. For without otherness, there could be no knowledge. Thus substance could not know itself, since it is entirely unified, nor could it know another, since it is nowhere subject to the differentiation that distinguishes one part as a knower, another part as known, and another as knowledge. Now life, although it is said to be intellectual and intelligible owing to the extremes [that border on it], is in fact neither one purely,⁷ but simply insofar as it is undergoing differentiation,⁸ it contains knowledge, a knower and a known, though not as something distinct, but as undergoing differentiation, that is, as beginning to manifest differentiation. Therefore the first knowledge is in the first intellect, since the first knowledge was delimited in intellect both with respect to itself and with respect to what came before it.

Accordingly, to the extent that intellect is differentiated with respect to these realities, it knows them, and this means that it is connected with these realities from afar by means of knowledge. But to the extent that it [remains] by itself and from itself, to this extent it is connected with itself through knowledge, and so it [also remains] in a kind of remoteness with respect to itself. And the elements in it are differentiated and are contained with respect to each other and with respect to the whole; therefore they also know each other and the [intellect] as a whole. But intellect as a whole and each [part of intellect or station of intellect] is in a state of differentiation and is delimited, so that it is reasonable that intellect as a whole and each [part of Intellect or station of] intellect is filled (II 147) with knowledge and has become intellect through intellection, and is illuminated with the light of intellectual truth, first projecting on itself the eye of knowledge, in order to return back to that from which it has proceeded by means of contemplating it, and in order to lead that back to itself insofar as it can in its division. Substantial reversion attaches intellect to Being, but in terms of the first division by which Being was divided and determined as a hypostasis. Vital reversion also attaches intellect, but in terms of the secondary differentiation by which Being was differentiated from the substantial hypostasis into the cognitive hypostasis. Cognitive reversion also attached intellect as the furthest and ninth hypostasis from the undifferentiated, and as third from that which is completely differentiated. (Reversion is third after

remaining and procession, and reversion by means of knowledge arises as the third reversion.) So intellect, standing at the most complete remove from itself and separating itself as third from the third into the lowest part of itself, is content with that connection by which things so separated can be connected. And this is knowledge. And that knowledge is a form of reversion has been stated and that it is the lowest form of reversion has also been stated.

But what is knowledge?

[Our reply] is that it is the apprehension of the known in that which can know. But we do not yet know any of the things we are speaking about, since it is not easy to know the knower or the known, (II 148) if knowledge itself is unknown. [We state that] knowledge (*γνώσις*) is, as the name makes clear, a thought that is in the process of coming to be (*γγνομένη γνώσις*), that is, intellection (*νόησις*). As for intellection (*νόησις*), because it returns (*νέιται*) or reverts to [the fact of something's] being and to the [affirmation, "it] is," (*ἔστιν*) it could justly be called "a state of return" (*νεόεσις*). But as it is, using a more elevated diction and achieving euphony by contracting [the vowels] into *eta*, we call it *νόησις*. So too intellect [*nous*] is named from the fact that it inclines (*νέιται*) to Being (*to on*). Now intellect returns by means of substantial reversion as well as by vital reversion, but third in order and as it were distantly, by means of cognitive intellection, and insofar as intellect is cognitive, that is to say, in act, but not substantially nor by means of the vital power. And that is why this kind of intellection is something that is involved more with becoming, but is more apparent to us, because it especially is in a state of differentiation. And that is why the majority of philosophers define intellect in terms of [intellectual reversion]. In fact, [intellect] must have been the distinct and delimited hypostasis that existed before reversion, and it was this latter that ought to be called *noesis*, as prior to the cognitive reversion, as the first return [*ἐπάνοδον*] to Being from the state of procession, and from this return intellect (*nous*) gets its name, as already, before knowledge, returning [*νεόμενός*] and coming back to Being.

Yet perhaps knowledge [*γνώσις*] is the coming to be [*γένεσις*] of Being [*ὄντος*] and of substance. The knower certainly becomes substantial by means of the return to Being in the act of knowledge, but not in a primary way, but rather in a kind of substantiation that is nevertheless (II 149) characterized by becoming. And that is why intellect is the intelligible realities, as Aristotle, too, says.⁹

Names should fit closely with realities, to the best that one can make them. That intellect subsists and that knowledge is projected in the course of [intellect's] return to Being, and that every return is of something that once proceeded and is now already separate and therefore in need of return, and that return does not eliminate separation, but rather it actually leads back that which is separate, insofar as it is separate, into that from which it has divided itself and proceeded, all of this is evident even from the name "knowledge."

Thus, what is [the essence] of knowledge? Is it a halo, as it were, the forerunner in the procession of light that comes about in the knower from the known? Certainly sense perception accords with the content of perception, and representation subsists according to an impression, and so with opinion and discursive thought; the latter accords with the content of thought, the former with the content of opinion.¹⁰ In general, then, knowledge subsists according to the content of knowledge (*γνώσμα*), if this expression is allowed, and the content of knowledge is the object of knowledge, but [as it] already comes into being in the knower. [Or should we say that] knowledge accords with this content of knowledge but it is not the content of knowledge?¹¹

What, then, is the experience of the knower when it does not yet know?

[Our reply is that] it seeks out the object of knowledge. Therefore knowledge is the attainment of the object of knowledge qua object of knowledge. For if it also attains Being, this is [only] insofar as Being is an object of knowledge.

What, then, is the nature of the object of knowledge and how does it differ from Being? [The difference is this:] the object of knowledge is related [II 150] to another, whereas that which is what it is in itself is Being. Yet this [way of putting it] indicates what belongs to either of them, but what their nature is has not yet been shown.

[We reply that] Being is subsistence, but the object of knowledge is, as it were, the manifestation of subsistence. After all, one might say that in the case of an enmattered form, its subsistence is different from its being an object of sensation. The sensible aspect is what the enmattered form projects outside of it and makes known, making it known until the point of sense perception, and in this way it corresponds to sense-perception. That is also the way that manifestation [is related to] Being, as if it were a light that escorts Being [until it reaches] the knower, running out to meet the knower as the latter ascends the road up toward Being. The light is coordinate with Being and it becomes one with it and it accomplishes and satisfies its desire for Being because of the completion of its intrinsic light.

So intellect does not know Being, but [only] the manifestation of Being?

[It knows] Being insofar as Being is manifest, and Being is manifest insofar as [it is] the object of knowledge. After all, if intellect can know Being, it knows it as an [object of knowledge],¹² but all that is known is necessarily capable of being known. The result is that intellect does know Being, but necessarily, as we say, according to the manifestation [of Being].

But it is Being [that intellect] desires.

Intellect may desire Being, but it attains Being as an object of knowledge. And perhaps it would be better to say that its desire is for Being as the object of knowledge. After all, natural desires and the attainments [of desire] have identical objects, and it is agreed that for the knower, the attainment of Being is according to that which is known.

What do we mean by the expression, "manifestation?"

[We answer that] manifestation is what allows an object to appear to secondary principles, and makes itself available in a way that is commensurate with those (II 151) wishing to enjoy it and desiring to embrace the light that escorts it.

Is it therefore the case that the whole [of Being] is not knowable, but rather only the illumination, just as the color alone is visible to sight, but not the underlying substrate?¹³

Yes, emphatically. But it should cause no surprise, but rather be a necessary consequence, that something belonging to the first principles is always unknowable for the secondary principles and hence, is ineffable. After all, that is also how that which is entirely transcendent is, as aforementioned, absolutely ineffable in relation to all things, whereas each of the other things has its own ineffable aspect only relative to principles that are secondary [to them], and so is relatively ineffable. And this is not especially illogical, as I said, but one might perhaps wonder whether it is true that intellect knows the accompanying [manifestation] of Being, and not Being itself, that is, [it only knows Being] in terms of its manifestation.

[We answer that] the manifestation of Being is the name for this forerunner [illumination, which is] not, however, a kind of emanation from it, as the light that surrounds the earth is from the sun. Rather, it is as if someone were to see the sun itself by means of its internal brilliance.

Then [intellect] knows only the surface [of Being], since it knows the manifestation of Being in the way [that one sees] a color?

No: we must conceive the manifestation as through and through; there is no part of it that does not shine out and hasten to be revealed, just as you would say of a crystal or of some other transparent object that it is visible as a whole, because the nature of the visible permeates it throughout.¹⁴

Nevertheless, the body is one thing and its being entirely manifest is something else, so that even There the manifestation would be other than Being. (II 152) The same problem will return,¹⁵ first, that [knowledge] is not of Being, but of the manifestation which is other than Being; after all, in the case of something completely transparent, it is not the body that is visible, but only the color. Second, in the case of something that is completely indeterminate, shall we [indeed] be able to distinguish manifestation as one thing, and Being as another, which then is like the substance for its manifestation, or differs from it, however it in fact does?

To this we reply as follows: the Being that is what it is, insofar as it is just Being, is also solely undifferentiated. Yet to the extent that intellect has separated from Being as [something] distinct from it, and Being has come to be not solely undifferentiated, but also is distinct from what is distinct,¹⁶ given that it is as the undifferentiated that differs from what is actually differentiated, that Being has distinction, to this extent, the knowable is manifest in Being. That

which can know shows up in intellect as what is determinate, and thus anything else is also manifest in Being, qua differentiated [at least] in some way. We are not discussing Being here as what is able to know, because this, as aforementioned, coexists with what proceeded, but we are talking about Being as knowable, because having been grasped through knowledge by what proceeded, Being became knowable, and the knowable is not in Being as a determination that uniquely characterizes it, since not even the determinate is in Being as its unique character. Being qua indeterminate is distinct from the determinate, nor would Being subsist or be designated determinate, in virtue of its own nature, if it is possible to use this expression, unless the truly distinct had been distinct from it. Therefore Being is not (II 153) knowable as one of the things in it, but it is manifest and has been [so] designated by way of contrast with intellect. Intellect, on seeing that it is itself distinct from Being, but that Being remained without differentiation, called its [own] departure from Being “differentiation,” a differentiation that truly exists in intellect, whereas it only exists in Being as something that is undifferentiated and as what has not departed from Being along with intellect.

So because it is upon proceeding that intellect became something capable of knowing that from which it proceeded, it is as that very thing that has proceeded that it projects the cognitive reversion, as was said earlier,¹⁷ and once it has grasped by means of cognition what it desired, intellect allows Being to be designated as knowable. Or rather, it revealed the knowable present in Being, but not as something determinate. Nor is what is distinct [in Being]¹⁸ determinate, since Being itself is not determinate relative to life and intellect. All these names and realities, belong to the formal nature, but that other nature is entirely without differentiation, as we are saying; but in the intermediate nature [life], [this nature] somehow undergoes determination; but it is in intellect that the other distinctions were made, the knowable, the one capable of knowledge, and knowledge, and intellect is what is knowable in the strict sense, since it is capable of knowing itself. Intellect is form because it is knowable and formal, and thus some knowledge is co-present with every form, and every form is also a living being, or a corpse that belongs to a living being, having undergone deprivation of its nature as a living being, and so of the form, as for example, stones and pieces of wood and dead bodies, since natural things are alive and (II 154) possess consciousness, even if it is the most obscure kind, and even if we are unable to perceive it. (Even plants are living beings, according to Plato.¹⁹ As for rocks and metals and the entire earth and each of the other elements, the reproduction of the living beings contained in them and the perfect completeness of their formal structure shows that they are not entirely without soul. But these matters would require a different discourse.)

Intellect, upon becoming differentiated in itself as a whole and through and through, became both capable of knowledge and knowable. For by being differentiated from itself and established in [this] differentiation, it connects

with itself through knowledge, as it is normal for those things that are separated from the things from which they have been separate [to be united with them]. Strictly therefore, as I said, the knowable and that which is capable of knowledge and knowledge are distinguished from each other in intellect. But in virtue of intellect [becoming] differentiated, it is manifested as capable of knowing, whereas to the extent that it is that from which it has become differentiated, it is the knowable. What proceeded desired to return back to this, and returning through knowledge as what is capable of knowledge back to the knowable, it made for itself its return. But intellect itself is that from which [it proceeds] and that which [proceeds]. Therefore intellect is the knower and the known, and in the middle of these is knowledge. So as I was saying, these things are strictly [true] in the case of intellect and in intellect. But in another way, intellect is already distinct from Being, so that it goes toward that by means of knowledge, for knowledge, as was said above,²⁰ is the ultimate form of connection for the things that proceeded. (II 155) But desiring to be united to itself and to accord with itself, it brought the knowledge of itself into one collection of all knowledges, and it produced a single unified knowledge, and one might say that with all force it dispatched itself to the undifferentiated and truly knowable. However, it did not render what is capable of knowledge relative to the knowable as one thing relative to another in terms of a differentiation, but in a manner that demonstrated that knowledge is a substance through its great unity: it approached the known as substance, and as that which is capable of knowledge it desired the knowable, on account of its distance, but touching it and obtaining it, it realized the union was not of what was able to know with the known, but it was the union of substance with substance. As a result, the return [of intellect] to Being is more substantial, but the return of intellect to itself is more cognitive.

Why, then, is intellect both, knower and known, whereas substance is only knowable, although it is itself seen in a certain differentiation, as has been said? We must reply that the knowable intends to be something desirable, whereas what is capable of knowledge intends to be that which desires, but these things too are relative to each other, in differentiation, just as intellect and substance are. Yet substance is what is desired, since it is superior, and intellect that which can desire. So it is clear that what can desire and what can know are appropriate for the inferior, whereas for what is superior, the desirable and knowable [are appropriate]. If intellect is knowable (II 156) in itself and desirable for itself as well as for the other entities that follow it or proceed from it, what wonder that the inferior participate in the things before them, and not vice versa? Accordingly, substance is not intellect, whereas intellect is both substance and intellect, but subsists as the latter and participates in the former. Insofar as it is substance, intellect is also knowable, and therefore it is knowable through participation. Insofar as it is intellect, it is capable of knowledge, and so it is such through subsistence. But this is sufficient for this aporia.

Perhaps, though, someone will posit that substance is capable of knowledge as well, but not as knowledge that is determinate, since it is all things as their inherent aggregate. For it is in this way, too, that substance is knowable, to the extent that it is knowable, but in an undifferentiated way, in the absence of a relationship to another. When intellect proceeded from substance, and when the relationship as of a cause to an effect arose with it, since the effect was manifested as being capable of knowledge, substance also projected [its manifestation as] something knowable to the extent that the unique character of their relationship [that is, as cause and effect] revealed itself in contradistinction to intellect. So much is enough concerning these questions.

Chapter 82. Replies to Questions 9 and 8

■ In the first part of this chapter, Damascius reintroduces an aporia that has already appeared in the very first chapter of the *Problems and Solutions*, namely, the simultaneous arising of cause and effect. However, here he resolves the aporia by stating that the effect does not act on the cause, but rather the cause acts on itself and on the effect. The cause actually renders itself as the object of reversion, and so makes itself both knowable and desirable. This solution then gives rise to the next topic, which is the object of reversion as telos or goal of the effect, insofar as the latter reverts to its cause. In answering question eight, Damascius alludes to the Platonic doctrine of desire for the Good and discusses the role that knowledge plays in the realization of that desire. He thus asks about the utility or goodness of intellectual reversion. Here Damascius reverts to metaphorical language, picturing knowledge as an eye that sees the good, or as a scout for the expedition that all things undertake to return to the good. This passage in the *Problems and Solutions* links the anonymous lectures on the *Philebus* to the *Problems and Solutions*, via Damascius' doctrine of the intellectual appetite or cognitive enjoyment.

For comparison, here is a parallel passage from Damascius' *Philebus* commentary, *In Phil.* 13.5: "the analogue of the appetitive function is the urge to inquiry; for inquiry can be described as cognitive appetite, being a way to an end, just as appetite is directed to an end; knowledge, however, is attainment of truth, and its analogue is attainment of desire, to which, for want of a more appropriate term, one might apply the word 'enjoyment.'" ■

The ninth question from the start was this: if things that subsist in a relationship [that is, relative entities] constitute each other reciprocally, how will the effect not act on the cause, and how will what is capable of (II 157) desire not act on the object of desire? If so, the knower will have an effect on the object of knowledge, since indeed each of the constituents [of the relationship] comes into act simultaneously with the other. And yet how is it possible for the effect to act on the cause? Now in the case of things that belong to the same rank, perhaps this could be true, and yet in these cases, one might ask whether something that is unconnected can affect in any way that with which it is

unconnected, simply by means of the advent of the relationship, and whether that which is affected by the [object with which it is not connected] without changing in itself can nevertheless be said to be affected.

[Our reply is that] things that are brought together or become separate with respect to each other occupy the role of matter, while the [role of] form [is occupied by] the relationship that immediately illuminates them, when one of the elements or both either approaches or departs. For example, when human beings come together, they acquire a certain number from outside, and the single staff that is cut participates in the dyad instead of the monad. Socrates teaches us about these things in the *Phaedo*.²¹ If the cause is distinguished with respect to the effect through procession, and either two arise instead of the one, or else one is the knower and the other is the known, the argument of Socrates does not allow that there is something that comes from one member of the relationship to the other member, not even in the case of things belonging to the same rank. But it is not reasonable, in cases where there is nothing before both members of the relationship, to suppose that [something comes] to both of them from something else that is prior to them, as for example [is the case with] the first object of knowledge and the first knower, or the first cause and the first effect. Rather it is clear that all the things that are in the effect from the cause (II 158) come to be in the effect together with substance as a whole. What produced the effect has departed from itself and differentiates its product from itself. Thus it endows both itself and its effect with differentiation. This is also the way that the paradigm functions with respect to the image, in terms of likeness, in that the paradigm makes the image like itself and in this way the desirable comes before what desires and is distinct from it, because it has imparted to the latter [that which desires] the desire to acquire itself, in the latter's very remoteness. Likewise, then, this was the way that substance, by generating intellect, revealed to intellect that it was itself knowable and bestowed on intellect the capacity to know itself, and not just potentially, since the superior bestows on its inferior the same nature in act. That is how Being is knowable, because it fills that which is capable of knowing with knowledge. That is also how Being is desirable, because it attracts what is capable of desire to itself and fills that which desires it with itself. And that is how Iamblichus understood that the intelligible object functions with respect to intellect, because it has completely filled intellect with intellection of itself.²²

Therefore, the effect does not act on the cause at all, but rather the cause acts on itself and on the effect. The cause introduces the relationship that is parallel alongside the effect, and if one can say this, before it makes the produced and the effect and what is capable of desire and what is capable of knowing, it makes itself knowable and desirable and cause and producer. This could not be otherwise.

(II 159) The eighth point of investigation from the beginning inquires after the utility of knowledge, what benefit it offers the knower or the known, if one wishes also to inquire after these points.

Let us say, then, first that knowledge provides the knower with Being itself. It is in knowing that that which is substantialized by means of knowledge has its being. For intellect is [substantialized] in the act of knowing, so that knowing is the substance of intellect, and what brings about intellection in intellect produces the substance of intellect. This [what is referred to as] the intellectual object and the object of knowledge.

Next, intellect reveals the knowable in the intelligible to the intelligible, as parallel with itself, if it does not actually cause it to exist, as we said before.

A third benefit intellectual activity provides to that which engages in intellection is that it specifies that which engages in intellection in terms of the intelligible, and it establishes that which has proceeded as second or third or in whatever order, in the form of what produced it. The most valuable thing comes about if the effects are ordered by the forms of the causes through the mode of cognition. But if the knowable happens to be inferior, the coming to be like the inferior would debase the knower, through sympathy with the objects known. Yet if knowledge of the secondary principles or in general of inferior things is unaffected by them, there is some other way that it introduces the inferior to the superior and establishes the former in the latter. (II 160) Or rather, it introduces the superior to fellowship with the inferior in the projection that consists in the formal structuring of the inferior elements through knowledge.

If someone is also going to seek the nature of the beneficial itself or the Good [itself], let him conceive of the assimilation of all things to each other, an assimilation that comes about through cognition, in terms of their familiarity arising from their sameness of origin, and still more, [let him conceive of] the journey of all things, marching to the single source, as if to the Good, in which knowledge corrects their wandering and posts itself as a guide for [all things] in their journey upward. Knowledge is, as it were, a forerunner eye and leads the desire that yearns for the Good, kindling its native light, and consequently knowledge is the most fulfilling of those [methods] that lead to the goal. Moreover, knowledge structures the inferior by means of the formal cognitive structure of the superior, and thus becomes a cause of reversion of the inferior elements to the superior and even of all things to the supreme, by means of their common return back to Being. We do not connect to the Ineffable by means of knowledge but by means of Being; and that connects to the Ineffable through complete unity, so that through this intermediary, all other things also connect [to the Ineffable].

Chapter 83. Replies to Questions 7, 6, 5, and 4

■ How does intellect revert to Being? How does intellect know Being? In asking about intellectual reversion, Damascius ventures into the topic of self-knowledge, asking whether it consists of a knowledge that knows itself, or whether rather, of a knowledge

that knows its object only when it lets go of itself? Damascius replies that intellect does not know Being alone, apart from itself, nor does it know Being through knowing itself alone.

Reply to the sixth question: if knowledge is a kind of agency, then just as it affects something, it also causes that thing to subsist, so that knowledge is no longer knowledge of the known, but it is a creative cause of an effect. But creating is not a characteristic of the knower, which only knows something that already exists.

Reply to the fifth question: it is characteristic of reversion to coincide with something else toward which the reversion is, namely, the reverted to, or with itself, if reversion is from itself toward itself. The coincidence comes about as substance together with the characteristic that bestows subsistence, but as life with the characteristic that bestows life.

Reply to the fourth question: the same differentiations apply in the case of the three kinds of reversion, namely, that there is in the case of life something analogous to the knower, which is to say the living being, and to the known, namely, that very life which the living being lives, and to knowledge corresponds livingness. It is possible to speak in these cases of that which can live, of that which can be lived, and of livingness, and what is more, in the case of substance, there is substantiality or subsistence, and there is that which is substantialized, as, for example, the substantial intellect, and there is what is bestowed as substance, which is substantialized in intellect and is that according to which intellect becomes substance. ■

But let us come to the seventh of the inquiries, and first offer an explanation concerning the ranking of cognitive and substantial reversion, and show that the latter is superior to the former. Intellect established within its own limit imitates what is before it, which itself becomes situated within its own limit, even if the boundary of this is related to the boundary of the latter as the indeterminate is to the determinate and as the undifferentiated is to the completely differentiated,²³ (II 161) thus intellect has come to knowledge of Being in the terms of its own limitation, and imitated the aspect of that which is situated above knowledge in that which is knowable only. But this is a limit of a secondary rank, as is agreed, not of an hypostasis in relation to an hypostasis, but of the knower with respect to the known. Thus the general [answer].

If there is a substance that belongs to intellect, or if there is a limit to the scope of intellect insofar as it proceeds from itself, a cognitive reversion will correspond to this substance, [and this is the reversion] in which intellect knows itself. And if intellect has proceeded from what is before it as well, the knowledge that knows what is before it would correspond to this procession that has its reality from above, since it has reverted to that by means of both a substantial and a cognitive reversion.

Let us study, in the second place, how intellect knows Being. Does it know Being by means of the knowledge that knows itself, or does it know it when it lets go of itself?

[We answer:] not by either of the two ways, but in both ways. For intellect does not know Being alone, apart from itself, nor does it know Being through [knowing] itself alone, as if it were gazing not at Being, but at itself alone. All things must run together simultaneously. Intellect actually proceeds from Being as its entire hypostasis, so that it will also know Being with the entire knowledge of itself. For by knowing itself it will discover that it is the imitation of what is before it, and as it were, that that is itself, and again, by knowing that image and by knowing that, it knows itself. Therefore, intellect will know not only likeness, but²⁴ [also] the (II 162) unlikeness, and it will recognize that [the image] is itself, and that it is what brought it into being, and again, that it is Being and also that it is what is from Being, and again, that it is what is capable of knowledge, but it is also the knowable.

We must say that just as intellect has been distinguished from Being as something which is itself completely distinct, yet it has revealed that Being is separate from [intellect] as not subject to distinction, and so, by being known and by being circumscribed by its knowledge of itself, intellect, as stated above,²⁵ perceives the uncircumscribed nature of Being, and that this nature not only knows but also is known, because [this nature] was commensurate with intellect, since this nature as it were undergoes a strong affection for its own offspring.

Therefore, does not intellect look to its own cause?

[We reply that] intellect, in being absent from [Being], reverted to [Being] and wished to grasp it, but instead of this, it knew Being. Or rather, it grasped Being in such a way that it did not become Being, but embraced it in the manner of knowledge, which means for its eye to be completely illuminated by the light of that. That is the nature of the union of the knower with the known, not that the knower becomes the known, nor does that become the knower, nor does it grab hold of something that comes from the known, nor yet is it led back into that. For once these things [knower and known] have been distinguished, such approaches confuse them, and they do not even allow the form of knowledge, which consists in the differentiation that is set up as the boundaries of the knower and the known, since it is a reacquaintance with or rapprochement of things that are separate that extends itself forward together with the separating interval.

But we know this kind of reality as something external [to Being] by means of the same kind of reality that exists [within Being], they say. Yes, this will be our position: (II 163) intellect arose outside of Being through a change of its nature, but after its procession intellect nevertheless has a nature such as substance, that as much as possible remains. For the differentiation alone has introduced change [in the intellect],²⁶ so that intellect might know substance with the whole of itself, no less than if it contained a trace of substance within itself. If, in the intellect, there is prior to the division the co-aggregate, this would be the intellectual pleroma, as it were an image of the unified substance that is prior to it, in terms of which the intellect will know its paradigm, just as it will know the image in terms of the paradigm, although there is a great differentiation between

the image and its unique paradigm.²⁷ But if there is something in intellect as well that belongs to the unified nature of Being, either absolutely or in some other way, and either co-natural with Being or becoming substantial along with intellect or in some way or other (we shall inquire into these things a little later in our argument concerning participation)²⁸—if, then, there is something like this in intellect, intellect will know Being also according to this. If [we are dealing with] a single nature, then a single knowledge will arise from it. We hope to clarify these matters in our remarks about true intellect, inasmuch as we shall have added a discussion about participation as well.²⁹

But we have posed as the sixth problem after these [the question of] how intellect constitutes itself in the substantial reversion to itself, though it surely does not also constitute what is before it, (II 164) in the reversion to that. And the same puzzle is also present in the case of vital reversion, as was mentioned above.³⁰ for we see that cognitive reversion is equally reversion to oneself and reversion to that [which is before one]. Therefore intellect has no effect at all, on either side, just insofar as it knows. For if knowledge were agentive, then just as it affected something it also would cause that thing to subsist, so that knowledge would no longer be knowledge of the known, but a creative cause of an effect. Creating is not a characteristic of the knower, but [the knower] only knows something that already exists, yet substance and life cause [things] to subsist. Or rather, it is the mark of substance to furnish substantiality and a first hypostasis, whereas it is a mark of life to, as it were, impart motion to that hypostasis and to awaken it into procession or instill the creative nature of Being [into it].

Why, then, does substantial reversion toward itself cause the intellect to subsist as apart from itself, whereas the reversion toward what is before it no longer causes that [prior thing] to subsist? And how can it be possible for the effect to cause the cause to subsist? Therefore is this kind of reversion not substantial, if it does not create substance?

[We reply that] the [substantial reversion of intellect] does create the substance that belongs to intellect, but as it is generated from what is before intellect. It is in that substantial reversion to the latter, as it proceeds from what is prior to it, that intellect has circumscribed itself, (II 165) receiving by the turn toward that its being from that. For so must we consider the [case of] substantial reversion [of intellect] to itself as well, that in proceeding from itself, it causes itself to subsist.³¹ And by making these assumptions concerning vital reversion, we shall rightly preserve the analogy.

Now we shall easily solve the fifth aporia, by agreeing that, one the hand, it is the mark of reversion either to coincide with something else, toward which the reversion takes place, namely, that which is reverted to, or to coincide with itself, if [we are thinking about] a conversion of one thing toward itself, and that, on the other hand, the coincidence comes about either [in the form of] substance together with the characteristic that bestows subsistence, or [in the form of] life together with the characteristic that bestows life. While it is not the same thing

to revert and to produce, yet still it, the maker, reverts entirely toward the product, and what we had in mind was to clarify the form of reversion which takes place from the source of Being and of life, from the producer that is already there when reversion begins. Since, in fact, reversion is different from knowledge, given that reversion is the inclination toward oneself or toward another, but knowledge is an affirmation and an agreement that each thing is what it is.³²

We should append to the fifth answer the fourth [answer], and establish the same divisions in the case of the three kinds of reversion, namely, that there is (II 166) in the case of life something analogous to the knower, that is, the living being, and to the known, namely, that very life which the living being lives, and to knowledge corresponds livingness. It is possible to speak in these cases of that which can live, of that which can be lived, and of livingness, and what is more, in the case of substance, there is substantiality or subsistence, and there is that which is substantialized, as for example the substantial intellect, and there is what is bestowed as substance, which is substantialized in intellect and is that according to which intellect becomes substance. To speak more clearly, while reversion can be observed as it relates to the middle term, insofar as it involves the extreme terms, from the viewpoint of that which reverts, there are [the following realities]: that which can know, that which can live, and that which can be, in other words, the knower, the living being, and that which is; whereas from the point of view of the terminus of reversion, there are [the following realities]: that which can be known, that which can be animated, and that which can be substantialized. And each of these latter is the object of each of the former's desire, that is, of the knower, of the living being, and of that which achieves substantiality.

Let us not circumvent in silence what is worthy of observation, namely, that the names are distinguished in the case of knowledge, inasmuch as cognition consists in nameable differentiations, but there is no such available differentiation in the other cases, because the unity of these is great, that is, of the living being (II 167) with life, and still greater, of that which achieves substantiality with substance, by which it achieves its substantiality, or toward which it substantially reverts. Moreover, knowledge is both an activity and an experience that is undergone. For I know you and I am known by you, we say. But "I live" and "I am" are [expressions that can] be equally [transitive or intransitive] according to the grammarians, unless one were to except the phrases "making" and "being made." Then at least the transitive relationship is present, as for example, "I make live" and "I am made to live."

Chapter 84. Replies to Questions 3, 2, and 1

■ Reply to the third question: procession is of two kinds, of which one is the procession of what has proceeded, and this is threefold, the procession of being, life, and the known. The other kind of procession is of what is in the process of proceeding.

Reply to the second question: there is a reversion of what has proceeded. For that which has created a way of leaving also requires a way to return, but this turns out to be not the same as what is actually proceeding, since it is still proceeding, nor, a fortiori, can it be what remains before procession, since this is not yet proceeding.

Reply to the first question: the three moments of procession, remaining, and reversion come most decisively by analogy with beings that do not belong to the intelligible order at all, which are ranked hierarchically according to their possession of intellect, life, or being. ■

Now, then, to the third question³³ we reply that procession is of two kinds, one is the procession of what has proceeded, which one might view as threefold, of the knower proceeding from the known, of a living being proceeding from life or from the cause of life, and of being proceeding from the first being. But the other kind of procession can be seen in the case of something that is in the act of proceeding, according to which we say that only life subsists; in this case, three kinds of procession cannot be completely differentiated, but if at all, then [they must be conceived as] in the process of differentiation and as projecting a kind of trace of contradistinction to each other. At least in the case of unified substance it is not in any way possible to separate the substantial, the vital, and the cognitive. If therefore one contemplates remaining and assigns a name to the isolated constitution of Being, not even this [remaining] could be separated into three modes. If one speaks of the remaining of what has proceeded, he will see that this is divisible in three ways. Intellect remains in the knowable as knowledge and in life as the life of intellect, (II 168) or in the cause of life, and in Being as the incomplete departure from Being, as we said earlier.

As a result of what has been said, it is easy to reply to the second question,³⁴ that reversion belongs to what has proceeded. For that which has brought about its own departure also requires a way to return, but what is actually proceeding does not require this, since that is still proceeding, nor, a fortiori, can what remains before procession revert, since this is not yet proceeding.

Does reversion alone belong to what has proceeded, or do proceeding and remaining also belong to it?

Just by its very remaining, it has already proceeded and contains the intermediate procession between having completely proceeded and remaining. In general, the three arise in differentiation with each other, as has often been said. Therefore, the three are [found in] that which possesses a differentiated nature, and this is what has proceeded. But Being could not reasonably be said to remain, since it is what has not even proceeded and in which there are no differentiations, so that not even remaining is in it as a determinate entity. And it is otherwise called immobile, since it is completely undifferentiated, or it is called Unified or Being that remains in its processionless nature before all things. And thus not even what is called life has remaining or procession or reversion as they are contemplated in differentiation, but it has them as they

give rise to manifestation, in the process of becoming differentiated. Therefore, the three seem to arise together with each other, although in the Unified in an undifferentiated unity, whereas in the distinct [they arise] (II 169) through differentiation and through a contradistinction that is already projected, whereas in the middle they [exist] in the middle ground, namely, in one way they are either differentiated or undifferentiated, and in another they are not. But that it is in what has proceeded, that the three are thus completely distinct [from each other] is clear from what has been said.

What follows? Is Being then not self-reverting and self-constituting, and does it not proceed from itself by itself and remain in itself?

[We answer that] it gives the appearance of being like this to us, who are divided with respect to its unique simplicity, yet in itself Being is none of these things, but it has as within its purview the inclusion of the three, and yet this is insofar as it altogether concentrated in the universal inclusion of all things. In fact, otherwise it would have been necessary for that which exists in terms of reversion, or procession, or remaining, to be only what it in itself is, absolutely. Each of these is not absolute, but is rather a substance modified in such a way as it happens to be remaining or proceeding or reverting or, in general, to be differentiated. Thus it is clear that substance and life and knowledge are in what has proceeded, but that these arise mutually in terms of differentiation with each other. But the intermediate nature is not yet any of these, nor is it substance or life or knowledge, but there is already some gestation or progression. And in what is called Being there is not even the trace appearance of [substance, life, or knowledge].

But what is that which has proceeded? Is it always the third term, and whatever comes after the third, or is it sometimes the second, if not (II 170) the second member of Being, which we call life, but, for example, the secondary intellect?

[We reply that] after the first intellect and after the first differentiation that is manifest in it, the secondary entities are immediately distinguished from what comes before them, and yet they participate in the differentiation that has already been projected higher up. But there are also [entities] that, in terms of the differentiation, can be seen as related to what comes before them in one way, and as analogous to what comes after them, as for in example, power is in the Chaldean triads.

After all these [questions have been treated], let us study the first question we posed, [namely] what is the necessity for the antithesis of the three [moments] with respect to each other, whether of remaining and procession and reversion, or whether of substance and life and intellect, or whether of the Unified and that which is subject to differentiation, and the completely distinctive. (Perhaps one could better discriminate these as the undifferentiated, that which is subject to differentiation, and the completely differentiated, or again as the Unified and the plural, where these are opposed according to the differentiation

between one and many and in the middle of these, that which has loosened itself from the One, and has projected the trace of multiplicity.) The latter triad is discriminated on the basis of a probable argument. But the triad prior to this was something that sensible beings, underlying everything, make manifest, some of which we refer to only as being, some we say also live, and some we say have knowledge as well, and again the definition of the living being [reveals this triad], since it defines [the triad] as a substance (II 171) that lives and has knowledge. Therefore, a living being is from these three, but when knowledge is removed, then a living being is only a living substance, and when life is left off, then it is only substance.

But let us leave off the intelligible realities, if you like, and let us examine the conceptions that we hold concerning the things we say are, or live, or know.³⁵ Knowing is something that extends to another, since knowing is constituted in terms of the desire for the knowable; Being is by itself and of itself and alone apart from every division; life is intermediate, for the living being is still in itself and by itself to the extent that it lives, but it is already awakened from itself and divided with respect to itself, and as it were, it is seething with its own substance, but it is not yet extended toward another. And so neither is it moved toward activity or passivity, since it greatly united with substance. In fact, life is what arises on account of substance. And therefore life seemed³⁶ to be motion or the cause of motion, and it appeared to be differentiation or to consist in becoming distinguished, or the cause of such differentiation. But life is none of these. Nor is substance rest or the cause of rest, nor is it unity or the cause of unity. Nor is intellect knowledge or the cause only of knowledge. For these are forms and are distinct with respect to each other. Of course, life and substance are also differentiated. Intellect is all things; the first intellect, which is already a complete world, is ordered and encircled by its appropriate delimitation and with its (II 172) appropriate differentiation. The nature that is before this, which we call life from the specific form of life, which it resembles in its intermediate status, is not yet ordered, for there is not yet anything to discriminate or anything to circumscribe, because there is no circumference or differentiation. These things begin to be manifest because life, as it were, flows to them from Being, but it is nothing other than a flow that can neither remain above nor proceed below. Before life is the completely perfect hypostasis [that we call] Being, so complete that it does not allow flow, or any profusion into the intermediate term [life].

Rightly, therefore, this triad has been differentiated with respect to itself in terms of the implications of these distinct conceptions. Substance shows what each is by itself alone, and someone might see knowledge as a kind of hypostasis, as well as life and intellect. Thus the good, the beautiful, the just, all that is substance, belong to Being. But the living of each form, that is, the life of each substance, is what surges from it each time and arises and breaks into external activity, if this helps toward the description of what we are talking

about. Whenever there is entanglement with another and there is extension toward another, and activities and characteristics are observed, there too is knowledge. And so with respect to substance, life occupies the role of power, but knowledge takes on the role of act. And yet there are also a cognitive power (II 173) and a cognitive substance, and similarly, a vital power and a vital substance. Substance is what has come to subsist together with the attribution, "by itself," whereas knowledge is what has come to subsist together with the attribution, "in relation to another," and life has come to subsist with the attribution, "in the middle, and tending neither toward another nor remaining motionless by itself," and is named after this very fact of seething (*ζεῖν*) and being that which seethes (*ζεῖον*).³⁷ But how is intellect the third? If intellect achieves being by means of cognition and if cognition happens by intellection, because knowledge is already set up as relative to life, as has been said, and if intellection and intellectual intuition signify return toward Being, as was said above, and return is reversion or differentiation, it is clear that intellect is the third after life and substance. The latter, however, is without boundary, whereas intellect is bounded, and life occupies the middle state. And likewise, intellect is completely distinct, since it has become many instead of the one and unified, whereas substance is uniform and without differentiation, and life also occupies the middle station in between these two.

Therefore must this be added to what has been said, that remaining and procession and reversion are contradistinguished from each other?

[We answer that] if we take [them] as one reality, it will have three activities. It either is at rest, or it changes by virtue of difference, or it returns back to stillness. For example, the body too is either healthy by nature, or it deteriorates toward what is unnatural, and then again it desires once more its natural state. And if we compare to what is one and the same thing, something that is divided in three ways, we shall say either that it is with itself or that it is departing from itself or that it is returning to itself.

PART SIX

On the Many

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Section XIV. On Parts

■ In chapters 85–88, Damascius begins to explore questions that may strike the modern reader as finally bearing some resemblance to issues that Plato and Aristotle considered under the purview of metaphysics or ontology. Damascius is concerned with the contents of the intelligible world, the forms, and considers some of the ways that Plato discusses the relationships among these contents. For example, in the *Sophist* Plato shows that each of the essential forms has a participation relationship with the greatest kinds of Being, that is, sameness, difference, motion, rest, and being. Likewise, in the *Parmenides*, Plato seems to show that each form participates in unity and being. For Damascius, these relationships underscore the ways in which Being is metaphysically prior to the world of essence that is only expressed at the differentiated level of intellect. In what follows, Damascius is concerned with the nature of parts and whole, that is, parts considered as natural kinds, as the various components that comprise a composite substance, as elements of the cosmos as a whole, and so forth. In all of this discussion, Damascius seems to conceive of the idea of part and whole as relative terms, thus skewing in important ways the fundamental significance of essence in his understanding of Plato's ontology, and focusing more on the way that concepts divide reality. In this sense, Damascius seems to be reading such dialogues as the *Sophist* in a way that is consistent with Plato's own meditations on the relationship between language, or conceptual activity and reality. ■

Chapter 85. What Does the Term “Many” Denote?

■ Synopsis. Many are said in three ways, as form, as parts, and as elements. How do we distinguish parts from elements? Elements are simpler than parts; parts are divided, whereas the elements tend to conglomerate; and

elements are different from the elemental, which is made up of parts of elements. Thus forms are parts and elements, and again parts are elements, but not always vice versa. ■

(II 174) After these [investigations into procession], we must inquire about the intelligible and that which is called the completely unified, and ask if it contains a differentiation in itself and an order that [consists in] a first, middle, and final pleroma, or whether as the philosophers¹ say it consists of Being and life and intellect, or whether [its composition is] as the theologians say, who in various ways fill out the intelligible principles, or as the Chaldeans say, who speak reverently of the paternal triad.² If we intend to pursue this discussion skillfully, we must take up again the discussion surrounding the investigation of multiplicity and of plurality. Then perhaps [we can discuss] whether plurality pertains to that intelligible order or not, and how it would or would not pertain.

Accordingly, “many” is observed and said by all clearly to mean as many things as are separate from each other, where each thing has come to be by itself within its own delimitation, and consents to remain what it is and what it is called, as for example, we say that the forms are eager to be.

Parts are also said to be “many,” for there is no one part of something by nature, but there are at minimum, two parts. Thus many are also the parts. But the difference [from forms] is that parts do not wish to be by themselves nor to constitute themselves, but they belong entirely to each other and to the whole as one continuity, and they are constituted in the whole, since they began their differentiation in terms of division, and yet parts are not separated into distinct (II 175) boundaries, since they continue to come into being through a coincidence with each other and with the whole, as is especially evident in the case of things whose parts are said to be homeomerous.

And in a third way, “many” refers to elements. For one element alone is not able to complete what is composed of elements, but there must at least be two.

What is the difference between “parts” and “elements”? The first difference is that parts are from elements that are the same as the whole (the parts are parts of what is constituted by elements, as for example the four elements constitute the parts of the nerve, and each of the parts of the nerve), and elements are simpler than each part, as for example fire and earth are simpler than what is apparently the smallest nerve.

Another difference is that the parts keep intact their own division, according to which they are constituted [as parts] or, if they did not preserve this division, they could not be parts. But elements do not accept any division, since they merge together into a mixture and they are pressed into unity, and elements have their being in this, that is, in that they do not produce their own division, and a fortiori, neither do they bring about their own delimitation.

A third difference between them is that elements are not of the same nature as the elemental, except to the extent that the latter is said to possess elements. For example, the elements that constitute our body are not in accord with the form of the mixture, if there happen to be bones and flesh, but they are [elements of] bones and flesh, appropriately assimilated to this form, whereas by themselves they belong to another hypostasis. (II 176) Moreover, if there are any elements of a substance, they could not be themselves substances. The elemental is the substance, but the element could not be the elemental. The extremes, therefore, are what has been divided off into a unique hypostasis versus what has been mixed into a single unity consisting of all things, and the intermediates between these two are the parts and the partition of these parts, when they are already somehow distinct, but they are not yet self-contained.

If these things are intrinsically distinct [that is, forms, elements, and parts] how are these four elements still forms of a kind, and how is it that what are called the kinds of being, are not also forms?³ And yet they are called the constituents of substance, and on account of this, they are called the kinds of being, because substance is composed from these kinds. If these were forms and not elements, what would the elements in fact be? For what elements could we find that are simpler than the kinds of being? They appear nevertheless to be forms, although they are also self-contained; motion and rest are manifest in substance, and each of the other kinds is such that each is opposite another kind.⁴ But how is it that the parts of the human being are head and hands and feet? And how is it that the whole is from whole parts, as for example, the sun and moon and the other [celestial bodies] of which each form is a whole, and yet our parts are contained by formal differences, as many parts as are not homeomerous?

Our reply must be that what is below always participates in what is above, so that forms are parts and elements, (II 177) and again parts are elements, but not always vice versa. Since some of the forms are simpler than other forms, the simple forms become elements of the composite ones, but not by undergoing [partition into] a composite part, which would be the division of that which is constituted by elements, but rather by remaining in their first hypostasis, and this was the hypostasis absolutely without parts, at least, as partless as possible in the case of a mixture. Moreover, before they are perfectly delimited, forms are divided into parts by necessity, and each is established in the order of parts, since they must be separated from unity into parts, and in this way they proceed into complete separation, which is formal separation. But in general, the forms wish to be delimited and as many forms as are not content with a unique station by themselves and out of longing for their original nature coincide into one, these forms also become parts, to the extent that they do this. Insofar as simple [kinds] are woven together, we must consider some forms simultaneously to be parts, but each in a different way, and others as

simultaneously forms and elements; nor do the forms [become elements] in the same way.⁵ But to the extent that they are unified and in their most collected state, they would be elements, and to the extent that they are separate from each other, it would be right to call them forms, and to the extent that they are distinct in some way, in the twofold nature of the hypostasis, they are properly called parts.

As many unlike parts are in the whole, they are at once forms and parts. They are forms because they are unlike, and they are parts because they are not by themselves, but are inherent in some whole, as for example, what are called our (II 178) organic [parts] or as for example, in the sky there are hemispheres and quadrants and different zones and poles and centers and axes and circles, all demarcated by certain demiurgic cuts,⁶ but not capable of existing in themselves. And even in souls, reason principles form such parts and so do all the causes of difference and all the forms of participation are of this nature. But as for things that subsist, [we must consider them as] belonging to a self-completing nature, except that there are collections of these, too, as if from elements, and there are forms of wholeness that arise from something like parts, as has been said earlier as well.⁷

Thus some forms are also parts. But the forms that are simultaneously elements are those that come together into an undifferentiated system of a single form, as for example, living beings that are composite, but that reveal their composition as a whole, such as mules or ostriches, or things like this. For these things are composed from different forms, just as if one form were a blend of elements.

In the same way, we see parts as well, some of them, just as parts, as many as emerge from their composite nature, but, though not yet self-contained, each one is separate and complete by itself. For such are agreed to be things that are homeomerous, though they are divided as a whole, nevertheless they remain in the same form, and therefore they share the same name with the whole and with each other. Some things also emerging into what is not homeomerous also nevertheless remain in the whole and share the common name that belongs to the same nature, as for example (II 179) the living being that is ranked in each of the species forms. For it is still a living being of such a kind and there is a part of a living being and a measure. Already the part is human, the other equine, not only by means of symmetry with each of the two (for this too would describe the homeomerous) but also by the approach and the inclination toward horse and human.

There are also parts that are quasi forms, such as those that are on each side of the forms that are self-enclosing by themselves, either as inferior such as our organic parts, or as superior, as the parts of the universe. For the latter parts are intent on belonging to the whole more than belonging to themselves, and the former are not able to exist by themselves or for themselves due to the incompleteness of their own nature.

There might be parts that become elements, as well, as for example those that complete the totality that is said to be from parts. That the totality is completed from parts, even if not every totality, then this one at least, is obvious. But as for the fact that the totality is completed from elements, the fact that one form is brought to completion from many forms makes [this] clear, while the many forms disappear into one and they no longer preserve the division in the structure of the totality. I imagine that of the species forms seen in the genus as in a whole, some are seen as parts (since they are not contained by their own delimitations), while the parts become the elements of the genus. This kind of co-aggregation of the many living beings is the one living being, or has its hypostasis in the one living being. And perhaps [to say this is to say] the same as (II 180) what was said previously. But the kinds of being, even if they seem to be forms of a sort, still are parts of the whole composition, but nevertheless they constitute through this very fact one nature that contains elements as one single substance, which embraces all things. But it is possible to finesse this topic with greater accuracy.

We must also specify which of the forms or which of the parts are able to become elements, and which are not. Not all can do so, as it appears, as for example the lowest forms.⁸ For if these too are elements, then there will be something after them composed from them.

And this too must be studied, whether the elements belong entirely to a higher ranking and simpler nature, since they retreat in the face of the hypostasis that presides over what is more composite. At least, it seems to be this way in the majority of cases, but not in all. Our body is an aggregate of elements that preexist, and human being and horse, to mention a rational animal and an irrational animal, are from elements that are more inclusive, and the soul is a mixture from substance and life and knowledge—all of which subsist prior to [the individual]. But the complete body of the all is from the four elements, although these are no longer presubsisting. Nor again is the first substance [derived] from elements that are prior by nature, since there are no elements before it. In fact, what is composed from elements always wants to be superior to its own elements, and the elements want never to exist by themselves, but always to be in what is composed of elements and together with each other, as for example, the parts want to be after the whole (II 181) and with each other. And that which is composed of elements makes use of its own elements as if they were matter, as if it were form that arose as an epiphenomenon from them.

If these things are so, then the first elemental could not be composed from elements prior to its own nature, nor could the elements be ordered prior to the composite, but they would manifest themselves in it first, and they would be less complete than the entire form, and therefore they would be simpler in conception. But in truth they would not even be simpler, but only less perfect and more divided. The parts are just as the forms are. For apparently the more

universal is more composite if it embraces more, but this is not true, rather it is simpler and superior.

Chapter 86. On Ones

■ In this chapter, Damascius continues to meditate on issues that Plato first raises in the *Parmenides*, particularly in hypothesis three, where Parmenides asks whether the One will be such as to have parts, if the One is. Damascius apparently asserts a number of rules or models for composition, for the relationship between part and whole, here approaching the topic from the point of view of the organizing principle or structure, that is, the one that governs the many. Like Plato, Damascius is concerned with the question of whether or not the parts are identical with the whole, whether or not the whole is identical with its parts, and whether or not a part can be said to be in the same sense that the whole can be said to be. For a careful treatment of Plato's discussion about parts and wholes, see Harte 2002.

Damascius shows once more that he is very concerned with the dialectical formulations in the second half of Plato's *Parmenides*. In fact, Damascius' discussion is largely inspired by the puzzles that are raised in the first half of the dialogue and elaborated in the second, concerning the relationship between unity and plurality and the distribution of unity within the confines of multiple being. Plato's discussion of parts in the *Parmenides* begins at 142b1. At 142d1, Parmenides draws the conclusion from the reiteration of the hypothesis, if the one is, that "the one is such as to have parts." At 144b3 and following, Parmenides elaborates the conditions under which the one can be said to have parts and affirms that "being is parceled out among beings of every possible order from the smallest to the greatest; it is subdivided to the furthest possible point and has an illimitable number of parts. So its parts form the greatest of multitudes." Plato also inspires Damascius' discussion here of the parts of being as constituted by the greatest kinds of being, sameness, difference, being, motion, and stability. Cf. *Parmenides* 143b1, where Plato discusses the relationship of difference between the one and being, from whence he derives the proliferation of the illimitable parts of being.

Another important source for the discussion of parts and their relationship to the greatest kinds is Proclus' *ET*, Propositions 66–74. Dodds in his commentary on Proposition 66, "every existent is related to every other existent either as a whole or as a part or by identity or by difference," quotes *Parmenides* 146b: "All is related to all as either the same or different. Or, if it is not the same or different, then it would be a part of that to which it is related in this way, or else it would be a whole related to a part." ■

What is the simplicity of the elements called and with respect to what composite is it so designated?

[We reply] that what is elemental is of two sorts, the one comes to be present [among the elements] in the manner of a form, and [this is] actually the simpler and superior kind, and the other is like a mixture and a blend of the elements when they come together, and this is presupposed as if it were a single composite

material. With respect to the latter, then, the elements are simpler, but they are not simpler with respect to the common character that determines the specific form of the mixture. Such a nature is substance, but it is substance in potential, when it is in a mixture and each of the elements is a part of the matter. These parts are not yet substance, but they are substantial and close to substance, though less complete.

What follows? Is the first substance [composed] of matter and form? Whence then has matter come to subsist, if not from an earlier [stage] in nature? In fact, matter in our world is from prior principles, (II 182) as they say.⁹ Therefore it is necessary that even There, there are participations from the prior principles, which function as matter or elements. But I must put off elaborating the argument concerning participation for another occasion. As for elements that are considered as in a certain plurality or in terms of a certain differentiation, substance, which is before every substantial division, could not be subsequent to its own elements. Since, then, substance first comes to be a hypostasis, it manifests together with itself and in itself also its own elements, as the whole contains the parts, and this universe contains what belongs to it and its elements in itself. I mean, for example, not matter, although perhaps it is true of matter (that it is an element), but I mean the elements of the form, that is, the four elements, whatever they are and however one defines them, whether the totality projected them as four parts [of the universe] or whether they were separated out as the visible and the tangible and their intermediates, visible everywhere, yet still from a single organization of the universe that participates in a unique form.¹⁰

Every one is prior to its own plurality by virtue of its own nature, and from this it, as it were, expands by means of the partition of the former into the latter. If one may put it like this, the one distends itself into the hypostasis of the many, though the one is not used up on the many, but offers a place to the many, for them to [become] a hypostasis as well. And even if the one is inseparable from the many, it is this way by nature.¹¹ If the many are said in three ways, as forms, as parts, (II 183) or as elements, it is entirely true that the one would be threefold, and that each plurality would have its own one, namely, the formal coaggregate, that is, the one form before division, the whole before parts and the elemental before elements. Moreover, the differences [among] the ones proceed in an analogous manner. The one of the forms is a polymorphic one. The one of the parts appears to have many parts, insofar as the whole extends itself along with its parts, through containing [them], but it is nevertheless the one without parts before the parts if it should subsist in the parts, since it grants a place for the subsisting to the parts, and this subsisting is subject to partition in the one. The elemental one is more perfectly bound into unity and it pours out its elements and it unites them with itself and does not allow them to be stationed after itself in reality, but it compels them to realize themselves in its own hypostasis.

Wherefore, although there are many things by nature, nevertheless all things become one, and the mixture is not one thing and the elemental something different, as we were now saying, for the sake of clarity looking at it from many perspectives, but the elemental is one and many, however the many are bound together with the one and they do not agree to be simply many, but they are unified and consumed by the one and established in the indeterminacy of the one. For in this way the elements appear to be everywhere related to each other and to the elemental [one] and these are not the matter of the one (for they are not parts [in the sense of being the matter] of the whole, nor do the forms belong to what can be called the all, substituting this expression for the whole [as its matter]) but they are only analogous to matter, and the plurality is of each form as related to its one, from which the whole form is constituted as one and many. For so, too, the elemental one is also many, but the many are enfolded by the domination of the one. Thus if the one dissolves its own simplicity and is, at it were, mixed with the many who take their stance in opposition to it, but more truly in imitation of it, by virtue of the respective defining limit of each, both the many are established as forms instead of elements, and the one has become somehow polychromatic and variegated,¹² and instead of the elemental and its elements, or a mixture and its components, it has become a number or monad,¹³ that which is both one in the forms and many.

But the parts and the whole must be seen in the intermediate state, once an abatement occurs, and therefore the parts have come to be in the division they boldly undertake, but nevertheless, since there is the pull of the one toward the parts with a view to apprehension and checking of their division, and there is also an inclination of the parts toward the one as the one is grasped in its turn and partially received, the reality of the particular character of the whole and of the parts is established in the middle. And therefore, in the case of the whole and parts, both their duality and their singular relationship is evident, but in the case of extremes, which ever extreme it is, still, these relationships are more obscure. In the case of the formal one and many, their singular relationship and merging is less visible because they hardly incline toward each other nor are they said to belong to each other, whereas in the case of the elemental and the elements, (II 185) the dual relationship is not clear either, because the plurality of the elements does not appear beforehand as something determinate within the one. Their plurality is rather demonstrated by means of argument, because of the fusion, if it is right to say this, of the elemental qualities.

And yet what wonder if the first elemental, substance, imparts the indeterminate to the elements, when the forms, whenever they function like elements and are mixed with others, just as we said earlier, are also blended together in a single mixture, even though there are times and ways that they escape the combination and manifest their own activities in addition? Since they are forms, they cannot be completely united. And therefore [in the case of the] the visible

and the tangible, everywhere either of the two is, the other one is, but nevertheless each is also different. So too in the case of the soul, the substantial and vital and cognitive are everywhere in the soul, but they are still distinct in some way. The same is true of the kinds of Being in intellect, for they are elements of that intellectual substance, not of the transcendent and absolute, but of the specific substance. These [kinds] too are forms, though they are more elemental than other forms, and are simpler, and therefore they are common to all forms and to the single formal nature that is prior to the many forms. Whence, too, the qualities also manifest themselves in this nature, but still, they are not yet forms when they are taken as elements. For they have not yet become parts. In the specific diacosm, there is the specific substance, and this is a uniform composite of the specific forms, (II 186) and there is a division of the substance as well as a whole that serves to collect this division, and this is the specific nature of part and whole. And in addition to this, belonging to the completely distinguished aspect of the specific hypostasis, the forms themselves are separated and there is a polymorphic one that contains the forms, as has been said, namely, the monad and that which is closely attached to the monad, number.

Before the elemental and unified specific substance is the true hypostasis of the whole and parts, which is seen in the differentiation of the first substance that is truly real¹⁴ which we call life, on this account, because it already is inclined toward differentiation and it is beginning to stir into differentiation, and as the name signifies, it seethes and boils up, but it does not yet fuse into the hypostasis of the form, but it can be seen in seething and seething up, whence also we call it whole and parts before the entire specific nature, because it moves while remaining and although it is unified it undergoes a form of differentiation: it is the whole by being unified and remaining, and it is the parts by being subject to differentiation and by being in motion. And therefore a single nature is the whole and its parts, because, although it is single, it is also already beginning to be differentiated, and this is no longer like the entirely Unified, since the Unified is not yet completely differentiated.

Therefore a single intermediary that we call by two names, whole and parts, is seen in terms of both whole and parts. But substance is prior even to this, [as] a unified nature that is absolute and undifferentiated, though not in the way that the One is [absolute], but [in the way that] the Unified [is absolute]. (II 187) This substance is both from many and with many, so that it is formed from elements and is itself the first thing to be composed of elements. And this is absolute substance, on account of which any particular substance is everywhere something elemental. We everywhere call what is compressed, substance, just as we call what is differentiated, life, and that which is completely distinct, form, even if each of these things should be in an ultimate state, as for example the corporeal. Substance is what is blended from the four elements. But what introduces movement in it and awakens it into the differentiation of its own activities is its life, for life is a movement and a preparation for specific

activity and a hypostasis before the activity. The form is the figure as extended. If every substance is compressed as a unity, or if you prefer, as fusion of the elements, it is especially true that the first substance and absolute substance is a coaggregate of the elements. The elements of substance are most of all and in the strictest sense elements, not that they are mixed in a fusion of their own limits, as Aristotle says regarding the elements in our world,¹⁵ nor yet are they united alone on their own summit, releasing everything else into differentiation, in the way that we maintained that the forms blended, becoming elements of the specific nature and thereby too revealing their own distinctive mark in the specific nature. Rather, it is as if they did not have differentiation, not even a specific differentiation, nor does any external force fuse them, but instead they are elements that are entirely whole, and that by nature are such as to belong to the truly unified substance subsisting in unity. (II 188) Therefore, the elements are not forms nor are they the kinds of Being. For the kinds of Being are in a way forms. What are they? Beyond this we have nothing to say about them. Nor yet are the kinds parts in the strict sense, since even as parts they are super formal.

Therefore we must investigate the question, what are the parts [of the original substance]?

[We answer that] they are the kinds of Being, but they do not, as they are called and conceived by us, subsist as specific forms. For we conceive and name all things in terms of specific forms, and I hesitate to say that these [names] are not even intellectual realities, but we are content if they are simply mental entities.¹⁶ But nevertheless, the things that have names and conceptions from our point of view have specific forms. Of things that are known in this way, we must allow that their specific nature is determined by the defining characteristics, and abstract from them only their division. For we say that forms are parts, but not that parts are forms. Therefore, the kinds of being are parts, to the extent that they are parts. Are they, then, what are called the “as it were” parts?

[The “as it were” parts] are not those that are bounded by the formal nature [which comes close to being] the divided aspect of reality, but rather the [forms] before these, such as these are. [We can say that the kinds of Being] are parts, but they are purely parts and parts in an absolute sense. Therefore the so-called kinds of Being subsist as parts before they are defined by their characteristics, and likewise they subsist as elements in the same way. Once we have stripped from the kinds of Being the necessity of division, we shall see that they (II 189) merge with each other, and they are unified into one single mixture, and in this way they can be seen as elements. They are elements in terms of subsistence, but the parts become elements through participation, since they also possess something that joins with the hypostasis of the whole. For the whole is the joining together of the summits as parts, mixed into one whole, and the parts become elements in these mergings (whence the aporia that often comes up,

that is, how can the whole be composed of parts, and how can the parts be after the whole and parted from the whole). But nevertheless, they are parts in terms of subsistence because they have their being in division. But the [kinds of Being] that subsist as delimited forms come to be by participation, that is, come to be parts more closely through the inclination toward the one and a kind of departure from division, but they become elements higher up, through unity, when they are rid, not just of differentiation but also of division. They are the same kinds of Being, subsisting in three different modes: [parts, forms, and elements.]

Therefore, do only the kinds of Being take on this triple nature?

[We answer that] as many things as are forms, and even the lowest forms, are constantly contained by the first principles, but are differentiated in different degrees, some first, others later, since some have more universal definitions that tend more toward the undifferentiated, and some have more divided definitions that tend more toward the differentiated. But nevertheless, whatever (II 190) is differentiated below is undifferentiated above. For whence could the things that are divided come to be, unless all things were There, undivided? Procession is nothing other than differentiation of what is compressed, not in the sense that it is a collection of all things, but [in procession] some things become manifest before others things, the more universal before the more individuated. Why should all things be completely differentiated in intellect, whereas all things could not be unified in substance? For the unified is always prior to the completely differentiated, and so the all as unified is before the all as completely differentiated. But why are the kinds of Being collected together There, if they are elements, as they say, of substance, or are only limit and the unlimited present There, since the philosophers¹⁷ also say this, but not the other forms, which would not presubstist in the Unified, before all things? For thus the Unified would not be the principle of all things, but only of those pairs everywhere derived from the limit and the indefinite, or from those either united or mixed from the so-called kinds of Being. If the summit of every form is the unity of the entire multiplicity in the form,¹⁸ how is it that the single principle of all things is not a unity of the multiplicity that derives from it and has imposed differentiation on the all?

Why then, if all are elements in substance and if all are parts are in the middle rank, just as all are forms in the third rank (which is the completely differentiated or intellect), nevertheless do we say that of the forms, that some of them are elements, as, for example, the kinds of Being, while some things are from the elements, as, for example, (II 191) a living being or a plant and things whose forms are composed? And why are these [for example, living beings] not also elements? In fact, the living being is an element of the human being and the human being is an element of the earth. And perhaps, too, the lowest form can become an element in individuals, and together with other forms, it can complete the individual human being.

Chapter 87. On Specific Forms

■ Here Damascius analyzes problems raised by Plotinus in the latter's treatment of individual forms versus specific forms (V.7), applying as he does so some fundamental principles of Neoplatonist logic. In the first part of this chapter, Damascius is concerned with the status of the final differentia as completing the essential definition of substance, that is, with the relationship between parts of the definition and the specific substance. Damascius also touches on a fundamental critique of Platonist metaphysics, insofar as it is difficult for Platonists to account for the individuation of substances, given that the essential form is the same for universal and for particular substance, and given that the individual must somehow be related to a universal in order for it to exist as an individual at all; this relationship cannot be one of identity, for if it were, the individual would be the universal. Nor yet can the relationship be one of nonidentity, for if it were, then the same form would not define both individual and universal. In the second part of this chapter, Damascius looks at several puzzles regarding the forms of individuals. ■

We say it is not surprising that all things, as many as are forms, are both parts and elements. But already of these, some are more universal and simpler, and therefore more suited to blending, because their demarcations are not developed or multiple; rather, the demarcations are just emerging, and have not formed links with other entities, whence they are more easily united and, as it were, fused with each other. But to the extent that procession tends to progress, it deepens and is built onto by means of limitations and partitions, and to that extent it is more difficult for the parts to blend together in a fusion, and the elements do not create a real unity, since this unity has, as it were, spaces¹⁹ that permit differentiation.²⁰ Whence the elements nearest the unified nature appear to be elements more than forms, and the farthest away tend to be forms rather than elements, and those in the middle are in the middle of the extremes, between synthesis and simplicity. Thus the kinds of Beings are more like elements, but the lowest kinds, the members of composite things, are more like forms, as for example, the human being and horse and in general the most specific of the forms. Intermediate entities, (II 192) which are also called "subaltern" with respect to the genera composed from them, have the rank of elements, and with respect to the genera before them have the rank of elemental. Thus the same forms are equally elements and elemental.

So are the most specific forms in any way the elements of the individuals?²¹ They are not the elements of other forms. For these latter [the elements of the other forms] will not be the last of the forms or the most specific forms. But they are not even the individuals. The universal must be present together with the other differentia [in the definition of the species form], and yet which individual differentia would belong to each [species] form?

[We answer:] perhaps the accidents. [The objector states that] the accidents do not complete the substance.²² Therefore, perhaps, the differentia are themselves substantial. Thus they will appear first, if indeed they characterize the individual, so that they will have their own form, even though they are individuals. And there will be a single form which is subject to birth and death as a whole, and which is neither monadic nor does it embrace the individuals. Or perhaps, then, the manner of division is double, the first dividing the one into many forms by virtue of form-creating differentia, and the other dividing the same whole by stamping it with different kinds of matter, and so it is more properly called the individual, because it is whole on each occasion, and it receives no change to its differentia.

Then is the differentiation between individuals related to matter alone? And what difference besides matter would belong to the forms?²³ [We answer that] besides this, there is none. If matter were shaped by form as something in addition to what is in the matter, then the form would be a difference, as if the image of Socrates in stone differed from the one in bronze, since the form that becomes substantial in matter would change somehow by means of the matter. If matter has no form, but it is potentially different, (II 193) then what is actual changes along with what is potential, except that no formal difference in addition to the matter is added. Let us leave off these things for the moment.

But I go on to say this, that nature has instilled the same complete form in many matters, [in order] for the matter in many places to receive the same form without difference. What follows? Is not one individual different from another? Yes, but just insofar as one is here and another there, but the form is nevertheless the same, so that if someone were to subtract the matter, the one form would appear. Therefore they are not different formally. Therefore they are not different by difference, even if they are different by matter, since otherness is a form. Perhaps they will say they are different in number.²⁴ But number is also a form and it can be indifferently a member of either side, and therefore the difference of two monads is undifferentiated.

How, therefore, is the whole form predicated of all individuals, whereas the form of Socrates is no longer predicated [of all individuals]?

[We reply that] it is not [Socrates] qua form whose application is narrowed; rather, it is [Socrates] qua particular. [Socrates] is equally a human being in terms of the hypostasis of the form that he is said to be, but the difference is between the individual and the universal. But the individual as compared to the individual does not differ; each of them is an individual. Therefore Socrates is not different from Plato, since all things correspond in them and they reveal the same traits.

But why is that while the human being is one reality, there is the universal [human] and (II 194) the individual [human]? Surely it is not superfluous for the one, the universal human being, to participate in the universal, and for the

other, the individual, to participate in the “particular” or individual, whatever that turns out to be?

We must say that the definition is of the universal from which there is a common participation for all the individuals, which we call the universal form in the many [particulars], and which is predicated of all [individuals] at once, since it is understood as universal.²⁵ But the form in each of the individuals is identical by being the same as the universal form and by the fact that each is the same as the form of each, by virtue of the character and the whole and the entire nature of the form (for there is nothing belonging to form that is not everywhere and in each particular), but the form that is the same in all by virtue of its hypostasis gets divided, and differs from itself as it gets drawn out into individuation, just as the body grows distant from itself into a continuous mass, although as a form it is the same undifferentiated reality everywhere.²⁶

For it seems that nature, having proceeded from the first stages to the last, has traversed the diametral path, and arrived at one opposite from another. This becomes clear in many ways, but it turns out to be the case precisely in what has been said. The individual form by itself is only one, since there cannot be two firsts, as Plato shows.²⁷ In the case of the lowest forms, the many individuals are the same thing, since they are many images of the same one form, not differing in form, but still many, since the one form is everywhere productive of the same [images].²⁸ And perhaps this generation is of two kinds: one takes place in the differences that specify the universal forms,²⁹ (II 195) and the other takes place in the undifferentiated dispersion of the same forms either as contiguous, in bodies and qualities, or as individuated in monads, human beings, horses, and forms of this nature. This generation of the many individuals that is not [owing to] differentiation is either brought about or undergone not only by the most specialized forms, but also by all the [specific] differences that are seen in these forms, along with the genera that are seen together with them. For example, in me there is the individual living being that is both rational and mortal, and obviously the generation of these is without difference, and this is the same as saying that [I am]an individual, [not divided] by differences. Many things also all undergo the same thing, for example, the kinds of being and every nature that proceeds to the point of individuation. But every specific form proceeds, and so we must investigate the prior principles, and see whether [or not] they result in some procession, and also those that appear to proceed, and see how it is that they bring about procession.

As we said at the beginning [of this chapter], the specific forms do not function like elements in the individuals, as the kinds do in the specific forms, but they are wholes themselves that function like elements and everywhere manifest the same characteristics, and just as the mixture of the one body, as elemental, is both in this particular part and in that particular part as a whole, [so it is with the] the mixture of the four elements that are everywhere dispersed. I do not know if it is worth continuing to elaborate this topic any longer.

Chapter 88. On Elements and the Elemental

■ Damascius develops the discussion on the basis of certain differentiations that prevail in Neoplatonist (Porphyrean) logic. Porphyry interpreted the Aristotelian notion of essential definition, in which one thing is predicated of another (*Cat.* 1b10) to mean that, for example, when the species term “man” or the genus term “animal” are predicated of the individual, then what is being predicated is the so-called “unallocated” or “absolute” form, which is distinct from the form as it exists within an individual. In this chapter Damascius asks about an “absolute living being prior to the living being inherent in humanity,” referring back to this notion of the unallocated term that Neoplatonists invoked for explaining essential definitions.

Although essential definition is only one topic discussed in this chapter, this point of Neoplatonist logic is the theme running through the entire chapter, as we read in the opening paragraph, where Damascius states that “the living being as universal or generic is prior to the human being.” Later in this chapter, Damascius discusses the relationship between genus and form in the terms of Plato’s language in the *Sophist*, where the *megista gene*, the great kinds, are treated as the genus terms for other forms. ■

(II 196) Returning to the initial aporia,³⁰ let us see whether or not the elements are inferior insofar as they constitute a hypostasis and insofar as they are elements, to the elemental, while yet by their nature they are superior to their characteristic property. For example, the living being as universal or generic is prior to the human being, but as an element in the human being it is more particular than the human being. Is this true in all cases?

[We reply that] some elements do not preexist [the elemental], as for example the elements of the universe could not be assumed to predate the world. Nor yet could the elements of the first substance, since the first substance is also equally the first elemental. Perhaps the elements are not able to preexist any other first elemental. For the particular elements of life are not able to subsist prior to the first life, nor are the elements of intellect prior to the first intellect, nor are the elements of the soul prior to the first soul. But when they are projected, the common elements that belong to each of the totalities are from that time on divided among partial realities, and the elements become more particular than the totalities that are forever being divided and more partial than their own totality, just as the parts and even the forms also contract the totality with respect to their own monad. And thus, too, the parts are more divided than their own substance, which we conceive as the collection of the elements. Whence in these cases the natural characteristics seem to preexist [substance], but not the elements themselves. For these are homogeneous and also synonymous, as for example, human nature is synonymous with the elements of humanity and equine nature with the elements of the horse, and so with the soul and the body and likewise with the parts of the (II 197) sun and

moon, and other common celestial bodies, since they have a celestial nature, and other elements of the entire universe, since they are cosmic.

Thus the elements are always structured by the character of that whose elements they are. For example, the forms are structured by the character of their own monad, since we say that the forms are intellective or psychic, or encosmic. And so one must imagine that the forms of life are vital and that they live through participation in the nature that projects them. Or rather, the elements of life were the plurality in its root existence, but the unique form was itself the elemental, and life was both the elemental and the elements. And thus, too, the forms are whole at their root existence, because they are parts of the whole and they are realized in the existence of the whole. And thus, too, the plurality of the monads is realized in the monad of each number, and therefore the triad is not only the one of the triad but also the plurality of the three monads. And so it is true to say also in the case of substance that the elements become substantialized in the root existence of substance, since they grow out of substance and they complete it in the manner that has been often described. Therefore we must not say, as we are often accustomed to saying, that the elements of substance are unitive, but that when they are realized as substance they become substantial. They are secondary to substance, which itself has a characteristic unique form, and the elements are its plurality when it is substantialized, since they are that in the substance which is itself pluralized. And if the same elements subsisted in the one in a different manner, (II 198) then they would be elements of the one. The one that occupies the place of substance is, as it were, unitive substance, and the unitary elemental is that of which the elements are unitary, just as the elements of intellect are anticipated by the unitary intellect.

Therefore, once more, is the character of the elements anticipated by the hypostasis?

It is most accurate to say this, that all things are anticipated in the gods, as many as are in the substances that are dependent on them.

But the problem was not about this kind of anticipation, but rather, if something that is in the more divided substances was anticipated in the more universal. How, then, is the absolute living being prior to the living being inherent in humanity?

Because the living being itself and the element, as it were, that is divided in the many forms are not the same, not even by virtue of their character. The latter was only something that belonged to the former, of which it constitutes an element, and it is just a living being, even if it is specified by the human being, while the former was another nature: it was all living beings simultaneously at once and all the forms that attend these living beings, human being together with horse and sun and moon and whatever else there is. And so all [living beings] proceed from it, and it is nevertheless called living being from the [living being] that forms its element, because life is also all things and it is

called life from one characteristic, that of seething.³¹ It has been said often that the names belong to what is differentiated and divided, especially the names of the characteristics, but that already they [name] the whole specific hypotheses themselves, and from these by analogy they name the parts, and then also, though more remotely, they name (II 199) the elements. But there is no name for the universal vessels that contain [all things]. What name could be complete and, as it were, all embracing, such that it befits the whole cosmos? For if the cosmos is named from one character, namely, from the fact that it is utterly set in order, so life is named from surging and resurging into differentiation, but yet it is nevertheless all things, so that the living being from its participation in life also participates in a kind of surge, because it is stirred into desire and perception. Therefore, that living being is not what we say functions as an element in humanity. This is only the character that is substantialized along with the human. The human being, that is, the absolute form of the human being as well as the first human being, is all human beings simultaneously, that is, as many as are formally differentiated in a more divided way. Therefore the human being in the earthly human, contained as an element, could not belong to that [higher] nature, but could only [possess] the character that comes from it and is named after that, in the sense of looking up at what he has seen (*ἀνατηρούσης ἃ ὅποεν*).³² But the same things are true concerning the other forms that are observed in the earthly human being and in the absolute human being. For as has been said often, each form brings its own elements with itself, and these share the same rank and the same form.

How, then, could the elements of something that is inferior share the same nature as the elements of something else that is superior, when it is not true to say this in the case of two hypostases that have the same rank? For the elements of my body and your body do not have the same specific form, either. And if this is true, because they are individual bodies, then (II 200) neither can the elements of a Syrian or a Libyan have the same specific form, anymore than can a horse and a mule. Yet characteristics are the same, as we say, both above and below.

This is true at first glance, but in a more precise way the characteristics are not the same, namely, the way that brings about that the procession of the same [take place] with difference, and does not allow, among things that differ, that the universal is undifferentiated. The intellection that suffers this [delusion and sees the characteristics as the same] either because of distance or through some obstruction of vision, projects greater universality on what is called common, stealing away small differences, or rather, even the great differences, because it imagines that the living being is common in the case of the mortal and the immortal, and what is even more paradoxical, in the case of intellect and in the case of me, insofar as I am a living being. For insofar as they are living beings, they do not differ, they say.

What then? Is there nothing universal?

If the universal is the same and formally one, there could be nothing in common among those things that are different in form. If what is not entirely other is universal, then even what shares in something while not even possessing any familial relationship would have something in common.

Therefore, does what is simply common and related in this way count as one and the same?

This is the cause of all evils, that our thoughts speed away directly, if we hear the word "other," to complete differentiation (II 201), and if we hear the word "the same," to complete fusion, tumbling, I imagine, through weakness and stumbling upon each of the forms, not able to traverse the hypostasis of each of the forms skillfully.³³ Therefore, something must not be allowed as common among different things, if the former is not itself capable of differing, nor again as different in identical things, which is not itself common. There is something that is in between universal and particular.

Therefore, do the synonymous characteristics anticipate each of the elements?

But this would not be the way it happens, either. In a certain kind of division the elements and the parts and the forms happen to be related to each other, but there is a different differentiation in a different place, as, for example, the triad [is distinct] from the three monads or the tetrad [is distinct] from the four elements, nor is the tetrad just composed of those three monads and another added to it, as it seems, but rather the division is unique for each of the monads, so that the more universal monads [are divided] in lesser numbers.³⁴ When the universal monadic form is divided, the division into two is different from the division into three and the division into four. Thus in the case of the universal living being, the division into two is different if one should say that one kind of living being is rational, and the other irrational, versus [the distinction employed] if someone were to take the rational being, insofar as the rational being is not identical to the universal living being, and were to divide it in its turn, if it should happen, thus, into immortal and mortal, he would make three elements of the human being, that is, living, rational, and mortal, and then the elements corresponding to the mortal in the third order are no longer the same in form as the previous elements, since they are neither rational nor living. But this triad of elements first appeared in the human being, and it is (II 202) from the human being that these elements are distinct, in the sense that they are the proper characteristics of the human being.³⁵

What follows? Are not the seconds always contained in the firsts and the more individuated contained in the more universal, so that also the three elements of the human being are in the living being, for example?

In that realm, too, the elements are contained together with the whole. And in that realm, too, the human being is in the unity. For the seconds are always in the first, beginning with the wholes that are in the wholes, and

together with the wholes and the parts that are in these, and equally also the elements and the forms and, to generalize, the multiplicities in their own monads. For so, too, substance is contained in the unified, and it is without differentiation from its own henad. In that realm, too the elements of each substance are undifferentiated and they themselves are contained in the henad, because they are not yet elements nor the elemental, since there is no differentiation there [in the Unified]. Thus parts are anticipated in the elements, but [only] in the elemental unity. And so, too, the forms are in the parts, although they are separating features, but simply divided. And therefore this is the way that the cosmic elements are partlessly in the supermundane light, whatever and however great it is, and the elements that belong to the human body are merged together in an undifferentiated state in the sublunary world. For the elements common to all living beings and plants and metals are present prior to manifestation in one unity, and below, the individual traits are (II 203) distinguished in each, with the elements of each existing [below] in the way that these are present [before]. And I say, "in this way," because they are not present [above] as they are in the form of distinct [elements], nor in the form of species. All things therefore equally both do not presubstist and again do presubstist. It is more universal to the one who [is able to] see universally and in a more unified and universal way, rather than than in terms of specific determinations.

But we should understand that the elements on each occasion proceed together with the elemental in its unity, and that they come to substist together with the subsistence of the elemental, and that everywhere the parts are equally present to their own totality, and that the forms are not thus inclined [to merge] into their own one, since they are entirely specified by means of their own differentiations, and they long to be on their own, and they have rendered their procession, as is right, double. When the elements are ordered as parts, then the elements are parts, for this is how the forms are in intellect, since they complete the multiplication of intellect, just as reason principles complete the polymorphic nature of the soul, and the multitude of things in nature also completes the polymorphic aspect of nature (there then would also be some plurality of this kind, polychrome, that belongs to the one form of the body, analogous to the polymorphic aspect of nature and of the soul and of the intellect.) We were saying these things were parts that were not homeomerous, and they were named by reference to the entire form, since they were called human or equine, because reason principles, too, are either expressed physically or psychically, (II 204) not that each reason principle is the soul or nature, nor is it the case that each part is the same as the human being, or the horse, for example, the head or the hand or foot, but that they complete the whole human being and each whole. And so the part is neither the same as the whole nor different, but in some way and in some manner [the part is the same as the whole or different], as Parmenides the great thinks.³⁶ Therefore, certain specific forms

proceed and exist in the universal and in their one simultaneously as parts and as elements.

Another procession arises spontaneously when each form is separated from the whole and from the forms that correspond to it, and this procession appears to be of things that are more perfect but, in fact, it is of inferior things, of things that have dissolved their sympathy and attraction to each other and with their one, but on this account they have completed their procession sporadically, however they can. The reason principle in the intellect and the reason principle in nature are equally superior to the one that belongs to this phenomenal human being, and the reason principle in the more universal soul that belongs to the soul of the human being is superior to the human psychic substance that subsists in isolation.

Therefore, this kind of procession is of forms that do not subsist as alike, but rather each acts on its own. And since the titanic division did not completely subsume them, these forms also have a coordinate existence relative to each other, consisting in the figure of a chorus or an army or, to summarize, some whole cosmos, as Plato says, "composed of wholes."³⁷ But this (concerns) parts and whole, so that one could better call it monad and number, divided off from (II 205) the monad, emanating as a series from its own principle in a descent of forms that are transformed by virtue of their unique differences. This is the nature of a cosmos, that it is one and also many worlds after the one. If so, all worlds are also one world, but like a chorus, [which can only be] one when it has a leader.

How this [cosmic nature] functions, we shall also investigate later, when we study the nature of all procession, investigating the procession of the first principles, as to whether there is or is not such a procession. But now let us conclude with the following summary, that the elements are always proceeding together with substance and with each other, and that the parts are proceeding with the whole and with each other, and that the forms, as many as have come to occupy the station of elements, are proceeding together with that of which they form the elements, those that are in the station of parts subsist together with the whole, and those that are in the procession of specific forms have come to subsist as forms by themselves and from themselves, and these are the forms that proceed sporadically, on their own, in the way that each number derives from its own monad, the more universal [from the more universal monad] and the more individuated [from the more individuated monad].³⁸ These are not entirely on their own, however, nor are they only distinct from each other and their own monad. For they participated in the community as parts, and the monad participates in nature as a whole, whence the same forms seem to be parts of the cosmos considered as having a form, both as utterly dispersed, and as in the complete unity of their specific leaders, as if they were lines converging together in one center, and they function in this unity like elements of the one universal substance.

Chapter 89. On the Origin of the Many

■ In this chapter, Damascius turns from the problems of the parts versus the whole (and how this relationship resonates through the formal or intelligible world, in terms of predication, of genus and species, and hypostasis and participants) to the question of whether or not the many or plurality can constitute a kind of self-sustaining reality. Here Damascius turns to the language of Plato's *Parmenides* and especially to the second hypothesis, where Parmenides discusses the implications of the hypothesis, "if a one is," as entailing that the one necessarily has parts: "any 'one that is' is a whole and also has parts" (142d9). By alluding to the *Parmenides*, Damascius invokes the Neoplatonist conception of the indefinite dyad, and simultaneously alludes to the One-all and to the Unified as the origin of multiplicity as such. The proliferation of the third henad, the Unified, as giving rise to the differentiated order of intellect and intelligible substance will serve as an introduction to the final topic of the *Problems and Solutions* as a whole, namely, the procession of the intelligible triad. ■

Let us say again from the beginning that the many on each occasion are either elements or (II 206) parts or forms. And of the forms, some are unified in the specific substance, and they are also what we call the specific elements. But others are seen in division, those that we call the specific parts, as for example, the first name applies to the four elements of our body, and the second name both to the parts of the body, and the homeomerous parts (since the latter are also specific parts since they have the same form in a divided state), and still more so, to the non-homeomerous parts. Still other forms are [not seen in terms of division but] are autonomous, as for example, human being and another human being and sun and moon. And in the third degree of descent, the [latter] can themselves be taken in three ways: the elemental nature can be conceived as their highest degree; in terms of their completion in their one and their attraction toward it, they can be conceived as whole and parts; in terms of the unique, isolated, and characteristic boundary of each form, they appear as number [proceeding] from a monad, or as a series from the principle, and as the completion of the autonomous [whole] from the autonomous elements, whereas nothing proceeds beyond this [degree]. Anything beyond this would be the complete dispersal of all things as utterly separate, and utterly scattered, and under such conditions, chaos will occur, that is, unless all things are ordered toward their one. Sometimes, indeed, this condition is generated in the all, but then, nevertheless, the all is led back to the one and is coordinated with the one.

But let me for the present defer the discussion about procession, as I said previously, since it must await the following discussion, [the inquiry] into whether each plurality is of two kinds. One kind is the plurality of forms that is inherent in intellect and is, as it were, the plurality of the intellect, (II 207) and the other kind is the plurality of the many intellects after the one Intellect.

Again, also in the case of soul, there is one plurality of souls that consists of the souls after the one soul, and another plurality that consists of the psychic reason principles in the one soul, to which we compare the plurality of the distinctive forms within intellect. And we must also consider the case of parts and elements in a similar way, if there is one immanent plurality and another externally constituted plurality. But let us leave these questions to the side for now.

Now since the many are said as elements or as parts or as forms, it is clear that it is not the same thing for them to exist as many forms or parts or elements. Each of these is some kind of plurality and a qualified plurality.

But would plurality be by itself, or the many be, if they were absolute, and of what would they be, and where would they subsist?

[Surely the absolute plurality] is prior to the plurality that is divided in three ways as well as the three kinds of many, and thus prior to the elements, and therefore prior to the elemental. For the latter is coordinate with and in the same rank as its own elements.

Of what, then, is the absolute plurality composed?³⁹ Just as the elements compose the elemental, what do the many constitute?

[We reply that the many belong to] the one, as parts belong to the whole. For the one does not function as a part of the many, but it is like the whole before the many, and like a monad of the many, and although it is one thing, it is all things. Therefore all things are the many of the One, and they themselves constitute the hypostasis of this One, as parts (II 208) constitute the whole and as the elements the elemental. For we do not say that there are two substances, the one and the many, nor do we say that the elemental and the elements are two, nor the whole and the parts, nor the single monad of intellect and the number of forms in intellect, but rather one and many are said of both. And therefore, one must think of this nature as the absolute one-many, as, for example, each form is one and many.

What, then, are the many? Are they monads? But the monads are forms as well, and the many are before the forms. Are they parts? But the many are also before the elements, and the elements are before the parts. Perhaps the many are elements?

But the elements mix with each other in the mixed substance of what is composed of elements, whereas the many wish to be a multiplicity that belongs to the One.

Therefore do the many not intermingle with each other? Or are the many separated from each other more than the elements?

This question is not logical. It is not that the many do not mix with each other, but that they are still less partial than elements and more unified, so that they become One before they can be intermixed, and instead of making a mixture they make the One. The many belong to the One and not to substance.

Therefore, are the many distinct from each other, or do they cohere with each other?

The coherence and the differentiation belong to the forms and are themselves forms, so that it is not true to say this, even in the case of parts. For the parts are seen as forms when they are being subjected to differentiation, but not when they are (II 209) completely distinct. A fortiori, the elements eschew both the coherent and the distinct. Nevertheless, the elements do attempt to remain different from each other in some way. Each element contributes something different, and still more is that the case with the parts, and still more with the forms. But the absolute many do not wish to introduce great differences, since they will then be many differences and not the absolute many, but they are nothing other than the many, without qualification. And so whichever one of them one gets hold of, and even if one takes them altogether, she will see nothing other than the many. For there is not "one thing" and "another," nor "altogether," nor "all," since these are differences and they are distinctive properties, but there is just "many" and only a plurality, and they do not belong to themselves nor are they by themselves. For neither do the elements nor the parts nor the many forms exist by themselves. There is no self-sustaining multiplicity, but the multiplicity is always constituted around a one, a monad, a whole, or a mixture. And therefore the many as absolute are multiplied around the One as absolute, and the multiplicity is of the One, just as the division is of the whole, as a kind of diminishment of it or a procession that happens within itself, and thus came to constitute the perfection of its own nature. And therefore the One can be taken immediately as many, and the many are everywhere present with the One.

Yet perhaps this is the celebrated indefinite dyad of the *Parmenides*,⁴⁰ which is indefinite because of this, because what is not a plurality cannot have a limit, but is everywhere many, and without even this "everywhere"; rather, it is "in many places." (II 210) And yet not even the "in many places" can be taken in relation to anything other than the absolute many.

This is perhaps the One-many from which also the denials begin in the first hypothesis,⁴¹ which also first generates all the definitions of the things that are qualified in some way or another as differentiations.⁴² This is the origin of its also being called the One-many, because it contains in its own many the complete cause of the things that proceed from it by means of every division. And thus the Chaldeans call it the "Source of Sources,"⁴³ and Orpheus calls it "Metis, pregnant with the seed of the gods,"⁴⁴ and the Phoenicians call it the "Cosmic Aion,"⁴⁵ since it has gathered all things into itself.

But we are accustomed to attributing these names to the lower limit of the intelligibles, whereas the intelligible is One and being together, yet this is One-many but not One-Being. Plato⁴⁶ showed that the One-Being is the indefinite dyad, but not the One *absolutum*. Yet our account seeks further the nature of this so-called absolute One-many, which is not the One-Being. The one that is differentiated from substance is also the one that takes substance as its vehicle, and is itself unified substance, just as life exists in a twofold sense, the one is

unified life and the other is life subject to differentiation, and intellect also exists in a twofold sense, the one is a henad, and the other a substantial form.

But where would the absolute One be, which is the beginning of the two processions—the procession of the unitary and the so-called substantial procession?

Perhaps the One-Being, which we call the Unified since it is before both, is itself the absolute One, for it was One itself, but in an amplified way.⁴⁷

[We reply that] the absolute One, if it is before Being and the One, (since it is neither [II 211] Being nor the One, inasmuch as they are contradistinguished) is nevertheless one in a different mode; it is one before distinction and and contradistinction. Moreover, it is absolute because it is not substance, not life, and not intellect. And yet how could it still be the lower limit of the Unified? For it is not Unified in an absolute way, since it is not the first Unified. If it is a particular Unified, it will be a particular one, since it is one before both [Being and the One] which in fact was the Unified. In general, the argument seeks an absolute One, which is only One, and not One-Being. After all, the absolute intellect is the first intellect, and the absolute life is the first life, and the absolute substance is the first substance. Therefore, it is necessary that the first henad not be the substantial henad, nor the vital nor yet the intellective, but it is the absolute henad, and the pure henad, and not a qualified henad.

But perhaps the third member of the intelligible must be placed in the intelligible [intellect]⁴⁸ and itself must be made the lower limit of the intelligible, and in between this and the unitary substance we must place the absolute One, as the first and absolute god, if as they say, One and god are the same (since what is before this is not correct to call a god), and this is the One-many.⁴⁹ But in the *Parmenides*, Plato showed that the Unified was the many before the One-Being, and therefore the indefinite multiplicity, because it was separate from the One-Being.⁵⁰ But the One is said to be many now in another way, as the principle is said to be what comes from the principle, and as the monad is said to be number. And therefore, because of differentiation, the procession arises from this point, because the absolute One (II 212) was this many. Whence too each of the things that proceed in terms of the concentration of its own internal multiplicity, also generates the external [multiplicity] from itself.

Perhaps therefore we must assume that the absolute [One]⁵¹ proceeds from the qualified Unified, just as the absolute substance of the substantial henad is from a qualified henad, or we must make that One-Being two-faced, so to say. For the limit of the intelligible is praised as source of the intellective as well, so that to the extent that it is a source of the things proceeding after the intellectives, it is the One-many, and by virtue of the relationship with what is after itself it dissolves the unity before both into the hypostasis of the absolute One, but to the extent that it is the limit of the intelligible, it is thus the qualified Unified, and is One-many not as the absolute many, but as absolute One-many. Someone could adduce evidence for either hypothesis from the theologies:

from the Chaldean and Orphic he could maintain the second thesis, but from the Egyptian and from the Phoenician the first. The gods alone would know the truth. But let us this point be [the end of] our deliberation concerning these matters. Perhaps we shall make some investigation again concerning them.⁵²

Perhaps, therefore, the absolute One, which is the all-One, since it is the unitary entities and the substantial entities, is before the Unified, and the absolute Unified is after the One, since the Unified is established as absolute Being and absolute substance, and is that in which all substance is unified, both the so-called unitary substance and the substantial substance that is contradistinguished from the former, since in either of these kinds of substance [one finds] a particular substance. One kind is (II 213) unitary substance, another is substantial substance, and absolute substance is prior to differentiation, and it possesses what is called the unitary and the substantial in itself. And, therefore, we must posit the absolute substance itself, after which substance is differentiated, which is sometimes called unitary and other times called substantial, but which is better to call Unified and mixed, since it is thus distinguished from the unitary.⁵³ And if this system prevails, all of these doctrines will agree with each other, both as given by the philosophers and by the theologians. But we shall speak again later concerning these things.

But let us go back to the original point, namely, that the plurality of substance, which is distinguished in two ways, consists either of elements or parts or forms, to use a more general expression, that is, these are the parts of unitary substance or unified substance, whereas the many of the single and absolute substance is the absolute many, and as Plato⁵⁴ says, the indefinite multiplicity and the absolute undifferentiated, since no otherness has yet become manifest. But how is it many, if it is not yet separate in any way?

[We reply that] just as the one is in the Unified, so too are the many, which are like a profusion and a release that belongs to the Unified,⁵⁵ and such is the nature of the many that belong to the Unified which is prior to both [one and many]. If the many belong to the Unified and not to the One, one should know that the absolute One that is prior to absolute substance as both [One and Being] contains the absolute many. The second principle is the many of the absolute One, just as power is said to be the principle of the father.⁵⁶ Therefore, the prior of the two principles is an absolute One, and absolute many is the second, absolute substance is the third, as (II 214) indeterminate substance. Below, the double row of henads and substances develops out of it. This is also the true origin of the differentiation of any kind of multiplicity, when the many undergo differentiation under the influence of an otherness that reveals itself, whether the many are elements, or parts, or forms. In the Unified prior to these there is a multiplicity, but it [the multiplicity] is at once like the One in the Unified and like the multiplicity that is parallel to it. As the One it has not become separate from Being, and thus neither has the multiplicity divided into many, but it remains in the One, running along in the unified nature, which could

neither be said to be many nor one but only both, as it is Unified before both. But nevertheless, in the Unified as well, we ascend from the things below by analogy, since in that realm, these things are not there, but they are analogous to [the one and the many], though they are unknowable in terms of what is familiar [to us]. And so the summit of the Unified we call mixed, and [say that it is] composed from elements; the middle we call whole and from parts; and the third we call monad and specific number together with the monad. And in general, we call the third intellect, the second life, and the first Being, [deriving these ranks] from differentiations that only exist in the lower realm, attempting by way of suggestion to illustrate the perfect and complete descent of that which is undifferentiated.

Section XV. On the Procession of the Unified

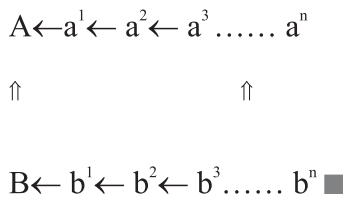
Chapter 90. Seven Questions on the Procession of the Unified, Questions 1–3

- 1. If the Unified is immediately after the One and subsists in the sphere of the One, how could any differentiation be present in the Unified?
- 2. Is procession double: one uniform, as Athena proceeds from Athena, and one heteroform, as Athena is from Zeus, or is there one nature shared by all procession that proceeds in both ways?
- 3. Why is one kind of procession of similar forms and the other of dissimilar forms, whether separately or whether one procession contains both kinds? If there is a difference among the processions, what is the cause of the difference?

As we saw in the previous chapter, Damascius employs the Proclean terminology according to which multiplicity can be studied as internal and external, as uniform and heteroform procession, or as horizontal and vertical procession. It would seem, in the words of A. C. Lloyd, that Proclus refers “to procession and multiplication as the external activity of an entity, and reversion and unification as its internal activity” (Lloyd 1982, 33). Lloyd goes on to cite the example of *PT* V.18.283–284. The demiurge addresses the younger gods, and his words are described “as the external activity of the intellect; for they ‘make the indivisible proceed to divisible existence’” (Lloyd 1982, 33). Here begins Damascius’ treatment of Proclus’ theorems on relationships between what Proclus calls “orders.” At *ET* 108 and 109, Proclus sketches something that appears to be the support for Damascius’ description here of vertical and horizontal, or internal and external modes of procession.

Proclus' *ET* proposition 108 is as follows in Dodds' translation: "Every particular member of any order can participate the monad of the rank immediately superjacent in one of two ways: either through the universal of its own order, or through the particular member of the higher series which is co-ordinate with it in respect of its analogous relation to that series as a whole."

Dodds also adds in a note to this proposition the following scheme, according to which propositions 108, 109 and the two following may be illustrated diagrammatically as in the diagram below. Here we have two successive transverse series or strata of reality proceeding from their respective "monads" or universal terms A and B: thus we have two kinds of procession, one of B from A (such as soul from intellect) and one of B1 from B (such as world soul from soul).



(III 1) Having established these preliminary definitions, let us initiate the discussion concerning procession, inquiring whether the Unified proceeds in itself [inwardly] or from itself [externally], since our doctrine attributes to the Unified the summit, mid-point, and nadir, that is substance, life, and intellect, or whatever metaphorical expression one uses [to describe them] based on lower entities. There are good reasons for objecting to either position [that is, either internal or external procession].

If the Unified is unified in the sense that it subsists immediately after and in the sphere of the One,¹ because there is not even a division between One and Being at that point, by what contrivance could there be any other sort of differentiation inherent there [in the Unified]?² For the first differentiation of all (III 2) is that between the One and Being, since the fusion and unity of these constitutes the first union. All other realities are differentiated either in terms of the One, as for example, the unitary, or in terms of Being, as for example, substantial number. Therefore, a first otherness of the two monads must become manifest, so that the numbers may be divided along with their corresponding monads.³ But where the single monad is prior to the dyad, or there is rather not even the monad, if it is true that this monad is distinguished with respect to its own number, but a single complete nature completely unified and undifferentiated, how could any distinction into first, middle, and last arise here? For to introduce darkness into the light is the same as introducing the mobile into the immobile (the pure immobile), or to introduce the temporal into eternity is the same as to introduce any distinction at all into the first undifferentiated and unified principle.

If the differentiated is after the Unified, and the differentiated is from the undifferentiated and after it, neither of the things from it would be in that [Unified]. The first and the middle and the last arise either in what is already distinct or in what is subject to differentiation. For these could not rightly be found There. I omit to mention that [for Parmenides] the beginning and middle and end appear in the limit of the differentiated nature, far from that [primary] station, as Parmenides⁴ says, whereas the hypostasis of the whole and parts is prior to the (III 3) differentiated nature and reveals that number is even older than that hypostasis. But if number is not yet in the Unified, then neither can the triad be in the Unified. If the triad is not there, then neither are the elements of the triad: first, middle, and last.

Notwithstanding [the provision of the *Parmenides*], the *Oracles* and the theologians have announced the intelligible triads to us, and the processions of the divine principles from the single original principle of the universals. Moreover, reason itself also requires that there be a procession in that realm as well, even if this procession is unified as much as possible. First of all, if that nature is unified because it is after the One, since it is also after the many, it is necessary for it to be multiple in some way. And if the One checks procession, multiplicity awakens procession and renders it complete. If the Unified is the One-Being because it is before substance and One, there must be something before either kind of life, both the unitary and the substantial; and likewise, before either kind of intellect there must be the combined intellect, that is, unified intellect and unified life, just as there is also the unified substance. But where would the Unified be?

[We respond] that it would be in the whole unified diacosm. Therefore, even that diacosm possesses three orders throughout. From it proceed substance, life, and intellect, which form its external multiplicity, since it has not produced these differences with itself as a whole. The external multiplicity by nature arises in accordance with the internal multiplicity, whether it is the cause or the subsistence, and whether the multiplicity is differentiated or unified. We admit that the internal multiplicity is unified, yet it is nevertheless analogous to the differentiated. And if someone says (III 4) that the many are from the One, still, nevertheless, the many are not in the One, and one should know that the many are the inward multiplicity of the One, if that is a permissible expression. And if this is not true, yet it is easier to concur that the unified and as yet undifferentiated multiplicity must be intermediate between the One and the differentiated unity. These are the problems on either side concerning the inner multiplicity that [is in] the intelligible.

There is equally a problem concerning the external [multiplicity]. For either the produced multiplicity has the same form as the producer, as for example, the many unifieds are from the one Unified, as the intellects are from the one intellect and the souls from the one soul, or else the multiplicity

has a different form, as soul is from intellect or intellect from life or life from substance, and so from the Unified are substance and life and intellect. If this is so, the Unified does not proceed, nor does that nature suffer procession, but what proceeds from it is another entity. After all, the many proceed from the One as the expressible proceeds from the Ineffable, but the nature of the One does not proceed or become many, nor does the nature of the Ineffable become expressible. And if that is true, what differentiation could there be within the Unified nature? It is the same thing if someone says that the many proceed from the One under a similar form (III 5). It is the same also to say that the differentiated are from the Unified. But for what purpose would they proceed under the same form? From the preservation of the same form, so to speak, the result will be the same in the case of beginning, middle, and end. Nothing proceeds via a simple destruction of the same characteristic, unless some difference be also added that transforms the things proceeding in terms of their form. Nor will it do [to say that] the same form is undermined by multiplicity without undergoing a transformation [of its nature], nor is the same form capable in and of itself of differentiation, when there is no difference or differentiation added to it. For not even in the case of the individuals differing numerically is it easy to accept that the procession into individuals occurs without any structural difference, and certainly not in the case of universal form or specific [form]. Thus each star and every living being is a common form and also differs in form. But if the procession is like the things that proceed, that is, at the same time it is both common and unique, just as human and horse and living being are each common and unique, how does the difference proceed from the living being that is undifferentiated? How does what is inherently undifferentiated become parceled into many living beings in the formal unity of the procession?

And yet the argument if it is formulated concerning the Unified is even more difficult. For one must remove every proper characteristic [that depends on] differentiation from this, both uniform and heteroform. Therefore also the so-called differentiation that involves the internal multiplicity must be removed from it as well. Intellect, since it is a form, can perhaps be differentiated into many forms, and the whole can be differentiated into parts, and the mixed into elements. But how could the Unified be differentiated by means of procession that is internal to it? Neither can it be differentiated in terms of (III 6) heteroform procession, since how is it possible to speak of any transformation of form or property in the identical and, to say it better, unified nature? Nor can it be differentiated in terms of a uniform procession, since the Unified is nothing other than what it is called, Unified, so that as the Unified, at least, it could not become distinguished. Therefore it is not differentiated according to a uniform procession. If it is differentiated inwardly in both ways, as Unified life is differentiated from Unified substance

and Unified intellect, either of these results will be strange, just as would be the case, respectively, both to the uniform procession and to the heteroform procession.

But now we must investigate this [question] in general, whether procession is double, as the philosophers say, one uniform, as Athena proceeds from Athena, or heteroform, as Athena is from Zeus, or if there is one nature shared by all procession that proceeds in both ways?⁵ For neither can the particular proceed without the universal nor could it even come into existence, nor does the universal proceed without the particular or without difference. In fact, Athena from Athena comes as a second from a first, a more divided from a more complete, ouranian from hyperouranian, if this should happen. These things alone do not change Athena formally, but rather there is also particular Athena-hood, in which every (III 7) Athena is first in her own particular nature, since even each human soul differs formally from every other. By how much more will the many Athenas differ in form from each other, since every god is a summit for the nature that it has.⁶ And therefore, the procession that is called uniform is obviously also heteroform. Moreover, Athena is also from Zeus, a god from a god, and intellect from intellect and the demiurgic from the demiurgic, and the intellect-instilling from the intellect-instilling, depending on the case. And so the uniform is evidently the heteroform. Perhaps then all procession everywhere is of both kinds, unless there are times when the similar prevails, and times when the dissimilar prevails.

But we must also investigate the following, why one kind of procession is of similar entities and the other is of dissimilar entities, whether [each takes place] separately or whether the procession is of the two. Perhaps all processions are similar or all are dissimilar. As an example of what I mean, we say that Zeus and Athena proceed from Zeus, and each [of the other gods proceeding from Zeus] is a different god, but they could not be generated as many from one, unless the one were all things. For always the more universal gathers the more divided in itself, just as the living being contains all living beings, human and horse and cow. And the same forms simultaneously proceeding and proceeding (III 8) separately were all forms of the living being. If Zeus, sharing the same form, proceeds from Zeus in a way that is not similar to the other gods, if someone were to pay attention to names, perhaps he would be at a loss, observing the two processions that are distinct from each other. If he were to think that the more particular Zeus who proceeds as second or third is not formally the same as the prior Zeus, [given that] the one was all the gods that proceeded, but the other was one of the gods that proceeded, he will observe that procession as a whole and the procession of all things consists in a partition of the one [Zeus], that is, a partition of the subsistence of the complete Zeus. Therefore, each god is a part of the cause and is synonymous with it, and none is a whole with its whole, but is in the part that each one proceeds as.

If the whole is the cause, and the others are caused as a whole, Zeus as a whole is not the same as the part of Zeus, for example, the second Zeus or Athena, and it is clear that all are generated as dissimilar, and they are different from one another in their form[s]. But their sharing in Zeus extends to the name [alone].

Since even if there is a difference among the processions, what is the cause of the difference? Why is there a similar and a dissimilar procession from the same [god]? What is the determination of the advent of that kind or this kind? Is it because the procession that transmits a similar form is accomplished in the division of the particular subsistence, but the procession that transmits a dissimilar form is accomplished in the cause of difference that is present in an anticipatory way?

[We reply that] first, the cause is the subsistence of the nature that contains [the different form], as for example (III 9), the cause of the subsistence of Athena is a completing predicate in Zeus that is prior to the subsistence of Zeus. Or else Athena is substantialized together with Zeus, and without her there could be no Zeus, which is easier and truer to say. And therefore, the procession of the unlike form is also accomplished according to the division of the subsistence. Second, the division of the subsistence subsists in Zeus, with the more divided proceeding from him, as for example, the procession of the similarly formed series called “Zeus” is from him, and therefore it is not that the series generated from Zeus is in him as subsistence, but rather it is in him as a cause relative to the series that is produced and as subsistence relative to what produces the series.

The following too is worthy of study: perhaps one entity functions as subsistence for another entity, but can be called the cause of something else, [so that] it is not useful to bifurcate the nature of each thing with the so called “subsistence” of itself or “anticipation of the cause of the secondaries.” We can say the same concerning participation. In one way the living being is in human being, and in this way it is [a form of] participation, but in another way it completes the human being, and in this way it is the subsistence of the human being.

Chapter 91. On the Possibility of Procession, Questions 4–7

■ Damascius continues his discussion from chapter 90 above, concerning the possibility of procession from the Unified. To review, in chapter 90, Damascius poses the following questions:

1. If the Unified is immediately after the One and subsists in the sphere of the One, how could any differentiation be present in the Unified?
2. Is procession double: one uniform, as Athena proceeds from Athena, and one heteroform, as Athena is from Zeus, or is there one nature shared by all procession that proceeds in both ways?

3. Why is one kind of procession of similar forms and the other is of dissimilar forms, whether separately or whether one procession contains both kinds? If there is a difference among the processions, what is the cause of the difference?

In this chapter, he proceeds to ask the following questions:

4. Is procession possible?
 - a. How do the many proceed from the One? Why does One alone not proceed from One, and why do the many not proceed from many?
 - b. Why doesn't the whole proceed from One, as from a whole? Why is the effect always more divided than the cause?
 - c. Is procession from Being, and how could what exists already, even before procession, proceed? Or is it from not-being, in which case how could anything arise from what in no way has being?
5. How is there procession into matter from intellect?
6. How do we account for the fact that unity and differentiation are manifest simultaneously and for the opposition that arises in a single procession, that is, between the distinguished and what it is distinguished from?
7. Can the Unified be a cause of differentiation? It is as if the One could make something that generates its opposite. If it is descent that differentiates, what is it that has undergone this descent itself? ■

Advancing still higher, one could reasonably ask the question, how is it that the many proceed from One? Why does One alone not proceed from One, and why do the many not proceed from many? But now we say that the many gods are from Zeus. But perhaps (III 10) [procession is from] many as they are already contained [in the One], whether as subsistence or as cause or as participation, according as one likes to say, so that the many gods proceed from many gods.

What could proceed from a One as a whole from a whole, since the product is always more particular than the producer?

[Our answer is that] the entire series in the case of what is called the procession of the similar form has simultaneously proceeded from the One as a whole, but in the case of the procession of the dissimilar, the chorus of the gods that have been simultaneously engendered is a whole as one complete god [comes] from one whole god.⁷

But perhaps one could say that the entire demiurge has proceeded from Kronos as a whole, as one complete world from one complete world, the demi-urgic from the titanic.

In that case, would Zeus then be of equal station with Kronos, or is the containing world of equal status with the world it contains? In corporeal masses, the container exceeds the contained. Therefore, the analogy will obtain also among the incorporeals, and the world of Kronos will contain the world of Zeus; the world of Ouranos will contain the world of Kronos, and the world of night that of Ouranos, and again the absolute single world ordered before all worlds will contain the world of Night. So the whole does not proceed from the

whole, for Kronos would not then merely contain the demiurge, but would also exceed [the demiurge], so that this form of procession is also something that consists in partition. And therefore every productive cause of the internal plurality divides its procession. And so we shall be compelled everywhere to posit the internal plurality (III 11) as greater than the external plurality. Since all things are from one, this one, which we call the absolute One, will contain a multiplicity in itself, [or] the many could not have proceeded from it, and an infinite regress will result.

Once more raising a different kind of puzzle that is at once ancient and more recent, [we can ask,] is procession from Being—and yet how could what exists already, even before [procession], proceed? Or is it from not-being,—and yet which member of reality could arise from what in no way has Being? For there is no matter in that realm, so that what is in act could proceed from what is in potential. And yet nothing in act could be produced by what is in potential, since what is in act is superior to what is potential, and that which is generated is always inferior to its originator. Neither could anything arise from what already is, nor from what is not, either in potential or act. For example, life, we say, proceeds from substance, and intellect from life, and soul from intellect, and the entire corporeal nature from soul. And so the second will be in the things that are prior or they will not be in act. And the latter will make procession impossible, but the former will make it superfluous, in addition.

If someone says that [what proceeds] is in [the prior] in the cause, then we inquire what this expression “in the cause” means. Does it mean that what has proceeded is in what produced it, as the same either in form or in number? But the latter is impossible. For the effect is other than the cause. They are not the same, even in form. For the first form in each thing is one, since the human being in this realm is not the same as the human being in that realm in form, for one is the image and the other the original, and the one is in matter and the other is in intellect, and the one in soul is a different, intermediate form, (III 12) in between each of the extremes. If [cause and effect] are not the same in form or in number, then there could not be something in the originating cause other than the originating cause of the originated itself. Again, why will one thing be the cause of another thing? For it is the like the case of what is originating from what is not. The originating cause itself is other than the generated. How can one thing be generative of another thing, whether in itself, or whether as another thing, in itself?

Reason also draws an absurd conclusion in the case of things that have proceeded into matter from intellect. For necessarily, nothing that is rooted in matter can be first, but all things come from That realm. Neither, therefore, can what is imaged in matter be first, nor can what is created in matter be first, nor can the material form, nor can what is spatialized and has acquired mass here [in matter be first]. For these are also forms that differ from their opposites. And so they cannot proceed from above, nor can they subsist There before

[they are expressed in matter]. But what subsists [There] before could not allow itself to proceed into matter, as, for example, things that are eternal and un-generated.

But apart from these aforementioned aporiae, we say that the completely distinct has already proceeded from the Unified, but that these things, the Unified and the distinct, come about through unity and differentiation, (III 13) and unity and differentiation are manifest simultaneously, and so in general are the opposites that arise in a single procession. But where there is union, the Unified is also there, and where there is differentiation, there also is the distinct that has undergone differentiation. Therefore each of them is in the distinct, both the Unified and the distinguished. Therefore the Unified from which the distinct proceeds, is not before the distinct. If unity is in the Unified, and if where this is, there is also differentiation, the distinct will also be in the Unified.

Still worth inquiry is what it is that has brought about the distinct instead of the Unified, and made the distinct subsequent to the Unified. For how could the Unified be a cause of differentiation? It is the same as if one made out that an opposite were capable of generating its opposite. If it is descending that differentiates, what is it that has produced this descent itself? Again, the state of being superior is not what produces descent.

91.1. Continuation of the Seventh Question and Reply

The same kind of problem emerges in the case of the One and the many that it has long been customary to mention, namely, how the many are produced from the One.⁸ For it is like saying that the cold proceeds from the hot.

Should our response to this problem be that which the philosophers give, that what proceeds is inferior to what (III 14) caused it?⁹ Thus to the extent that what has arisen from the One departs from the One, in this way it is not One, so that it is many by necessity.

But first, the fact of being inferior does not change the form or the nature of the reality. There is superior beauty, and there is descended beauty, but each is nevertheless beauty, so that each is one as well, even if one is the cause and the other the caused. Therefore, there is a unique procession that proceeds as from one into one.¹⁰ And second, the many proceeding will be per accidens, if it is not to the extent that they are many that they are generated, but to the extent that they are generated, that they are many. And third, the puzzle remains. For why is generation from one opposite into another opposite?

Perhaps it is better to say that the One is not just one, as the name reveals, but it is also all things, as one simplicity that is before all things, as we often say. And so it is the cause of all things in the all-containing simplicity of itself. [But it is the cause] not insofar as it is one in the sense that it is opposed to the many (for One is prior to antithesis) but insofar as it is the principle of all things, and

all things as a principle of all things. Thus it produces what is after itself: it produces all things as the sole principle, and the many things as One, and beings as supersubstantial, though it too is also the beings. For why is it different for the demiurgic intellect, since it has anticipated all things in itself as the paradigm [of all things] to produce all things from itself as images [of the intellect], and for the single principle of the wholes—which is without qualification all things that are from it, in an undifferentiated way before the things that are from it, and as one nature that cannot be multiplied—to produce the many from itself? But the problem was how the many are from the One. But as it in fact is, the many (III 15) appear from the principle of all things, because the principle was all things before all things.

If the things that have proceeded are both the One that is [a synthesis of] all things and all things as a multiplicity that consists in all things, one should know that the principle is twofold; on the one hand it is known as the absolute One, and on the other, as all things, which we say it is in the manner that is before all things. And we have long referred to this as the many in the sense of the many of the One, as if it were the infinite power of that, in which or together with which, that was all things and generative of all things. And so this principle is referred to as the power of the Father also in the Oracles.¹¹ And since the first principles share the same nature, in the sense that the second is in the first and proceeds in it and from it, therefore each of the things that have proceeded from there both severally and jointly are all one and many together, and the many have proceeded from the One in the One¹² and are everywhere the seconds of the One.

Therefore is it the case that, even in matter, the many of matter are after the One and that the last principle of all is not the One, but that we shall call it the many, with the result that the many are also before all things and not the One?

[We reply that] the many are everywhere in the One, as embraced by the circumference of the One; therefore the One is everywhere first and last. Let so much be by way of a digression in the argument.

(III 16) But the problem from the beginning is that the many are produced by the One, because this One is called One as the absolute One, since it is many and all things, and it is still more than all things, insofar as it is itself One, and the many and all things are a second principle, since the second principle is a profusion¹³ and infinity of the One and it produces all things. Therefore the inquiry into how the One produces belongs to those ignorant of the simplicity of the One, for subsistence and power and act are not differentiated from each other in it, but they are just the One; by contrast, the second principle first manifests in the beginning stages the generative [power] and that which gives rise to the indefinite, as it proceeds into multiplicity and into the indefinite that is outside the One. And therefore it is deemed worthy [only] of secondary names, and there is no longer a puzzle about the many proceeding from this

principle, since it is many, and [indeed is] the absolute many before all things. We must make the same reply also concerning the Unified, for this is at the same time the multiplicity, so that it is all things as the Unified, and it is reasonable [to call it] generative of all things, as the unified principle of all things.

But how are the things generated from it distinguished from that unified principle, and how is it that there can be a distinction of the many from the One? For this was our original question.

[We reply, it is] because the principle, being all things, is also procession and descent and differentiation, for each of these is a particular member of all things. As it produces substance and life and intellect, for example, so too it also generates along with these things descent, differentiation, procession, and all things that are connected to otherness. In fact, otherness arises as a process of distinction among things that are other, so that differentiation also occurs together with what is distinguished, and procession along with (III 17) what proceeds, and descent along with the elements that descend. Therefore, it is not by accident that they proceed into [a state of] differentiation, but the generative cause both distinguishes them and produces differentiation along with its products.

Chapter 92. Answer to Sixth Question

■ Recall from chapter 90 above that Damascius presents a series of puzzles concerning the nature of procession, which he then proceeds to answer, as he typically does, in reverse order. The sixth question concerned the simultaneous manifestation of unity and differentiation, of the differentiated and the undifferentiated, as a condition of procession. Unity and differentiation are expressed variously at different levels of reality, but in particular, Damascius notes four different levels of unity: a unity that is contradistinguished from differentiation, a unity that functions like a dyad, incorporating all possible modes of antithesis, a unity that gathers all unities, the monad of monads, and finally or rather first, the unity of unified substance itself, which is actually prior to differentiation. ■

To the second from the last question (that is, the sixth) we shall reply that there is a unity in the same rank as differentiation, and that they [the unity and the differentiation] are in the same rank together. There is a unity that is the unique enfolding of the entirety of any antithesis, such as the dyad. And there is a unity prior to this, which gathers all the monads of this kind, insofar as they are monads, since it is the monad of all monads, and it is the one form of the entire number that is of a single form, in which are contained all the forms. Before this unity, one must conceive the unity of the whole in an absolute sense, in which the parts, also in an absolute sense, are contained, and prior to this unity the unity of the elemental, which is the aggregation of all the elements,

and is unified substance, as the unitary substance coexists with this unity; before both substances we accept a single unity that is unity in the strictest possible sense, the unity of the One-Being, which we single out as the Unified. And this is all things, so that differentiation is in it as unity, just as the other things are, and from this proceeds what is becoming differentiated and in addition to this, that which is completely differentiated.

(III 18) How, then, did [that which is unified] become unified, if not through unity, as the differentiated did through differentiation? For these arise together.

[We answer that] they have reality through predominance, that is, with unity predominating above and differentiation predominating below. Thus differentiation is also above, so that [what is unified] too is subject to distinction, even if it is less distinct. Wherever the one of a pair of opposites prevails, the other member exists, as well, as for example, wherever there is sameness there is difference, and wherever there is motion there is rest. For they become manifest together.

Therefore is anything else signified by that unity or that differentiation, since these two are somehow in opposition, not in the same rank, but [related] as cause and effect?

It is better to say that we conceive of and describe all things as distinct, both everything else, but especially unity and differentiation, and from these we indicate something about that which is free from differentiations. It is not that we specify the unified in terms of unity, and it is not that we specify the entire domain of the completely differentiated in the terms of differentiation that takes rise in division, for the intellect is both the unified and the distinct, and in intellect, that which is a part relative to another, is intellect relative to the whole as differentiated, but it is substance as [the whole is] unified, or to say it more accurately, relative to both One and Being it is the Unified before both. We employ the terminology of things that are subject to differentiation either as single predicates or as complex predicates, intending to indicate something about that which is entirely free from differentiations, whose name and conception we are unable to articulate, owing to the great divisiveness of our own thought. For we must gather all of our conceptions into one metaconception, the summit of all thinking, if we would get hold of any trace of that transcendently coaggregate nature.

Chapter 93. Answers to Fifth and Fourth Questions

■ Here Damascius takes on a discussion that he actually addresses much more fully in the *Commentary on the Parmenides*, in his work on hypothesis five, which for him refers to forms in matter. Below, he is concerned to show that forms in matter are still forms; their sole reality is always intelligible and never material as such.

He also begins his reply to the fourth question, how the many proceed from the One. Why does one alone not proceed from One, and why do the many not proceed from many? In treating this question, Damascius references his own understanding of the henads, that is, the One qua One, qua One-many or One-all, and qua the Unified, or ground of intelligible Being. ■

(III 19) And now as regards the third group of problems [in other words, the fifth question counting backwards from seven], we must elaborate this one point concerning images and their originals, that when the argument states that whatever arises must presubstist in that which is not subject to generation, it means the following: all the forms and their properties originate from intellect and from the eternal, and then proceed into soul and into the intermediate substance, and then also into matter, in the case of the ultimate forms. For the forms that are in matter are not independent, nor are they first, nor do they constitute the reality of the formal subsistence, since they are bound up in that which is not and in that which lacks form, which does not mean that they are not the first [forms] to be debased in the sense of being in matter, but only that they are not the first forms.¹⁴ Therefore, both that which has mass and that which has extension presubstist there as forms as well, and the things that are there are first, but [insofar as] as they come to be and are in matter and are the things such as we see, they are firsts only in the sense that they are such as they are in this world, but as forms, as what they are said to be, they are the very last of all forms. Who then would think that the lowest forms are in fact the first? But solely as forms they are manifest as firsts There, and the opposites have equal dominance There—sameness and otherness, motion and rest, one and many, all antitheses are equal. But in one place all things are ungenerated and eternal, and this means without division, and in the other place, they arise and are in time, and this means, divided.

(III 20) And yet I am not speaking of the divisible or the indivisible as forms (for each of the two would be present on either side in an authentic way), but in another way; we name the whole after a part, since we have no name to signify the commonality. For in designating the all as “world” (*cosmos/κόσμος*), it is not that we are gathering all things and making this designation from their common nature, but rather [we do so] from a single characteristic, that of being ordered (*κεκοσμηθαι*). In fact, the chorus (*chorus/χορός*) is named only from dancing (*choreuein/χορεύειν*) and the army (*stratos/στρατός*) only from encampment (*strateuesthai/στρατεύεσθαι*), and human being (*anthropos/άνθρωπος*) from contemplating what one has seen (*anathrein ha opopen/ἀναθρεῖν ἃ ὅπωπεν*), and horse (*hippos/ἵππος*) from going by means of feet (*hiesthai tois posin/ἵεσθαι τοῖς πόσιν*). Each of these things as one and many is named from one of the many things in it.

Therefore is the expression “the whole” not a name that applies as a universal designation, as it [signifies] a reality that is common [to all things]?

The whole is all the parts before the parts, but it is named from the conglomerate of the parts. It is whole (ὅλον) because it is both pure (ἅλές) and complete (ἄλυσ); what is seen as a pure being (ἅλές ὅν) is called whole (ὅλον). Hence all that is in matter is a partial whole, whereas all that is ungenerated is an undivided whole, not insofar as each is expressed as a distinct form, but as a suggestion of their [natures]. And so all the forms are both in intellect and in matter, both the undivided and the divided, since they are forms, but one is through subsistence, and the other through participation, and some are first and others are lowest. And yet these things, as forms, that is the first forms and the last forms, (III 21) along with subsistence and participation, are in intellect and matter as well.

Therefore, since some are originals and the others are images, are the images also forms and are they also in intellect and in matter? But how could they not be forms, since the image is a likeness and likeness is the result of resemblance, and resemblance is both in matter and in form, and the original is the archetype of resemblance. In that realm, too, one thing resembles another, and in this realm the same is true, since Socrates is the original of his own image. Properties are both in matter and in intellect. But what we call the image is what is only an image, as for example, the form in matter, but what is just an image is not in intellect. And if by original [we mean] just what is ungenerated and eternal form and what is in the first subsistence, then the original nature would not be in our realm. Thus that which has mass is in that realm both as form, and as undivided mass. But in this realm what has mass has form, but it is still divided, and it has mass as something divided. Thus the quality is shared in both places, but the first and lowest hypostasis is unique in each case. But the hypostasis of that which comes to be and that which does not come to be, of what is in matter and what is immaterial, and of what is in time and what is eternal [is unique], and these things are not like properties but like cause and effect, or like subsistence and participation, and however one might distinguish becoming (III 22) and substance, not as common properties, but as unique hypostases, they are above and proceed below. This is a differentiation that I make.

But next, we make the same differentiation in the case of every productive [cause] and everything produced. For example, since the world that is moved by another proceeds in its entirety from the self-moving, and the self-moving from the immobile, all the things that are in the first in an unmoved way are in the second as self-moving, and in the third as other-moved, so that they proceed as real being from real beings, and from the things that are in act. And yet the result is not absurd. The productive cause and that which is produced are not the same thing in an absolute way nor in exactly the same way, but in one way they are the same, and in another way, not the same. The beauty that is moved by another is from the self-moved, and the self-moved is from the unmoved. Thus one could say, too, that each thing that is a being is from a being and a

non-being is from a non-being. There is a way in which they are the same and a way in which they are not the same. And this is also true in the case of the procession that is of what manifestly shares the same form, since beauty is from beauty. If the beautiful is from the good, or the other-moved itself is from the self-moved, and the self-moved is from the unmoved, then again [it is a case of] of being qualified in one way or not being qualified in this way, of one thing existing as a cause, but not as subsistence. By nature, we have both cause and effect, and the latter is precontained in the former, in just the way that the argument, as it progresses, reveals. But all things are in the Unified and in the differentiated equally, and the latter proceed from the former, different kinds of realities from different kinds of realities, and again different kinds of nonrealities from different kinds of (III 23) nonrealities, or if you like, alternately, beings from non-beings and non-beings from beings. In act all things are in all things, and again there is nothing in act anywhere, since in one way nothing is There but in another way all things are There. There is no scope for the puzzle that produces what is in act from what is not in potential, or being from non-being. In That realm, nothing is in potential, nor yet is there non-being in the way that we mean when we pose this puzzle, but rather, there is non-being because the mode of the hypostasis is different and there is potentiality because different things are generated by nature from other things.

Continuing with the fourth [question] from the last, it seems to admit of easy solution, through the same manner of procedure. For it is not surprising that many things proceed from the One, if the One generates all or many, either in its own all-embracing simplicity or in the multiplicity contained in it, in any manner whatsoever. For us as well, the One was all things, though not in potential, but in act; however it was not all things in a state of differentiation, that is, in the way that this world is differentiated or in general, the way any world is, nor is it all things in a state of being unified in the Unified, but being solely One, it is all things as one. The Unified is also all things, but as an undifferentiated unity. And the differentiated is all things, but as differentiation. But since these things are so, there is no difference between saying that multiplicity proceeds from this kind of (III 24) one and the one that is this way, and saying that the multiplicity is from the many that subsist in the One or cosubsist in the Unified or are different in that which is subject to differentiation or are completely differentiated. But you would be able to say this more clearly if you said that the second principle proceeded from the first as the One-many proceeds from the One, and from this, the Unified proceeds together with the multiplicity, and from this, in short, the hypostasis that is further subject to differentiation from the many into multiplicity.¹⁵ Thus there is nothing surprising in the fact that one whole multiplicity proceeds from the One without division, or about all things proceeding from a single cause simultaneously and as one all-great world, or about the many being from many, with the things that do not subsist in the One coming to be from those that do subsist in the One. For in

this way the same thing is the One and in another way one could call it and see it as the many.

Therefore a one comes forth from a one, as Dionysus from Zeus, or plurality comes from a unity, as the many gods are from Zeus, or one is from many, as when the soul is said to proceed from all things before itself, and that which is always generated is from all the causes that are prior to it, or many proceed from many, as we say the sensible things are from the intelligibles. But nevertheless each of the two is everywhere, the one and the multiplicity, even if sometimes it is the many as the one, and sometimes it is the one as the many. And sometimes the one is by itself and the many are by themselves. Therefore we shall not arrive at an infinite regress if we search always for the unmultipliable One before the One-many; indeed this absolute One by itself is the cause of the many, since as one, it is nevertheless all things, because it is before all things, not as one thing among all things, nor yet is a certain one that is a composite from (III 25) all things, but truly one, and thus all things together as the One itself. But the second principle is all things itself, but as the many of itself. For this was the many of that One, because all multiplicity subsists around the One, as all power subsists around its own substance. Thus we ascend to this principle from the all many, as we ascend from the One-all to the One. Each of the principles is all things, the One as all things together, and the many as the many-all. And perhaps all things proceed from the One as already fashioned, and many from the second principle as still indefinite and unbounded and not yet perfect. So much [will suffice] concerning this difficulty.

Chapter 94. Answer to Fourth Question, Continued

■ In this chapter, Damascius moves further down the chain of being, from the realm of the henads into the realm of the intellective, or noeric, order. His examples all make reference to a system of correspondences between his own adaptation of Proclus' *Platonic Theology* and the Orphic theology as Proclus and his predecessor, Syrianus, worked them out.

The correspondences between Proclus and the Orphic theology may be understood as follows (adapted from Brisson 1987, 103):

Platonic Theology

the One
the henads

intelligible gods
triad of Being
triad of power
triad of act

Orphic theology

Chronos
aither, chaos

primordial egg
egg, tunic, night
Metis, Erikepaius, Phanes

intelligible-intellective gods	
triad of Being	Night ^{1,2,3}
triad of power; also corresponds to	Ouranos
Chaldean “maintaining” gods	
triad of act; also corresponds to	Hecatonchaires, Cottus, Briaraius
Chaldean “perfective” gods	
intellective gods (<i>hebdomad</i>)	
parental triad	Kronos, Rhea, Zeus
immaculate triad	Athena, Persephone, Curetes
separative monad	castration of Ouranos ■

In response to the things that immediately attend what has already been said, we offer this one reply, to the effect that if a cosmos proceeds from a cosmos as a whole from a whole, as for example, the demiurgic from the titanic,¹⁶ or the titanic from the maintaining, or the intellective from the intelligible, the entire prior cosmos proceeds into the second cosmos in entirety, and does not remain above, secluded in the prior, or if it does remain, this prior will remain sterile and completely without procession.¹⁷ And therefore, this is the manner in which that [higher world] will not exceed this [lower world], that is, by the existence of something in that realm that is not in our realm. On the contrary, it is easy as well to understand that something becomes manifest in the secondaries whose nature cannot yet be differentiated in the primaries. But this is not true, either: in That realm, that which is subject to differentiation in this world is in a concentrated state.

Then how does differentiation arise? And how do we say that all things are everywhere, if they are everywhere differently?

Whenever we say that what is below is greater than what is above, we are speaking in terms of differentiation, since the same things [exist] in that realm too, but in a concentrated way. How then do we say that different things are manifested in different places in terms of subsistence?¹⁸ For where each being can offer opportunely its own act to all things, here it differentiates its own nature from that of others. And this is the so-called first subsistence of each being, the first subsistence of each being that is differentiated from the others' properties.

[We answer that] this is true (all things are not everywhere in the same way, but in some contexts they are unified, and in other contexts they are distinct) but nevertheless all things are in every world, the intelligible world (“it is all things, but in an intelligible mode,” as the Oracle says)¹⁹ and the sensible world and the intermediate worlds.

How then do we always say that what is above is more universal than what is beneath, and that the latter is contained while the former contains, if there is no superiority of the former over the latter, and if all things are in each of the two, and if all things are equally in all things from necessity?

[We reply that] even if they are equal in terms of number, yet through its greatness one can contain the other, and the one sometimes contains the more numerous, just as the sphere of the fixed stars contains all of those successively [within it], and the world of Kronos will (III 27) contain the world of Zeus even if it is equal in the number of its forms, by the superfluity and the superiority and the, as it were, greatness of its nature.²⁰ And then it is necessary to concede that since the superiors always bring into existence and generate what comes after themselves, it will result that more things will arise from the former than from the latter. For example, the intelligible world produces all the worlds that follow it simultaneously—the intellective, the supermundane, the encosmic—whereas the intellective world produces only two, and the supermundane produces only one, the sensible world, or however one divides the things that proceed into plural worlds. Thus the intelligible is the most complete, because it contains all worlds, and the sensible world or the sublunary world is the most partial, because it is the lowest world and it contains only its own parts, but the middle worlds by analogy both contain and are contained. And so one could see in the case of each series the world in the first station, the most complete world, and the world in the subordinate station, the more divided world.

Let us also say something else concerning these same matters, namely, that if someone should say that the demiurgic world proceeds as a whole from the titanic, the doctrines just enunciated will apply to these worlds. If someone represents Zeus as produced from Kronos, we know that Zeus is generated from Kronos together with many other deities, both according to the Greeks and according to the barbarians, since once more, Kronos is from Ouranos together with other offspring, and again, Dionysus is from Zeus. If some worlds have been distributing the whole of each Father as parts, while still different worlds have proceeded (III 28) from a whole by preserving the same form (and thus these are established as the successors of the paternal reigns), this does not destroy the truth of the argument. For example, Zeus has produced the many gods as parts, but in addition to this thoroughgoing division, has produced the divisible totality as well as the many gods that are stationed beneath this totality. Did not Zeus also generate the Titans in their own diacosm in the Orphic succession story?²¹ Thus Kronos also, in addition to his previous prolific family, produces at last the complete Zeus who initiates the next reign. And [Orpheus] relates that Ouranos also brings into subsistence similar progeny: after the other Ouranides, at last he brings [forth] Kronos. It must be stated that those who were produced attempted to gain the upper hand over each other on this account, both those who remained in the father and at the side of their father, although they were in a state of greater division, as well as those who separated from the paternal nature and projected an inferior version of this nature, although they were complete and they preserved the likeness of those gods who generated them to those gods generated by them. The wholes are analogous to the wholes, but the second rulers do not extend [their domain]

equally with the first rulers. But these matters involve a different way of talking about things.

Moreover, let us reply in the following way to the same underlying questions, that the generator, for example Zeus, both produces one [god] and produces many [gods] from himself, but each of these is either a whole by himself or is one of the things in him.²² [He produces] the entire (III 29) chorus of the Zeus-like deities by itself, as one, or again the many deities at once as the many in him, and each deity in particular as one of the qualities in him. And he produces a unity from a unity because they are contained in him as the many.²³ Again, the chorus of the many gods is the complete *pleroma* of Zeus, in terms of the differentiated, but it is Dionysus as the totality of the Unified. And thus one could not reasonably be surprised at this account. It is from one that the one whole as a whole and the part as a particular [come], and many come as well from one, but as it is pluralized. The chorus is the many as a whole, and the many individuals are as the many individuals in the one.

How is it possible that one of the processions consists in [transmission of] the same form, and other consists in the [transmission] of a different form?

[Our answer is that] Zeus produces a synonymous series [that is after his own] character, but [produces] Dionysus and the other heteronymous deities [insofar as he is] their anticipated cause.

What follows? Does not Zeus generate Dionysus in accordance with the whole of himself, but the many gods as the parts of himself? His subsistence (III 30) is the whole and parts together.

Why, then, does the procession of these [gods] involve the procession of a similar form, since it arises at the level of subsistence, and if so, why isn't it synonymous?

But it precisely is not. Zeus is not the many gods, since he is one, nor is Dionysus the [many gods], for that matter.

But what is that subsistence, in which the series proceeds from Zeus synonymously,²⁴ for it is not [Zeus as a] whole, since it is contradistinguished from the series that proceeds from each of the other parts. Nor does the series consist in all of its parts together, for the same reason. If the series consists in one of the things contained in it, how would it alone be synonymous with the whole [of Zeus]?

The puzzle can be construed in four ways. If the product is produced by virtue of the producer as a whole, sometimes it is synonymous with the producer, as the sevenfold demiurge proceeds as a whole among the Chaldeans (for each is celebrated as "twice transcendent,"²⁵ and all seven contain exactly what the first did, even if each is more divided due to the descent in the order), and sometimes the product is heteronymous, as for example, Dionysus. If the product is produced by virtue of a part [of the producer], then again sometimes the production is synonymous, as the series, if it should arise, of Zeus

is from the universal Zeus, and other times it is heteronymous, as Athena is from Zeus.

Chapter 95. Answer to Third Question: Four Ways of Constructing the Issue

■ There are four ways of construing the puzzles: if the product is produced by virtue of the producer as a whole, sometimes it is (1) synonymous with the producer, and sometimes the product is (2) heteronymous. If the product is produced by virtue of a part of the producer, then again, sometimes the production is (3) synonymous and other times it is (4) heteronymous. Therefore the division of each, the producer and the products, is twofold, the one kind expressed as the depth of the entire series that emanates as descent, and the other kind expressed as the breadth of the forms contained in it or of the non-homeomerous parts. The vertical division is a homeomerous division anticipated in the cause, and so it is also synonymous. The entire vertical order is divided along the entire horizontal order, always transformed by the preponderance of each of the forms in turn. What proceeds as the subsistence involves the same form, whereas what proceeds as the anticipated cause involves a dissimilar form. ■

Perhaps, then, the division of each producer and of their the products is twofold, the one kind, vertical, is that of the entire series that emanates as descent, and the other kind, horizontal, is that of the forms contained in it and of the non-homeomerous parts. The vertical division is a homeomerous division anticipated in the cause, and so it is also synonymous,²⁶ whereas the other division involves the transmission of a dissimilar form, whence it is the case that the generation in this division is heteronymous. The first and second “twice”²⁷ proceed from the perfect [order] as the totality itself, hence they are synonymous, but the source²⁸ that presides over the magical operations [proceeds] as one of the non-homeomerous elements.²⁹ Each of the so-called partial sources,³⁰ of which each is the leader of its own series that possesses a similar form, [is homeomerous], because the vertical division is homeomerous. If also a non-homeomerous series in one of these is contained horizontally, as for example, the Apollonian is in the heliacal source, and in the Apollonian is the Asclepiad,³¹ it is entirely because the derivation of these is from a procession that does not involve similar forms.

95.1. *Conclusions Concerning Procession of the Unified*

But even in a philosophical approach, the vertical generation proceeds from the absolute intellect involving the transmission of the same form, although it has introduced everywhere as a whole the containing of the forms in a horizontal mode. If intellect produces soul or nature or body, it produces them without the transmission of the same form, as something that is contained

in intellect, (III 32) so that even if it [produces something] according to the form of the beautiful or the good or the just, still it [does not involve production according to] the same form. Now the beautiful or the just is something generated. [That is, each of these forms] is either an intellect or a soul or in intellect or in soul or in each of them. So why is it that soul or intellect or body is each by itself self complete, but that beauty and justice and each of these kinds do not enjoy this [independent] kind of existence? What makes [the two cases] different? And why has matter proceeded into all things and received all the forms, but it does not [proceed into or receive] each of the others (that is, soul, intellect, and so forth)³²

[We reply that] first, the simpler forms, although they also have the function of elements or parts, always share the same nature with each other and negate the hypostasis that is separated off by itself, since they possess a nature that is more perfectly unified among themselves than the hypostasis that has, in its separation, been differentiated as self-completing. Second, beauty, repose, and all the absolute [kinds] have brought about their procession into all things, for example, beauty has entered into each form, and so it has proceeded as well into all procession. Third, absolute intellect generates one by one, each of the kinds that are contained in itself, first intellect, then soul, then living being as well as a material nature that is shaped by the form by which it proceeds, as if one could say that Aphrodite's intellect is by virtue of the form of the beautiful, the intellect of Diké is by virtue of the form of the just, the intellect of Agathodaimon is by virtue of the form of the good, for example, with a different intellect subsisting by virtue of a different one of the forms. No doubt the entire vertical order is divided along the entire horizontal order, always transformed by the preponderance of each of the forms in turn. One should know that the horizontal has a vertical quality, as the first elements, (III 33) or middle, or final are observed in it, as for example the [highest] kinds,³³ followed by the more universal forms descended from these kinds, and then the more particular natures, until the most individuated entities, which also seem to be self-complete and self standing, owing to their great synthesis, and again, these are subject to vertical [differentiation] in another manner. After the intellectual hypostasis comes the psychic hypostasis, and after the psychic is the corporeal. Whence too this hypostasis [involves the transmission of] a dissimilar form, because the procession itself is of the horizontal, and the horizontal is itself subject to the vertical procession as it enters into the formation of inferior members of a dissimilar form. But perhaps we have gone into these matters past measure.

Perhaps in pursuing a long digression we have made no progress. For once more we seem to reiterate our original position, that what proceeds as the subsistence [of the subsequent members] involves the [procession of] same form, whereas what proceeds as the anticipated cause [of the effects] involves [the procession of] a dissimilar form. What is the cause, and how is

one nature anticipated in a different nature? Why is the subsistence of one thing the cause of a different thing? We now arrive at problems that are among the most ancient.

So let us first say that the subsistence of that which generates is different from the cause of that which is generated, and this is particularly true in the case of the [cause that] (III 34) involves [the procession of] a dissimilar form. For if what is in potentiality is [something else] besides the subsistence, as Aristotle clearly showed,³⁴ then it is by all means true that what is in the cause³⁵ is something else besides the subsistence. Moreover if there is only a subsistence of that which generates, but the subsistence generates from itself and by itself, how will it still generate that which has a dissimilar form,³⁶ since there is nothing else that is combined with it beyond itself? Having generated by means of its being and through the transmission of its own nature, it will bring the generated into existence. Therefore, it must anticipate some cause of that which has a dissimilar form, because of which, although it is one thing, it will generate something different. At any rate, if one thing generates something entirely different without any anticipating cause, why would not the random effect proceed from the random cause, having a subsistence, but no cause?

Chapter 96. Manifestation versus Generation

■ In this very wide-ranging discussion, Damascius considers the general point of how causes anticipate or contain their effects, in terms of the structure of vertical and horizontal causation. How and why do different orders or stations of Being arise as dissimilar from their initial causes? Why does soul arise from intellect, or indeed, why do various classes of deity arise from their parent deities? Finally, how is it that individuals arise at all from the eternal order of things? This discussion is particularly complex, because in considering this fundamental metaphysical question, how is it that difference emerges, Damascius ranges over material taken from the Chaldean system as well as material that seems more familiar, that is, the relationship of individuals to forms. Damascius gives various examples that correspond to the different levels at which emergence can be detected in the Platonist worldview, but the variegation of his material should not obscure the basic point, which is to distinguish between external and internal procession. ■

This is what persuaded the ancient philosophers to produce all the products from things that presubstituted in the cause. But it is a strange doctrine, if someone should say that the cause is anticipated in something, but yet that which anticipates the cause is not the subsistence of the latter. For first, how did the cause itself arise? If from another cause, we shall have an infinite regress. If it is from the subsistence, how could the cause have a dissimilar form, and be the cause of what has a dissimilar form? And then, if it generates by means of its being, and the being of each thing is its own subsistence, it is clear that what

has a dissimilar form is generated from its own subsistence. And therefore the so-called cause was a part of the subsistence. Moreover, the first strategy (III 35) conduces to the opposite conclusion. For, in fact, the potential is present as a part of the subsistence, since its form is said to be potential in relation to another, as the bronze is potentially a statue. The bronze by nature can be easily shaped, and that which is easily shaped is a kind of part of the nature of bronze.³⁷

But if the subsistence and the cause are the same thing, how is it that the one of the generations involves [transmission] of the same form, and the other, of a dissimilar form?

[We answer that] to the extent that the generation is according to the subsistence, it involves the same form, but to the extent that the subsistence is not absolute, but rather inclines toward the generation of another, the generation involves a dissimilar form. Perhaps the cause is nothing other than the subsistence inclining toward otherness, and on account of this it comes to be generative of another, but subsistence that remains by itself is generative of an identical [reality]. But as for the procession involving the same form, if the absolute subsistence did not incline [toward it], it could not [even] be generated. And yet, universally, that which generates is the cause of the generated. Therefore, what is the difference [between] the cause [and subsistence] if in fact every cause is an inclination of the generator toward the generated?

Perhaps then it is better to say that there are two kinds of subsistence, the one that is associated with the homeomerous division, and the other that is associated with a non-homeomerous division, which is the horizontal. For all things that proceed from the producer are contained in the producer in a single concentration that one must posit as the subsistence of the producer. For whatever each producer is, this it projects from itself, and all the products are an unfolding of the concentration (III 36) contained in the producer, just as every number is the forward progression of the monad. For in this way we call the producer universal and the products are what are more divided, that is, the things that are distributed as parts and are what the whole contains. How is it not necessary that the absolute living being contain all the living beings, not only vertically as for example, the celestial living being or the aerial living being, or the aquatic living being, or terrestrial living being,³⁸ but also horizontally, as for example human, horse, and cow? And so the subsistence of intellect contains not only the vertical concentration of what is in it, but also the polymorphic breadth of the forms, just as all gods are in subsistence in the intellect associated with Zeus and the god himself, that is, with some gods achieving a procession that is concentrated about the vertical axis, maintaining their completion, and other gods who also go forth as perfect and are synonymous with the whole, as for example the seven demiurges that are [called] "twice transcendent" among the theurgists.³⁹ But other gods proceed by virtue of a part of [the producer or cause] and they are parceled out in the distribution of the

whole, and therefore they have departed from the nature that generated them, and become established as heteronymous with respect to the subsistence from which they have arisen, and they [subsist] as one of the elements that comprise the subsistence itself, but not as the whole of it. Therefore the dissimilar generation proceeds from the subsistence that is subject to differentiation and as one of the distinct things in it.

(III 37) As for the series of Zeus—how does it proceed from Zeus, as unique among the many series that emanate from him?⁴⁰

[We reply that] all synonymy is produced when the producer produces as a whole, and therefore [this series] is synonymous with the whole, even if it veers away in some way owing to its more particular state.⁴¹ Zeus as a whole is the father of all the gods, even if Zeus has proceeded as one of the gods in him more [than as another]. For the “Twice Transcendent” is everywhere a whole. If it is itself called Zeus, then Zeus is also one of the particular Sources⁴² in it, just as another is Helios and another Athena, since each divine series emanates as a part from the Source that is particular, and in this way, then, if some Source is called Source of Zeus as homonymous with the universal, it will itself produce a particular Source.

Perhaps the universal Source is not called Zeus, but only the particular Source, or perhaps vice versa: for if the name is common [to both] let it amount to mere homonymy. Still, the nature of each [god] is different, since one is the Source of the universal Sources and releases only a Source series from itself, while the other is the Source of particular Sources and proceeds into Principles and Archangels, and Azones and Zones,⁴³ as is typical of the procession of the sources that are celebrated as particular. For already also in the case of other sources, both universal and particular, their homonymy is observed, even if at the same time it is possible to observe a nature that belongs to the same origins, and that furnishes synonymy, (III 38) as for example in the case of the synonymy of the Zeus-deities, and of the connector deities and of the Teletarch deities in the regal order.⁴⁴ For every Ruler emanates from a partial Source.⁴⁵ And so the regal Hekate is said to emanate from the crown, as the regal soul and the regal virtue are said to emanate from the partial Sources of the girdling membrane.⁴⁶ And so too Iamblichus numbers the particular Source of the Implacables among the partial Sources, just as they are numbered among the universal Sources.⁴⁷ Therefore, why is it surprising if someone represents a demiurgic particular Source that is different from the universal Source encompassing all Sources, a demiurgic Source such as [the theurgists] represent as the Source that presides over the magical operations, from which its own particular series [is said to] emanate, and if someone transfers the name of Zeus and the name of the Demiurge to either Source, then sometimes the name is distinguished from the Telesiurge, the Guardian, the Purificatory,⁴⁸ and from the other characteristics of the partial Sources, and sometimes one uses the name “demiurgic” of that which contains all the causes that are

involved with matter. Such might be the account for these kinds of issues [related to Chaldean nomenclature].

But the following must be concluded from all these considerations, that the divisions in the procession that is from a one are entirely anticipated as a concentration in this one, as for example, each series is in its own particular Source, as each number is in its monad, and the Source series of the hebdomad as a whole is anticipated in the universal Source. But also the complete number of the particular Sources is in its own universal Source, (III 39) since the division that internally divides each perfect Source into many parts anticipates that which externally divides the partial Sources that exist in the sphere of the universal Sources. The ornament⁴⁹ [of the goddess Hekate] that embraces its parts is analogous to the parts that are set in order by the figure of the goddess itself. And the girdling membrane is analogous to the hollows that encircle the goddess, and the crown is analogous to the temple and the brow of the goddess' head.⁵⁰ Again, since this is the horizontal division of the parts of the goddess as well as a number from the emanating hebdomad vertically anticipated in the monad, it is united in that which is without division and is universal. Moreover the perfect hebdomad of the first Sources is gathered in the triads of the older Sources, and the triads again are gathered in the single Source of the Sources.⁵¹ And, therefore, every number after it, whether it is a Source number or still more particular, comes together in it, under a single form. If the many are collected in it, and the many other things that are different in different places are from it, it is absolutely true that even the trace of the multiplicity is swallowed up in the summit of the intelligible world by unity.

This, too, must form part of our doctrine, from what has been said, that at every level, the external multiplicity that becomes differentiated in the things that are generated out of it, grows out of what is concentrated internally in the things that generate [the external multiplicity]. As a result, the correlate is also true, that if many are within the generator, they most certainly are transferred in the next thing generated, and if the many are externally differentiated in the generated, the many are certainly (III 40) manifested prior to this, in the closest generator. The reason is that what presubsists in the generator is productive, as well as that all that is observed in the generated is sketched in a preliminary form in the generating cause, as the subsistence of the cause and as its concentration.

A third consequence follows these considerations, namely, that all the secondaries are always anticipated in their priors, and the more particularized are anticipated in the more universal; those things that share the same form are anticipated vertically and those with a dissimilar form are anticipated horizontally.

A fourth conclusion is that all things are divided into their own orders and subsistences. It is not any less true that all things are in all things, but they are appropriately in each thing;⁵² some are undifferentiated, and others are

differentiated, and some are completely separate, and again, of these, some are like elements in the elemental, some are like parts in the whole, and some are like forms or the number of forms in a monad. But the external [multiplicity] also proceeds in a manner analogous to the inner multiplicity; sometimes the many intellects proceed from the one intellect like number from a monad, and other times like parts from a whole, as for example, the many lives from the single life, and sometimes like elements from the elemental, as the many substances are from the single substance. And thus these substances are very closely related to each other, and are unified in an undifferentiated way, whereas the lives are more differentiated and are like parts of the whole in relation to each other, (III 41) and the numbers and the intellects have achieved distinction into [discriminating] boundaries that [indicate] self-completion. Whence it is a more familiar idea that there are many intellects after the one intellect, that is, from the one intellect, but that there are many lives that are self-complete before the intellects is not as familiar, and that there is a plurality of substances is least familiar, because of their close unity that is elemental in nature. If it is not evident, still it is necessary to agree that there are many lives and substances, since substance is composed of elements and is a composite of elements, but life subsists in differentiation, and is a whole from parts, whereas intellect is a form [constituted] by forms.

Each (life, intellect, substance) is one and many. But the entire internal multiplicity, as has been said, generates the external plurality. Therefore it is necessary that many substances proceed after the single substance, with one of the many elements prevailing over each substance that is specified [by it], and that after the single life many lives emanate, with a different life dominated by a particular one of its parts, just as the many intellects have proceeded after the one intellect, a different intellect dominated by a different one of the many forms. For it is always the case that the internal multiplicity generates the external. Or rather, it should be stated in the following way, that the whole generates the second whole as a whole, and the parts by themselves generate the parts in the second, and the whole generates a more particular whole in each of the parts. This is true also in the case of the elements and the elemental, and in the case of the monad and all of number. For the monad generates the monadic aspect of each number, and the multiplicity in the monad generates (III 42) multiplicity everywhere. However, the monad generates, as number in itself, every number at once and each number that is specified as one form, since the form contains as a whole in itself its own multiplicity.

Moreover, in addition to these conclusions, let us also conclude that all things are contained in the priors that are differentiated further in the subsequents. And so all things are in the intelligible and in the intellective diacosm and in the intermediate [diacosms], but also in each of the less substantial diacosms, until we reach the sensible. But all things are in each as befits each, in however many ways one could define what is fitting for each thing, and

especially the more and the less, or rather, the specific degree of each unity and differentiation, since things differ from each other because of their container and because of their content.

What follows? Is it the case that the procession of the secondaries from the primaries is not generation, but only manifestation or distinction, as we say, of what is latent and concentrated above?

We say that distinction is what establishes each thing in its own subsistence, whereas this subsistence was not previously something that belonged to it. For its subsistence was not yet differentiated into a characteristic nature when it was in the whole concentration, and the latter [concentration] was the subsistence of another that subsisted as a complete nature in the concentration. Therefore, it is the same to say differentiated and generated with reference to the seconds coming from the firsts.

Are all things therefore compressed in the things that are before them, to the extent that they differentiated after the [firsts]? For if so, then even the individual forms will be compressed, since (III 43) differentiation has also brought the individual forms from the first principles. But this is utterly absurd. For either the causes of the individual forms will disappear from the concentration when the individuals no longer exist or when the individuals are not yet in existence, and there will be something in eternity that [nevertheless] does not always exist, or else there will be something that always exists but without issue, since its effects will exist eternally. For this reason, therefore, we shall not accept paradigms for the individual forms. Thus there must not be any prior concentration of these forms [in the intelligible].

But these too are generated from the previous forms. Therefore will it not be necessary that they are concentrated in the generator, as the generated?

[We answer that] those things that produce by virtue of their being and that project their own offspring from their substance, are those very things that anticipate the concentrations of their offspring, but those things that fashion their forms externally, by virtue of their external activity, as if they were artifacts, no longer anticipate [these products]. And thus also the individual forms arise by virtue of the activities that are extended from the moving causes.

Whence then does such a specification proceed? Is it fashioned externally? And how is it fashioned, if that which fashions does not anticipate it?

[We reply that it] specifies its own activities with a view to the activity of fashioning, and the anticipation of the forms arises not in the substances, but in the activities that are constantly changing.

Whence are the activities specified?

[We reply that] it is from the anticipated universal forms that the changing individual activities that are constantly determined arise, and, fashioned and shaped in this way and, to summarize, (III 44) specified, are fulfilled in the individual forms. And this is the anticipation of the individual forms that itself changes in the changing activities, since in fact, the activities do undergo

transformations in the shape of their realizations, and are different at different stages.

So much is our explanation concerning these matters, or if some argument should compel us to make the unmoved the cause of the moved, as for example [to make] the demiurgic intellect the cause of individuals both arising and perishing, or to speak more universally [to make their cause] the first substance and the single principle of universals; for what is there that could not proceed from There, and how could the causes of all things not be the pre-established principles of all things, and which of the secondaries is not contained by the primaries? If this is what one holds, as I do, how shall we answer the difficulty?

[We shall say that] the unmoved cause concentrates in its immobile aspect these beings as well, in the manner that belongs to the ever-flowing nature that always generates them. The all-producing cause produces absolutely all things that have arisen to infinity; thus all things taken altogether that have this nature, and to put it more clearly, as for the individual forms that ever have or ever will arise, it has anticipated these as a single cause, not particular to me or you, but yet the cause of both me and you and of those individuals that have ever been prior [to me or you] and those that will ever be. The way the individual forms are concentrated in that nature and the way they are differentiated from it, is like the light of the sun, which forever remains both in its own universal nature and also is distributed individually to (III 45) each being, because the sun contains a unique cause of vision for all the individual eyes. Let this be our answer to this problem.

Section XVI. On the Intellective Procession

Chapter 97. On the Nature of Procession from Subsistence

■ In this chapter, Damascius covers some points of Neoplatonist logic and ontology, focusing on the Proclean idea of three levels of participation: the unparticipated, the participated, and that which participates. For Damascius, subsistence, the term under discussion in this chapter, will correspond to Proclus' idea of the unparticipated. At the same time, Damascius uses language that has implications in Neoplatonist logic, focusing on the idea of the *haplos*, that is, the unassigned or purely logical function of a genus term, which is still seen as metaphysically prior to the genus term deployed in a genus-differentia definition. Complicating the discussion is the fact that Damascius chooses to illustrate his explanation of these fundamental principles using the language of the Orphic correspondences to Neoplatonist hierarchy. ■

And yet we must also add this to our definitions, that subsistence is everywhere that which on each occasion is either concentrated or differentiated, so that Athena in Zeus is the subsistence of Zeus, whereas the Athena that leaps from the summit of Zeus is Athena in herself, but there is also Athena as participation in another, since Athena in Koré is the subsistence of Koré.¹ And if it is in this sense that the philosophers² should say that each thing is threefold, either in the cause, as Athena subsisting in Zeus, somehow, or in the subsistence, as Athena by herself, or in participation, as the Athena who has arisen in Koré, they are right, except that they must explain all the [forms of] subsistence: the Athena of Zeus, which itself

completes the distinct subsistence of Zeus, and Athena by herself, and that of Koré, because it also completes the plurality of Koré.

Someone could look at the question more in terms of dialectic. For the so-called kinds of Being on each level complete the hypostasis that is constituted from them, and so they also complete substance as Unified, life as subject to differentiation, intellect as separate (and one kind of intellect is separated in an absolute way, through an equally applied differentiation, whereas the other, more particular intellect is always separated through the inclination toward this or that member of the kinds, or parts or forms, depending on the prevalence). If we look at it more in terms of logic, (III 46) then the absolute human being³ is in the living being, by virtue of its universal nature, and because it contains in the single subsistence of living being, all living beings. But after the living being is the subsistence of humanity, by itself, and in third place, the absolute human being is like an element in the earthly human being and in me qua the individual, as the living being is in the human being. For the living being is [in human being] as subsistence as well. And yet if participation is bestowed in this way from above, then this bestowal belongs itself to the subsistence of that in which the part becomes a member. So much is the extent of what we have to say about these matters.

97.1 *Is Procession Double?*

■ Here Damascius equivocates and attempts to dissolve the differences between the two kinds of procession, one kind involving the transmission of the same form from level to level, and another kind involving the transmission of a different form from level to level. The first question Damascius treats is the problem of how multiple members of the same series can be prior to members of a subsequent series. Are there many intellects proceeding from the one intellect, and many souls proceeding from the one soul? ■

Now then, let us return to the beginning, to the problems associated with the initial puzzles.⁴ We must agree that there is something that does not share the same form in [the kind of procession that involves the transmission of that which] shares the same form, and something that shares the same form in the [kind of procession that involves the transmission of that which] does not share the same form, as the argument that poses the problem maintains. But it is no less [true] that one procession involves the same form, whereas another involves [the procession of a dissimilar] form, insofar as the whole Aphrodite and the whole Athena remain somehow in the boundaries of the first Aphrodite and the first Athena, even if each is transformed so that the form is more particular than the characteristic itself. And yet both the commonality of the name and that of the division remain, as what persists as common. And therefore, they are common to the entire series, since the series proceeds from a

single principle and to a single end. And yet if Eros proceeds from Aphrodite or Athena proceeds from Zeus, (III 47) then the procession involves [the transmission of] a dissimilar form, because Eros has stepped outside the boundaries of Aphrodite, and Athena has stepped outside the boundaries of Zeus. And yet Athena by all means possesses something Zeus-like, and Eros possesses something derived from Aphrodite, insofar as they also have a form in common with their productive causes. But they have this as something, as it were, preserved in different limits, just as in the other case the different manifests within common limits. Therefore Athena and Zeus do not share the same form qua gods and intellects and demiurgic intellects sharing the same form. For the former [divine natures] are common characteristics, and they are present together with things that share the same form, as for example, [in the case of] the many Aphrodites, since of those that are pandemic, some are demiurgic and some are also intellects and gods. And, of course, Aphrodite and Eros share the same family. But "of the same form" cannot be defined in terms of a common family, but in terms of the subsistences, strictly speaking, since this is where the names are used in the strict sense. All Aphrodites share the same form, together with some otherness, and Eros and Aphrodites have a dissimilar form, together with some sameness. There are also titles that are more generic, with both the same and dissimilar forms, the latter, for example, as in the case of substance [proceeding] from the henad, and life from substance, and intellect from life, and soul from intellect and the corporeal from soul,⁵ and in another way, [dissimilar procession occurs in the cases of] the Unified [proceeding] from the One, and the differentiated from the Unified, and the completely distinct from the differentiated. And until this point the unmoved [prevails], but after this is the self-moved, and then the other-moved. But those of (III 47) the same form are gods proceeding from a god, and substances proceeding from substance, and lives from life, and intellects from intellect, and souls from soul, and the many living beings from the unique natural living being.

What, then, would be the prior of the two kinds of procession, that [involving the transmission] of the same form or that of the dissimilar form? If the [procession of the] same arises before the [procession of the] dissimilar, and if the intelligible gods proceed from absolute deity before the intellectual substances, and if in the other cases the same rule applies, and moreover, if the procession of the same establishes a subordinate world, as for example, the intellectual from the intelligible-intellectual, and so on in succession, while the procession of the different establishes the same, as for example, Kronos generates his own titanic diacosm, and then generates the demiurgic diacosm as beneath it, then, if this is true, it is clear that the procession of the same is prior to that of the dissimilar.

But, one might say, procession in general is a departure from the productive cause, and every separation involves the descent of the product into something that has a dissimilar form.

[We reply that] this is a case of that kind of dissimilarity of form that involves co-presence with similarity of form, and perhaps one might even agree that it is prior. But this is not quite true. In fact, that which has the same form is necessarily prior to that in which the dissimilar is present. Each reality proceeds while yet remaining, and remaining in the cause, it creates sameness and otherness with respect to that cause. Let this suffice for this part of the discussion, (III 49) but we shall [now] consider the problems that arose before this set of questions.

We have already spoken about the procession involving the same form and that involving a dissimilar form, as well as the difference between them, and that one must not confuse these processions, since each of them possesses an element of the other. Now we must speak about the Unified, to see whether it admits of any procession, and [if so] of what kind.⁶

Someone will reasonably grant that there is an intellectual procession and that the many intellects proceed from the one intellect. But nevertheless we must still investigate this question, whether [or not] there is a multiplicity of intellects and whether or not there is a multiplicity of souls. For perhaps the arguments that demonstrate that the self-moved must be before the other-moved, and the unmoved before the self-moved, compel us to hypothesize one intellect before soul, and one soul that ensouls all things after the one intellect. If the argument shows that there is also life before intellect, and before life substance, then again, it will force the conclusion that one substance and one life are stationed prior to the one intellect. And someone could say the same thing concerning the one henad that is stationed before the one substance.

How can it be clear that these proceed—a multiplicity of gods and a multiplicity of substances and a multiplicity of lives and a multiplicity of intellects and a multiplicity of souls, and each number after its own monad?

[Our reply is that] there is one method of demonstration, with which the present argument treats, from the interior multiplicity, which is productive, and when this proceeds, already the exterior (III 50) multiplicity is pluralized, either in the procession that involves a dissimilar form or the same form, just as has been said earlier, that is, vertically or horizontally.

Since the cause is both one and many, it will generate as the one and the many, and even as both one and many together, with the one bringing each thing into being through its prevalence, since the many are nevertheless one in this one. For in this way the maintaining intellect proceeds from the absolute intellect, and from the maintaining intellect, the titanic, and from this still [further] the demiurgic. Every intellect is in the absolute intellect, and each intellect brings about some aspect of plurality in that intellect, as for example, the maintaining class, or the titanic, or the demiurgic. Likewise, in the case of the more particular pluralities [there is a succession]. The Apollonian intellect is from the demiurgic intellect, as well as the Arean intellect and the Athenan, and [each is] even more particular according to each specific form, if it prevails and causes

an intellect to be generated that is whole and independent, but brought about according to this specific form, as for example, if the intellect happens to be generated according to the form of humanity or of horse. Thus necessarily the external multiplicity of intellects is generated from the internal multiplicity of forms.

But it is also clear that a multiplicity of hypostases arises from the parts as parts, in such a way as to be external to the parts. And if primary life is both the whole and parts (III 51) as it subsists in that which is coming to be differentiated, just as we said earlier, it is clear that those hypostases are complete lives that subsist with the internal multiplicity of parts and occupy the station of parts with respect to each other and with respect to the cause that produces them. But how, then, are they complete? And how is wholeness the cause of wholes? Wholeness is generative of parts, but not of wholes. And how is it that the hypostases that are independent come to [exist] in the rank of parts that are specified as independent?

[We answer that] as particular lives they are not yet delimited; for to be delimited belongs to intellect and to all whose distinction is complete and final. But the lives have their being in the order of what is beginning to be distinct, so that they are superior to that intellective form of self-completion, which is independent in a different way than the first life is independent, the latter of which subsists as a whole and in its parts, and, to use one word, subsists as that which is subject to differentiation. Therefore, too, the lives are both complete since they arise from a cause that is complete and complete in the way that it is complete, and they also enjoy the rank of parts, because they have proceeded according to the nature of parts and are a kind of number of that which is seen in differentiation, like a monad, which does not have its being in a state of distinction that is complete and final, but in coming to be distinct.

Then, too, the first mixed also produces the many mixeds after itself; I mean that the elemental produces the elements as the multiplicity of the elements that is contained within it, as has been often said. (III 52) And yet these elements are also the many substances that have proceeded after the unique substance and from the unique substance, as it were, a certain number proceeding from what is like a monad, that is, a unified number [proceeding] from the unified monad and a substance proceeding from a substance, occupying the position of elements with respect to each other and with respect to the generating cause, existing independently because of the intense unity of the mixture, [but] in another way, being free from circumscription and longing to be mixed with unity.

Of such a nature are the elements whose procession took place by virtue of the multiplicity of the multiple substances; for just as the external multiplicities arise from the internal multiplicities, so too they are specifically determined according to the nature of those [internal multiplicities]. And while the substances delight in mixture and practically take refuge in the undifferentiated,

the lives are differentiated to the extent that parts are [different] from the whole and from each other, and intellects are the first to have been delimited from each other and from the whole, since they brought about the hypostasis characterized by complete separation in its own circumscription.

Chapter 98. Summary Concerning Internal Procession and Aporia: How Does the Intellective Proceed from the Unified?

(III 52.17) But what can be said conclusively concerning all of these cases, is that wherever any sort of multiplicity is contained within the interior of its proper one, then there is generated from the interior its own external multiplicity as well, like a number that derives from its own monad. For the one must be generative everywhere, and the one that contains the many must be generative of the one and the many.

Therefore, is it the case that the many are absolute, [and that we may refer not to] the many forms, nor to the many parts, nor to the many elements, but simply to the many themselves, simply many and the absolute many, which we have shown to be prior (III 53) to the other multiplicities, and do the many therefore bring about the external multiplicity as analogous to themselves?

If the many are in the intelligible, there will also be a procession of the intelligible. But this was the question we had from the beginning, namely, if the Unified underwent differentiation in the procession that [originated] from itself, and what distinction would arise [in that case] between the Unified and that which had received as its portion all of Being as a unity. The many are not in the Unified in the sense that they could be different from each other in any way: there is no otherness among them, nor any difference, nor again any differentiation whatsoever. *Parmenides*⁷ also makes [this] clear when he makes the apparent division homeomerous, and then produces the first otherness as subordinate, and makes the first number subsist together with this alterity and by means of it, and with good reason; for wherever there is alterity there is also differentiation, and where the latter is, number is there as well, but not specific number, for neither is differentiation specific yet, nor is alterity opposed to identity, since, There, there is no alterity along with identity, nor is the alterity the kind by which the parts have become different from each other; instead, the alterity is that by which the elements become dispersed in some way, that is, they become many, though not the absolute many, but they are like many hastening toward a merging with each other. But this characteristic is nevertheless a kind of difference. Whence it is that the external procession, on its emergence, became separated from the many substances owing to the difference of the elements that were concentrated within, even if it is through their longing for their original nature that the many substances, in their procession, hasten toward a homogeneous merging with each other.

(III 54) But the intelligible many are absolutely without difference and without quality, and therefore they are absolutely unified, and they are like a single nature that is completely full, and so they are called many. And therefore, too, the many are the indefinite multiplicity. For there is no limit in the indefinite multiplicity that can be quantified (since it is outside of number and quantity) nor can it be qualified (since it is undifferentiated and without quality). Nor in general is there any determination of quantity or quality There. That is unified unity, which does not even endure the differentiation between One and Being. Whence someone rightly would intuit that that multiplicity remains in the intelligible and never proceeds to bring about the hypostasis of the external multiplicity.

There is no procession properly belonging to it, but since it is nevertheless many, all things arise from there until one reaches the individuals, since even the indefinite nature of individuals is from there, as has been said previously, through the single all containing and indefinitely productive power of the intelligible. "For from there, all things begin to extend wonderful rays down below, whence the birth of variegated matter leaps forth,"⁸ (III 55) and as many things concerning this order that the Oracles reveal. But Orpheus, too, has celebrated this very august divinity who "carried the seed of the gods, famous Erikepaius"⁹ and from him makes the entire family of the gods proceed.

Broadly speaking, all things are anticipated there in their seed form,¹⁰ as the theologian says, in a unified anticipation that he has called the seed of all things, since the Unified was all things in an undifferentiated state, and therefore all things are differentiated [upon their departure] from the Unified. Yet why should this be surprising, since the absolute One has anticipated all things in the unifying perfect simplicity of itself? There was no vertical dimension in the One, because there was no differing multiplicity in the horizontal dimension, either; for in the processions, it is because of the horizontal dimension that the vertical becomes distinctive. In this way, at least, the Unified is an undifferentiated multiplicity and only multiplicity, since each of the many is undifferentiated by means of unity, and not by means of fusion. This [fusion] belonged to the different elements, but unity belonged to the undifferentiated many, since according to us, the latter brings about the Unified, while the former brings about the elemental. And therefore the one procession belongs to the elemental, and it has proceeded externally descending along the differences between the elements, but the other procession is entirely inward and belongs to the Unified, since it does not have within itself the difference between horizontal and vertical that applies to the external procession. Since there is no difference, it has remained, inclining toward its inward completeness and wholeness.

(III 56) But it is not the same circumstance, when different things proceed from one thing, versus when that thing proceeds from itself. For all the immanent forms and the pericosmic forms proceed from the universal demiurge,

and yet the demiurge has not proceeded into matter, or into the pericosmic, that is, the particular order. The intelligible god has produced from himself all the divine diacosms, but has continued to remain in his own truly supermundane observatory, and proceeds only thus far into them, that is, as is [needed] for the purpose of establishing the realm of his own monad over all things. Accordingly, he himself remains whole, and it as undivided and as intelligible that he is somehow ranked alongside the worlds that flow forth from him. But of those that follow him, each of the most universal gods either multiplies threefold in its procession or sevenfold, and of the more particular gods, each multiplies itself in many other greater numbers, but the intelligible god is the monad of all the processive numbers, remaining one in reality; or rather, as a monad of all monads, it is superior also to every plurality related to a single form, and to every Source, to speak the language of the theurgists. Whence too the Source of Sources is their title for it.¹¹

If the Unified is entirely undifferentiated and therefore has no procession, how are we able to divide the intelligible in three ways, into first, middle and last, or into substance, life, and intellect, or into father and power and intellect, or in whatever other way one chooses to speak? (III 57) If we also keep the three intelligible triads in mind, the Unified could be divided in many ways. Plato also gave us the tradition of the three orders of the intelligible in the *Parmenides*, and called the first order one-being, the middle order whole and parts, and the third order, the indefinite multiplicity.¹² And we, too, in the previous remarks, agreed that the undifferentiated is in the intelligible order.

But does not Orpheus produce the very august Phanes from the egg and from the cloud, when he also established procession in the intelligible order?¹³

The reply to this must be that we transfer these ideas from things below to the intelligible order, desiring to reveal something about that order by means of a more readily discernable analogy. But the one and being are distinguished [from each other] outside the intelligible order.¹⁴ And Plato clearly places the whole and the parts in the middle of the intelligible-intellective, and the indefinite multiplicity is also divided out, wherever differentiation is manifested. And yet what is the wonder, since we are also willing to indicate the nature of the intermediate diacosms from the [nature] of the intelligible? For all of our conceptions are formal, or perhaps even just mental [formations]. But the Unified is not in a state of division, since it is not even subject to being divided. For it is the purely unified and the primarily unified. Therefore, there are not even many forms There, nor parts, nor elements. And therefore in truth, there is no procession, either internal or external, and this is the reason why the triad is manifested after the intelligible order.

(III 58) For intellect of the father said to divide all things into three, and when he nodded assent at his will, then immediately all things were divided.¹⁵

And perhaps the god is celebrated as three pointed for this reason, not because he establishes the triads [causes them to exist], but rather because he is the overseer of the triadic division, but not the creator of it.

Chapter 99. First Method of Reply, Triads and Multiplicity in the Unified

This is the nature of the truly Unified. But since it was not possible in the case of the Unified itself, then insofar as it is not one, we have attempted to see it, but being unable to see its single unity, by analogy we have multiplied it with the first multiplicity, and the multiplicities come from below. The triad is the first multiplicity, and therefore we have assumed the Unified is also triadic, by analogy. And therefore it [the Unified] can also proceed through the procession of the same form, by analogy. For the inner triad, that is, the intelligible and the intellective and the intermediate, has proceeded as well into the external triad in a way that [preserves] the same terminology, so that it is possible to understand both the same names and the same realities.

No doubt we ought to speak in the following way, that is, by loosening in some way that formidable unity, we should realize that every world proceeds by itself in itself, until the point to which it had been capable of proceeding, and then it makes the place of the hypostasis available to that which comes after it, but it no longer itself proceeds into the latter as well. For example, the cosmos of the psychic substance comes to rest having proceeded to a certain point, and the corporeal cosmos succeeds it from this point. And so, too, the intellective is completed in the (III 59) psychic, and the intelligible is completed in the intellective. And thus the intelligible will come to rest by itself, and the intelligible and intellective will succeed it. But the nature of the intelligible does not proceed outside of the intelligible world. For it is not possible that one cosmos can proceed into the descent of another.¹⁶

But the first members of the world that at any given time has descended form a system and are linked as vehicles with the prior worlds, just as the ultimate members release their hold on this association (for not all bodies are connected to their own souls, nor yet are all souls connected to intellects, nor yet in other cases are all the seconds connected to the things that come before them), but nothing of the intelligible world proceeds below to which the secondary elements are attached in the single system of those which serve as vehicles and those which are vehicled, but the intelligible is one imparticable whole, and the cause of this is that the intelligible is the summit of all the worlds, a summit that is seated on the very crown of all things. And since it is all things in an undifferentiated manner, either it is detached from all things that are subject to differentiation equally, or it is equally vehicled by all things. Its completion is available for all things. For it is not the case, because it

has been narrowed into the undifferentiated, that therefore it is not the greatest of all worlds.

But what difference would it make to the intelligible if it proceeded into the vehicle or the (III 60) vehicled? That which is vehicled by one reality becomes a vehicle for a different reality, so if the intelligible should proceed into a state in which others use it as a vehicle, as intellect is served by soul (as its vehicle), and the soul is served by the body (as its vehicle), it will be a vehicle itself for another, as the soul is for intellect and the intellect for something else. But of what could the intelligible serve as vehicle? For thus the first god will also be participle. But the first must everywhere be imparticipable.

But perhaps the body is just a vehicle, and the intelligible is just vehicled, and the intermediates can be seen in terms of either function. If this is true, then the intelligible will be divided into the participle and the imparticipable, and be not just one participle, but more and participated by more, for example by substance, by life, by intellect, by soul, by body, and it will be necessary for the things that have vehicles to differ specifically from each other, as the supermundane god from the encosmic god, and the latter from the intellective, and the intelligible-intellective from latter again. But what difference there could be and how so great a difference could arise in the Unified, it is difficult even to invent.

Moreover, if the One has not proceeded in itself nor after itself, whereas what is after the intelligible (whence arises alterity of any sort) is both in itself and after itself, has the intelligible therefore remained in the middle, having proceeding in itself, but having brought about no procession after itself?

To this we must add the following, that the henad is the first to obtain a vehicle, and that which it uses as its first vehicle is substance. But the Unified was before both, and therefore before vehicle and that which deploys the vehicle. Therefore its nature does not admit of the (III 61) difference that belongs to something that is a vehicle, because it was before the one, which first obtained a vehicle in its very differentiation from Being, as a second differs from a first.

If one also thinks about what Iamblichus says, that the intelligible subsists in the region of the One and shares the nature of the good, and is, as it were, determined by the inclination of its entire nature toward the One, it is clear that the intelligible remains with the One and that it is undifferentiated and without procession into the external. If, in fact, the intelligible has manifested any surface trace of descent in any way within itself, yet this descent is not differentiated by number or multiplicity or alterity, but again, as Iamblichus says, the intelligible triad is not three monads, nor does the triad arise as an effect of the three monads, but it is the form itself alone that arises as an effect of the monads.¹⁷ Or rather, one should say that neither the form (since that was not yet form) nor yet an element (there were no elements There) but only the one of the triad itself, and one not differentiated with respect to substance, but the one

before both, which is called Unified. How, therefore, can what has this nature be disposed to proceed into multiple hypostases?

What follows? Is it that the many are not there [in the intelligible]?

The many are there even before the Unified, but they are not as so many things. Rather the many there were a henad infinitely generative, and the first offspring of the henad is the (III 62) intelligible plurality, becoming Unified instead of one, and this was not yet so many things, either. For there was not yet any determination; there was not yet any alterity. But wherever alterity and determination arise, there the first number is said to come into being straightway after the Unified, not number as specified, but the number that is implied in the first differentiation after that which is undifferentiated, and implied by the first differentiated multiplicity. This was the multiplicity of the first elements, where differentiation of the first to be differentiated came to be, that is, the differentiation of the one and substance, or rather these were not already distinct, but they were still in the process of becoming distinguished, especially in the summit of those whose lot it is to have their being in differentiation. It will be often necessary to touch on these matters again.

Chapter 100. Second Method of Reply, Proceeding from the Lower Realities and Ascending

■ Another answer to the first aporia discussed in chapter 90, as to whether or not there is a descent of the Unified, proceeds by analyzing the situation from the analogy of the lower realities. In this chapter, Damascius discusses the relationship of various multiplicities to their given monads, as for example, the many embodied souls and their relationship to the hypostasis soul. One way that he illustrates this relationship of monad to multiplicity is in terms of the Neoplatonic idea of illumination, which essentially involves the distinction between a thing and its activity, where the activity is conceived as the functioning of a lesser member of the synonymous series. For example, some Neoplatonists might wish to explain the apparent multiplicity of the many souls as not that of independent souls, but as a multiplicity of psychic illuminations. ■

We shall employ a different kind of argument concerning the same things, proceeding from the lower [realities] situated beneath sensation, and progressing toward the first members of the intelligible orders, if this demonstration that arises from signs and by means of analysis might furnish any confirmation of its own truth to us. The argument investigates not only the monads themselves but <also>the many stationed beneath each monad and proceeding from each monad.

(III 63) The self-moving is before the other-moved, and before the self-moving is the unmoved, which is still completely distinct, and before this that which is subject to differentiation, and before this still is the undifferentiated,

and to put it a different way, the soul that moves the body and brings it to life must be before the body, and before the soul the intellect that knows all things simultaneously and unchangeably, and before intellect life, and before life, substance:¹⁸ let us posit these theses, [all] of which have been pointed out and agreed upon by the most eminent philosophers.

But we are inquiring as to whether or not there are many substances after the one substance and many lives after the one life and many intellects after the one intellect and many souls after the one soul. Perhaps one could say that many illuminations arrived from the single soul into many bodies, and that each body possesses a rational life that chooses it, as an illumination from the single soul, and that the apparent multiplicity of the many souls is not of independent souls but a multiplicity of psychic illuminations.¹⁹ But equally the plurality of intellects are the intellectual illuminations that have come to the individual soul having arrived from each of the forms that have been distinguished in the one intellect. For it is necessary to agree that the illuminations are many and varied according to form, if one does not wish to quarrel with the obvious, and that the illuminations alone proceed from the different reason-principles²⁰ that are contained in the single soul and from the forms that are distinguished in the one intellect. It is easy to demonstrate that the multiplicity of forms comes to be before the multiplicity of reason-principles, and that the multiplicity of reason- (III 64) principles is before corporeal and material images. Indeed, it is immediately obvious that the sensible comes after the eternal and motionless realities. Similarly, one could say that the apparently many lives are illuminations from the single life that flows out into all the living beings, and that the many substances again are gifts by way of illumination from the single substance that proceeds into all substances. But why is it necessary to use many arguments, when the gods thus make the same assumptions about the many that almost all philosophers before Iamblichus do, saying that there is one god beyond Being, and that the others are substantial and made divine by the illuminations from the one, and that the multiplicity of the henads above Being is not of self-standing hypostases, but of divinizations illuminated by the sole god and transmitted by means of substances?²¹

Just as I often say, the argument raises an inquiry about each number that is said to be stationed beneath each principal monad, as to whether it is independent or only pluralized through illumination.²² But the illumination is also twofold, with one kind suspended from the illuminator and being present to it through a single connection, and the other inherent in the illuminated and belonging to that and existing with that as its underlying reality.²³ We must, therefore, inquire in which of the two ways we shall posit the illuminations, if someone accepts them as real instead of independent hypostases. But this must be clarified first, how the independent hypostasis is superior to the illumination that is in the same order. (III 65) For example, if the light of the sun

were to subsist on its own, and it were not suspended from another thing, and were a kind of substance, but not like the act of a substance, then the light itself would be self-sufficient and stand on its own, and not come into subsistence through the being of another, and it would then be agreed to be superior. But it is clear that this kind of illumination is better than the other, since [the kind that is not independent], even if it depends on another reality, still, it depends on the superior, namely, the illuminator itself, and the [other kind] depends on the inferior, since it depends on the illuminated. The one is separated, and the other is in matter and not separated, and it is clear which is which.

Let this also be added to the admissions, that if something superior belongs to something inferior, then it will also belong to the superior, a fortiori.²⁴ For example, if the naturally inferior soul is independent substance, and is not one of the two kinds of illumination, it is by all means true that the naturally superior soul will be independent, as for example, the human and the divine soul, to a much greater degree. Thus, if soul is independent, then intellect is also independent for the same reason. If intellect is independent, then life is, likewise. But if life is independent, then substance is. But if substance is independent, then the One is. The independent and self-sufficient and seated in itself would belong more to the transcendental reality than to the subordinate realities; if, therefore, independence is found in the lower, then it surely belongs to the higher. And I am talking about the [property of] being substantialized "by itself" and "in itself" in terms of the beings whose nature is like that, and such are substance and life and intellect and soul and body. And I define them as such because those things that we call elements and parts and forms and reasons in the soul and other things that alike belong to the body have their being in these.

(III 66) Since these things are so, it would be obvious even, as the expression goes, to a blind person that the bodies are many and are individually separated from each other. But those bodies that are animate are either ensouled by one soul that is common to all, or there are many souls after the one, with a single particular soul for each body, and each soul is a self-moving substance.²⁵ But that there is not a single life for all things is also apparent. Each sentient being perceives with the perception belonging to a different life; either the illuminations are particularized relative to the substrate, or they have come down from the unique reason principles of a single soul, but come to be present in each of the underlying bodies.

[One might object] that this is impossible, since the self-moving is entirely separated from the underlying bodies that are ensouled by it.

[Perhaps we should reply that] the illuminations are not infused into the bodies, nor do they have their being in the bodies, but they are suspended from their illuminators, and the illuminations are either the activities of those, or else they are secondary substances connected to the primary and emanations from them, in the manner of lights from luminous objects, or whatever

description one prefers. But these will by no means be independent, but they will be like outgrowths from a single nature, or parts or substantial reason-principles. If this is true, what space can vice or ignorance have in the particular souls that no longer even exist?²⁶ These will be the experiences belonging to the universal soul.²⁷ If there were nothing other than the light of the sun in this particular place, [a lamp's] extinguishment would be of the light of the sun, that is, since the lamp just is the light of the sun. (III 67) But this is not valid. Therefore human souls are not outgrowths of the universal soul. They are independent and seated by themselves and in themselves, being what they are of themselves and not from others, with free will and self-moving in the truest sense.

If the human body has the form of ensoulment that is deeply rooted in [body], but [if] it also has prior to this, the independent soul that animates it, and [if] it is animated somehow by the universal soul, then it is certain that superior living beings not only have the life that is in the substrate, not only the universal life that animates from afar, but also the particular life that belongs to each of them, for this kind of animation is superior to that which does not [involve] a particular, independent soul. In general, if the lowest form of animation is [life in the substrate] and if the best is life in the universality of the single soul, then why is there no life stationed in the middle of these?

Moreover, if our soul is some particular substance, and if there is also the universal, single soul, as it were a monad of the souls, then why does not the entire number [of souls] arise between the universal soul and the souls that have undergone division to the lowest stage? How is it possible for the most particular of all souls to proceed from universal soul without the intermediate pleromas? It is therefore necessary that each living thing possesses an independent soul of its own. Someone, speaking more carefully, might say that the life-giving power from the universal and single soul is double, the one anticipating the particular life, which enlivens even the inanimate beings in the universe, yet is inferior to the individual and more particular life, and when the animate beings receive it they become more alive; and there is the other kind that arises as something received in addition to the particular life, bestowed from the universal soul, through which the parts are made whole and thus all animate beings nevertheless comprise a single common life, a life that is received from outside, since it belongs to the universe, or, even if there is also the animate body, then there is a particular soul that belongs to this, through which it achieves in a greater and more universal way the life of the universe. Therefore, there are many independent souls after the one soul, as one can conclude from the appearances.

If the ensouled body is related to the soul and the being endowed with intelligence is related to intellect, it is necessary, I think, in these cases, for the same argument to work. The ensouled body is made alive, and it does not just have an illumination from the soul, but it is also connected to an independent soul. For this

was superior to the illumination for it. But that which possesses intellect is a soul that is converted into intellect, having not only the intellectual illumination, but also is joined to its native intellect by nature, which is better for it than if it simply possessed the intellectual illumination. For it cannot be that this superior form has come to be constituted among its inferiors and is even substantialized within its inferiors, but that it would not have come to be present among the superiors and within the superiors. I am referring to the fact that the ensouled body is joined together with the independent soul, but that the soul that possesses intellect is not joined together with the (III 69) independent intellect, since the latter was superior, and thus, how could it not more greatly subsist among the superiors?

Chapter 101. Third Method of Reply: Other-Moved, Self-Moved, and Immobile

■ Again on the procession of the Unified: even though there is a multiplicity that arises out of a given monad, in fact, each member of the multiplicity participates not only in its immediately superior monad, as for example, the soul participates in intellect, but also it is the case that intellect itself depends ultimately on the life that is prior to intellect.

The ancient philosophers have long posited the succession of other-moved, self-moved, and immobile, which we now explore. ■

Now the same methodology applies both to intellect and to life. Intellect lives, as it is agreed, but its life is the life of intellect and subsists in intellect. Therefore, there must be an independent life before this life, in which intellect participates as connected to it and as yoked with its superior, just as body is to soul. And through [that prior life] intellect participates also in the life that is not participate, just as body participates through its own particular soul also in the life of the one who drew the lot, so to say.²⁸

And in the same way, we shall ascend from life to the substance that admits of participation and to the substance that does not. Is it not the case, then, that someone could say this in the case of the Unified, that since it is triple, one aspect conforms to the permanent disposition in matter, another conforms to the hypostasis that admits participation, and the last to the hypostasis that does not admit participation?²⁹

But the same argument will also demand that there be a third hypostasis for the absolute One and the One before all things. For one aspect of it is the illumination that has come to be in another, according to which each reality subsists as one and is called "one," the other is in conformity with the subsistence that does not admit participation, and the last is in the intermediate or one that does admit participation, through which the things that participate also enjoy a dimension that is not participated. But this puzzle awaits us in the future.

(III 70) But I wish to return back to the beginning and proceed forward, along another path of argument, demonstrating through proofs that necessarily it is the case that not only are the higher monads prior to inferior realities, but that also the numbers that are differentiated from their proper monads are superior. For example, [we can see this superiority in] what I was now saying, that the many souls have come to be after the one soul, and many intellects after the one intellect, and lives and many substances after the one life and substance. In addition to these examples, we shall encounter the same problem concerning the Unified and the One.

That it is necessary to posit the three in succession, [namely,] the other-moved, the self-moved, and unmoved, even the more ancient philosophers have sufficiently shown.³⁰ For if the body that is moved is moved by another, since it cannot be moved by itself, either body is that which moves, whereas it is [in its turn] moved by another, and this goes on *ad infinitum*, or it is moved by the unmoved (yet, however, will this move [sometimes], but sometimes not move? For the other-moved can be observed when change occurs, but the unmoved could not govern change, so that it itself will not change, but it is posited as the unmoved). Or if this is impossible, then the self-moved will govern the change that belongs to it, as well as the change that belongs to the other-moved. Therefore, necessarily, the self-moved is posited before the other-moved.

(III 71) And yet the mover, insofar as it moves, is entirely unmoved. For if this were moved we would arrive at infinity. If the self-mover were the first mover, then the self-mover would be unmoved and not self-moved. If the same thing is at once mover and moved, and to the extent that it moves, it is unmoved, but to the extent that it is moved by itself, it is a self-mover, then it will not be purely unmoved, but first among the moved, because it is not moved by another, but by itself, and it will be last of the movers, because not only does it move but it is also moved. But one must assume that the unmixed is related to the inferior as first before the mixed. For if the mover (which is necessarily unmoved) must be prior to the moved, it is impossible for the first to be the mover and moved simultaneously. For not even this is the mover in the strict sense. For why is the same thing more the mover than the moved? And why is it called one of the unmoved things, as opposed to the moved? And even if it changes its own state, nevertheless, it changes. Therefore it is not truly unmoved. Therefore, the unmoved must be prior to the self-moved, which again would be a triple nature. Therefore, intellect, life, and substance are able to be entirely unmoved. For substance is unmoved prior to eternity, intellect is unmoved as eternal, and life is unmoved as the *aion* itself. Or perhaps it is better to say that one is delimited and differentiated into forms, and the other is not delimited and not differentiated, and the term in the middle is awakened toward differentiation and delimitation, but not is yet established in the state of complete differentiation and determination. This is clearly the order of these

[three aspects of the unmoved]. But before these and stretched alongside in correspondence to all things (III 72) will be the One. The One and the Unified are not the same thing. For the Unified was the undifferentiated.

Chapter 102. The Self-Moving

■ In this chapter, Damascius returns to a theme he treated extensively in chapter 24, above, but does so in order to explore the relationship between a monad and the multiplicity it governs, in this case, exploring the Iamblichean idea that there is one soul or a divine soul that is related to other, lesser souls as their cause. The argument proceeds in three parts, starting with the apparent self-mover, that is, the individual qua embodied soul, and proceeding to the actual self-mover, that is, the soul that makes use of the body as its instrument or vehicle, to the unmoved mover, that is, the intellect. First, Damascius considers the case of transmigration of the soul, where the same specific form apparently is the cause of the distinct lives, either of individual human beings, or indeed of different kinds of soul (for example, divine, human, demonic).

Next, Damascius considers the relationship of the soul to the activities of the embodied soul, employing the Neoplatonic grade of virtues, from political to purificatory, to suggest the varying degrees of detachment from the somatic states of the soul, or the vehicle of the soul. The revolution of the heavenly spheres represents a kind of image of genuine self-motion, but this is like the case of the embodied soul as opposed to the soul that uses the body. If there is the self-moved, there is the unmoved before it, which is the intellect, not dependent on anything external for its life. ■

Having briefly referred back to these points, our inquiry concerns the so-to-speak many specific forms that are beneath each genus, if some argument can compel these, too, to be related to the common [forms].³¹ But prior to this question, we must establish the following points, that the parts are specifically determined together with their proper totality, and that the activity of the part must be characterized by the activity of the whole. For example, the imaginary faculty of the divine soul or the imaginary faculty of the demonic soul, or that of the human soul, is not the same in its form, but one is human, another demonic, and another divine. And each reason-principle that belongs to each soul is similar. And the self-moved is therefore different by virtue of a different specific form, so that the apparently self-moving, each of which has descended from a soul that differs in species, is different in its specific form. Therefore, it must be said correspondingly that the phenomenal differences in the specific form manifest from the real differences in the specific form. Therefore, the many specific forms that appear are the signs of the many true specific forms, and the phenomenal universal trait is a demonstration of the real universal trait. If, therefore, we in an absolute manner make the phenomenal self-mover a sign of the real self-mover, as has been shown more perfectly in the *Phaedrus* [Commentary],³² if there were many specific forms of the phenomenal self-movers,

then there would be many specific forms of the real self-movers. For each phenomenal self-mover becomes a sign of its proper real self-mover, just as each image differs in its whole specific form from its proper paradigm. Surely if each phenomenal animate being is self-moving, and each is not the same in specific form, it is clear that the genuinely self-moving specific forms are many. Therefore the souls are many.

But perhaps just as there are many paradigms in the one intellect, so the many psychic reason principles are many souls, distinguished by specific form in the one soul³³ that is universal and has a unique form.

But the parts of that soul are all divine and parts of a perfect nature, so that they themselves are perfect in part. For each is universal and actually cosmic. But not every living thing gives out these activities, nor does every living thing have such a [cosmic] nature, but one thing has a divine nature, another the demonic nature, another human, and the one is the reincarnation³⁴ of Pythagoras, another of Kylon,³⁵ and another of Plato, it may be or of Kleon.³⁶ Therefore it is necessary also that the souls that are strictly self-moving are different even when they have the same specific form, and still more greatly different than the apparent self-movers. Therefore there are many souls after the one universal soul.³⁷

Perhaps they are not stationed together with the animate being, but they are separate and by themselves and they illuminate the animate principles from afar, by means of which the bodies become animate beings.

If someone were to suppose that this statement is true, it would have no bearing on the present matter. That each ensouled body has its own soul, the soul that furnishes a different apparent self-mover to it, this was what the argument wished to show, whether from near or whether from afar, and in whatever way this were accomplished. And then next, there are different activities that belong to the ensouled body, activities that are not separable and belong to the living being,³⁸ and different activities of the soul itself that either struggles with the ensouled body, or commands it and disposes it, or withdraws from it in full flight, or does not even appear to be present [to the body] because of the vast separation.³⁹ And this is clear in our own case. In the case of the demonic kinds, it is less clear because they are invisible, even though many people have encountered such [demonic] phenomena. In the case of the divine souls, it is much harder to distinguish the activities that belong to the ensouled body and those that belong to the souls, and still more, those which belong to the gods themselves, to which the souls are attached.⁴⁰ But one might easily come to the same conclusion concerning the divine souls: [it is not the case that] our soul uses the ensouled body in the manner of a tool,⁴¹ a fact that becomes apparent when it sometimes does not even use the body at all, whereas the divine soul cannot also move its ensouled [divine] body in this way, [as a tool,] even if it always moves, since it also always projects the soul that is separable from the body. If, then, the ensouled body is attached to each soul as an

instrument, it is clear that the one who employs the instrument is present to it. But this means that the rational soul of each body is seen in correlation to its proper instrument, which we call the vehicle. Therefore many souls are leaders of the many ensouled bodies, and although they differ from each other in form, and the bodies differ from each other in form, the truly self-moving are leaders of the apparent self-movers.

(III 75) Ascend now from the self-moving to the immobile, just as you have ascended from the other-moved to the self-moving. For there is also a phenomenal immobile, as for example, the constant revolution of the heavenly spheres in the same place and in the same way.⁴² Let this [revolution] be from the soul. For this [revolution] is a kind of change, but the words “in the same way” and “always” and other expressions of this sort belong to and are predicated of what is without change. And therefore the motion in a circle imitates intellect in this way, as Plotinus says,⁴³ or rather, as Plato⁴⁴ himself in Book X of the *Laws* has projected this image of the motion of intellect, because the phenomenal unmoved is the image of the true unmoved. For it truly is phenomenal since the “always” is mixed with the “sometimes” (for it always sometimes moves) and the “in the same way” is mixed with “at different times in different ways,” (for the “in the same way” takes place in a change that is numerically [distinct]), so that the moved is generally mixed with the unmoved. If even in the cyclic motion of the souls one can see the image of intellect, by analogy the moved is mixed with the unmoved there.

But perhaps one could say that this kind of unmoved is not imparted by or an image of the intellective unmoved, but of the psychic, to which belongs even the unchangeable in bodies, and I am referring to the substantially unchangeable. There is indeed something unchangeable that [has a] substantial [mode of existence] in the somatic forms and in the souls. Since the souls are immortal, they receive neither any addition or subtraction, nor any change in general. For either their substance is eternal, as the philosophers very often assert, or although it is born, it is essentially unchangeable. One must agree that there is also a generation like this, and not all that is without change is entirely eternal. For example, the substance of the sun is a hypostasis, which is perpetual and changeless, but it could not be eternal. For how would the body be eternal if it takes up space and is transported from place to place? For the eternal is without parts, either in space or in time.

These things are true, and we shall demonstrate them more accurately on other occasions. But it is not the case that the phenomenal unmoved will lead us to this first unmoved principle. For although it [brings us] closer to this, still it cannot bring us into the first and true unmoved principle. We did not posit this unmoved principle by distinguishing between the self-moved and the other-moved, which was a finite entity that nevertheless did not change, but with what was truly eternal or *hyperaionic*. This was truly and primarily unmoved, since what comes to be, even if it is unchangeable, is either moved

by another, and this is the apparently unmoved in the other-moved, or it is self-moving, and thus it is truly self-moved in the apparent unmoved. The substance of the soul moves itself and is self-moved. But to the extent that it is moved, how can it be eternal? But [if it is] simultaneously both mover and moved, it cannot be strictly speaking unmoved, and what is purely unmoved is not at the same time moved. For the moved is the sign of something that is generated. And so the self-moved can be translated as the self-generating. For it comes to be under its own agency, and in this it differs from the other-moved, and yet it is not the truly self-moved, but the apparently self-moved that is bound up with the unmoved, as the apparently self-moved is at the same time other-moved. Thus just as the self-moved in the activities of the ensouled bodies has led us through proximity to the apparently self-moved, but strictly to the genuinely self-moved, so also that which is always the same in the midst of changes leads us proximally to its proper substance, which is also the apparently unmoved itself, but strictly and truly it will lead to the first unmoved. If, therefore, there is the self-moved, there is the unmoved before it. And if there are many self-movers differing from each other in specific form, each will refer us to its own unmoved substantiality.

Perhaps someone might say that many forms are contained in one unmoved, just as the paradigms are merged in one intellect, and therefore there are not many intellects after the one intellect and proceeding from it.⁴⁵

It is not the same thing to mention the solar or lunar part of the one intellect and to speak of the solar intellect or the lunar intellect, nor yet is it the same to speak of the phenomenal unmoved of the universal soul, which is the solar or lunar unmoved that is discriminated in a part of it, and to speak of the unmoved of the solar or lunar soul in itself. Nor is it the case that my psychic unmoved is the same as that which is anticipated in the universal soul as determined by the cause of my soul. Since my soul differs in form from the anticipation of my soul, for example, in Kronos, when contemplated as a part there, but the soul of Kronos differs from the psychic cause that is governed by Kronos that is anticipated in the universal soul, it is clear that their phenomenal unmoved qualities differ formally from each other, so that the genuinely unmoved will bring us, in the manner of a sign post, to the causes that also differ formally. Therefore, the same unmoved will not be manifested from the anticipation of the soul of Kronos in the whole, and from the soul of Kronos itself. From the former we arrive at the unmoved intellect that properly belongs to Kronos, and from the latter we arrive at a part that is in the universal intellect, where the part belongs to Kronos.

That there are many independent intellects after the one intellect follows from there being many independent souls after the one soul and proceeding from it. And therefore it is necessary to inquire whether we shall also posit a universal apparent and true unmoved. For if so, there will also belong to my soul an independent particular intellect. And yet why not, someone might say,

if in fact there is an independent particular soul for each ensouled body, and by “for each,” I mean for each apparently self-moved? But let us allow this question to remain until we fully investigate it.

Chapter 103. The Henads and the Characteristics of Individuals

■ Now Damascius compares the relationship of the soul and its vehicle to the relationship between the gods and the intellects, which function as the divine vehicles: just as the divinity that employs intellect as its vehicle anticipates the characteristic of intellect, intellect uses the soul as a vehicle and anticipates the character of the soul. Unitary substance is the god who uses substance as hypostasis for a vehicle, and unitary life is the god who uses life as a vehicle. The henads are first to project their characteristics and to transmit these to their proper vehicles. Much of this chapter is an illustration of Proclus’ *ET* Propositions 118–122, where Proclus discusses the henads and their transmission of the divine attributes through the channels or stations of Being. Proposition 118 is especially comparable to Damascius’ discussion here of the gods (he does not call them henads): “Every attribute of the gods presubsists in them in a manner consonant with their distinctive character as gods, and since this character is unitary and above Being, they have all their attributes in a unitary and supra-existential mode.” ■

(III 79) For the present, let us return to the question of whether the argument shows that there are many absolute intellects only, but also intellects coordinated with the many souls, like instruments or like vehicles. That the apparent solar immobile reveals to us the independent solar intellect, and that every lunar immobile reveals in turn the lunar intellect, is clear. If there is a partial solar intellect, and a partial lunar intellect, the one intellect will make available to the soul of the moon, and the intellect of the sun will make available to the soul of the sun the apparent immobile, and the one kind of intellect, by means of the one kind of soul, will make the projecting trace or the image of the immobile available to the natural species. Therefore, the one intellect is coordinated with the sun by virtue of its native characteristic, and the other is coordinated with the moon, and a different intellect uses a different soul as an instrument for the completion of the triad, and it is clear which kind of intellect uses which kind of soul.

Therefore, this method of demonstration does not lead to the many unparticipated intellects, as it just now seemed, but quite to the contrary, to the participated intellects (for it is with reason that we advance from the ensouled bodies to the souls that are coordinate with them and that are participated by them). And yet how was it likely that ascending from the dispensations, we should not return to the [intellects] dispensing [the various qualities]? In fact, the souls that are attached to the natural species dispense the ensouled body [to the species] and also use the species as vehicles from nearby, but the intellects

that are similarly linked with the souls themselves and share the same form, dispense the principle of intelligence. The likeness that is [shared] by [similar characteristics] and the symmetry [that belongs to] things that [share] the same measure in their division from the wholes is what joins those things that can participate with those in which there can be participation.

Therefore, is it the case that the imparticable is one [only], and the participle is everywhere multiple?⁴⁶

[We answer that] the philosophers know that there are also supermundane souls that are prior to the encosmic souls, and intellective and imparticable intellects before the supermundane and participle intellects.

What is the method of ascent from below to the unparticipated multiplicity?

The same method applies: let this first be established, that just as the divinity that employs intellect as its vehicle has anticipated the characteristic of intellect and is, in fact, unitary intellect, so also intellect that uses the soul as a vehicle must anticipate the character of the soul, and be intelligent soul, since it is intellect as hypostasis, and intellect in terms of its character. In fact, the henad that is of the same order as the intelligent souls has first projected the psychic characteristic, and it is unitary soul according to the same argument. We call unitary substance the god who uses substance as hypostasis for a vehicle, and we call unitary life the god who uses life as a vehicle. Therefore, the soul that employs this sort of living being as a vehicle would correctly be [called] either nature or a complete form that is physical and bodily, or a form that is in matter in an absolute manner, or an encosmic form, (III 81) and before this soul is intellect, and before this still is the henad. It is uncontroversial that in some way we call encosmic gods and sensible gods and gods in matter, the lowest gods, not in the way that the philosophers seem to speak, who mean that the gods are specifically determined from the ultimate vehicles (for nothing can rightly be characterized or named by its inferior), but because the henads are everywhere first to project their characteristics and to transmit these to their proper vehicles. Therefore, the gods first have become encosmic and in matter, and perceptible and somatic in a unitary mode, and then after them the intellects have done so in an intellectual mode, and then after the intellects the souls have done so in the mode of self-mover, and in addition to these, the characteristic form has itself proceeded and it is from them that it has proceeded, but not just with a characteristic, as we say, but the form is already in the lowest hypostasis, which we consider to be other-moved and body in itself and graspable by means of perception. For this is what the philosophers have long ago demonstrated, that every property, being a good, comes from gods.⁴⁷ What is there that is able not to be an offspring of a god and an One? Let us then posit this point of clarification, which appears useful for the preceding puzzles and for the upcoming puzzles.

If it is necessary to arrive at the genuine self-mover from the apparent self-mover, which will be more genuine, the self-mover that is mixed with the

character of the other-moved, even if it is self-moved in its hypostasis, or the self-mover in both respects, by virtue of its character and hypostasis (III 82) self-moving, and is only what is self-moving and nothing other? In either case, there is a transition [that is, from apparent to genuine], but the one transition is immediate because it involves what is more akin [ascending] to the participated, while the other is from farther away, because it involves what is more true [ascending] to the unparticipated. Therefore, we shall ascend from the apparently self-moving first to the psychic intellect, which is self-moving only by virtue of its character, and is immobile in its hypostasis, and second to the completely immobile, which truly has this nature, and this is the imparticible intellect. It is clear that the multiplicity of intellects is immobile, as well as the multiplicity of souls. Since there are many participants, so there must be many imparticibles as well. For each participle property will possess its own purification in its own [imparticible which]⁴⁸ is more truly [the property] and is absolutely such as the true nature received from the apparent wishes to be. But [if there were no such individual imparticible], the ascent would be from each appearance to the absolute imparticible. For we shall not bring the soul from the human soul to the imparticible soul in such a way that the soul that is supermundane⁴⁹ and imparticible could belong, for example, to Plato [the individual], nor yet [shall we bring the intellect] from the daimonic intellect to the imparticible intellect. For every daimon is encosmic, so that we cannot even suppose that there is a supermundane soul in each daimon.⁵⁰ For each encosmic god would not be supermundane before, nor has every supermundane god already come into previous existence as intellective, nor could the intellective be the intelligible, or if so, then we shall make everything already determined on every level, and immediately in the intelligible the entire tribe of gods would be discernable, and I mean the multiplicity of the universal properties and the individual. Therefore, it is not the case that the upper realm compared with the lower realm is restricted in terms of quantity or that the higher exceeds the worth [of the lower] in quality.

Chapter 104. Conclusions Concerning the Ascent from the Lower Realities to the Unified

■ In this chapter, Damascius explores the relationship between various orders of reality and the principles that cause them, reflecting in these remarks the influence of Proclus *ET* Propositions 100 and 101, where Proclus discusses the three moments or aspects of causal transmission, in terms of unparticipated and participated causes. Proposition 100 reads: “Every series of wholes is referable to an unparticipated first principle and cause; and all unparticipated terms are dependent from the one first principle of all things.” Proposition 101 reads: “All things that participate intelligence are preceded by the unparticipated Intelligence, those that participate life by Life, and those

that participate being by Being; and of these three unparticipated principles, Being is prior to Life and Life to Intelligence."

Damascius will apply these principles of causation to a more problematic case, according to his own admissions, and posit the idea of an unparticipated multiplicity as a way of explaining his fundamental intuition that the Unified does not proceed. This intuition is complemented by Damascius' references to Iamblichus' doctrine, according to which the Unified remains in the sphere of the One. In this chapter as well, Damascius begins a more extensive exploration of Plato's *Parmenides*, here concentrating on 142e and following, where Parmenides describes the two indefinitely multiplying series of parts that are generated from the division of the One-Being into One and Being. Evidently Damascius envisions this division in terms of two rows: one row of henads, or parts of the One, and one row of substances, or parts of Being, each of which proceeds from the One-Being. ■

(III 83.8) If someone were to raise a question about the argument as stated and ask again that it define from which entities the ascent into the higher takes place, and from which it does not take place, this has been raised earlier and we shall attempt to solve it again insofar as we are able. But for now I assume that the argument demands so much, namely, that there is an imparticipable multiplicity before the participated souls and intellects, because the simply imparticipable is without contact with the multiplicity of participated entities, and is opposed as one is opposed to many, and as imparticipable is opposed to participle. In the middle would be the imparticipable, although it will be a multiplicity.⁵¹ If there is a first participle the first participle will be at the head of its own multiplicity, and therefore the first imparticipable will be at the head of a particular multiplicity. For every number has the same form as its own monad.

Therefore, we shall divide the unmoved into three aspects, as well. For since intellect is something differentiated and delimited both in itself and with respect to its contents, it is not absolutely dispersed, but in some respects it is concentrated, although it has its being in differentiation, and in order that I may speak more clearly, since it is intellect, it has life, but life as somehow intellectual and not pure life, then it is necessary that life above formal nature and pure life subsisting in itself be before life that is in another and is mixed with another formal property, and it is necessary for life to be substantialized only in (III 84) differentiation, but not also to project perfect differentiation. Now since life has substance, too, and this is vital substance, not simply absolute substance, and therefore it is differentiated and not absolutely unified, it is necessary that before this substance there be true substance and only substance and perfectly unified substance, and it is clear not only that the monads are such in terms of their ranking with respect to each other but also the multiplicities, and the participle is available not only for the one who ascends from the many intellects to the multiplicity of participle lives but also for the one who ascends from these lives to the imparticipable multiplicity. Equally, in the case of substances

[there is the same pattern of ascent]. For the same argument agrees with all [members of the intelligible triad, being life, and intellect].

Someone could say, then, that the same thing is true for the other realities, and in the case of the Unified nothing prevents us from introducing the same necessity of argument. Therefore, there will be before the participated multiplicities many henads that are also participated. But to the extent that [these henads] have proceeded into substance, they are substantial, and to the extent that they have proceeded into life, they are vital. The henads that are attached to intellect are intellective. Therefore, there must be many imparticipable gods before the substantial gods, and not just one, and there must be one god before the many gods, that is the absolute god.

(III 85) What god, then, would this be, and which unparticipated gods would be after him? It is necessary for them to be unitary and substantial, not such as we say the undifferentiated gods before one and substance are, the gods that are unified as the One-Being of Plato.⁵² For those were not henads established in the One alone, and differentiated with respect to Being, in the first manifestation of alterity.⁵³ For evidently this alterity, having separated the One from Being, ought to have stationed the absolute One before all things, and then the many imparticipable henads, after which in succession are the henads participable by substances and lives and intellects and souls and somatic physical forms. Plato placed the two rows of the participle henads and the participable substances after the undifferentiated One-Being.⁵⁴ In general, if it is true to say that the multiplicity produced from the absolute One is double, as it is from the absolute substance and absolute life and the absolute intellect and, if you will, absolute soul, namely, the imparticipable [multiplicity] and the participable [multiplicity] (for how could one not name it correctly) it is clear that a double multiplicity of Unifieds also manifests itself from the absolute Unified, one of which is imparticipable and not extending along with the things that participate until the point of the encosmic lives, and the other participable until these lives, just as each of the wholes is [participable]. Therefore the procession of Unified is also external by means of the internal multiplicity that belongs to the things proceeding externally on a double course.

(III 86) If it is permitted, in our inquiries, to reason in the same way concerning the absolute One, the One that is beyond the Unified, then perhaps it would also be right to ask the same questions concerning that One. Why is there not also a unique procession of the One beyond the Unified that is itself beyond the Unified, a procession that is unparticipated, and a procession that is participated by the Unified?

The participated and the participant are not yet differentiated there, nor the participable and the imparticipable, nor yet the many and the one. For that nature was only one, and the second principle was said to be many as one nature, a cause of that which is in any way subject to differentiation, being the autonomous power of the One that is generative and introduces differentiation.

Therefore, such a nature is not subject to the processions that arise from the One with any differentiation whatsoever. For it wishes to be One alone, both replete with all things and before all things, from which those things that have such a [differentiated] nature are manifest as seconds or thirds.

Moreover, where all things are one, there precisely no difference whatsoever could exist. Therefore, [there] there will be no absolute one, or unparticipated one, or participated one, for there would then be differences, whereas the nature of the One is entirely without differentiation. Neither, therefore, will it be receptive in any way whatsoever, either as a trace or through analogy, of remaining, procession, and reversion, or of that which generates or that which is generated, since these are also differences.

(III 87) But since that nature is before all things, and it is the principle of all things, it could not be subject to anything proceeding from it. Therefore, neither could the nature that rules all things be subject to anything of this sort. These things belong to the all, and already are among those things that subsist according to differentiation. Nor does any among these things reveal the nature of what we say is One only, and nothing other [than the One].

If that nature has its being in its transcendence of all things and in being the common principle of all things, how could that nature yet be common, since it is unique, just as a monad [is the unique monad] of the unparticipated multiplicity [that arises] from itself, and how could its nature be unrelated, since it has a participated multitude? But all that is like this joins the ranks of the things that participate in it.

Chapter 105. On the Unified as Cause of the Intellectual Procession

■ A final response to the puzzles raised above in chapter 90: the Unified admits of no differentiation in any way, nor does it admit of any procession at all. Damascius illustrates this conclusion through a favorite image, that of the center of a circle with radiating spokes. Plotinus also uses this image, particularly when he wishes to convey the nature of the intelligible reality as transcending discursive awareness. Although he uses it for the same purpose as Plotinus, as he begins to develop the idea of a quasi-illusory multiplicity, in fact Damascius attributes the image to Iamblichus, though the provenance of the citation is unknown.

In this chapter, Damascius equates the supermundane abyss with the “hidden (*kruphios*) world,” perhaps then equating the Chaldean term with its Orphic counterpart, where “hidden” signifies the Orphic egg. For this expression, see *Or. Ch.* fragment 198 and Majercik’s commentary ad loc. (Majercik 1989, 213.) It is possible that Damascius is thinking of the Orphic myth, since he discusses the seed state of differentiated reality, and he also mentions the titanic nature of discursive reason as it attempts to project or to divide the intelligible order into a triadic scheme. Damascius discusses three methods of purifying this discursive projection concerning the intelligible order.

First, he elaborates the idea of the supermundane world or world before all worlds, which is the seed state, or birth pangs that precede the manifestation of any determined reality. Second, Damascius mentions the triad of Being, life, and intellect that functions like the unparticipated monad of all subsequent substances, lives, and intellects. Third, Damascius discusses the nature of the Being, life, and intellect in the intelligible as not equivalent to (ordinary) thinking, being, or living, or to actually having these (ordinary) properties. ■

Concerning the first cause, why is it necessary to prolong the discussion, since it has nothing other in common with all the other things, than this alone, this it transcends all things and is the cause of all things, nor does it have this character, of being a cause, as something differentiated in addition to its being the One.

But why cannot the Unified proceed into the twofold multitude that is produced from it, unparticipated and participated? Rather, we agree there is an unparticipated multitude [only]. For the intelligible is many. We continue to contemplate it as triadic, and do not let the triad be tripled into an ennead. Therefore it was necessary also for the participated to proceed after the unparticipated.

(III 88) Or perhaps it is truer to say that the unparticipated does not even proceed. For not only does the One refuse to admit the differentiated multitude but also the Unified inclines as a whole toward the One and is, as it were, both formed through the nature of that [One] and also wishes never and in no way to stand apart from it, since the first Unified has its being in this. As it is necessary for each first to be most real (for what could be prior to something, if it is first?), so also this is most truly Unified. Therefore, the Unified admits of no differentiation in any way, nor does it admit of any procession at all. For the Unified would be such most correctly as one could correctly suppose its apparent elements are. Thus to speak from below, from the things that are after it and those that proceed from it, the Unified is one simple being stationed prior to the One and Being. If, therefore, [the One and Being] occasion processions from themselves, as for that which is neither of the two, but before both, how could it not be superior to the necessity of procession? This necessity just is that which differentiates the One and Being from each other. For this differentiation is the first to become manifest. But to look at it from above, from the perspective of the two principles [the One and Being], the Unified is at the same time One and many in terms of participation, just as it was those principles as cause.

But the One and the many do not proceed. The many do not proceed since they are the cause of processions, but the cause [of processions] does not itself proceed. Nor yet are they many in the sense that they constitute a one multiplied, but rather like a one characterized as a kind of extension of the One. Therefore the many are known as the power of the One,⁵⁵ and as that aspect of the One that (III 89) contains all and is the cause of all. For to the extent that it

is One, it is not the cause of all things, but only before all things. Since the Unified proceeds out of the two principles that have this nature, as the One it possesses something of the One, and as the many it manifests something of the many, but it does not remain One, but rather it becomes Unified instead of One, and not the One itself, and to this extent it manifested the many (for this was the second principle, but not that which is differentiated in any way) and since the Unified has such a nature, how could it be differentiated into any processions, either in itself or from itself, and how could it be either participated or unparticipated? What will be the source of these differences, when nothing there is established by itself, and thus not difference or alterity or differentiation or procession or abasement or superiority or generator or generated or any other thing [that can be] differentiated from something or subject to differentiation or remain in itself or some other differentiation such as these? The nature of the Unified has swallowed all things into a single unity of all things just as, if it is permitted to say so, the One itself has [swallowed all things] in a single simplicity of all things.

I am more than anything convinced that the truth is as [we just explained] and Iamblichus in many places compels us to gather our multiple conceptions into one center, and to make their rotation a center, and thus to approach the Unified and intelligible in a unified and intelligible way, with one great thought that is both undifferentiated and intelligible. And (III 90) since it is not easy to project such a thought as a human being, especially for one who is still living on the earth, but we wish in some way to see what has been hidden in the depths there and is, as it were, confused with our own conception after we have attempted to gather that nature as we can, not yet ourselves concentrated in a single intuition, which we were calling the center of all intuitions, we are at first divided into two with respect to the uninterrupted unity: in some way it is unified, but in another way we see it as possessing multiplicity, but it ought not to. For it is not the case that its unified character is one thing and its multiple character a different thing, but these are both enfolded in the Unified. But nevertheless, we are content and think of it as such and name it, in one way calling it that which possesses multiplicity and is not yet the One itself, and in another way since it is subject to the One, we give it the epithet, "the Unified." But that is just a single nature, which not being able to seize on as one thing, we think of in dualistic terms, either as One and not one, or as neither One nor not One, or as both One and many.

Chapter 106. Purification of Our Conceptions Concerning the Unified

What follows? Are we wrong about it? Rather, we are wrong through differentiation and we are truthful through the unity of these things. And perhaps we can, in this manner, just hit on this truth.

Then seeing all the worlds proceeding from the true supermundane abyss,⁵⁶ we give that abyss the title of hidden world, since it has concentrated all the worlds in itself, as if it were the world of every world, (III 91) or rather the undifferentiated birth pangs of all worlds, not yet attached to the cosmic form, but nevertheless giving birth to it prior [to any manifestation of any world]. For it is, if it is permitted to call it this, the single common and undifferentiated labor pain of the cause of all things and is before all things, stationed prior to the universal worlds that are from it and all the intelligible [worlds] that are born, which we say is the unified boundary of the worlds, however many there are, and of the pleromas that are contained in them, and [viewed from] above, is the single transcendental simplicity.

Since then we intuit this much, that that which is in truth the supermundane abyss is a world, therefore this ranking runs alongside our conception of it, that is, of its first, middle, and last parts, though no such differentiation is there. Whence does this ranking arise? For there is no such thing in the worlds after it, either, but this differentiation manifests itself after the limit of intelligible and intellectual, as it says in the *Parmenides*.⁵⁷ Let the triadic procession be observed in some way even in the [worlds] prior to [that limit], yet in the intelligible, this cannot be manifested. But think, if you will, of the birth pang of this [procession], which we call a threefold differentiation in that realm, and if there is something even more like the One than the birth pang, as for example, the spermatic (since the sperm is less divided than the birth pang), or yet beyond the analogy of the sperm, since it is really beyond any analogy that suggests differentiation. Trying, then, to get hold of this (III 92) indefinable abyss that in reality contains all things, it is we who are in a state of division concerning it, and we are afraid of the division created by our own thoughts, titanic⁵⁸ and fearsome as it is in truth, not because it is fragmented around a divided intellect, but because it is fragmented in an unholy and most offensive way around that which is absolutely without division, and in a state of contentment, we have seized on the concept of the triad, venturing to be dragged down into the furthest division, and satisfied with this fallen state, we have dared to accuse the intelligible order of the threefold division, intending to rest from our own thought, but not being able to become more concentrated, and not able either to be rid of our speculation concerning the intelligible, in our longing for the original causes of the nature that is perfect.

Nevertheless, having purified our conceptions and concentrated them as much as possible, first we shall attempt to ascend to that point, not from any ordinary realities, but from the principles that have proceeded from there, from substance and life and intellect. But second, [we are not trying to ascend] from separate characters, that is, from the synthetic or the unitary, but from the unique character that is before any separation. We were speaking of the absolute Unified before One and Being, and thus also the character that belongs to those is not synthetic or simple, but unified before both. Thus, too, the life that

we call intelligible is unified life, before the unitary and the so-to-speak mixed life. And thus too is intellect, that is, intelligible intellect, and not unitary intellect or intellect that is differentiated as against the (III 93) unitary, in the way that a vehicle is distinct from that which occupies the vehicle, or substantial and synthetic intellect as opposed to unitary and simple intellect, but rather the intellect that is before both and before differentiation is [unified intellect]. And therefore, each of the two separate intellects is some particular intellect: [the one] intellect is unitary and the other is substantial (for let substance be called in a more universal way, that which is differentiated from the monad, as the *Parmenides*⁵⁹ has it) but neither one of them is absolute intellect, since the intelligible is the absolute intellect. And, in fact, that is the first intellect, from which the first unified intellect and the first substantial intellect were differentiated, and since that intelligible intellect is first, each of the two is nevertheless relative. The [intelligible intellect] was absolutely first. And thus, too, absolute life is related to either kind of life, that is, separated into unitary and substantial, since it is the absolute and the first life. And substance in the very same way is before either kind of substance, since it is absolute substance, and is with both, since it is entirely before either one. And not just these things, but also all the differentiated things that are in these and from these are concentrated there in terms of both being and One. "For it is all things, but in an intelligible mode," says the Oracle.⁶⁰

Why then is the Unified not divided analogously in all things?

[We reply,] because it is not even divided in these [substance, life, intellect] in reality, and because nevertheless all things are in that realm in an undifferentiated mode. If it is necessary for there to be manifestation in that realm, the first members would become manifest rather [than the subsequent members], (III 94) and these would be appropriate for the analogy, since they are the most generative and the simplest and the most divine and the first of the things that proceed from the intelligible. For they could not have become manifest first, unless in that realm, in their delivery, they were projected before the others, not because of any greater differentiation that belonged to them (for they are the most unified of all things), but because of their summary and intelligible perfection, which therefore was content to become substantialized along with the intelligible and, as it were, to become manifest alongside the intelligible and not to be hidden by its brilliance or to be fused by its unity, since these also became substances in their state of near unity, and, through their concentrated likeness with it, they were not affected by the intelligible.

The third purification of our conceptions we introduce in addition to these, by contemplating the substance and life and intellect in that realm, not thus [as they are here] with the differentiation that they seem to have in these names, but in terms of the single nature of the Unified, which is compared only with itself in its apparent descent. For it is one everywhere it is, as *Parmenides*⁶¹ shows, and it is undifferentiated and intelligible throughout. And just as in the

undifferentiated all, the all has coalesced from a first, middle, and final differentiation of the same nature, just as if someone observed the separable and the inseparable and the intermediate aspect of the nature in an underlying body, but agreed nevertheless on its nature. For the intelligible intellect is not said to be such because it thinks, but rather because it is the cause of thinking. (III 95) And if it does think, even its intellection is, as it were, in the nature of a cause. And it is the same with life: [the life] below is life in the strict sense, that is, either as a hypostasis or composite life, or life anticipated as a property, that is, unitary life, while intellective life is life neither as hypostasis or property (since it is before both) but as the birth pangs of these. And this is how one must speak in the case of substance, as well, that substance presubsists in that realm, either in its cause or as birth pang, or as undifferentiated unity. Therefore, this differentiation is the trace of the differentiation of the things that are generated from there, but the subsistence of the intelligible order is the Unified and undifferentiated and all that is of this kind. But we shall return to these matters a little later.

Chapter 107. On the Undifferentiated Many

■ Here Damascius continues the argument, developed in chapter 106 above, but interrupted by his discussion of the nature of being, life, and intellect in the intelligible, concerning the undifferentiated many, or the indefinite multiplicity, referencing Plato's *Parmenides* 144a3: "Therefore, if one is, there must also be number. Necessarily. But if there is number, there would be many, and an unlimited multitude of beings. Or doesn't number, unlimited in multitude, also prove to partake of being?" (Gill 1996 translation) Again, he is continuing his overall argument against the procession of the Unified. In this case, he equates the unlimited multitude of Plato's *Parmenides* with the Orphic chaos. In terms of Damascius' metaphysics, the indefinite multitude or chaos is actually the second henad, that is, all things, conceived not as an aspect of the intelligible world, but as a modality of the One. In fact, the Unified represents the union of the One and the indefinite many. ■

But let us return to the point raised in the beginning, that the intelligible could not proceed according to the external procession, since it did not even proceed according to the internal procession. And therefore neither does it naturally proceed as a participated or an unparticipated multiplicity, since it is uniform and undifferentiated. Therefore, neither is the inner multiplicity of forms a multiplicity of parts or elements, since neither is it a multiplicity of particulars, but it is simply multiplicity, nor yet is it the same as a divided plurality and composed from particulars either at random or from specific particulars, but it is Unified and belongs to that family that includes the indefinite and the many and the chaotic. And, therefore it has been called the "indefinite multiplicity" in the *Parmenides*,⁶² as if Plato were calling the one form of it "the

definite one."⁶³ And in the respect by which it differed from (III 96) the first principle, having become Unified instead of One, it also differed from the second, having become indefinite instead of indefiniteness and a multiplicity instead of many. Just as the Unified [derives its being unified] from the One, so [it derives its being] multiple from the absolute multiplicity. But the one of the Unified has also concentrated the many into a single nature, which is composed from the two principles, and it has also collected in itself both the universal procession of that which follows itself and that which subsists from it, as well as the procession manifesting the most general differentiation that belongs to them, namely, the differentiation into substance and life and intellect. Intending to see the unity in that realm, we see instead the differentiation that arises from that realm. So it is necessary not to abide at the level of differentiation, but to flee it with all haste, by assuming that the intellect there is not intellect but as it were intellect, nor life there life, but as it were life, nor substance there substance, but as it were substance, nor procession there procession, in general, but as it were procession.

And yet perhaps we must concentrate the procession that is imagined [in this way] into a single procession, as if the internal and the external were the same. The intelligible and the Unified are both a monad as a single nature, if it is appropriate to call the unbounded unity of the intelligible a monad, and again a cosmos, if one must name the unified world [which is also] truly the supermundane abyss. For it is not as it is in the case of intellect, life, and substance, where the first substance is one thing, and the multiplicity differentiated from it (III 97) another, but both together are given the name, substantial world. And there is a single life, and many lives after the one life, but the many lives together with the one life are a world. And intellect is the same, in that there is the first intellect, and intellects divided from the first, and the one together with the many form the intellectual world. But the intelligible, which is the Unified, is not like this, since it is bounded together in itself and it is not separated into monad and number; the same thing is established as monad and number. Therefore the same thing could be also a world that is simultaneously all worlds and a universal world, nor is it divided into universal and complete, but these things, too, are as one. And the same thing would be both the inward one and the external, apparently a multiplicity, as if the inside of a monad, but the inside and the outside are the same, since the monad and the world are the same There.⁶⁴ Thus the same thing is forms and parts and elements there, for the same thing is whole and all and the mixture of the elements.

For nothing there is distinct nor is there any other in general, but there is only the One-Being alone, and this is the Unified. But in one way, it is the undifferentiated as One and Being, wishing to have one name and one designation, and in another way, it is differentiated, since Plato⁶⁵ says that the parts of it are the One and Being, and in yet another way, it is the completely distinct, as the indefinite multiplicity, even if these [aspects] attend (III 98) each other

always. For the division of the Unified into unities has come about because of its own limit. Therefore, not even the differentiation that manifested itself there was able to weaken the nature of the Unified, but it made a verbal attack and then refuted itself so that it was not really a differentiation, since it was more unified than differentiated, and it unified more than differentiated. The fragments of the Unified reappeared as unified, so that they are not fragments. Nor is there therefore differentiation, whose effect is not yet manifest in the intelligible world, other than the [differentiation that signifies the] strengthening of unity. In fact, just the things that [differentiation] appeared to divide, it led back to the same unity, as if someone wishing to divide the form of gold should discover that the particles were no less gold.⁶⁶ Therefore the division of it only happened to the quantity, but not to the gold qua form. And in that realm, differentiation happens to the Unified alone, for there is no quantity or anything other than that nature.

It is clear that Plato,⁶⁷ having intended to indicate that the Unified is without differentiations, posited a division and found that it was without consequence, or rather without great consequence, and so indicated the undifferentiated nature of the Unified and that it remained in the same state even in the last reach, where it would seem especially to be differentiated in itself because of the trace of differentiation that it anticipated, whose nature Plato indicated by establishing it as the putative thesis.⁶⁸ Thus it must not be said that the forms that appear have become fragments of the Unified, but only as it were forms, nor parts in the strict sense, but only as it were parts. This is what [Plato] clearly taught us, when (III 99) below, that is, after the intelligible, he produced the whole and the parts again after number,⁶⁹ and made thoroughly clear that the parts and whole above [that is, in the intelligible domain] were said to be such with a different meaning. And by placing the multiplicity before the number in the Unified, it is clear that Plato thought that this [multiplicity] was the indefinite principle, before every differentiation.⁷⁰ Therefore, it is not capable of being composed from particulars, nor is this multiplicity continuous, since the continuous is after the differentiated. And therefore the multitude is unified, and not even differentiated into the first multiplicities, but just as I have said very often, it is an indefinite multiplicity, or chaotic.⁷¹ Therefore the elements, too, There are the worlds that are differentiated from their appropriate monads, and are as it were elements. For the Unified is not distinguished in terms of differences based on parts and elements, nor is it a mixture of them, but it is unified before every differentiation. Therefore, too, both the horizontal and the vertical are perfectly undifferentiated, to speak in terms of act and in truth. However, in potential and by analogy let there be both horizontal and vertical equally, not concentrated into a fusion, but into a perfect unity.

(III 100) Therefore, what I was just saying was that the same thing appears as internal and external multiplicity in the intelligible. As outside the intellective

diacosm as a whole, no intellect could proceed (for every intellect would be contained in it), and as there could be no procession of soul outside the psychic diacosm (for this would also be contained in its own diacosm), so then the intelligible could not be outside of the intelligible diacosm. Therefore, it is not that the participated is one thing and the unparticipated is another. Although they are two multiplicities, they are also concentrated into one absolute and unified multiplicity, whatever it may be called. It is the self-same reality that both uses all things as its vehicles and is detached from all things. For the participated is not distinguished in opposition to the unparticipated, but stationed before the differentiation; it has the power of both before both, as it is the same to be participated and unparticipated. To the extent that it is beyond the participated, it appears to be unparticipated. Yet to the extent that it [is from the first plurality]⁷² it seems to be participated. But we shall discourse again concerning participation.

Chapter 108. On the Absolute One and Absolute Many

■ In this chapter of the work, Damascius returns to the principles or henads explored earlier as limit, unlimited, and mixed. However, here he seems to be writing in terms of the Proclean concepts, that is, pure unity, pure multiplicity, and substance, the last of which is intermediate between the previous two. For this doctrine in Proclus, see *Platonic Theology*, book II, pp. 1–5: “All beings, that is every kind of being, must either be purely multiple, with no [possibility] of a one appearing among them, or in each individual, or among all of them collectively, or they must be purely one, with no plurality” (*PT* II.1.11–15). Apparently Damascius is rehearsing the problem of the Unified in its nature as mixed, or substance, insofar as the Unified represents the simultaneous presence of the One and the indefinite, and yet is itself the cause of the series of henads, and so of divine substance, which can only be subsequent to it. Hence, Damascius again invokes *Parmenides* 144d5 and following, where he takes Plato to be discussing the two kinds of processions that result from the Unified. Thus Damascius is wrestling with the composition of the Unified (as a synthesis of one and many) as well as its products (the Unified is source of substance and of the henads). ■

But now let us once more return to the investigation of the absolute One (I refer to the one [III 101] that is separate from substance by means of the otherness that becomes manifest as the intermediate term) and ask if we must posit [this One], and also [if we must posit] an unparticipated multiplicity [that derives] from it, for the participated multiplicity is the plurality of henads, to which what are more commonly said to be the many substances are attached. As *Parmenides* says, there are as many fragments of Being⁷³ as there are of the One. But there must be another multiplicity before this, one might say, the unparticipated, and the absolute One is before the [unparticipated] multiplicity. If there are many henads, it is necessary for there to be one henad before

the many, which is the absolute henad.⁷⁴ The Unified is not only a Henad but it is also substance, although it is also before both [monad and substance] and what is, beyond the Unified, called one, is one in the manner that that was unified. For this was the principle of henads and of all substances. But we are seeking an absolute One that is the leader of the pure henads, since we have absolute substance as the leader of the substances, and life of the same sort is the first of all the lives, and the absolute intellect is the monad of the many intellects. Since, in fact, if there is a substantial henad, a vital henad and an intellective henad, there is a one that is characteristic of each, and a one that is universal. Whence, then, is this one that is universal to all, other than from the cause that is universal to all? And this, from necessity, must be posited as an absolute One.

Moreover, the absolute soul is dependent on an intellect, and not the absolute intellect, and the absolute intellect is dependent on life, but not the absolute life, and the absolute life is therefore dependent on a substance, but not the first substance.⁷⁵ Therefore too the absolute substance is the vehicle of a henad but not, it seems, the vehicle of the absolute henad. But before the particular henad there must be the absolute henad. For always the (III 102) absolute is unparticipated but the participated is never the absolute. If even the Unified, when it differentiates itself, produces two things, then it must have produced absolute Being and the absolute One, or something that was either of them. In their unity, they actually have the same rank. If we say that there is an absolute One, by all means this [implies] absolute Being, as well. The positive case for that hypothesis was persuasive, and yet I do not believe it is true.⁷⁶ For there is also a powerful intuition that opposes it. But may god in his pity steer the direction of our argument toward the truth.

First it is better to risk siding with Plato⁷⁷ and to represent the one and substance directly after the One-Being as if they were lined up in two rows that are parallel and opposite each other. But Plato equally places the absolute One in opposition to absolute substance, since he also joins together the qualified one with [qualified substance]. But he says that there are as many fragmentations of substance as there are of the One.⁷⁸ But whether we shall assign the absolute One before the absolute substance, or whether [we shall assign before this substance] the unparticipated multiplicity that depends on the absolute One, the parts of Being and of the absolute One will not prove equal. But [still] greater evidence is that in the Unified, right at the beginning of the second hypothesis, Plato posits that Being participates in the One and that the One participates in Being. If they participate reciprocally [when they are] in the Unified, as it seems, it is clear that they will also participate in each other when they have been differentiated, in such a way that we can speak of the substantial one and unified being. But that what was said just above does not conform to Plato's thought is clear from these points.⁷⁹

(III 103) Come now, and from the realities in themselves let us attempt to speak for the opposite point of view. First, where shall we situate the absolute One? It is not in the intelligible world, for this was the Unified. Nor was it in the intelligible and in the intellective, since true substance occupied this region, according to Socrates in the *Phaedrus*.⁸⁰ And Plato is evidently careful, since he often does not use the phrase “absolute substance,”⁸¹ but rather “true substance,” and “that which truly is,” suggesting substance in contradistinction to the One. Perhaps someone could say that, just as the intellective diacosm and the psychic diacosm embrace either of the two multiplicities, the participated and the unparticipated together with the absolute multiplicity, so also the intelligible-intellective diacosm will establish its own summit together with the absolute and unparticipated multiplicity.

Well, [if this is the case,] we cannot posit many gods before alterity, but alterity revealed substance together with the henad. If otherness itself is unparticipated before participated otherness, and if otherness also contains an unparticipated multiplicity, there will be a much greater grouping of gods before substance. If not just the One is absolute, but also we suppose the absolute many in contrast to this, there will also an unparticipated procession of these many, which will be, as it were, many pluralities after the single procession. But how is it not necessary to posit the absolute many in opposition to the absolute One? These many are, as it were, a power of the one or its fecundity. But what is in the intelligible is already stationed separately, so that the many actually form a separate henad that generates plurality, (III 104) and perhaps that celebrated otherness there is the principle that opposes the one. [Otherness] also opposes substance. For [the] three monads appear together: the one, otherness, and substance.

Chapter 109. On the Relationship between the Unified and the One

■ In this chapter, Damascius again rehearses the relationship between the Unified and the One, focusing on the Unified in its role as absolute Being, and on its role as leader of the henads. His point is to clarify that we should not conceive of the One as the cause of the henads and of the Unified as cause of Being, but rather, should view the Unified as the One-Being that transmits unity and being to all of the subsequent worlds by means of the henads. ■

No [mere] detour along the way will help [resolve these puzzles] with any accuracy, except that the argument will require that, as from the One, so also many gods proceed from plurality, gods both unparticipated and participated, if there is such a thing as the absolute many.

How is it possible that there not be an absolute many, since there is the absolute One? And yet how will the One generate a multiplicity outwardly, if it

does not also contain within itself the multiple, since it is absolutely one? Even the many are not in any way distinct in themselves, as has been shown previously, but they are a one that generates the many. If someone were to say that the many belonged to the One as [its] elements [and that the One is something that] consists of elements, not even in this way will the One generate qua many. Each of them [the One and the many] is without differentiation and without multiplicity, remaining inside and having no external procession, meaning a procession involving the transmission of same form [that generates] its own multiplicity.

But apart from these considerations, there is a kind of substance that is composite, and another that is simple, and the latter is unitary, while former is unified in some way as a mixture. If each of these is a qualified substance, then each is a certain kind of substance. Therefore, the substance that is both [composite and simple] together, before both [the composite and the simple] is absolute substance and in the same way, absolute life is unified life, and the same is true of intellect.

(III 105) Is it therefore the case that the same is true with soul, that one soul is unitary and the other is substantial, and each is a qualified soul and a particular soul and is the same true of body, that there is a unitary body that the encosmic god brings about as well as a substantial body, which depends on what is called the bodily one through an anticipation of the bodily attribute, and that each one of the bodies, for example heavenly or aerial, is particular, and that the absolute hypostasis of these things presubsists in that which is both, and before both, in the intelligible? It would not be surprising if all of this were true. For all things are that, but intelligibly, and that means, in one unity. And therefore, the intelligible is said to be absolute substance even by the philosophers, and just as the absolute substance is generated from the absolute One and is before all things, so all things are divided out from the intellectual world. Everywhere, therefore, the One and that which the One uses as its vehicle are each a particular one and a qualified one, but the one that is both is the absolute One.

If these things are correct, then absolute Being is the Unified, which is also all things, and the absolute One is beyond the Unified. Moreover, the absolute One is that which underlies every one. But after the absolute One and absolute Being are the particular henads and the particular substances, undergoing entropy and organization again as if [the former] were the vehicle and [the latter were] that which uses the vehicle, or like participant and participated. Yet these things were not differentiated above, in the intelligible world.

What follows? Is the absolute One, as it were, a monad of the many monads below, and is absolute Being a monad of the substances?

But each of these was the cause of all things, and it is not the case that the One was the cause of the henads alone, and that Being was the cause of substances alone. We shall (III 106) require another substance, that which is common to all substances, in that case.

The absolute One cannot be posited as Being either by virtue of its hypostasis or character, and the absolute Being cannot be considered One either by character or hypostasis, but the one is One, the other is being alone and throughout its entire hypostasis. And therefore, they must truly be celebrated, respectively, as absolute Being and the absolute One, the latter of which is the very absolute One that our thoughts long for, before the many henads, and the former of which is the very Being that we desire to be before every being. And after these things, otherness shows up and separates them and brings the qualified and particular being and one into existence after the absolute, although these do not belong to the original nature, but simply imitate it. The Unified is also beyond substance, but it is beyond each kind of substance, substance that is a property and substance that is a hypostasis. The One and the many of the One are also beyond substance as two principles, but they transcend the absolute substance, which is before both [kinds of substance]. And therefore the absolute One is this, the absolute beyond substance. And yet so too is the One, the one beyond the mixed Unified, which we call substance by hypostasis, and the One beyond each kind of mixed, the mixed by virtue of hypostasis and the mixed by virtue of character, which the substantial henad has anticipated since that one was before both, and was more unitary and simpler than every one that joins the participating mixed. (III 107) Nor is it simpler as a relative composite, nor yet as a trait that belongs to a composite, but it is simple before both and it is not composite. But the single and most authentic principle of all things is the One, because it transcends that which is before the Unified that is before both [kinds of mixed—the substantial and the characteristic] and is both [kinds of mixed], since this is first unified and is most unified, and the second unified is that which has the character of the mixed, and the third is that which has the hypostasis of mixed, which must be said to be more a synthesis from elements than actually unified, both the third kind of unified itself and also the unitary mixed that is before it, which transcends it, just as what comes after this is the whole, and after the whole, is again a monad. For the participant is always synonymous with the participated through each attribute.⁸²

Chapter 110. Conclusion Concerning the Unified as Principle of Procession

If, therefore, we should have the daring to explain, to attain at once a more accurate indication of the nature and likeness of our subject matter, and also to elaborate our own overly charged speculation, I would say that the unparticipated multiplicity grows out of the absolute One and first cause of all things, as something akin to it, and that especially like the One is the whole race of gods,⁸³ remaining in that unity and therefore Unified with it and with itself, and offering us the hidden diacosm, which the *Chaldean Oracles*⁸⁴ have celebrated as

supermundane, since it is undifferentiated and beyond all cosmic order, and it no longer produces the unparticipated multiplicity. Not even this visible heaven, although it has produced the supercelestial world, (III 108) nevertheless produces the multiplicity of gods as imparticible, but only as particible and sublunary, nor was the generator itself in this realm unparticipated. The corresponding principle first to generate, generates all things, but it has attached to itself the unparticipated race of the gods alone, concentrating them in a single unity and nature. At any rate, it was necessary for there to be an intelligible principle,⁸⁵ to which is joined the one sole multiplicity and the unparticipated multiplicity, as we say, for example, that the race of intelligible gods is, whereas this is inferior to the principle that transcends all things in every way and yet contains the multiplicity, both unparticipated and participated, that grows out of it. For the intelligible is one, although it can be contemplated in three ways, that is, as by itself and remaining in itself in the one, as proceeding by itself and in itself, and as proceeding somehow from itself, as the triad. And the triad is not a differentiation of the substances that belong to it, but only the indication of multiplicity, to the extent and of the kind that is co-unified along with the intelligible.

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PART SEVEN

Summaries and Comparisons

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Section XVII. On the Intelligible Triads

Chapter III. Chaldean Theology

■ The theurgists hold that there are three triads in the intelligible, a tradition that was revealed to them. The Egyptians, Phoenicians, Orphics, and Plato himself also posit a proliferation of deities in the intelligible. According to Proclus, in the case of each triad, the summit is the limit, and substance or life or intellect is the final term, and the indefinite is the middle term, so that there are two henads, and one substantial and composite monad of the triad. But this is not how Damascius construes the triads, since he holds that each consists of three henads, of which the last is the support for substance. ■

But now that we have with difficulty found our way through these puzzles, let us also turn to an investigation of the theories of the ancient theologians, to see in what way one might understand [them] in terms of philosophical explanations. First [to be examined] is that which is agreed by all to be the most mystical, the Chaldean. (III 109) This theory seems to be the theology that most disagrees with our conceptions, given how desirous [they] are, as much as they possibly can, to concentrate the intelligible into a single unity.

The theurgists have a tradition that there are three triads [in the intelligible], a tradition that they have learned from the gods themselves,¹ notwithstanding that the Egyptians and the Phoenicians represent a vast generation of gods in the intelligible, as we shall relate a little later.² And what about the following? Does not the divine Orpheus also bring in many gods starting from Chronos and ending with Phanes Protoponos?³ Does not Plato, our most venerable philosopher, work out

three conclusions in the case of the One-Being,⁴ and to say the same thing, does he not have a tradition that there are three intelligible divine orders, each differing from the others?⁵ And therefore we must seek the intellectual meaning of the traditions of the gods [that is, the Oracles] and the men who were born near to the gods.⁶

[Our] immediate [topic] is, then, what tradition do the gods transmit to the theurgists concerning the three intelligible triads? Is it, as contemporary philosophers⁷ describe in technical language, that in the case of each triad, the summit is the limit, and substance or life or intellect is the final term, and the indefinite is the middle term, so that there are two henads, and one substantial and one composite monad that belong to the triad?⁸ But first, it is surprising that two henads are participated, whereas there is [only] one participant, namely, the substance [composed of] the two henads. And then why is the limit (*peras*) one henad and again the indefinite (*apeiron*) another henad, with the latter called power and the former called father, while the third, called the paternal intellect, is not itself a henad?⁹ For the intellect should have originated as a henad, as well as life and substance. It is uncontroversial that they [the philosophers] themselves assign the unitary intellect to a rank before the substantial intellect in the intellectual order, but they ought to have done the same thing also in the intelligible, with much more justification. By contrast, the theologians, whose works the philosophers are attempting to explain, give us the tradition that there are generations and orders not of vehicles or of those things that have proceeded from gods, but of the gods themselves. If, then, we understand the traditions concerning the intelligible-intellective, the intellectual, the supermundane, and the encosmic as if they were generations and orders of the gods, why is it that only in the case of the intelligibles do we think it correct to confuse things from the gods with the gods themselves, and if they mention the father or the power, we understand them as henads, and if they mention paternal intellect, we go to another genus altogether? And yet what shall we do when it is said that the paternal intellect produces the triadic diacosms of iyn- ges, maintainers, teletarchs, the threefold division of the intellectual orders, and all the cosmic diacosms?¹⁰ Is that that we can represent the henads as proceeding from the mixed and composite intellect? And yet how is what we do different than if someone were to produce souls from bodies, or intellects from souls? But shall we suppose that the iyn- ges and the maintainers and the other gods are not unitary, but substantial?¹¹ But then the Oracles themselves will contradict us. (III III) If, in the Orphic tradition, the god who is “the first-born, and he who, carrying the seed of all the gods”¹² first leapt out of the egg and made his way up, what device is there to explain that the egg is Being and to celebrate “the first-born god” as leaping from Being? Indeed, how is it consistent to suppose that there are two substances, and similarly two lives, if there are not [two sorts of] intellects and souls, some participated and others unparticipated, and [how is it reasonable to assume] that all the henads are

participated, when it was especially appropriate for there to be unparticipated henads among them?

But we shall not construe the triads in this way, but each of them [will] consist of three henads, of which the last is the support for substance, as it once seemed also to our teacher, since we shared these views concerning the third member of the triad, so that each triad is also a unitary monad, and the two henads before the third are unparticipated, and the last or third is participated in each.¹³ Is it any more [likely to be true when construed] thus?

First, [one might object,] the whole of the prior triad is always the leader of the second as a whole, and the unparticipated multiplicity is scattered and will not be continuous in itself, though it is in the other diacosms. For we could not find a participated soul in the midst of the unparticipated souls, for example encosmic among the supermundane, nor a participated intellect among unparticipated, for example, a supermundane intellect among the intellective. How then after the third (III 112) participated henad is the first henad of the second triad stationed? For the second triad as a whole is after the first as a whole, and what is more, the third is after the second.

And then, [one might object,] the substantial intelligible will be forcibly rent and will not incline and be unified as a whole toward itself as a whole, since we shall not even arrange the henads that succeed each other together, but they will be separated by the unparticipated henads.

And again, [one might object,] how can we make one triad from three unlike monads, two that are unparticipated, one that is participated? It is as if someone were to make one number of gods, some of which are from supermundane gods, others from encosmic gods, or some from rulers, others archangels, or archangels and azones.

[Another objection is that] the genus of imparticiples brings about one world, while the genus of participle brings about another world,¹⁴ as in the case of souls and in the case of intellects, it is clear that there is one genus of the former that is unparticipated, and another genus that is participated. What is the intellective [diacosm]? Is it the unparticipated? And what will the participated number be? Certainly it will belong to substance and the number after the intellective will belong to life, as we say. Or is the participated number the intelligible number? And yet what would be unparticipated number before this? The intellective is the first world, as we say. If the (III 113) intelligible is both [participated and unparticipated] why do not the other worlds, the intelligible-intellective, the intellective, the supermundane, and the encosmic, [also contain both unparticipated and participated multiplicities]?

Moreover [one might object that] if the same property belongs both to the henad and to the substance that depends on the henad, but the henad is the paternal intellect, then the substance is also the paternal intellect. If the henad completes the triad with this property, then clearly substance also completes the same triad with the same property. In other worlds, analogously, the substantial

is coordinated with the unitary. How, then, are there simply two monads belonging to the triad, and yet the third element is double, at once a henad and a substance?

But apart from these considerations, [one could object that] if the paternal intellect is a henad, and if substance depends on it, and these are separate from each other through alterity, it is clear that the Unified that is before both [henad and substance] will fall in between the triad, and will disperse it, or else it will be before the triad, that is, the first triad, and we shall no longer situate the triads after the one principle, as the philosophers themselves wish to say and the oracles testify, not just more recent philosophers, but even Iamblichus and Porphyry.¹⁵ And other triads will show up before these triads established in the Unified, as we shall shortly declare.¹⁶

Perhaps leaving this hypothesis, we should turn rather to the following, that the third member is neither Being (III 114) nor the One together with its partner, Being, but rather the Unified before both Being and One, situated in the paternal intellect, and if you wish, in the mixed of Plato,¹⁷ that is, the intelligible or supersubstantial. Or again, if you wish, [the Unified is situated] in the Being of the philosophers, the Being that is still indefinite with respect to the One and Being, and contemplated as before both. That [Unified] was absolute substance, as we were saying, but it would be mixed if it were from the two principles prior to it. For the Unified is one and yet not one, and insofar as it is not one, it is a function of multiplicity. Therefore, this function has come to it from the second principle, but the former [aspect], its being Unified, is from the first. Thus it has proceeded from both as a composite and as a mixture. But since the principles are not completely separate from each other, but rather they subsist above every differentiation (since the separating and distinguishing mode of Being emanates from the second principle, but it does not immediately follow the second principle, and the Unified was indefinite by itself and with respect to those principles, since if it is Unified, then it is also entirely undifferentiated) and therefore the Unified must not be supposed to be composite or composed or to be an element, or composed from elements, except by analogy for the sake of explication and a kind of indication that itself longs to get hold of the truth, in the most obscure way, since the truth is really incomprehensible and beyond reach. Rather, the Unified is simply unified and its simplicity is perfect. The One's reality is its very separation from all things; the many function as the all that belong to the One, and the Unified is what one could rightly call and speculate upon as the first One-all.¹⁸ There was, until a certain moment, so to speak, the One, and then this One spread out into its own infinity as a kind of chaos.¹⁹ For there was Limit alone and the aither of all things, but chaos was established (III 115) and proceeded as one, that is, simultaneously as limited and unlimited as a single simplicity, and then upon revealing this nature it became a qualified, amplified one, instead of the ungraspable principles. This third One after the second and the first is what we call the Unified,

as if it were indefiniteness converted to limit and as it were concretized, or rather a third principle with that which is established both before both and from both, that is, before the two lower principles since it is absolute Being, and from the higher principles, since again it is absolute Being. And therefore it is the same with respect to either pair, but with respect to the higher principles it is a third principle, and with respect to the lower, definite principles, it is a first [member of the triad]. Therefore, this triad becomes the one as father, and the many as power, and the Unified as the paternal intellect.

Chapter 112. On the Intelligible Diacosms

■ In this chapter, Damascius continues to meditate on the structure of the intelligible triad, here focusing on the subordinate diacosms introduced by the successive monads outlined above. The structure under discussion here may be summarized in the following chart, where the Chaldean and Neoplatonic names are interchangeable.

Chaldean Triads

<i>Noetic/Intelligible Diacosm</i>	<i>Noetic/Intelligible-Noeric/ Intellective Diacosm</i>	<i>Noeric/Intellective Diacosm</i>
father	noetic-noeric triad	noeric triad
power	iynges	once beyond
intellect	maintainers	Hetake
	teletarchs	twice beyond ■

(III 115.14) If one accepts this hypothesis, then how are the three triads worked out? For the absolute One will need to be triple, and so will the absolute many. Therefore, neither one will be absolute, since the absolute is everywhere one. We can let the Unified be tripled in its unique form. But how the absolute One will also be triple, is difficult even to imagine.

Moreover, if one construes the Unified as monads, it will be dispersed from itself. And there will be three powers and three fathers.

(III 116) But apart from these considerations, how shall we rank the first and the second and the third? For the Unified will be both with the triad of the whole and before the second and third fathers.

And how could there be a number among the intelligible realities, either in the completely Unified, or, even more difficult, among the principles before the Unified? The number will be neither nine nor three. The number, again, will be from principles that do not share the same form, since either it will be from limit and unlimited and mixed or Being, or from father and power and paternal intellect.

In order that I set aside these problems with reference to the intelligible world that is constituted by these, [next, we shall inquire as to what the constitution of] the intelligible-intellective world would be after the intellective

world, and what the intellective world would be. For the latter must be [realized] in terms of intellect as it is in [its] hypostasis, whereas the world before this must be [realized] as life in its hypostasis, and we shall therefore contemplate the intelligible as the substance that we call substance in its hypostasis. Therefore, the world that arises as the Unified that is before substance and life and intellect would not be the intelligible world, but beyond the intelligible world. Therefore what could it be called? Perhaps [its name is] the absolute world, or the undifferentiated world, or the world that encompasses all worlds in common? If one accepted this, then what would the intelligible world turn out to be? Clearly, the intelligible is "in the sphere of real Being," as Plato says,²⁰ that is, the substance that we were saying in our previous remarks was the summit of the intelligible-intellective. But this was the principle of the differentiated, and the differentiated was life. (III 117) This, therefore, is the principle of life, and not the principle of substance nor of the undifferentiated, which we were saying was the intelligible, but of the differentiated, which for us was the intelligible-intellective.

If someone were to object to these [divisions of the Unified in itself], we shall ask, in turn, how shall we define that intelligible-intellective, and what will its limit be?²¹ What pure intellect is, is obvious, and so too is that it forms the origin of the intellective. Therefore, it is left to construe the maintainer diacosm together with the diacosm of the teletarchs as the intermediate diacosm. What is the triad of the intermediate order? "The teletarchs assist the maintainers," in the Oracles.²² But the maintainers themselves are three, just as the iynges occupy the [place of] the intellective substance [in the order that is] prior to them, as has been noted. And yet perhaps the intelligible and the true substance would be appropriate [to assign to the] iynges, because the intelligible brings together and collects, whereas the intelligible-intellective and the first life are appropriate [correspondences] for the maintainers. It is characteristic of life to maintain, preserving the hypostasis in terms of its specificity and its differentiation and also to proceed alongside of the differentiation. The connected can also reveal distance and division, as well as continuity and unity of parts. Especially according to the usual hypothesis of the philosophers, this place is agreed to manifest the pinnacle of life.²³ Perhaps the time that coexists together with this [interior] heaven is an image of the eternity, which coexists with that [superior] heaven and measures its circular motion, since heaven is the truest image of heaven. It is clear which [heaven] is the image of which. And therefore it seems (III 118) that the first intellect itself both differentiates itself from the father and divides the father [so that it] relates to him, because life is divided by the differentiation of the forms.

But one for whom this doctrine is sufficient could say that the intelligible can be seen only in the monad of the iynx-nature, but that the intellective tribe [can be understood] in the triad of the world leaders, or as the philosophers divide it, in the triad of the pure mind and the life-generating mind, and the

demiurgic mind,²⁴ whereas the middle pleroma, the intelligible-intellective, is properly in the dyad.²⁵ The dyad is vital and revels in the procession that extends to the lowest extensions of its own monad. And what is the middle dyad? It is the maintaining nature and the teletarchic nature, since the latter separates the continuity: "Into the beginning, end, and middle in the order [bestowed by] necessity."²⁶ And the former contains and contracts first, middle, and last into one. Perhaps then, just as I said, someone might also arrange them like this, using the preceding arguments.

Chapter 113. On the Substance of the Intelligible-Intellective World

■ This is the first of three chapters that respond to the fifth of the objections posed concerning Damascius' arrangement of the intelligible triads, which Damascius presented in chapter 111, above, with the objections following in chapter 112. Below, Damascius reiterates the doctrine of Iamblichus, according to which the Unified is in the sphere of the One. Consequently its identity as divine substance transcends the identity of substance considered purely as the first member of the intelligible triad, that is, Being, life, and substance.

Nevertheless, the purpose of this and the next two chapters is to discuss the structure of the second intelligible world, that is, the triad governed by life, which is the order of the noetic-noeric. Since Being is its first member, for Damascius as for Proclus, Being or substance at this level is what he calls true Being, Being that implies alterity with the One; it is the order in which Being and the One finally part ways, so to speak. ■

But I must take care not to debase the ancient hypothesis, which has proven sufficient not just to the most eminent among human beings (since none of the philosophers until this point has had a different theory), but also to the gods themselves. (III 119) For the Greek theologian Orpheus first represented Phanes as an object of contemplation for the gods, especially the intellective gods, to which belongs the demiurge.²⁷ The gods who revealed the much-esteemed Oracles to us had a tradition that the first triads were intelligible, whose supermundane abyss, they report, the intellective gods know.²⁸ But I would be ashamed before the divine Iamblichus,²⁹ if I invented anything new concerning these traditions, since Iamblichus was the greatest exegete of all the other divine realities, and especially the intelligible realities. Therefore it seems to me with my trace of Iamblichus' much-seeing wisdom, that the intelligible world is that unified abyss, not containing "truly real substance,"³⁰ as distinct from the one whose vehicle it is, but containing absolute substance, and neither unitary nor mixed, but just substance before either qualification. If any god or man has established the intelligible world in substance, let everyone understand that it is in this substance, unified substance, agreeing with those

who say this much, and purifying substance so that it is that absolute, unified, and completely undifferentiated substance. In fact, all those who say these things have assumed that the Unified is in the undifferentiated unity of all things, and no one disputes this. And our witness is Iamblichus, who furnished the intelligible with unity since it [arises as] second after the first principle, and extends the intelligible to subsist everywhere around the One and to be in every way without distance from the One, and refuses all division or duplication or distance in the case of the intelligible, and makes other objections of this nature against the old man.³¹

(III 120) If the intelligible is truly unified, what device will be able to attach substance that has been distinguished from the One and coexists with otherness and has undergone any differentiation among its elements at all, to the intelligible world—which would not be a case of joining line to line, as the proverb says,³² but rather a kind of poetic “meeting of the waters”³³ by means of argument, in the case of the most sacred contemplative objects? Now let that intelligible subsist just as it did in the beginning, in the entirely undifferentiated. And let the intelligible-intellective be in the differentiated, as was then said and is now repeated. But alterity originates in the intelligible-intellective, and it first creates the disjunction between Being and the One,³⁴ since the latter is established in simplicity, a simplicity which existed even above, and Being is established in its embrace of all things that is bereft of simplicity, since it does not remain simplicity, but it nevertheless participates in it. Whence, too, that substance is the first elemental, and the first number is there, because the first differentiation is there.

Often have we reiterated this doctrine, and so has Plato and so have the oracles themselves, but how could it be adequate to the intelligible? If the true substance is here, and we recognize that substance as existing, the explanation is that the summit of that which is beginning to be differentiated borders on the undifferentiated (III 121) and yet still preserves the concentrated form of substance, and yet another explanation is the comparison of substance with the One, since it offers a mixture of the elements that is easier to know, as compared to the simplicity of the one that is not really one, but is actually Unified. But since this one imitates the absolute One, as the one of substance, while that One is the all-One, so too, substance as unified compared to this [one] is an imitation of the absolute Unified, which is called the entirely Unified, since this substance is only [found in] one substance, the unitary, or perhaps to use a better term, it is mixed. In addition to these considerations, this substance can be grasped through substantial knowledge, just as the one can be apprehended through unitary knowledge, and the absolute intelligible can be apprehended by the knowledge that is beyond each of these. But we, as we are now, do not even use substantial knowledge correctly, not even to the extent that it is available to the human or rational mind, but rather [we rely on thought] that is still less clear than this and still more distant [from its object]. And it is likely that the intelligible does not reach

us. Nor does the unitary, which is rooted in what is beyond Being. For to see this belongs to divine knowledge. And therefore the highest of that which is contemplated by us we report as intelligible and as the truly real substance. Plato, leading souls up to this place, hypothesized that here was the true substance, visible only to the cybernetic [eye] of the soul.³⁵ But it is [possible] that he, by using the expressions “really and truly substance” enjoins us that the soul only participates in another intellective substance that is below [the intelligible and intellective], as Proclus rightly thought he understood.³⁶

(III 122) Now, just as this [intellective substance] is not absolute [intellect]³⁷ but qualified intellect (for it seems to be this according to the philosophers) so, too, it is not absolute substance but qualified, as it holds first place in the vital diacosm in the role of substance. It is substance as a mixture of elements, and every mixture is somehow vital, because it is also natural, if it exists by nature, or else it comes about as something subsequent to [nature], if it is constructed originally through art. If we were to say that it belongs to life to awaken toward differentiation, then this very substance is a kind of life because of its differentiation among elements. And again, if the elements are pressed into a unity and are eager to fuse their differentiation in some way (for such would be the nature that belongs to every element), then again on this account it is established once more as substance. But to speak more truthfully, it is the summit of life, wishing to be substance and not just life, just as its completion wants to be intellect more than life. And why is it surprising if the summit of life longs to be substance even more, when the summit of the intellective manifests the intelligible-intellective substance, and the intellective substance is in the intellective diacosm as a whole?

Why, then, do we not place absolute life in the intelligible as well as absolute intellect and absolute substance there, first, so that absolute substance is not the only intelligible [member of the intelligible triad] (III 123), as we were just now saying? In general, if, after the absolutely intelligible intellect in that realm, there is the intellect that is both the subject of intellection and is the identity of intellect in itself, and likewise, if the life here, the life that is life in itself, and is contradistinguished with respect to intellect, is after that absolute and unified life, it is necessary that substance in itself be contradistinguished with respect to life, and no longer be the summit of life, but belong to a different kind. Again, we must say that there is the undifferentiated, that which is subject to differentiation, and the completely differentiated.³⁸ It is in the latter that all of those things that are entirely differentiated are established in complete differentiation, including, in particular, the One and Being. For each of these is like a universal form, one a unitary form and the other a substantial form, and every form is delimited, as intellect is as well. But all things that are subject to differentiation are in the intermediate rank, beginning from the One and Being. And therefore, nothing in that realm is delimited, nor yet is it unified, but it undergoes something like a fusion nor can it remain nor can it revert into delimitation. But there was a flow and a seething (*zesis*), which we

call life (*zoe*). But in the [summit]³⁹ of the Unified all things are undifferentiated, other things and especially the One of Being, whence it is immobile in every way and it has no seething nor flow, so that it is Being alone.

Chapter 114. On Being, Life, and Intellect

■ This chapter continues the discussion of the structure of the second world. Damascius emphasizes that properly speaking, identity, in this case, the identity of Being, life, and intellect, can only exist alongside of alterity. For this reason, again, he insists that Being properly so called only emerges at this level, i.e., after the Unified. ■

This, then, is the true ordering [of the intelligible triads], and they are separate by these sorts of limits. By analogy, however, all things are in each, as in the undifferentiated as a whole, that which is especially undifferentiated [can be found], (III 124) just as that which is beginning to be differentiated is in that, and just as the completely differentiated is in the perfectly unified nature. And therefore, in substance as a whole substance is the very flower of substance, life is in the intermediate station, and intellect is third, but [it is only] absolute life and absolute intellect [that can be found in the undifferentiated], because in the Unified by itself, Being is undifferentiated from the One. And again, in that which is subject to differentiation insofar as it is a whole, the summit is especially substance, which we call substance to distinguish it from the *henad*, though there is also something vital on the very summit of what is subject to differentiation, but it is nevertheless as little differentiated as possible, which is why it especially manifests the nature of substance. But the middle term, flourishing in what is subject to differentiation, is life properly and solely, nor is it mixed with the undifferentiated, nor with the completely different, but it is just that which is subject to differentiation alone and unmixed.⁴⁰ And again, in the completely different there is in the initial term an appearance of the undifferentiated, which is why this is intellectual substance, and in the intermediate, there is that which is subject to differentiation, just as intellectual life is here by nature, and at the lower limit there is the completely differentiated, where the intellectual intellect flourishes, and it is on account of this [its rank] that it has become fitted for the ordering of matter.⁴¹

(III 125) The [triads] are often defined as above, but if someone should question this arrangement and ask for a life that has its one undifferentiated from Being, and an intellect that is also like this, then it is true, in one way, that these things are inherently so in the Unified as well. But make sure that he knows [this admission] transgresses the boundaries of our previous discourse. Not even life can be what it is, unless the one is discriminated from Being, nor can intellect, unless the one and Being had already been discriminated from each other, before all things. Therefore, to state it most precisely, where the one

is related in a particular way to Being, there the appropriate kind [of being] subsists without qualification. [For example,] if they are unified, then substance subsists, for it is clear that all the other things are unified in [One and Being]. If they are undergoing differentiation, then life [subsists there], for all things are already in motion toward differentiation [in life]. And if Being and the One are completely differentiated, then intellect [subsists there], for already the other beings are delimited in intellect. Therefore this is absolute intellect, and absolute life, and absolute substance.

Chapter 115. On the Relationship between the Henads and the Intelligible Triad

■ Again, we are at the level of the noetic-noeric order, where life predominates, and which is the order in which the strict unity of the Unified proliferates in the dawning differentiation first found here. The substance of this order is the first member of the noetic-noeric order, and so is considered to be the summit of the intelligible order, but already beginning to divide itself from the One that characterized the Unified, which, after all, is in some ways still in the realm of the henadic. The opening paragraph reminds us that the Unified still contains Being and One as a unity: substance is more subsistence and thus not strictly substance in its ordinary sense. When Damascius speaks about the separation of Being and One, he is alluding to the Parmenidean hypothesis in which otherness marks Being off from One and so introduces number. ■

How, then, did I mean above that life was before [both Being and the One] and that intellect as well was before both, and that each of them was before the differentiation of Being and the One, just as substance involves the joint [presence of Being and the One], and yet again, [what did I mean by mentioning] a substance that is completely separate, just as life and intellect are, thus demonstrating that Being is one thing and the One is another?

[Let us say that] these statements also bear some truth, the truth that has already been explained. But now we are nevertheless correcting our statements when we say that substance is a unified nature which it is right to situate after the One, and that to be substance is the same as to be unified Being. (III 126) Absolute substance itself is [what we are talking about now], but whatever is mentioned after this is a particular substance or a relative substance, such as vital or intellective or psychic or even, if one wishes, material substance. Absolute life is seen in that which is beginning to be differentiated. If there is an intellective life, or a formal, or a psychic, or material, then each of these would be a relative life and a particular life. In the same way, the intellect first seen in the differentiated is pure intellect. Whatever intellect is after this is a particular intellect and a relative intellect. And just as life in the undifferentiated is relative, because it is in that, so substance is in what is beginning to be differentiated, because it is in that and is a relative substance. Therefore, there is no One-Being

before the One or Being which is prior to both. For if so, then before each kind of life, it would be necessary to have the life before both. And one could raise the same problems in the case of intellect.

Perhaps then the saying of the philosophers⁴² is truer, namely, that the intelligible consists of One leading with Being following, but the former is co-unified with the latter in the closest possible way?

Our reply is that if they are unified as undifferentiated, then they agree with us, for differentiation begins in life. But if they are related so that the Being is the vehicle and the One uses Being as a vehicle, then they are entirely differentiated from each other; and this [complete differentiation] is particular to intellect, as they themselves agree, since they celebrate the attribute of intellect as the reversion toward oneself. But reversion toward oneself (III 127) comes about together with distinction from other things, that is, with otherness. If then substance will differ from intellect in any way, it is necessary for substance to be undifferentiated. If substance is undifferentiated, intellect is completely differentiated, and therefore life is beginning to be differentiated. Therefore, it is not possible for there to be life before Being and the One, as substance is, since neither can substance be from both differentiated things and things beginning to be differentiated, to speak precisely and without qualification.

Perhaps the one⁴³ kind of reality does exist before both the One and Being, since neither the One nor Being can become manifest itself by itself, and there is another kind of reality that is from both the One and Being,⁴⁴ as from two entities that are perfectly differentiated and coordinated, and there is another kind of reality that is with both Being and the One, as existing in the middle of the two, that is, of being unified and being differentiated,⁴⁵ but still having something of the ancient unity, and already manifesting something of differentiation. This is the first life and the absolute life, because it is also both otherness and the differentiation that is prior to all differentiations.

And yet we are accustomed to speak of these three in the mixed and in the substantial, namely, knowledge, life, and substance, and again intellect, life, and substance. In defining the living being, we say that it is substance both living and thinking, as if substance were different from life, and knowledge another thing still. There is no place for the unitary here, but we also divide it into these three, (III 128) calling it supersubstantial intellect, and likewise, supersubstantial life and substance, since substance is on either side of the One and of Being.

Chapter 116. On the Distinction between Relative and Absolute within the Intelligible Order

■ Above we have seen that the arrangement of the intelligible triads necessitates the proliferation of characteristics in successively subordinate realms. Thus, Being, life, and intellect, or Father, power, and intellect, or One, indefinite, and definite, are the three

moments of the intelligible world that is itself the unified substance, prior to all being, and source of the intelligible order *per se*. Nevertheless, each member of the intelligible triad contains all of the other members, though to varying degrees. As an illustration we can picture the scheme under discussion here as in the list that follows.

The Unified

Being/father	life/power	intellect
intelligible order	intelligible-intellective order	intellective order
intelligible Being	intelligible-intellective Being	intellective Being
intelligible life	intelligible-intellective life	intellective life
intelligible intellect	intelligible-intellective intellect	intellective intellect ■

How is it that we are continuing to posit that there is only [one] substance, that which is not differentiated from Being and the One? We answer that, in fact, each of these is said in many ways, and at all levels they preserve their analogy with each other. There is the lowest substance, the lifeless form, which is immobile in itself. If this should be moved physically, then nature herself would become a kind of life for it, and, not allowing it to remain in its undifferentiated state, in the state which is inherently frigid, it would heat up the substance into its own activity, relative⁴⁶ to itself, and would render it substance that is seething [with life]. But a more complete life, when added, brings about a vegetative being, and perception added to this has already distinguished a living being, and has articulated a life into its appropriate definition, so that it can be separated as far as possible from other living things by the criterion of its own pleasure and distress. But different again is that substance which is a life as well as an intellect, self-moving substance, which is specifically determined itself and is no other than a specific form, in which being, life, and knowing are differentiated from each other, even if they are merged in another mode. But to the extent that the cognitive factor in the soul is differentiated and is capable of discriminating knowable objects in terms of their proper definitions, and to the extent that the vital factor grows toward a unity from its differentiation, then there is a kind of constant flow [of soul] toward itself, (III 129) and therefore soul furnishes an extended continuity for bodies as well in some way.

But prior to these, there is the immobile substance belonging to intellect and life that is of the same sort, and knowledge of the same kind, since all are specifically determined and are differentiated from each other. But this differentiation belongs to the cognitive nature. And so this is the first and absolute cognition, since it creates intellect and is itself created as that which is differentiated. But life in intellect is not absolute, because it is a vital form, but not the first, absolute life. Nor, *a fortiori*, is substance [in intellect] absolute, but it is as it were substance and as it were life, and all of them are intellect and all belong to intellect. But before intellect there is true life, life alone and not a form in addition to this, nor yet delimited by the reversion to itself, but pouring itself

back more powerfully than by means of reversion. And prior to life is substance, which does not endure any dispersion, nor the upward or downward flow, but it is steadfastly fixed in its perfection and undifferentiated state, and it is not even differentiated with respect to life or to intellect, nor with respect to anything else that belongs to what has proceeded from substance. Nor is life differentiated from the things that are after it, but each of the two [Being and life] exists in the following way with respect to their subsequents: life is only subject to differentiation, but substance, remaining in the undifferentiated, differs only in this respect from those things that do not so remain. But these determinations no doubt have already been established previously.

(III 130) For now, with respect to the difficulty,⁴⁷ [we can say that] whenever we contemplate substance or life or intellect or knowledge, we see their specific characteristics as distinct with respect to each other, and we grasp them as three forms, as if someone were to grasp the One as specific or Being as specific, or limit or the unlimited, not as first principles, but as if they were certain specific forms distributed as parts, with the same names as the first principles, from which we actually do name the first principles, since they are by nature anonymous. For such, I think, is what we have in mind by substance and life and knowledge, as specified, and therefore intrinsically capable of receiving names or definitions, and [we have in mind] perhaps not even the motionless [substance, life, knowledge] but certainly the self-moving or perhaps other-moved or imaginary, and we think that we must conceive and define the [higher substance, life, knowledge] in terms of the others, but not just name them as homonymous and merely attempt to indicate their nature through analogy rather than try to [define] those things which are above the forms by means of the formally specified.

In fact, the very thing that this substance is with respect to this life, and life is with respect to knowledge, this very thing in the first hypostases is that which is motionless toward differentiation compared to that which does move toward differentiation, and the latter is [motionless] in comparison to what has already moved into differentiation. But that which has already moved into differentiation is the absolute intellect, and that which moves into differentiation is absolute life, and that which does not move into it is absolute substance. And the absolute intellect and the absolute form are the same, (III 131) but the absolute life and the specific life are not the same. For the absolute life is beyond form, and substance is beyond the formally specified substance and beyond the vital substance. And therefore it is absolute. Therefore, from what has now been determined, we are able to define the absolute in each case more accurately, and to define the particular life after the absolute life. No one should think that the particulars [substance, life, knowledge] or those characterized as such through analogy, are the same as those which are absolute and that associate [only] with the reality of themselves, nor should you be led from conceptions of the mundane world toward the manner of [understanding] that is

beyond all habitual thinking, but one should make sure that he understands that we are discussing substance, life, and certainly intellect in truth, from the indication of that nature which remains in the untrodden regions⁴⁸ and which is the object of our distant speculations. But it is true nevertheless and it is a point visible at the summit of contemplation, that it is possible to see the three in each, because each is all, by doubling the analogy above, and by employing the indications previously [received] for the more accurate indication of other things.

But for the resolution of the last difficulty, [what has been said] is perhaps sufficient, and after this, if it is necessary, we shall again say something with regard to the problem. But it will by all means be necessary [to return to this topic] when we search for the living-in-itself and try to establish where it must be located.⁴⁹ It is possible to speculate about this also on the basis of what has been said, that since the living-in-itself is satiated with life, it comes to receive a secondary rank after life, and everywhere it will be stationed as analogue of life, as it however, [functions] as the first paradigm.

Chapter 117. Answers to Puzzles Raised in Chapter 112 Above

■ How could there be a number among the intelligible principles, either in the completely Unified, or, even more difficult, among the principles before the Unified? The number will be neither nine nor three. ■

(III 132) But now let us examine the other difficulties, [to see] if they are sound or unsound. First of all, we say that there is no number in the intelligible, neither the number composed of like forms, nor the number composed of unlike forms. Nor, in general, is the nature of the distinct there, nor even the nature of the continuous. Nor is there any difference, nor otherness, nor even differentiation in the absolute Unified. What, then, could be the celebrated ennead in the intelligible? It only signifies complete perfection of the triad there, which, when we are unable to comprehend it by means of discursive thinking, we divide, and so divide in three its complete perfection, its all embracing nature, its leadership of every multiplicity, its generation of every triad that has ever been anywhere in any way, and its leadership of every procession to the lowest degree of reality, the unmixed [purity] of its generative nature, and its being more than all the things that are of this nature, or rather, [it is] the one unified metaintuition of all such intuitions, and this, only in the manner of indication, as we attempt to conceive that triad.

What, then, is this triad? It is not three monads, as Iamblichus says,⁵⁰ but it is only the immaterial form seen without the monads. But it is surely not the form, either (for what delimitation could there be in the Unified), but it is the One itself, which is the flower of the form.⁵¹ But it is not even this One, which

by nature blooms on the One of the forms, as for example, the triad, nor is it the (III 133) One that is together with all forms (for this belongs to the differentiated one, so that the one of that which is undergoing differentiation would no longer be the one of the undifferentiated triad).⁵² But the triad again signifies the beginning, middle, and end of the Unified, but these [degrees] are still unified. And the absolute One is not the arithmetic one, but it reveals the one simplicity of all things. And after the One, the dyad that is called indefinite is not the dyad that governed over two monads, but it was, revealed as the cause of all things that belonged to the One, and it was, from the point of view of both, the Father, empowered to generate all things.⁵³ Moreover, in the third place, the Unified is as it were activity proceeding from power. And therefore it is from a monad of this kind and a dyad of this kind that Being is constituted as a triad having the Unified by nature, since, when it is turned toward the One it is a dyad,⁵⁴ and therefore it is the paternal intellect.

But in saying this, we are creating three things. The Father is himself, with the power to generate all things after him, the entire triad. Therefore, the entire triad is a monad, and a monad is not the beginning of number, but a cause of every monad and every number, nor is it isolated like a form by means of a definite delimitation, but it is the unique form of simplicity that is [inherent] in all things.

Are the three the same thing or are they different, and is the monad a triad?

None of these things is true. There is none of this in that realm, not sameness, not otherness, not triad, not monad as distinct from triad. There is no (III 134) antithesis in the intelligible.

Therefore is the Unified just the One, or is the One just the many, or are the many just the Unified?

Surely not, I shall say.

How then are all things not three?

For the reason that it is no less true that the many are one thing, and that all things are many; nor are we speaking of different things [in speaking of the one and the many]. The One is not a unique characteristic, but it is such that it can be all things, and all things are not all things in this way, but as one, and the many are thus because the One is not one, and all things are the many in a state of perfect differentiation. If previously we said that the all signified the second principle as the all of the One, now, however, we improve our doctrine a little, and correct ourselves to say that all things and many are not the same, but the many, when they have received definition, become all things. For the many, to the extent that they are many, are indefinite. Thus the father is one, and the indefinite power of the one is many, and the intellect of the father is all things. And still all things were the many defined by the One through reversion. Yet you can observe that the many are inherently in between the One and all things; the One is simplicity only, but all things together are the unity of all things. Therefore, intellect

is constituted in the Unified. And as all things are delimited in the intellective according to form, so in the Unified all things are concentrated without delimitation as One. Thus this nature is a monad, since it is simple and many (the simplicity embraces all possible indefinites), and yet it is nevertheless all things, because its many are (III 135) defined by the One, since they belonged to the One. Therefore, it is a monad in its substrate, but it has three properties. But it is we who distinguish them, as we are not able to concentrate [on] one reality that is capable of containing three aspects. In this way, too, we desire to define other things, as well, and we say that they are many instead of one, and convert the elemental into elements. And as in the case of those, we think that we are contemplating the form that is before the elements or that arises in addition to the elements, but we arrive at it from the elements, so in this case but much more, we must release the definite properties and must return to a single simple nature, from which the division of these things below is parceled out.

The common element that belongs to the three as triad should be conceived as the one of the triad, but not the arithmetic triad, but that triad as a whole, which just now we reconstructed as the triad of the highest elements, since it was also not an arithmetic monad, but the monad of all things, in which the all is anticipated, just as in the monad all number is anticipated. To say it simply, just as we use the specifically defined for the illustration of that which is beyond form, so we use the arithmetic properties as symbols of the innumerable and entirely indefinite. In fact, we must use an image for the illustration of that which we wish to say, even if we are not able to say it, namely, that the one is the center of all things, whereas the distance from the center is the second principle, which is a flow (III 136) from the center, and the perimeter and the final circumference after the distance is a reversion toward the center, the paternal intellect, and the entire thing is one circle or, to speak more in accord with nature, a sphere. And it is clear that it is not a form, but is rather a nature that is more like the One than any form. And what more could one say about the One itself? For this is what gives form to the immaterial circle.

To summarize, let us not attempt to count the intelligible on our fingers, nor corrupt it with our distinct ideas, but let us concentrate all thoughts simultaneously, and closing our eyes, open up the one great eye of the soul,⁵⁵ by which nothing differentiated is visible, (although it is not the One itself in reality [that becomes visible with this eye], but only the Unified, nor is this the Unified that is opposed to the differentiated, but that which also contains the differentiated) and look there with this kind of eye, even if from afar and, as it were, from the outer limits, nevertheless, let us see the intelligible, except that what will appear in us, if one can put it this way, is the simplicity of it, and the plurality of it, and the completeness of it. The intelligible is one, many, and all, to explicate its single nature with three aspects.

And yet how are the one and the many a single nature? Because the “many” are the indefinite power of the One. And how is it One and all? Because “the

all" is an activity of the One that embraces all things. But the word "activity" must not be said in the sense of the extension of the power into (III 136) something outside [the One] nor a power that is an extension of the subsistence remaining within, but again, it is [meant] in the way that we speak of three instead of one. For there is no one name that can be adequate for the clarification of those realities, as we have often given ample evidence.

Is it the case, then, that these realities are undifferentiated? And how might one more easily venture an explanation about them? For we say that there are three principles in succession to each other, father and power and paternal intellect.⁵⁶ But in truth, they are not one or three, but it is necessary for them to be revealed by us through these names and concepts, since we lack ones that are appropriate for them, or rather, in our eagerness for clarifications that in no way are appropriate. For just as we call the One both many and all things, and father and power and paternal intellect, and again limit and unlimited and mixed, so we call it monad and indefinite dyad and the triad composed from both of these. And just as was the case with those names, so with these, by purifying our conceptions insofar as possible, we subject them to a strict accounting and they fall short when we fit them to the realities themselves. Therefore, let the intellective triad be called, to the extent that it is possible [to call it anything,] a triad, in the sense of, "the one of the triad," with that triad apparently composed from the three first principles. But concerning that unity we could not make progress by continuing to speak.

Concerning the order of the three triads,⁵⁷ if someone, having established the triad that we spoke of in the one of the intelligible triad, to the extent that it can be a triad, could see this one as perfect and as constituting the triadic nature of itself at all levels, just as in each of the (III 138) three monads there is an indwelling triad (for, in fact, among numbers the three monads of each number are not without difference with respect to the monads of the other numbers, but the monads that belong to the triad are somehow triadic, and those that belong to the tetrad are somehow tetradic) if someone, just as I was saying, could understand that the monads of that all encompassing triad were such as to be not absolute monads, but monads unique to the triad, then perhaps he would comprehend the whole procession of the intelligible into three triads in the one of that triad, and that this procession would not even so have departed from its original unity. And yet if this is so, then neither will the first Unified be before the [second] one, as the argument seemed to object, for each monad will have the triadic in its own order, being by itself alone. The One will manifest itself as triadic before the others, the many will be second to be triadic, and third after these is the Unified, and the father as a whole will be coordinated together with the whole intellect by means of the intermediary whole of power, the unique father with the unique intellect by means of his unique power, and again the threefold father with the threefold intellect, by means of his threefold power. Nor, certainly, is the Unified to be torn and dispersed from itself into three monads,

since it remains unified in the same way, even if the triadic unified begins to be manifested in it, and a fortiori, the One remains one, all the while containing the triad, and the power likewise, even if it is manifested as three natures.

(III 139) And yet how will the One be threefold?⁵⁸

[We reply that] it is threefold because although it is one, nevertheless it is sufficient for the three of the Unified. Let this Unified be tripled, as has been said, with a certain unified triplicity. But the One turns this triplicity toward itself, so that the One as the One begins to manifest itself as triple. And yet the power, which is a dyad, becomes like the One by agreeing with the One, and by agreeing with the Unified, it also appears as triple. Therefore the dyad is in the middle of the One and the triad. The Unified as third by nature is a triad, and what comes before the Unified is [three] in a more transcendent way. Therefore, it is not surprising or difficult to conceive the One as becoming triadic in this way, not because it is subject to number or definition, but because it anticipates in itself the triplex of the Unified, and because it is a triadic one, as if it were in the triad as a whole. Whatever one conceives this kind of One to be, let him conceive [anything] rather than [imagining] the differentiation of the One. Unless it is also more suitable to hypothesize a descent from the One, so that the one father is also three, with the same father being one and trimorph, or rather, one but manifesting something triadic, and I mean not divided into three, but the partless one of the triad.

If the one is triadic, how is it absolute?

This was a previous difficulty with the argument, and rightly so.⁵⁹ [Didn't the argument go as follows, that is,] hypothesizing the One as absolute and the many as absolute and all things as absolute in the Unified, from these absolute monads we made an absolute triad, as we thought, (III 140), so that also the triad belonged to the absolute One, to the extent that the absolute One anticipated that entire triad and, as it were, realized itself in it and was numbered together with the other absolute principles, as the first principle ruling over the second and the third? Therefore the absolute One in reality is without number, and it is necessary to say more clearly, that it cannot become either a triad or a monad. For neither is it monadic, when it is not One in truth, and is only called one for the sake of illustration. And so it is with the absolute Unified. But the many are in the middle of these in a unique way without any distinction and without any addition.

Chapter 118. On the Language of the Absolute

They therefore must no longer be called three when their being three is added to them, since no otherness is manifest in that realm. Yet unless we speak in a human dialect concerning the most divine principles, we are otherwise not able to conceive them or to name them, except as we are compelled to use reason on behalf of the realities that turn out to be beyond every intellect, life, and

substance. Indeed, even the gods thus instruct some of us occasionally concerning these and other realities, [though] not in the way that reveals the nature of the realities that the god themselves contemplate. Just as they speak to Egyptians, Syrians, or Greeks using the language appropriate to them, else it would be fruitless to speak to them, so they are eager to transmit to human beings that which belongs [to the divine] and they will use a human dialect, as is right. Yet this dialect is not only composed of verbs and nouns, (III 141) but it is also composed from conceptions that are suitable and adjusted to human beings. If, therefore, we also get off the track of that truth as we attempt to chart the intelligible abyss, to see how great and what its nature is, and we are carried toward the lower and divided realities, as we are by necessity dragged along with or dragged down by our own meager nothingness, nevertheless it is necessary to endure missing and drifting [from the goal]. Otherwise, it is not possible, in our present state, to have any conception concerning these things, and we must be content even if only with a far-off and obscure glance or glimpse or trace suddenly flashing before our eyes, however small and not very luminous, but nevertheless a signpost for us that is an analogue of that superluminous and vast nature. But this much we can accept in our discourse, that it castigates itself and agrees that it is not capable of looking at that unified and intelligible light.

Therefore, we speak of the triad in that realm, in the sense that it signifies an undifferentiated multiplicity, and again the dyad signifies the cause of that multiplicity, and the monad is related to these as the One itself, as that which is beyond this very multiplicity. And this is the celebrated intelligible triad, which, wishing to explain by means of different configurations, we are unaware that we render it more complex in our accounts, and especially when we make it an ennead, reckoning it as the complete leader of all things from the first until the lowest, (III 142) observing it as if in a mirror, and [seeing it] in the third, since it is by nature trimorph, and [seeing] the triadic principles before it that appear to illuminate brilliantly its three ubiquitous forms, as if in a cloud that has three reflecting surfaces, the single color of the sun appears as an apparently polychrome rainbow. And so also Socrates in the *Philebus*⁶⁰ was unable to gaze in the face of that One, and clarified its nature by means of the triad stationed at its threshold, as he says, because he caught a glimpse of that triad quivering with the single ray of the henad, in a completely unified [vision].

In sum, as with other things, so with the triad, we return to that realm through indication. And as the first principle is a monad, and the second is the indefinite dyad, and the third is a triad, because the triad is contemplated through reversion, the dyad through procession,⁶¹ and the monad through remaining, so too the entire triad that is composed of these could not be from three monads, it seems, but because it is a single unity that is perfect, the same unity remains and proceeds and reverts, nor are these three different things, but they are as one before three⁶² and yet with the power [to be] three.

Are there three fathers or one? There are three, but they are above every triad. And therefore they are beyond the one that, relative to these natures, we divide as one related to two or to three. (III 143) Power, therefore, is neither one nor three, and the same is true for the intellects, in accordance with the Unified, since neither the one nor the two nor the three is distinct in the Unified, but the things there are, as it were, beyond any differentiation, and thus they are beyond what is the most reverend of all, and this is the differentiation between the one, the two, and the three. If that nature is truly this way, nevertheless for the sake of clarity and symmetry for human beings we trace back to it the most sacred properties that either proceed from or after that nature, as the one, the many, the Unified, the good, the cause of all things, the limit, the unlimited, the mixed, and everything else with this kind of existence, and especially the perfection and completion of that which subsists as distinct, all of which the triad and the procession of the triad contain. But all these subsist only in the hypostasis after the intelligible, although they are [present] as a trace or causality, or analogy in the Unified itself. And again, [in the many]⁶³ they are in a pre-trace or pre-causality or pre-analogy, which is from the Unified into the many insofar as the many are many, as if someone could see in the multiplicity that is before all number some unarticulated or rather some undifferentiated pre-hypostasis of numbers, as if it were the pre-hypostasis of forms in formless matter. And as a third step upward from chaos as one ascends from the many, one will intuit that they have been anticipated in the aether of the simplicity that belongs to all things, to the extent that the chaotic infinity is present in the simplicity and belongs to it, as well as the undifferentiated coagulation of all things that belongs to the Unified.

Chapter 119. Damascius' Criticisms of Proclus' Arrangement of the Intelligible Triads

■ What Damascius is describing but ultimately rejecting in this chapter is the Proclean scheme of dividing the intelligible triads, as Damascius describes it below, by dividing “the Father into three fathers, and the power into three powers, and intellect into three intellects, and then joining each together, putting the same relationship next to its analogue at a lower level.” Thus, according to Damascius, the following represents how one should *not* arrange the intelligible triads, that is, one should not follow the scheme whereby the first triad consists entirely of the paternal element, the second triad consists entirely of the dynamic element, and the third triad consists entirely of the intellective element.

Distribution of Intelligible Triads according to Proclus

<i>father</i>	father	father
power	<i>power</i>	power
intellect	intellect	<i>intellect</i>

Thus, the first arrangement described but rejected by Damascius would look something like this:

- 1. The iynges
- 2. The maintainers
- 3. The teletrachs

and this triad, which is composed of three triads, would correspond to the following order:

- 1. father = iynges
- 2. power = maintainers
- 3. intellect = teletarchs

The second arrangement, endorsed by Damascius, would look like this:

paternal iynx	dynamic iynx	intellectual iynx
paternal maintainer	dynamic maintainer	intellectual maintainer
paternal teletarch	dynamic teletrach	intellectual teletarch

Damascius further complicates the way that he construes the intelligible triads, however, by adding a governing monad that is then divided into the three triadic members. So Damascius' arrangement would look something like the following chart.

Distribution of Intelligible Triads According to Damascius

paternal (monad)	power	intellect
father		
potential (monad)	power	intellect
father		
intellective (monad)	intellective power	intellect ■
paternal intellect		

(III 144) But since we are daring in some way to count what cannot be numbered and to arrange what is beyond every arrangement, and to set in order the supermundane abyss, come now and let us discourse upon these very things, as to how and in what way all this can be done. Just as the intelligible-intellective world and the intellective world that is after this is first divided in three, and then again each of the three cuts is divided in three by analogy with the things after it, and from these we go back to that, following the indication provided by the differentiation, because the intellective was as vast in its complete differentiation as the intelligible-intellective was in its initial differentiation and as great as the intelligible was in its own undifferentiated state, which was no less perfectly full, so then, just as I was saying, we contemplated the intelligible as the perfection that was everywhere, and we divided it into father and power and intellect, and each of these again we divided into three.

How did we do this? Is it that we divided the father into three fathers, and the power into three powers, and intellect into three intellects, and

then joined and fitted each together, putting the same [kind] next to the same [kind]? [We remark that] if so, then the triads will be dispersed, if each is constructed from the first and the second and the third, (III 145) and there will be no complete first triad or second or third. Each will then have parts that do not belong to the same rank or to the same form. Moreover, in the case of the worlds after these, this arrangement does not prevail. Since the entire nature of the *inynges* is paternal in the middle rank,⁶⁴ whereas the maintainers are dynamic, and the *teletarchs* are intellectual, we shall not complete each triad from the three, but we shall divide each nature into three, according to the form of the entire division. For example, we shall divide the *inynges* into father and power and intellect and the maintainers into the same divisions, and the *teletarchs* likewise.⁶⁵ And therefore let us also divide each monad of the intelligible triad into three. For example, [we divide] the paternal monad into father and power and intellect. For this is one whole father, and seen by itself it is just the father, and when power is added to it, and it shares with power, then in some way, it becomes power, and to the extent that it is the father of intellect and there is an intellect that belongs to it, then to this extent it becomes intellect. And therefore although it is one, nevertheless it manifests the triad of its own simplicity. And in the same way, the power constitutes a triad by itself, agreeing with each of its extremes. And intellect is likewise from the three; to the extent that it has reverted back to the father it becomes paternal in the third triad of itself, and to the extent that it merges with power, then it is realized as intellectual power, and to the extent that it is unmixed and by itself it remains next to its superior and this is known as the intellect of the triad. And so the monads are of one form and of like rank in each triad, and so the triads are capable (III 146) of being united into monads, and each member of the triad is seen as one, but not in the plurality of it.⁶⁶

[We add that] these three monads as a whole will not be separated from each other through distinction, but they will be united with each other beyond every monad united with itself, because the absolute One directs its own unifying power into the principles that continually come after it and gathers them back into its own unspeakable unity, which so greatly transcends the unity of the monad, that even the third from the One, which we were calling Unified, even this nevertheless by means of its own nature and even before the unsurpassable unity of the One stands beyond any comparison to the monad. For the monad is a form. But what is not a form is nevertheless something distinct, but if not, then it is at least the beginning of a distinct system. But the Unified is beyond form and beyond every differentiation and beyond every substance that can be contemplated through others, and is not the beginning of a number but it is the absolute principle of all that is after it, and it does not possess a multiplicity concentrated from many numbers in itself but it is entirely innumerable and in an undifferentiated way that which is alone said to be the

Unified. Therefore, in truth, it does not appear to be any kind of triad. For the three do not remain in it as distinct from each other, [as] the Unified, the many, the One. But the Unified pours itself back into the many according to the prevalence of power. But power at the same time is and it releases its own dispersion into the simplicity of the one. This has embraced everything, then, and it does not allow the (III 147) differentiation of the triad to appear, but it has revealed the One as all things, just as power shows that intellect is an indefinite chaos when it is situated in the indetermination of power, but intellect, to the extent that it is surpassed by the other more important principles, to that extent appears as intellect.

How then is it in reality a triad? For the monads are inferior in the case of every triad to the triad as a whole, and yet no monad can obfuscate its own triad, but on the contrary, it actually constitutes the triad. In fact, the One is superior to all things and there is nothing before it, so that not even the triad itself as a whole [is prior to the One]. If this were the case, then the many would be before the One. Moreover, the One even makes the triad disappear, and every differentiation is swallowed up in the One. And so there is only a henad in the One, which is the so-called triad, but in the many the triad is a dyad (for it is power), and in the Unified there could be an obvious trace of the triad because it is the first to have encountered the One and the many. And therefore the triad is the first number, one and two, and this is the unified and the multiplied, the monadic and the dyadic.

Chapter 120. On the Configuration of the Intelligible Triad

■ In this chapter, Damascius returns to examine the nature of the three initial moments of the intelligible triad, comparing various philosophical systems and the nomenclature each employs: Chaldean, Iamblichean, and Pythagorean, as well as his own terminology. ■

(III 147.19) Let that be enough of this discussion (for when would our struggle to understand the celebrated intelligible triad come to an end, [relying merely] on natural reason), and let us turn our mind toward those researches that overly elaborate the very nature of the triads that are called the paternal, the dynamic, and the intellective. Is it the case then that, as the (III 148) middle triad makes preeminently clear, one triad exists in terms of power, and can be contemplated as the beginning of all powers, whereas another can be contemplated as subsistence, namely, the paternal triad, to which the power is said to belong, while the intellective triad can be contemplated as an activity proceeding from the power and as an activity of the subsistence? For the ratio that substance has with power, this is the ratio that power has with activity, and someone could say that this is [like] the paternal attribute with respect

to the dynamic, and the dynamic with respect to the intellective. Different philosophers wished to indicate the nature of the principles by means of different principles, as for example, the Pythagoreans through the monad and dyad and triad, or Plato through the limit and the unlimited and the mixed, or we ourselves, through the One and the many and the Unified, and this is what the Oracles of the gods indicated by their “subsistence and power and activity.” Thus the Oracles clearly call the father subsistence,⁶⁷ while they transmit the actual name, [power] for power. And if the father is subsistence, and power is the middle term, why is not the third term said to be activity as well? Indeed, the great Iamblichus⁶⁸ also sees the third term in this way. But perhaps, also, the third term could be called intellect, because of intellection, which is from an act, whether it is intellection or knowing or reverting back toward the father, or longing for that one. And perhaps the father exists alone, and power in addition to existing is also capable, and intellect, in addition to these, also manifests an activity. And this sort of indication would greatly save the unity of the first (III 149) principles, since they are three but are nevertheless unified with each other in such a way that with respect to subsistence, they are the power and act of the subsistence. And it is clear that they are more unified with each other than the single nature could be with itself, if it subsisted and had power and activity as a single, trimorph nature.

Therefore must we think of them in this way, that is, in terms of the third property?

By assuming that the absolute substance is the third, which is the Unified, could we then say that the father was subsumed under substance, if substance and subsistence are the same? No, they say that they are not the same, but that subsistence is the name for the gods and that substance is the name of those things that depend on the subsistence of the gods.⁶⁹ Thus philosophers are everywhere likely to distinguish [Being and subsistence].

But even if this is true [that Being and subsistence are different], still, Being is not yet differentiated from the One in the intelligible, nor is the Unified [yet] Being. Nor, therefore, is the father the One.

But perhaps the father is like the absolute One, and the Unified would be absolute Being, each of them named in a different manner, as has been said often before. But this would be true to say, if subsistence and Being really differ. But now I do not see the difference. For we predicate Being and subsistence of the same thing, even if we could sometimes also say that Being subsists (something that the was very common among the ancient philosophers).⁷⁰ If it is necessary that Being must subsist prior to every other thing, for example, it must subsist prior (III 150) to being in potential, or to being actual, or to faring well or being good, and nearly every other form of being (in fact, among the kinds of Being,⁷¹ Being leads the others), if indeed, therefore, Being acts as a principle (*archei*), and if it acts as a principle as subordinate to something—*hyparchein*—(since we conceive Being after the One), then it would be the same

to subsist (*hyparchein*) in this way and to be (*einai*), except that insofar as *einai*, Being, is stationed before the others, and makes Being available to the others, it could be called *hyparchein*, subsistence as well. If then substance and subsistence are the same, and absolute substance is the third member, how could it be reasonable to transfer substance to the father?

Is it not also true that the paternal attribute wishes to be the cause for the existence of another, rather than for its own Being qua paternal? Therefore the first father is also the absolute father, and if there is nothing else, and then the father, then the father alone is, but would not be by itself, but it will be the cause for others of Being, and in particular for the first absolute Being, which exists before all things. And therefore in this way too the father is before any subsistence or substance. But likewise the paternal power, since it is a carrier of substance, could also be stationed before substance. Thus the third term was the paternal act, so that even act is before substance, since the paternal act is also a carrier of substance.

Is it therefore the case that the Unified is not absolute substance, since indeed a paternal activity has generated beings?

Act runs alongside that which is actualized, and in one way it is paternal act, and in this it stays close to the One and is called Unified through reversion toward that One, and in another way, it has concentrated in itself what is separated and generated from itself, and in this way it is (III 151) absolute Being before distinctive being, just as has been said earlier. Perhaps we should say that the third principle is analogous to the act of the first, because it contains activity, power, the paternal attribute and the generative attribute, and has become absolute substance. In fact, we say that what is actual and potential and self-subsisting [are] substance and being, so that it is substance by itself, but it is said to be act in relation to the father.

Perhaps we should look at it in this way: the third principle is substance and subsistence in act and as act, but the second is [substance] in potential, and this means that it reveals its power. For what is in those things below in an inferior way, can be understood above in a superior way. And therefore that which is in potential is prior to that which is in act, and the Father is not yet in power, but has snatched⁷² himself away from his, as it were, fitness however conceived toward substance, since also in the things here the one of matter is beyond what is in potential, although it is inferior, since what is in potential is already predetermined by its fitness with the form.

Perhaps it is more comprehensible simply to say, that subsistence (*hyparxis*) reveals the hypostasis alone, just as power reveals power alone, and that act reveals activity alone, (III 152) and substance is the whole and comprehends the three. And therefore that which subsists, but is not in potential, or that which is in potential, but not in act, we say does not exist, or exists in vain. And again, we think that nothing exists in vain. But we make the three coincide with the third, and the two only with the second, and the one only with the first. Whence

this is alone subsistence and hypostasis, which is, as it were, without potential and without act, if it is possible to speak thus, since it is conceived as superior to power and activity. But the second principle is subsistence together with power, but it actualizes nothing and is before act, and it furnishes the things before act to all things, just as the first furnishes the things before power. And the third, adding act, has become substance, and is a nature that subsists and has power and act. In this subsistence differs from substance, in the way that Being alone by oneself is different from Being seen simultaneously with others. For subsistence is an element of substance, and it has been admitted [as a principle] for the sake of indicating the simplest principle. If this is our doctrine, there is some plausibility to it. Yet it seems to me correct to define these [subsistence and substance] in the following way.

Chapter 121. On Subsistence

Subsistence (*hyparxis*), as the name discloses, reveals the first principle of each hypostasis (*arche* of the *hypostasis*) as a kind of foundation or base underlying the whole and every superstructure. And therefore also, the one who gave it this name also placed the *hypo* part before the *arche*, because he wished to show the principle underlying anything ever said to (III 153) exist. And this is the simplicity before all things, to which every composite is added. And this is the One that is beyond all things and underlies them, which is the cause of every substance but is not yet substance. For every substance is a composite either through unity or through mixture or in some way or another, but that was just One itself. And it is necessary, if something is going to be a composite, for the absolute One and simple to underlie it and to subsist before it, since without this, nothing else could proceed into existence. Therefore, subsistence is the one of every substance and the first hypothesis. If subsistence in its own simplicity is posited before substance, it is as producer of substance, so that subsistence is entirely paternal, as well.

Therefore, we have arrived at the conclusion that subsistence and One and the father are the same thing. In addition to the first foundation and first subsistence, a second foundation is added, which is, as it were, the multiplicity of that One or, as it were, the distension of all things from it, since it wishes to be before all things, and we call this power, by analogy, because power is also an extension of substance. But in addition to this second, there is a third principle that it would seem is most perfect, since it encompasses the most perfect form, which is, as it were, divided in three ways and united in substance instead of subsistence. And therefore the paternal intellect is like its own father and turns toward him, as the Unified is like the One, and as substance is like subsistence, but not the same. The term that is intermediate between them is also different, power, since it has transgressed the (III 154) paternal simplicity and in this way

insinuates itself into intellect, but it is not yet delimited into a unity, but it is only a proliferation and indefiniteness of the One. And therefore it coexists, insofar as it proliferates, with the father, insofar as he remains. And so the second principle is not yet unified, but still one, even if it is dispersed in some way into chaos. In what way the subsistence differs from substance has been stated.

And yet it is clear that a henad is separated from substance in an analogous way as subsistence is everywhere separated qua subsistence. For if the One is absolute subsistence, then the absolute substance is the Unified. If the One that is contradistinguished to Being (because Being is dependent on it as otherness) is subsistence, and Being is contradistinguished to this subsistence as substance, still in its simplicity, substance is also subsistence. But the absolute One is just subsistence, as the absolute many and nothing other than the many constitute the first power. And already the Unified, which is a mixture of One and the absolute many, and therefore is itself absolutely unified, is called absolute Being, because everywhere what is called [the One-Being]⁷³ is subject to the One, but nevertheless is not the One, as Plato shows in the *Sophist*.⁷⁴ Therefore, rightly the One is the father of the triad, because it is before Being and has generated Being, but the power of the father is the many, because they are an extension of the One into the generation of Being, and the paternal intellect is the Unified and Being in terms of its reversion toward the paternal One. Therefore (III 155) it is not the cognitive reversion, since knowledge is not yet differentiated there. Nor is it the vital reversion, since neither is life in any way differentiated among the [first principles]. Nor, again, is it a substantial reversion, since substance is contrasted with these after the Unified. Rather, it is the most important form of all the reversions, not a reversion into substance, but into the absolute One. But since the absolute One is before all things, then also the reversion to it is above all reversions. And so this is absolute reversion, but not a particular reversion, as for example a cognitive reversion toward the object of knowledge, or an appetitive reversion toward the object of appetite (for this would rather be a vital reversion) nor again is it a reversion toward Being of that which is substantialized [by means of it] (for this would also be a particular reversion toward an object), but it is the simplest reversion of all toward the simplest [object] of all, that of the Unified toward the One, of the first toward the first, and it is so related to differentiation, that it is rather an excess of the undifferentiated, that it is unity rather than reversion. But nevertheless the analogy will say that it is reversion itself and will call it intellect subsisting in itself, because it is the reversion that is unique to intellect. And if the completely differentiated is intellect, as has been said above, then in this way intellect is the Unified, because it is third from the father. However it is said, it will be said through analogy and indication, that its greatness is extraordinary. But for a general outline [of the Unified as subsistence], let this much have been said.

Chapter 122. Summary of the Chaldean Description of the Unified

■ The beginning of the chapter contains a rehearsal of the exegesis of the *Parmenides* 142–147, with its triad of One, Being, and One-Being. The conclusion of the chapter details the distribution of the terms, father, power, and intellect, over the three diacosms of intelligible, intelligible-intellective, and intellective, discovered as the component triads of the intelligible triad.

Here again Damascius will traverse some of the same ground he has covered, but now he will employ epithets that belong more strictly to the Platonic *Parmenides*, and discuss the relationship of One and many as revealed in his interpretation of *Parmenides* 142 through 147.

In outline, the intelligible diacosm (Being or *hyparxis*) is followed by the intelligible-intellective diacosm (life or power), which is in turn followed by the intellective diacosm (intellect). Again, the intermediate diacosm is identified with *Parmenides* 144e3–145b5, where *Parmenides* uses the language of number, whole and parts, and limit to describe Being. ■

(III 156) But we must now speak in a more detailed way concerning the three-fold division of the Unified, according to which the summit of the Unified is the completely undifferentiated, the intermediate is already beginning to be differentiated, so far as the Unified can be differentiated, and the limit is distinctly differentiated so far as the differentiated can be said to belong to the Unified. Plato,⁷⁵ having made a distinction in the Unified in the terms of One and Being, still discovered that each was both, while he made the intermediate term a whole composed of the parts of the One and Being (this was his differentiated nature), and the summit was absolute One-Being, both the One of Being and the Being of the One. If someone were to describe it like this, he would be correct in saying that the summit has Being dominated by the One, the lowest extreme, again, has the One dominated by Being, and in the middle each of them is in equilibrium. Or again, [let us say] with Plato,⁷⁶ that the [first] is One-Being, the [second] the whole and parts, and the [third] is indefinite multiplicity. And this was analogous to intellect, which was already a multiplicity as the completely differentiated, and the middle was a plurality as what was beginning to be differentiated, and the first was a plurality as the Unified. And therefore the summit alone is One-Being, the middle is already beginning a kind of division, and the third has been divided into many, as intellect has into forms, we say, and so this [One-Being is divided] into many, which we call the many before any number. And, therefore, it is the indefinite multiplicity, because it is numberless by nature and before any arithmetic definition. For number does not receive the indefinite, not even according to those who speak about number, but it receives the multiplicity, because of the extent to which the multiplicity is indefinite, so the (III 157) substrate of number requires the

arithmetic limit, or rather, neither is it matter nor does it require a limit, but it is beyond the hypostasis of all numbers.

Therefore, these are the many of the Unified one, as the many before the Unified in the second principle were [an] absolute many, as we said. But of the former, [the many are the] one many, whereas the latter are the many as Unified. It belongs to this many not to presubstist in the middle of the intelligible as the many, nor as the indefinite multitude, but as parts and whole, and as the many contained in the One, and they are only beginning to be differentiated from it. And therefore the whole has arisen instead of One, but the parts are instead of the partless and that which is contained by its own one, since it has been differentiated completely, to that extent and with the kind of differentiation that is possible in the case of the Unified, and since there are so many and so many different kinds of fragments in this, the parts straightway have the appearance of many.

Moreover, the entire indefinite multitude will be like the intellect, and the indefinite multiplicity as a whole will be like the forms in intellect (and thus also it will be celebrated as the intellect of the intelligible all), and the middle is like the middle order and receives the same name in the second diacosm after the intelligible, and the summit will be like the elemental and that which is a mixture from elements, being itself unified from the entire Unified world.

(III 158) And again in the third diacosm, which is the intellective, the intellect that cannot be cut into small pieces and is "once beyond,"⁷⁷ can be compared to the summit of the Unified and to the completely Unified. But Hekate, who shines in both directions and who appears as a whole replete with many parts, is similar to the middle of the Unified. And just as in the intellective diacosm there is the "Twice-beyond," flashing with the intellective⁷⁸ (*noeros*) rays, in the intelligible and unified intellect there is also this, and it flashes with intelligible (*noetos*) rays, if one can say this.

If these kinds of differences are in the Unified, or rather are pre-traces of differences or pre-causes or however one might choose to reference them (for more has been said concerning these things above), and if the Unified was the paternal intellect, in one respect one whole, and in another respect divided into three, then it is clear how according to the same ratio we divided the perfect power into three powers and the one father into three fathers: one will be the father of the Unified in the Unified intellect, another will be father of the Unified contemplated as wholes and parts, and another will be the father taken as the indefinite multiplicity. From this it comes about that that latter was called intellect in the paternal triad, the middle [father was] power, and the first was the father of fathers. And likewise, these three powers will be taken in three ways, each agreeing with the three on either side, I mean fathers and intellects. For the powers are shining on both sides and they are always symmetric with each extreme. But nevertheless also, in the triad of the powers the first power

has paternal rank with respect to the others, (III 159) the middle is the power of powers, and the third is intellect of the first. And again in the unified triad and in the intellective completion of the intellective diacosm, the first intellect is the father of intellects, the second is power and the third is unified intellect or intellect of the unified father.⁷⁹

Chapter 123.1 The Theology of the *Orphic Rhapsodies*

The foregoing will suffice for the present concerning the Chaldean triads, lest we [be culpable] of prying too much into the tradition given by the Oracles concerning their truth. Our task at present does not involve a thorough exegesis concerning [this tradition]. But since we touched on these things briefly for the sake of a vision of the intelligibles and a purification of our own conceptions, come now let us try to recount a certain portion also of the traditions of the other theologians concerning the intelligible diacosm, to see if also from these we are able to receive some still more sacred truth, and even the greatest possible about that transcendent unity.

In the *Rhapsodies*⁸⁰ that are circulated under the name, *Orphic*, the following is the theology concerning the intelligible world, a theology that the philosophers⁸¹ also transmit.⁸² The theologians put Time (Chronos) in the place of the unique principle of wholes,⁸³ whereas aether and chaos are the two principles [of limit and unlimited], and the egg is in the place of absolute Being, [all of which] constitute their first triad.⁸⁴ (III 160) In the second triad,⁸⁵ the last term is the egg that is conceived and the egg that gives birth to the god, or the gleaming robe, or the cloud, because Phanes leaps forth from these (different philosophers have different explanations for the middle term), but this, whatever term [they use] is the equivalent of intellect, whereas [for the equivalent of] father and power they employ various designations that are fundamentally extraneous to the Orphic [narrative]. In their third triad, Metis is intellect, Eriepaios is power, and Phanes himself is father. (Perhaps the middle triad must also be thought of as the trimorph god⁸⁶ still being conceived inside the egg, since the middle always reflects both the extremes, so that it is at once the egg and the trimorph god.) One observes that the egg is the Unified, the trimorph and, in reality, polymorph god is the differentiated aspect of the intelligible world, and the middle as the egg is still Unified, but as the god it is already differentiated, or to speak more generally, beginning to be differentiated. And such is the current [form of] the Orphic theology.

123.2. *The Theology of Hieronymus or Hellanicus*

The theology according to Hieronymus or Hellanicus,⁸⁷ even if the latter is not the same personage, is as follows. In the beginning, he says, there were

water and matter, from which earth was coagulated, and these he establishes as the first two principles, water and earth, the latter as capable of dispersion, and the former as providing coherence and (III 161) connection for earth. He omits the single principle (before the two) [on the grounds that it is] ineffable, since the fact that [Hieronimus] does not even mention it, shows its ineffable nature. But as for the third principle after the two, it arose from these, I mean from water and earth, and it is a serpent with the heads of a lion and a bull grown upon it, and in the middle the countenance of a god, and it has wings on its shoulders, and the same god is called Ageless Time, and Heracles.⁸⁸ And Necessity is united with it, which is the same nature as Adrasteia, stretching the arms of its bimorph body throughout the entire cosmos, touching the very boundaries of it. I think that this is said to be the third principle that functions as their substance, except that they represent it as male-female in order to show that it is the generating cause of all things.⁸⁹ In my view, the theology in the *Rhapsodies* has omitted the two first principles together with the one before the two, which is transmitted through [their very] silence [about it], and begins from the third principle after the two, since that principle is the first principle that can be expressed in language, and is commensurate with the human capacity to hear.⁹⁰ For the highest principle in that theology was Ageless Time (Chronos), [who is] the father of Aither and Chaos.

Without question, according to this theology, too, Time (Chronos) as the serpent begat a triple offspring: Aither, which he calls "watery," and indefinite Chaos, and third after these is misty Erebus. And the second triad is analogous to the first, although it is dynamic, as the first was paternal.⁹¹ And so the third member of it is also misty Erebus, and the paternal element and the one extreme is Aither, not unqualified, but moist, and the middle term is indefinite Chaos. (III 162) But in the midst of these principles [the traditions] says, Time (Chronos) begot an egg, and this tradition makes [the egg] the offspring of Time (Chronos), and as birthed among these gods, because the third intelligible triad also proceeds from them. What then is this third intelligible triad? It is the egg. The dyad consists of the two natures in the egg, male and female, and the multiplicity [corresponds to] the various seeds in the middle of the egg. And third after these is the god with two bodies, with golden wings on its shoulders, which has the head of bulls growing from his sides, and on the head a huge dragon likened to all manners of beasts. This must be understood as the intellect of the triad; the many kinds of being constitute the middle term, and the power is the dyad, but the egg itself is the paternal origin of the triad. And the third god belongs to this third triad, whom the theology celebrates as Protogonos and also calls him Zeus the disposer of all things and the entire world, and therefore he is also called Pan. And this is the account that this theology gives concerning the intelligible principles.

Chapter 124. The Orphic Theology According to Eudemus

(III 162.19) The theology that is recorded with the Peripatetic Eudemus⁹² as being by Orpheus is silent about the entire intelligible world, since it is completely ineffable and unknowable by means of discursive [thinking] or through [sacred] narrative. Eudemus begins with the principle of Night, from which Homer too begins, even if [Homer] (III 163) has not written a continuous genealogy. One must not agree when Eudemus says that Homer makes [everything] begin from Oceanus and from Tethys.⁹³ For Homer clearly knew that Night was the greatest god, since Zeus himself feels reverence for her: "For he feared lest he accomplish things distasteful to the feelings of swift Night."⁹⁴ But Homer himself must start from Night. Hesiod,⁹⁵ in recounting that Chaos came to be first, seems to have called the ungraspable and unified nature of the intelligible world Chaos, and first produces earth as a kind of principle of the entire family of the gods, unless he turns out to have Chaos as the second of the two principles, and earth and Tartarus and Eros as the threefold intelligible, with Eros instead of the third member, since Eros is contemplated as reversion (for Orpheus also mentions Eros in the *Rhapsodies*) and earth instead of the first member of the triad, since earth is first fixed in a substantial and concrete state, and Tartarus instead of the intermediate term, since the middle is already on its way toward differentiation.

Acusilaus⁹⁶ seems to me to have Chaos as the first principle, since it is unknowable in every way, and the two after the one are Erebus, the male, and the female Night, with Night (III 164) in the place of indefiniteness, and Erebus in the place of limit. And from the union of these, he says that Aither, Eros, and Metis were born, which are the three intelligible hypostases, making the summit Aither, the middle Eros, according to the function of Eros as an intermediary, and the third is Metis, as constituting the intellect itself, already [called] much honored. In addition to these he represents a great number of other gods as offspring from the same [parents], according to the narration of Eudemus.

[Eudemus relates that] Epimenides⁹⁷ posits two first principles, Air and Night, and obviously reverts to the first before the two principles by means of silence. From these two arise Tartarus as, I think, the third principle, as mixed from the two. And from these are the two Titans, which is how he refers to the intelligible intermediate, because he extends the summit and the limit to both, which when they mix with each other become an egg, the true intelligible living being, from which again another race arises.

Pherecydes⁹⁸ the Syrian makes Zas and Time and Chthonia exist eternally as the first three principles, I mean the one before the two and the two after the one, and Time makes fire and breath and water from his own seed, [which] I think is the triple nature of the intelligible, from which another great race of gods divided into three kinds is formed, called (III 165) the five nooks, and this

is perhaps the same as saying, the five worlds. But concerning these another occasion [for discussion] perhaps will appear. So many and of such a kind for now are the hypotheses left to us by Greek mythology, although there are many others.

Chapter 125. Non-Greek Theologies

125.1. *The Babylonian Theology*

But of the non-Greeks, while the Babylonians⁹⁹ seem to have passed over the unique principle of all in silence, they posit the two [subsequent principles as] Tauthes and Apason, making Apason the husband of Tauthes, and make this [deity] the mother of the gods, from whom the single child is born, Moymin, the intelligible world, I think, produced from the two principles. And from the same couple, another generation proceeds, [namely] Dachee and Dochos, and then a third generation from the same couple, Kissare and Asson, from which three gods are born, An and Enlil and Aos. And a son of Aos and Daukee is Bel, which they say is the demiurge.

125.2. *Persian Theology*

As for the Magi and the entire Iranian race, as Eudemus writes about this, some of them call the intelligible and unified universe Space (Topos), and others call it Time (Chronos), from which are differentiated either a good deity or a bad demon, or light and darkness before these, as some say. And they then themselves posit the twofold differentiated rank of the superiors after the undifferentiated nature, one leader of which is Horomasda, and the other of which is Areimanios.¹⁰⁰

125.3. *Sidonian Theology*

(III 166) The Sidonians, according to the same author, place Time (Chronos) before all, and Longing and Gloom, and when Longing and Gloom mix as two principles, then Air and Wind are born; Air they reveal as the unmixed principle of the intelligible, and Wind as the living prototype of the intelligible that arises from it, and again the egg from both of these arises as the intelligible intellect, I think.

Apart from Eudemus, we find the mythology of the Phoenicians in Mochus,¹⁰¹ with Aither as the first principle as well as Air, these two principles from which is born Oulomus, the intelligible god itself, I think, who is the summit of the intelligible world; from which they say that Chousoros the Opener first came into Being, when [Oulomos] mated with itself, and then the egg,

meaning by the latter, the intelligible intellect, whereas by the Opener, Choursoros, is meant the intelligible power, since it first differentiated the undifferentiated nature. Unless, though, after the two principles the summit is the one Wind, and the middle the two winds Lips and Notos (for they place them somehow before Oulonon), and Oulonon himself would be the intelligible intellect, and the Opener, Choursoros, is the first order after the intelligible, and the egg is heaven; for when Choursoros splits into two, heaven and earth arise, each of them being halves of him.

125.4. *Egyptian Theology*

(III 167) As for the Egyptians, Eudemus relates nothing very precise, but the Egyptian philosophers in our own day have discovered and brought out the truth hidden in certain Egyptian formulations, to the effect that with them the unique principle of the all was celebrated as unknowable darkness, and this was invoked three times under this name. Again the two principles [limit and unlimited] are water and sand, according to Heraiscus.¹⁰² His elder [brother], Asclepiades,¹⁰³ has sand and water,¹⁰⁴ from which also came the first Kmephis¹⁰⁵ after them, and then the second Kmephis from him, and then from him the third Kmephis, which fill the entire intelligible diacosm. This was Asclepiades' account, whereas the younger [brother] Heraiscus named the third Kmephis from his father and grandfather the sun, the intelligible intellect itself.

One must not hope for accuracy from these authors. Yet one can know this much concerning the Egyptians, that they divided those things that subsist in unity many times, since they have also divided the intelligible into the traits of many gods, as it is possible for those who wish to learn by reading their writings, and I mean the summary of Heraiscus concerning the general Egyptian doctrine that was written for Proclus the philosopher, as well as that concordance of the Egyptians with the other theologians that was begun by Asclepiades.