‘A Mixing Cup of Piety and Learnedness’: Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone as Readers of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*

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This man [Origen] delved into our sacred courts from the perspective of Platonic and Aristotelian idle talk and thus dragged in from there all sorts of superfluous and pretentious discourse; and by wishing to seem to comprehend what is against and what is consistent with Christian teachings, and for this to be considered clever by the many, he corrupted and confused the holy Scripture in its entirety. I say this without accusing the man in every respect; for occasionally he gently severs the letter and reveals the spirit; however, in most cases he is overtaken by whatever wind is carrying him and is thus led astray from the main road and falls into the ditches. Don’t converse often with the man, but rather, if you wish to know divine things clearly, then enter deeply into the words of Gregory the Theologian. For he alone in my opinion introduced all wisdom into his discourses and prepared a mixing cup of piety and learnedness, so that everyone can drink without satiety, while his cup is never exhausted.¹

MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Theologica* 11, 4

1 *Theologica* 11, 4.87–102: ὁ γὰρ ἀνὴρ οὗτος ἀπὸ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν καὶ Ἀριστοτελικῶν ἀδολεσχίων ἐς τὰς ἱεράς ἡμῶν παρακύψας αὐλὰς πᾶσαν ἡμῖν ἐκείθεν περιττολογίαν καὶ δεινότητα ἐπεσύρατο, καὶ τῷ δόξαι βουλευθῆναι συνιδεῖν τὸ μαχόμενον καὶ τὸ ἀκόλουθον καὶ δεινὸς ἐντεῦθεν τοῖς πολλοῖς νομισθῆναι πᾶσαν τὴν ἱεράν γραφὴν ἐκαπήλευσε καὶ συνέχεε. λέγω δὲ οὐ πάντα τοῦ ἀνδρὸς κατηγορῶν· ἔστι γὰρ ὅπῃ διασχίζει τὸ γράμμα ἡρέμα καὶ ἀνακαλύπτει τὸ πνεῦμα· ἀλλὰ τὰ πλείω τοῦ ἀγοντος γινόμενος πνεύματος ἐς κρημνοὺς ἐκπίπτει τῆς λεωφόρου ἀποτρεπόμενος. μὴ σύ γε τούτῳ τῷ ἀνδρὶ θαμὰ προσομίλει, ἀλλ’ εἴ γε βούλοιο σαφῶς εἰδέναι τὰ θεῖα, τοῖς τοῦ θεολόγου Γρηγορίου λόγοις ἐμβάθυνε. μόνος γὰρ οὗτος κατ’ ἐμὴν δόξαν πᾶσαν σοφίαν τοῖς ἐαυτοῦ συνεισήνεγκε λόγοις καὶ κρατήρα πᾶσιν ἐστήσατο θεοσεβείας καὶ λογιότητος, ὥστε πάντας μὲν ἀκορέστως πίνειν, ἐκείνον δὲ λήγειν μηδέποτε. I am grateful to Stratis Papaioannou for help in translating this passage.

1 Introduction²

In a well-known article by Gerhard Podskalsky,³ Nicholas of Methone's *Refutation* of Proclus' *Elements of Theology* served as indirect evidence that the interest in Proclus so abundantly evident in the works of Michael Psellos in the eleventh century had in fact persisted into the time of Nicholas, who died around 1166.⁴ Surely, the argument goes, such a refutation demonstrates a contemporary fashion for Proclus in Byzantium; Nicholas would scarcely have gone to such lengths to refute Proclus had he not regarded his influence as a continuing and contemporary problem. Indeed, in his prologue to the *Refutation*, Nicholas explains that he has chosen to write the work because he observes that the attraction of Proclus for some of his fellow Christians has led them into heresy. For this reason he has decided to show, chapter by chapter, the points at which Proclus' teaching and Christian doctrine are at odds.

However, the absence of *direct* evidence for any substantial interest in Proclus' works in Byzantium in the mid-twelfth century might lead one to reconsider.⁵ Could one instead account for Nicholas' *Refutation* as a reaction to Psellos' use of Proclus in the previous century? Psellos' writings circulated widely in the twelfth century,⁶ and even if they had not, Nicholas would not be the first to engage in polemic with a long-departed threat. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, wrote his lengthy *Contra Julianum* more than half a century after Julian's death.⁷

Among Nicholas' primary aims, some announced explicitly in his prologue and some emerging only later in the *Refutation*, are to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against Proclus' unitary conception of the first principle, and to dis-

2 The research for this article was made possible through a COFUND Junior Research Fellowship at Durham University, where I was generously hosted by Krastu Banev in the Department of Theology and Religion. I would like to thank Andrew Louth, Lewis Ayres and Krastu Banev for helpful feedback in the early stages of this research.

3 Podskalsky 1976.

4 On Nicholas' *Refutation*, see Stiglmayr 1899; Angelou 1984; O'Meara 1989; Alexidse 2002; Trizio 2014; Robinson 2014; Robinson 2017a and 2017b.

5 Ioane Petritsi's Georgian translation of and commentary on Proclus' *Elements* are a notable example of interest in Proclus in this era, which may reflect ongoing trends in the Greek-speaking world. See Alexidse and Bergemann 2009; Giginishvili 2007; Mtchedlidze 2009 and various other articles by these scholars.

6 See Kaldellis 2007, p. 226–228.

7 See recent critical editions (Riedweg 2016; Kinzig and Brüggemann 2017), as well as text and partial translation in *Sources chrétiennes* (Evieux et al 1985; Odile Boulnois et al 2016). Matthew Crawford and Aaron Johnson are preparing a first English translation of the *Contra Julianum*.

tinguish strictly between the intra-trinitarian generations of the Son and the Spirit from the Father, on the one hand, and the Trinity's creative production of everything else on the other hand. In Nicholas' view, Proclus' hierarchical emanative structure cannot be applied to the persons of the Trinity, where the Son and the Spirit, though causally derivative, are consubstantial with the Father and thus equally divine. Nor is this emanative structure an adequate way to understand God's production of the world, since it seems to present a causal continuum in which the first principle is not the unique metaphysical cause, utterly distinct from its created effects. Instead, this causal continuum involves a series of metaphysical causes that seem to operate in the same manner as the first cause, even if each successive cause is more restricted in scope. Proclus' system is in Nicholas' view irredeemably polytheistic, both with its theory of henads and with its descending sequence of hypostases.

With these issues in mind, I propose in this article to examine Psellos' use of the *Elements*, in order to discover whether he regarded these aspects of Proclus' thought with greater sympathy than Nicholas did, and thus whether Psellos' writings might help to explain why Nicholas wrote his *Refutation*.

2 Michael Psellos and the *Elements of Theology*

It has been recognized for some time that Psellos had an affinity for the Neoplatonists, and that Proclus in particular had a special significance for him.⁸ In a famous autobiographical passage of his *Chronographia*, Psellos describes the course of his own education and tells us how, starting from Aristotle and Plato,

I completed a cycle, so to speak, by coming down to Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus. Then, continuing my voyage, I put in at the mighty harbor of the admirable Proclus, drawing from him all science and conceptual precision.⁹

8 On Psellos' philosophical interests, see Zervos 1920; Joannou 1956; O'Meara 1989, 1998 and 2014; Duffy 2002; Kaldellis 2007; Papaioannou 2013; Jenkins 2006 and 2017; Panagopoulos 2014; Lauritzen 2017; Miles 2017; Walter 2017.

9 *Chronographia*, VI, 38.1–5: ἐντεῦθεν οὖν ὁρμηθεὶς αὐθις ὥσπερ περίοδον ἐκπληρῶν, ἐς Πλωτίνους καὶ Πορφυρίου καὶ Ἰαμβλίχους κατήειν. μεθ' οὗς ὁδῶ προβαίνων εἰς τὸν θαυμασιώτατον Πρόκλον ὡς ἐπὶ λιμένα μέγιστον κατασχών, πᾶσαν ἐκείθεν ἐπιστήμην τὴν καὶ νοήσεων ἀκριβείαν ἔσπασα. O'Meara translates the passage and discusses it in detail (2014, p. 166–168): "From there, as if completing a cycle (*periodon*), I came to a Plotinus, a Porphyry and a Iamblichus, after which I progressed to the most admirable Proclus, as if arriving in a great haven, where I sought all science and accuracy of thoughts. After this, intending to ascend to first philosophy and

Given the climactic position that Proclus occupied in the stages of Psellos' education, it seems reasonable to conclude that he played an important role in Psellos' mature thought. I will not attempt here to determine the exact significance of this passage within the *Chronographia*. Much has been written on the rhetorical dimensions of this work,¹⁰ and it is sometimes suggested that one cannot always take Psellos' writings at face value.¹¹ For our purposes, however, it suffices to recognize that Psellos here unambiguously affirms his admiration for Proclus, and to take note of the specific benefit he derived from Proclus, namely "all science and conceptual precision (νοήσεων ἀκριβείαν)."¹²

Even so, one must not exaggerate the role of Proclus in Psellos' texts, where many other authors are also cited, some with great frequency. In the first volume of the *Theologica*, for example, Psellos' citations of Proclus, including many from his commentary on the *Timaeus*, are nearly equalled in number by those of Dionysius, and are exceeded by those of Aristotle, Plato and Maximus the Confessor. Above all, Gregory of Nazianzus dominates the scene, and other authors, including Proclus, are usually introduced in order to elucidate passages from Gregory.¹³ Proclus' true significance for Psellos can only be judged by examining the way that he is used in each case.¹⁴

While Psellos cites multiple works by Proclus (and especially his commentary on the *Timaeus*), here we will consider only his use of the *Elements of*

to be initiated to pure science, I took up first the knowledge of incorporeals in what is called mathematics, which have an intermediate rank between the nature that concerns bodies and the thought that is free of relation to bodies." Cf. *Theologica* I, 22 (84.38–39), where Proclus is "chief of the most theological among the Greeks": οἱ τοίνυν θεολογικώτατοι τῶν Ἑλλήνων, ὧν δὴ Πρόκλος κατὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ψῆφον τὸ κεφάλαιον.

10 See Lauritzen 2013.

11 See Kaldellis 1999.

12 See below [currently page 7].

13 In *Theologica* II, citations of Gregory, Maximus and John of Damascus exceed those of Proclus; in *Philosophica minora* I, citations of Aristotle, Olympiodorus and Plotinus exceed those of Proclus; in *Philosophica minora* II, the citations of Proclus (mostly from the commentary on the *Timaeus*) far exceed all other authors.

14 See Miles 2017, p. 81: "The immense complexity of the philosophical, literary, rhetorical and religious traditions that Psellos, like other Byzantine thinkers, inherited, was such that it offered great scope for choosing one's own position, and for combining positions and ideas from previous authors in new ways. Of this kind of intellectual freedom, Psellos made considerable and brilliant use. This is becoming increasingly apparent in the newer scholarship on his work, and it may be said with some confidence that the way forward in Psellan studies lies in detailed and careful readings of his many texts, in particular with an eye to how these combinations, transformations and balancing acts are carried out in the context of specific discussions."

Theology.¹⁵ It seems likely that citations of the *Elements* in Psellos' writings are indicative of Proclus' role in general; in any case, a focus on Psellos' use of the *Elements* keeps our enquiry to a manageable scope and allows us to consider what role if any Psellos may have played in provoking Nicholas' *Refutation*.

There are a few scattered citations of the *Elements of Theology* in various published works of Psellos,¹⁶ but most of his citations of the *Elements* are found in five modern editions, namely the two volumes of the *Philosophica minora*, the *De omnifaria doctrina*, and the two volumes of the *Theologica*. Within these five volumes we can usefully distinguish at least two broadly different ways in which Psellos uses Proclus, namely in compilations or epitomes on the one hand, in which he summarizes or 'plagiarizes' with little or no comment, and in exegetical treatises on the other hand, in which he draws upon Proclus as a tool for understanding some other author's text. In the former genre, the object of attention is Proclus' text, sometimes simply recycled without comment, sometimes introduced or followed by brief comments from Psellos. In the latter genre, the object of attention is some other text (most often Gregory the Theologian), and Psellos introduces Proclus' teaching during the course of his explanation of this other text. The following discussion is structured according to this broad division, which corresponds roughly to the division between the *De omnifaria doctrina* and the two volumes of the *Philosophica* on the one hand, and the two volumes of the *Theologica* on the other.

3 Proclus in Compilation (1): *Philosophica minora* I and II

Within the two volumes of the *Philosophica minora*, the use of the *Elements* is more frequent in the second volume. There, according to the indices, the *Ele-*

15 According to O'Meara (2014, p. 168–169), "The *Elements of Theology* is probably Psellos' favourite Proclean text. He names the text by its title a number of times and uses it extensively in his philosophical, theological and rhetorical works, citing propositions taken from throughout the work. He sometimes uses the same propositions repeatedly and makes considerable use of the book in composing the little encyclopedia, the *De omnifaria doctrina*, which, in various versions, he dedicated to his imperial patrons. This makes it likely that Proclus' *Elements of Theology* was not just a convenient source of philosophical knowledge for Psellos: he could also use it in his teaching, or at least as providing materials for his teaching."

16 Besides the five published volumes discussed here, citations of the *Elements of Theology* can also be found in *Oratoria minora* 27 (9–10), *Orationes Forenses et Acta* 1 (502–503) and *Epistulae* (ed. Papaioannou) 31 (42–43).

ments makes an appearance in nine different treatises.¹⁷ Among these, perhaps the most notable examples are found in *Phil. min.* 10 and 11, where Psellos compiles the propositions that concern intellect and soul respectively, and in *Phil. min.* 35, where Psellos comments on material from six different propositions.¹⁸ Other citations from the *Philosophica minora* will not be considered in depth here.¹⁹

Phil. min. 10, *On Intellect*, provides us with a good example of pure compilation. Here Psellos simply strings together, without any comment, seventeen propositions from the extensive portion of the *Elements of Theology* that is concerned with intellect. He includes all but two of the propositions in the range beginning with Prop. 166 and ending with Prop. 183, and he introduces this material by saying that he will “sum up in an epitome” the teachings on intellect of “those who philosophize among the Greeks.” In the next line, he refers to these teachings simply as “Hellenic opinions,” and only at the end of the passage does he tell us that all of the material comes from Proclus. Evidently Proclus is here representative of Greek thought for Psellos.²⁰

17 Michael Psellos, *Philosophica minora* 11, 9–11, 15, 25, 34–36 and 38. See also *Philosophica minora* 1, 36.

18 As well as on four excerpts from Porphyry's *Sententiae*, one of which also corresponds closely to Proclean doctrine.

19 In *Philosophica minora* 1, 36, which is an elaborate philosophical interpretation of the meaning of the letters of the alphabet, there is an interesting passage (lines 481–506) that I have not been able to examine thoroughly in context, in which Psellos summarizes various principles from the *Elements of Theology* (cf. *Elements of Theology* 117, 124, 125, 131 and 160) in answer to the question “what are the phenomena of the divine?” and concludes the passage thus: “and the other things, so many as are not disregarded by the theologians and especially Dionysius, who philosophized altogether more precisely (ἀκριβέστερον) concerning these things.” In 11, 9 (19.15–19), Psellos accepts without reservation Proclean principles concerning the substance and activity of intellect, soul and body as they relate to division and motion (cf. *Elements of Theology* 20). In 11, 25 (101.6–13) Psellos endorses the Proclean principle of a mediating principle in the structure of participation (*Elements of Theology* 64 and 129). In 11, 34 (117.16–19), Psellos affirms the Proclean principle of degrees of participation (cf. *Elements of Theology* 110). In 11, 36 (121.18–19), Psellos mentions, in the course of a lecture on Greek teachings concerning divine creation, the principle that divine creation is through intellectual activity (*Elements of Theology* 174). In 11, 38 (142.21–26), Psellos distinguishes various modes of being and affirms the ultimate derivation of all from one (*Elements of Theology* 39). O'Meara also cites *Elements of Theology* 209 as a parallel for the ideas discussed in 11, 15 (76.8–9), but the connection is not precise.

20 The same might be said for Nicholas. In the prologue to the *Refutation* (3.15–17), he presents Proclus as the preeminent Greek thinker: “And not least in comparison to all, yea perhaps even more than all, was this mighty Proclus, who was zealous not to be sur-

Similarly, in *Phil. min.* 11, 11, a short treatise titled *On Soul*, Psellos simply compiles twenty-four propositions from the last section of the *Elements*. In this case, however, he also includes brief comments on the acceptability of Proclus' teaching from a Christian point of view. "Behold I provide you the hellenic teachings concerning soul," he begins, "some of which agree with our scriptures," and then cautioning: "but the bitter among them is more than the sweet."²¹ The first proposition to which he refers is Prop. 184, "They say that every soul is either divine, or changes from intellect to non-intellect, or is between these, always intellecting, but inferior to divine souls," and then he comments: "And while this teaching is most absurd, what comes after is more mythological and sillier."²² "What comes after" in Psellos' compilation comprises all but one of the series of propositions ranging from Prop. 185 to Prop. 195. After quoting this series of propositions, he comments, "Perhaps then these teachings are not altogether absurd, but it would be better to say that they are ambiguous; the things that they say after these, however, are most laughable." The rest of the text, i.e. the material that he says is "most laughable," is mostly exact quotation from all but two of the remaining propositions in the *Elements*. Since a major topic of this section is Proclus' teaching on the "vehicle of the soul" or astral body, which might have struck Christian readers as particularly fantastical, this may account in part for Psellos' judgement here.²³

Psellos' compilation of this material clearly does not constitute an endorsement of Proclus' views on soul, nor can we conclude from his silence in the previous text (on intellect) that he agreed with everything in it. Yet it is clear that Psellos found this material interesting and useful—useful to himself perhaps, as a kind of condensation of what he had read and as an aid to memory, but probably also useful for his students.

In *Phil. min.* 11, 35 Psellos takes a very different approach. In this text, rather than simply compiling numerous propositions (without their proofs) into a condensed presentation of Proclus' teaching on a given topic, Psellos instead quotes individual propositions with their proofs, commenting briefly on each.

passed in pagan wisdom by even the most preeminent." Besides being a particular threat, Proclus stands for Hellenic wisdom as such.

21 *Philosophica minora* 11, 11 (22.1–3).

22 Following St. Paul, γρᾶῶδεις is frequently applied to myths (cf. 1 Timothy 4:7: βεβήλους καὶ γρᾶῶδεις μύθους παραιτοῦ: refuse profane and old wives' fables); cf. also Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 28.8: ὁ καὶ τῶν Ἐπικουρείων ἀτόμων ἀτοπώτερόν τε καὶ γρᾶῶδέστερον: "[the idea that God could be mixed with bodies] is a more absurd old wives tale than even the atoms of Epicurus."

23 Cf. *Philosophica minora* 11, 15, where Psellos associates Origenism with such ideas.

The text is titled "On Theology and on the Distinctions among Greek Doctrines" (Περὶ θεολογίας καὶ διακρίσεως δογμάτων Ἑλληνικῶν). It is actually somewhat like Nicholas' *Refutation* in its form and aims, though much more modest in its scope; in it Psellos considers individually only six propositions from the *Elements* (35, 39, 81, 90, 103 and 109), stating in each case whether he considers the proposition in question to be acceptable from the standpoint of Christian doctrine.

The first text quoted is Prop. 35: "every effect remains in its cause and proceeds from it and returns to it." Psellos prefaces the text with the following comment:

What is agreed upon by us concerning our theological teaching, i.e. the trinitarian consubstantiality, does not need other proofs or the establishment of proofs foreign to the discourse. But among the wise Greeks, reason (λόγος) is a highly productive component of their theological proofs, and it also contributes no small part to our own discourse [i.e., Christian theology] as regards the union and distinction of the Son in relation to the Father, where their union does not eliminate the distinction, nor does their distinction break apart the union.²⁴

Psellos here recognizes that trinitarian doctrine is not established by philosophy, but belongs to a "discourse" rooted in revelation and tradition. He nevertheless asserts the common utility or productivity of reason for both 'Greek' and Christian theology. While Nicholas of Methone also recognizes the value of reason (implicitly if not explicitly), he regards Proclus' entire project as a presumptuous rationalism aiming to scale the heavens (like the Tower of Babel) by the power of human thought.²⁵ Reason, for Nicholas, cannot grasp God in his transcendence. By contrast, even though Psellos sometimes rejects Proclus' particular conclusions, he here shows a fundamental sympathy with Proclus regarding the role of reason in theological inquiry.²⁶

24 *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (117.24–118.4): Τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς θεολογικοῦ δόγματος, φημί τῆς τρι-
αδικῆς ὁμοουσιότητος, ὁμολογούμενον παρ' ἡμῶν τὸ [πάν] καὶ οὐ δεῖται πίστεων ἐτέρων οὐδὲ
τῆς τῶν ἄλλοτρίων τοῦ λόγου συστάσεως. πλὴν ἔστι τε λόγος καὶ παρὰ τοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων σοφοῖς
μέγα τι μέρος λυσιτελῶν αὐτοῖς εἰς θεολογίας ἀπόδειξιν, οὐ βραχεῖάν τινα καὶ τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγῳ
συνεισφέρων μερίδα τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνώσεώς τε καὶ διακρίσεως, οὔτε τῆς ἐνώσεως
ἀφανιζούσης τὴν διάκρισιν οὔτε τῆς διακρίσεως διιστώσης τὴν ἑνωσιν. I am grateful to Anthony
Kaldellis for his help in understanding this passage.

25 See Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*, Prologue, 3.1–4.2.

26 See Panagopoulos 2014 on Psellos' 'rationalism'.

Psellos continues by quoting the entire proof of Prop. 35, and he comments:

This chapter alone of the Greek theology seems to me to have some contribution to our dogma; for in a manner involving neither time nor body, the only-begotten Word proceeds from the Father and remains in the Father and returns to the Begetter; although he has proceeded, he is not distinguished according to the principle of divinity, nor in returning was he separate, nor in remaining has he been confused with respect to the personal (ὑποστατικὴν) perfection.²⁷

As Dominic O'Meara has noted,²⁸ Psellos' application of Prop. 35 to the Trinity implies a greater degree of compatibility with Christian doctrine than Nicholas of Methone will allow. In his own commentary on the same proposition, Nicholas insists that one must strictly distinguish between the "productive procession" by which all things go forth from God creatively, and the "natural" or "supernatural procession," which he even calls an "unproceeding procession" (ἀπροΐτου προόδου).²⁹

The consubstantially super-substantial persons, even if they proceed from the cause insofar as they are other persons than it, nevertheless do so without proceeding, since they do not differ at all from it in substance, nor indeed are they separated from it. For this reason, they do not desire, for how can they desire him with whom they are identical in substance? Nor do they revert, for how can they revert to him from whom they did not depart?³⁰

27 *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (118.17–23): τοῦτο δέ μοι καὶ μόνον τὸ κεφάλαιον τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς θεολογίας φαίνεται τινα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ἡμέτερον δόγμα ἔχειν συντέλειαν· ὁ γὰρ μονογενὴς λόγος καὶ πρόεισιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀχρόνως καὶ ἀσωμάτως καὶ μένει ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἐπιστρέφει πρὸς τὸν γεννήτορα, καὶ οὔτε προΐων διακέκριται κατὰ τὸν τῆς θεότητος λόγον οὔτε ἐπιστρέφων διέστη οὔτε μένων συγκέχυται κατὰ τὴν ὑποστατικὴν τελειότητα.

28 O'Meara 1989, p. 475. On Psellos' trinitarian thought, see also Gemeinhardt 2001. Papaioannou (2013, p. 174) says of Psellos: "He was [...] clearly self-involved in the use of philosophical Hellenism and was indeed innovative in his approach; no one prior to him read Gregory of Nazianzus' Trinitarianism through Proklos' Neoplatonic metaphysics." He adds a note: "An aspect of Psellian writing that, in my opinion, still awaits its devoted student."

29 *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 35, 44.29.

30 *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 35, 44.24–28: τὰ γὰρ ὁμοουσίως ὑπερούσια εἰ καὶ πρόεισιν ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰτίου, καθὼ καὶ ἑτέρα εἰσι παρ' ἐκεῖνο πρόσωπα, ἀλλ' ἀπροΐτως, μὴδὲν ἐκεῖνου κατ' οὐσίαν διαφέροντα μήτε μὴν ὅλως ἐξιστάμενα· διὸ οὐδ' ἐφίεται· πῶς γὰρ του, ὧπερ εἰσι ταῦτα κατ' οὐσίαν; οὐδ' ἐπιστρέφει· πῶς γὰρ οὐ οὐκ ἀπέστη;

Psellos next considers Prop. 39: “And since mention was made of reversion formerly,” he says, “one must treat of this in the following way.” He then quotes the proposition: “all being reverts either substantially alone or also vitally or also gnostically,” and after quoting additional text from the proof of this proposition, he makes this comment: “And this chapter was earlier interpreted in a more extended way by Dionysius the Areopagite, and later was made precise (ἡκριβώται) by syllogistic method by the Lycian-born Proclus.”³¹

Note that the verb here for “make precise” (ἡκριβόω) is cognate with the word Psellos employs in the passage of the *Chronographia* cited earlier, where he stated that from Proclus he “drew all science and conceptual precision” (νοήσεων ἀκριβειαν). As the passage from *Phil. min.* 11, 35 shows, this “conceptual precision” is closely linked with the “syllogistic method” of the *Elements of Theology*. In comparing Proclus with Dionysius here, Psellos seems to imply that Proclus’ writings offer an improvement on, or complement to, those of Dionysius.³²

31 Psellos, *Philosophica minora* 11, 35 (118.30–119.3): τοῦτο δὲ τὸ κεφάλαιον πρότερον μὲν τῷ Ἀρεοπαγίτῃ Διονύσιῳ πλατύτερον διερμήνευται, ὕστερον δὲ καὶ τῷ Λυκογενεῖ Προκλῶι συλλογιστικῇ μεθόδῳ ἡκριβώται.

32 I have found one passage in Psellos, however, in which he appears to rank Dionysius above Proclus. See *De omnifaria doctrina* 101, “Concerning the return of beings to the divine”: “Among the things produced by God from not being into being, some are only beings, such as the soulless bodies, some are both being and living things, such as the ensouled bodies, and some are both being and living and intellecting things, such as souls and intellects. Each therefore returns to God from whom it was produced according to its own [mode of] existence. So being makes its return substantially, and what lives makes both a substantial and vital return, and what intellects makes a substantial and vital and gnostic return. For each is reverted in the way that it came forth. And the philosopher Proclus posits and elucidates this philosophical principle in his chapters, and, before him, Dionysius the Areopagite examines (διακριβοῖ) it more clearly than him; and this principle (ὁ λόγος) is among those entirely approved (σπουδαζομένων), being most true and most precise (ἀκριβέστατος).” (Περὶ τῆς πρὸς τὸ θεῖον τῶν ὄντων ἐπιστροφῆς. Τῶν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἰς τὸ εἶναι παρασχθέντων τὰ μὲν ἐστί μόνως ὄντα, ὡς τὰ ἄψυχα σώματα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ὄντα καὶ ζῶντα, ὡς τὰ ἐμψυχα σώματα, τὰ δὲ καὶ ὄντα καὶ ζῶντα καὶ νοοῦντα, ὡς αἱ ψυχαὶ καὶ οἱ νόες. ἕκαστον οὖν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, ἀφ’ οὗ παρήχθη, κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν ὑπαρξιν ἐπιστρέφει. τὸ μὲν οὖν ὃν οὐσιώδη ποιεῖται τὴν ἐπιστροφὴν, τὸ δὲ ζῶν καὶ οὐσιώδη καὶ ζωτικὴν, τὸ δὲ καὶ νοοῦν καὶ οὐσιώδη καὶ ζωτικὴν καὶ γνωστικὴν. ἕκαστον γὰρ ὡς προήλθεν, οὕτως καὶ ἐπέστραπται. τοῦτο δὲ τὸ φιλοσόφημα καὶ ὁ φιλόσοφος Πρόκλος ἐν τοῖς κεφαλαίοις αὐτοῦ τίθησι καὶ διευκρινεῖ, καὶ πρὸ τούτου ὁ Ἀρεοπαγίτης Διονύσιος σαφέστερον τούτου διακριβοῖ· καὶ ἔστιν ὁ λόγος τῶν πάντων σπουδαζομένων, ἀληθέστατος τὲ καὶ ἀκριβέστατος ὢν.) Note the use of διακριβοῖ and ἀκριβέστατος, cognate with ἀκριβεία. Cf. also *Theologica* 1, 59.113–117: “And so that we may pass by the discourses of the Greeks (for the church does not in fact need these for the establishment of its own teachings), we will receive the proofs from the theological teachings by Dionysius.” On

How different this is from Nicholas of Methone's reflections on the relationship between Dionysius and Proclus! In commenting on Prop. 122, which concerns the compatibility of divine providence and divine transcendence, Nicholas states that, apart from a few details, including a suggestion of polytheism, "this chapter is otherwise pious." He continues:

For this reason, it seems to me that [Proclus] has stolen his lofty and in this way remarkable propositions (τὰ ὑψηλὰ καὶ οὕτως ἐξαιρέτα θεωρήματα) from the theology of the great Dionysius, having come across this theology in Athens, and having mixed in the evil tares (i.e., the teachings of godless polytheism) with the seeds of piety. And so, it should be better rendered in this way [...]³³

Nicholas proceeds to paraphrase the entire proposition so as to bring it into conformity with Christian belief.³⁴

Both Psellos and Nicholas assume, of course, that Dionysius preceded Proclus by several centuries, and both seem also to assume, because of certain similarities between their works, that Proclus was acquainted with Dionysius' writings.³⁵ While Psellos gives this connection an entirely positive interpret-

Dionysius' "precision" see also *Philosophica minora* I, 36, 508 (note 19 above). Further study of the relative value of Dionysius and Proclus for Psellos could prove illuminating.

33 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 122, 117.23–29: Χωρὶς τοῦ πᾶν καὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἐμφάσεως τῆς πολυθεΐας, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τοῦ τὴν ἀγαθότητα καὶ τὸ ἐν ὧς οὐσίαν ἀφορίζεσθαι τῆς θεότητος, τὰλλα εὐσεβὲς τουτὶ τὸ κεφάλαιον. ὅθεν μοι δοκεῖ ἀπὸ τῆς θεολογίας τοῦ μεγάλου Διονυσίου τὰ ὑψηλὰ καὶ οὕτως ἐξαιρέτα κεκλοφέναι θεωρήματα, ἐν Ἀθήναις ἐντυχῶν ταύτῃ καὶ τοῖς τῆς εὐσεβείας σπέρμασι τὰ πονηρὰ παραμίξας ζιζάνια, τὰ τῆς ἀθέου πολυθεΐας δόγματα. οὕτως ἂν οὖν ἔχοι κάλλιον ἐκδίδοσθαι.

34 For an insightful discussion of this passage, see Alexidse 2002, p. 122–126.

35 The idea that pagan philosophers were dependent on Dionysius was not new. Psellos and Nicholas were almost certainly familiar with this anonymous scholion, interpolated into John of Scythopolis' prologue to his own scholia on Dionysius' works (PG 4, 21D): "One must know that some of the non-Christian philosophers (τῶν ἐξω φιλοσοφῶν), especially Proclus, have often employed certain concepts of the blessed Dionysius [...]. It is possible to conjecture from this that the ancient philosophers of Athens usurped his works and then hid them, so that they themselves might seem to be the progenitors of his divine oracles [...]," quoted in Rorem and Lamoreaux 1998, p. 106. For the possibility of attributing this scholion to John Philoponus, see Rorem and Lamoreaux 1998, p. 107 and Opsomer and Steel 2003, p. 6. The 10th-century *Suda*, in its entry on Dionysius the Areopagite, also shows awareness of similarities between Proclus and Dionysius. "We should know that some of the pagan philosophers, and especially Proclus, often have used the theories of the blessed Dionysius, and they did it also with his bare words. One might suppose from that, that the earlier Athenian philosophers, after having usurped his works—as Dionysius

ation, however, suggesting that Proclus took what he found in Dionysius and usefully re-worked it with greater "conceptual precision," Nicholas can only regard Prop. 122 as an inferior copy, the result of Proclus' theft and subsequent corruption of Dionysius' teaching.³⁶

I will now summarize Psellos' comments on the remaining four propositions quoted in this treatise. Regarding Prop. 81, "everything separately participated is present to the participant through some inseparable power that it gives," he states that it is "partly true according to our dogmatic conceptions, and partly false," and he gives a historical and christological interpretation in which John the Baptist is, like Proclus' "inseparable power," "a forerunner of the union of the Word with us, who proceeded as an illumination, preparing the soul for the reception of the first light."³⁷ Psellos rejects, however, any notions of "an

himself mentions, writing to Timotheus—hid it, in order to be seen as the authors of his divine books." (ἰστέον δέ, ὥς τινες τῶν ἔξω σοφῶν καὶ μάλιστα Πρόκλος θεωρήμασι πολλάκις τοῦ μακαρίου Διονυσίου κέχρηται καὶ αὐταῖς δὲ ξηραῖς ταῖς λέξεσι. καὶ ἔστιν ὑπόνοιαν ἐκ τούτου λαβεῖν ὡς οἱ ἐν Ἀθήναις παλαιότεροι τῶν φιλοσόφων σφετεριστάμενοι τὰς αὐτοῦ πραγματείας, ὧν αὐτὸς μνημονεύει πρὸς Τιμόθεον γράφων, ἀπέκρυψαν, ἵνα πατέρες αὐτοὶ ὁφθῶσι τῶν θείων αὐτοῦ λόγων.) Translation taken from the *Suda On Line* (<https://www.cs.uky.edu/~raphael/sol/sol-html/>).

36 Earlier in the *Refutation* Nicholas had already disparaged Proclus in comparison to Dionysius: "This one, although composing an *Elements of Theology*, does not seem to have dipped even the very tip of his pen into this most god-befitting theory concerning power, which Dionysius, great and illustrious in divine things, investigated more thoroughly [...]" (*Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 78, 81.20–22).

37 See also Psellos' discussion of receptive powers in *Philosophica minora* 11, 25, "On Illumination," where he seems to have greater sympathy for the particular features of Proclus' theory: "I perceive that you are always unreceptive of such contemplation, concerning which you have again posed a problem. For although you receive the substances of beings, you do not accept their illuminations and forms. Know, however, that nothing among substances had become akin to another substance, unless some forerunner, proceeding from it as an illumination, became a sort of receptacle for the sending nature. Therefore, the intellect never received God, if it had not participated in divinity, nor did the soul accommodate the substantial intellect, if it had not partaken of the intellectual property, nor did the body, divisible, dissoluble, and filled for the most part with earth, become receptive of the immaterial and incorporeal soul, if it had not received some form of it descending into it, nor did the second and third henads receive the power of the first henad, if they were not deemed worthy of some more divine unification. For it is one thing for the soul to participate in the all-perfect and super-substantial intellect, and another for it to commune in the intellectual property; and, for the same reason, no rational soul is without intellect (for all things after intellect that have come to be from God received from there [intellect] certain intellectual illuminations to themselves), yet in comparison to the all-perfect and super-substantial intellect, many of these subsist deprived of intellect. Therefore, both he who says that every rational soul is intellectual and he who says, oppositely to this, that it is without intellect, speak truth, the former concerning intellectual illumination, the

intermediary between soul and body,” of an “inseparable actuality,” of “natural hypostases in bodies,” of “conjecturing animals,” of “appetitive animals,” or of “an individualizing hypostasis of irrational soul.” “Because of these things,” he concludes, “I receive this Proclean chapter in part, and in part I dismiss it.”³⁸ He has singled out the respect in which he can give the proposition a Christian application, but he rejects various other details as contrary to “our discourse.”

On Prop. 90, where Proclus states that “the first limit in itself and the first infinity exist before every subsistent limit and infinity,” Psellos comments,

I have learned from our oracles [i.e. Christian scriptures] about the things that are limited and infinite, and I have known the limits and infinities in these limited and infinite things, but I have not comprehended a limit and an infinity that are separate from the things of which they are predicated, for these do not have a nature to subsist in themselves.³⁹

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- later concerning the substantial intellection. Do not be in doubt, therefore, concerning the doctrine, which has coherence or cogent power for acceptance.” (Ἀπαράδεκτόν σε αἰετοῦ τοιούτου κατανοῶ θεωρήματος περὶ οὐ καὶ αὐθις ἡπόρησας. τὰς γὰρ οὐσίας τῶν ὄντων δεχόμενος ἐλλάμψεις αὐτῶν καὶ ἰνδάλματα οὐ προσίεσαι. ἀλλ’ ἴσθι ὡς οὐδεμία τῶν οὐσιῶν προσφυῆς ἐτέρᾳ ἂν ἐγεγόνει οὐσίᾳ, εἰ μὴ τις ἀφ’ ἐκάστης πρόδρομος προοίσα ἔλλαμψις ὑποδοχὴ τις ὥσπερ τῇ καταπεμπάσῃ φύσει ἐγίνετο. οὔτε οὖν ὁ νοῦς θεόν ποτε ἐδέξατο, εἰ μὴ μετεσχήκει θεότητος, οὔτε τὸν οὐσιώδη νοῦν ἐχώρησεν ἡ ψυχὴ, εἰ μὴ μετειλίφει νοερὰς ιδιότητος, οὔτε τὸ μεριστὸν σῶμα καὶ σκεδαστὸν καὶ γῆς κατὰ τὸ πλείστον ἀναπεπλησμένον δεκτικὸν ἂν ἐγεγόνει τῆς αὐλοῦ καὶ ἀσωμάτου ψυχῆς, εἰ μὴ τι ἐκείνης ἰνδαλμα εἰς αὐτὸ καταβεβηκὸς ὑπεδέξατο, οὔτε τῆς πρώτης ἐνάδος αἱ δευτεραί μετ’ ἐκείνης καὶ τρίται τὴν ἄρρητον ἐδέξαντο δύνανται, εἰ μὴ τινος ἐνώσεως θειοτέρας κατηξιώθησαν. ἄλλο γοῦν ἐστὶ τὸ μετασχεῖν τὴν ψυχὴν τοῦ παντελείου καὶ ὑπερουσίου νοῦ καὶ ἄλλο τὸ κοινωνῆσαι νοερὰς ιδιότητος· καὶ κατὰ μὲν ταύτην οὐδεμία τῶν λογικῶν ψυχῶν ἄνους ἐστί (πάσαι γὰρ ἀπὸ θεοῦ μετὰ νοῦ γεννηθεῖσαι ἐλλάμψεις τινὰς ἐκείθεν εἰς ἑαυτὰς νοερὰς κατεδέξαντο), κατὰ δὲ τὸν παντέλειον καὶ ὑπερούσιον νοῦν πολλὰ τούτων καθεστᾶσιν ἔρημοι νοῦ. ὁ τε γοῦν πᾶσαν ψυχὴν λογικὴν ἔννου εἰπὼν καὶ ὁ ἀντιθέτως τούτῳ ἄνουν ἀντειρηκῶς ἀληθεύον ἄμφω, ὁ μὲν περὶ τῆς νοερὰς ἐλλάμψεως, ὁ δὲ περὶ τῆς οὐσιώδους ἀποφνημένω νοήσεως. μὴ οὖν ἀμφίβαλλε περὶ τοῦ δόγματος, ἀκολουθίαν ἢ ἀναγκαστικὴν δύνανται εἰς παραδοχὴν ἔχοντος.)
- 38 Psellos, *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (119.4–13): Τὸ δὲ ‘πάν τὸ χωριστῶς μετεχόμενον διὰ τινος ἄχωρίστου δυνάμεως, ἣν ἐνδίδωσι, τῷ μετέχοντι πάρεστι’, τῷ αὐτῷ φιλοσόφῳ ἀπεφασμένον, ἐστὶ μὲν οὐ ἀληθές ἐστι κατὰ τὰς ἡμέτερας δογματικὰς ὑπολήψεις, ἔστι δὲ οὐ ψεύδεται: ὅτι μὲν γὰρ τῆς πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοῦ λόγου ἐνώσεως πρόδρο[μος] προέρχεται ἔλλαμψις ἐτοιμάζουσα τὴν ψυχὴν εἰς ὑποδοχὴν τοῦ πρώτου φωτός, οὐδὲ ὁ καθ’ ἡμᾶς λόγος ἀγνοεῖ, ψυχῆς δὲ καὶ σώματος οὐκ οἶδε μεσότητος, οὐκ ἄχωρίστους ἐντελεχείας, οὐ φυσικὰς ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν ὑποστάσεις, οὐ δοξαστικὰς ζώας, οὐκ ὁρεκτικὰς, οὐδὲ ἀλόγου ψυχῆς ὑπόστασιν ἰδιάζουσαν. διὰ ταῦτα ἐκ μέρους μὲν δέχομαι τὸ Πιρόκλειον τοῦτι κεφάλαιον, ἐκ μέρους δὲ ἀποπέμπομαι.
- 39 Psellos, *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (119.16–20): πεπερασμένους μὲν γὰρ οὐσας καὶ ἀπείρους καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμετέρων λογίων μεμάθηκα καὶ τὰ πέρατα καὶ τὰς ἀπειρίας ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς πεπερασμένοις καὶ ἀπείροις ἔγνωκα, πέρας δὲ καὶ ἀπειρίαν χωριστὰ ὧν ταῦτα λέγεται οὕτω συνειλήφα, ἐπεὶ μηδὲ φύσιν ἔχει ὑποστῆναι ταῦτα καθ’ ἑαυτά.

Psellos' reaction here is similar to what one might call Nicholas' "Aristotelian" critique of Proclus' tendency (as Nicholas sees it) to give reality to abstractions:

The divine is *first limit* and *first infinity*, the former since the one both unifies and holds together and limits all things, the latter since it is beyond all and neither bounded nor circumscribed, either by a certain being or by all at the same time; besides the divine there is no other limit or infinity that subsists itself in itself, but only these mere relations of reason and non-existent imaginations that have a by-being (παρυφιστάμενα) in beings, and that tend more to non-being than to being. For the limit of something is neither that whole thing nor a part of it, but what remains beyond the whole, such as the point of the line and the line of the surface and the surface of the body. And how does non-being give subsistence to being? And infinity is the privation of limit, but no privation, *qua* privation, is subsistence-giver of something.⁴⁰

Thus, Limit and Infinity are for Nicholas either divine names or mere abstractions; they are emphatically *not* independent productive principles.

Regarding Prop. 103, "all things are in all, but in a suitable way in each" (e.g. "in being are both life and intellect, and in life are being and knowing, but in one case noetically, in another case vitally, and in another case substantially"), Psellos states that he "accepts it as understood in the concept of the philosopher, because, since it holds neither falsely nor truly with our scriptures, it is cleansed from dirt."⁴¹ In other words, this Proclean principle is compatible with Christian teaching even though it is not stated in scripture. It is an aspect of Proclus' teaching that Psellos can appropriate without reservation, and (as we will see shortly) he employs this very proposition in one of his exegetical works.

Finally, Psellos rejects the last proposition in the treatise, Prop. 109, which concerns the way in which particulars on one level of reality can participate in the universal principle of the immediately superior level either through their own universal principle or through a particular member of the immediately superior level.⁴² "In our scriptures," Psellos says, "neither a universal soul nor

40 Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 90, 90.24–91.2.

41 Psellos, *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (119.21–25): Τὸ δὲ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν, οἰκείως δὲ ἐν ἐκάστῳ ('καὶ' γὰρ φησιν 'ἐν τῷ ὄντι καὶ ἡ ζωὴ καὶ ὁ νοῦς, καὶ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ τὸ εἶναι καὶ τὸ νοεῖν, ἀλλ' ὅπου μὲν νοερῶς, ὅπου δὲ ζωτικῶς, ὅπου δὲ οὐσιωδῶς') ὡς φιλοσόφου ἐννοίας ἐχόμενον ἀποδέχομαι, ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ τοῖς ἡμετέροις λογίοις οὔτε ψευδῶς οὔτε ἀληθῶς ἔχον λυμαίνεται.

42 E.g. a particular soul can participate in the universal principle Intellect either through the

a universal nature besides the particulars is taught. So I refuse this chapter as shown to be more Greek than true.”⁴³ Here again we see a convergence between Christian teaching and the Aristotelian critique of the separate existence of forms or universals. While Psellos does not make this convergence explicit, and indeed might himself be disinclined to oppose the Platonist position on this point, Nicholas for his part cites Aristotle more than once for this very purpose.⁴⁴

4 Proclus in Compilation (2): *De Omnifaria Doctrina*

Before we consider Psellos’ use of Proclus in the *Theologica*, I need to say something about his didactic compilation known as the *De omnifaria doctrina* (Διδασκαλία παντοδαπή).⁴⁵ This work, which survives in several redactions, was initially composed for Constantine IX Monomachos, but a later version was dedicated to Psellos’ pupil Michael VII Dukas. In Westerink’s edition the text comprises two hundred and one brief chapters on a variety of topics: theology, psychology, ethics, physics, physiology, astronomy, meteorology and cosmography. Like some of the short treatises in the *Philosophica minora* II considered above, the *De omnifaria doctrina* is in large part a compilation of material from other authors, especially Plutarch, Olympiodorus, and Proclus. In all, eighteen chapters of the *De omnifaria doctrina* use material from about forty different propositions of the *Elements of Theology*.

In the case of the isolated short treatises discussed earlier, we saw that Psellos’ compilation of Proclean doctrine did not necessarily indicate his full endorsement: such treatises could be understood in terms of pedagogical utility, without necessarily displaying Psellos’ own philosophical commitments. For several reasons, however, it seems more difficult to argue for a non-committed use of Proclus in the case of Psellos’ *De omnifaria doctrina*. First of all, the very fact of inclusion within a larger set of chapters confers greater significance on any chapter that contains Proclean material: this inclusion suggests both that this Proclean material is safe and that it merits a certain pedagogical prominence. Second, in certain chapters it is clear that Psellos definitely endorses

universal principle Soul (which itself directly participates Intellect) or through the particular intellect with which it corresponds (and which also directly participates Intellect).

43 *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (119.30–33): παρά γὰρ τοῖς ἡμετέροις λογίοις οὔτε ὅλη ψυχὴ οὔτε τις ὅλη φύσις παρὰ τὰς μερικὰς δεδογμάτισται. παραιτούμαι γοῦν τοῦτ’ ὅ κεφάλαιον ὡς Ἑλληνικώτερον ἢ ἀληθέστερον ἐκφανθέν.

44 See *Refutation of the Elements of Theology* 60 and 184.

45 Ed. Westerink 1948.

the Proclean material that is quoted or paraphrased, or even that this material serves as a hermeneutical framework for discussing Christian themes. The resulting impression is that Psellos' system, while simpler than that of Proclus, is more elaborate than the general Christian teaching of his day.

5 "To Interpret the Wise Things Wisely": Proclus as an Exegetical Resource

We turn now to Psellos' use of Proclus in the *Theologica*. Whereas Psellos' approach to Proclus' *Elements* in the passages from the *Philosophica minora* that we have considered may be described as quotation or compilation, sometimes with brief commentary, where Proclus' philosophy itself is the object of attention, by contrast, in the works collected as *Theologica* Proclus is not the focus, but is introduced into Psellos' exegesis of something else, whether scripture, liturgical poetry or Gregory of Nazianzus's orations. I turn now to several of these exegetical texts.

The two volumes of the *Theologica* contain a total of one hundred and fifty-nine treatises, in seventeen of which, according to the indices, the *Elements of Theology* is quoted or paraphrased. Many of Psellos' citations of Proclus are quite brief and incidental, having an illustrative or corroborative function, but introduced only in passing and not dwelt upon or developed.⁴⁶ Among those

46 Here I will summarize those not discussed in the body of this article. In *Theologica* I, 22 Psellos refers (lines 38–49) to Proclus' hierarchy of things eternal in both substance and activity, things temporal in both substance and activity, and the mediating level of things eternal in substance but temporal in activity (cf. *Elements of Theology* 29 and 55). In *Theologica* I, 53 (147–148) he refers to the intermediate position of soul in this hierarchy (cf. *Elements of Theology* 191), and in II, 4 (42–43) and II, 5 (79) Psellos invokes the Proclean principle that the soul is a mean or mediator between divisible and indivisible substance (cf. *Elements of Theology* 190). In I, 54 (132–136) Psellos cites Proclus by name in regard to the simultaneity of remaining, procession and return, in I, 57 (95–96) he refers to the presence of causes in effects, and in I, 75 (86–88) he refers to the simultaneity of cause and effect (cf. *Elements of Theology* 35). In I, 59 (112–113) he refers to the Proclean principle of mediation (cf. *Elements of Theology* 132). In I, 64 (78–89) he invokes the Proclean principle of degrees of receptivity and participation (cf. *Elements of Theology* 122). In II, 3 (146–147) and II, 29 (7) Psellos refers to God as transcending and giving being, life and intellect (cf. *Elements of Theology* 115). In II, 18 (34), citing Proclus and the *Elements* explicitly, Psellos states that the Good and the One are identical (cf. *Elements of Theology* 13). Finally, in II, 33 (9–17) Psellos cites Proclus' distinction between perpetuity and eternity as correlated to the categories of being and life respectively (cf. *Elements of Theology* 105).

citations that are not simply incidental, several different modes or functions are apparent, and I will now present four examples to illustrate these modes or functions. Some of these examples also contain Psellos' explicit indications of Proclus' function and what value he sets on his thought.

In *Theologica* 1, 7, an exegesis of the verse in Proverbs 9:1, "wisdom built for herself a house and supported it with seven pillars," Psellos brings in material from Propositions 103 and 195 as a way of explaining how it is that this verse in Proverbs, a book that Psellos regards as predominantly ethical, can nevertheless have cosmological and theological meanings as well. Thus, according to Psellos, the house that wisdom built may be understood (1) "ethically," as the soul in the scientific state, which is supported by the pillars of the sciences and arts, or (2) "naturally," as the cosmos built by the divine Logos, with the pillars symbolizing the quasi-perpetual stability of the cosmos, or (3) "theologically," as the human nature assumed by the divine Word and supported by the pillars of the virtues. The point of mentioning Proclus in this context is to offer a metaphysical principle with hermeneutical consequences, a principle that explains how a predominantly ethical text can have cosmological and theological significance as well. On the one hand, Psellos says, Solomon is a

theologian in the Song, a physiologue in Ecclesiastes and simply a chastening teacher in the Proverbs. [...] But on the other hand [...] he mixes in theological teachings with physiology, and he mixes in natural contemplations with theology, since he adds to the Proverbs sometimes naturally, sometimes theologically, because "all things are in all things" according to Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, but on one level paradigmatically, on another iconically, and on another according to existence.⁴⁷

The phrase "all things are in all things" is drawn from Proposition 103, while the qualifications "paradigmatically," "iconically" and "existentially" are drawn from Prop. 195. The point here seems to be that a text that may be ethical "according to existence" (καθ' ὑπαρξιν) while nevertheless "iconically" containing cosmological and theological truths as well.

47 Psellos, *Theologica* 1, 7.38–47: ἐν μὲν τῷ Ἀισματι θεολόγος ἐστίν, ἐν δὲ τῷ Ἐκκλησιαστικῇ φυσιολόγος καὶ ἐν ταῖς Παροιμίαις παιδαγωγὸς ἀτεχνῶς ἐστὶ σωφρονιστής, τὸν δὲ ἐν ἡμῖν παῖδα, ἥτοι τὴν ἄλογον καὶ νηπιώδη ψυχὴν, τῇ τοῦ νοῦ ἡγεμονίᾳ ὑποτιθεῖς καὶ σωφρονίζων τούτου τὸ ἄτακτον. ἔστι δὲ ὅπῃ τῇ μὲν φυσιολογίᾳ θεολογικὰ ἐγκαταμίγνυσι δόγματα, τῇ δὲ θεολογίᾳ φυσικὰ θεωρήματα, ὥς δὲ καὶ ταῖς Παροιμίαις νῦν μὲν φυσικῶς, νῦν δὲ πρόσεισι θεολογικῶς, ὅτι καὶ ἅπαντα ἐν πᾶσι κατὰ τὴν θεολογικὴν τοῦ Πρόκλου Στοιχείωσιν, ἀλλ' ὅπου μὲν παραδειγματικῶς, ὅπου δὲ εἰκονικῶς, ὅπου δὲ καθ' ὑπαρξιν.

Psellos' use of Proclus here contributes relatively little to the treatise, most of which is taken up with distinguishing the predominant qualities of the four books of Solomon and then with elaborating the sense of the verse in question on the three levels already mentioned. The principle from Proclus, "all things are in all things," serves as the hinge of the discourse at the transition to this latter task. Of course, it is a commonplace of the patristic tradition that a text may have multiple levels of meaning, and so one might reasonably wonder whether Psellos really needed Proclus at all here, given that in the Byzantine tradition the notion of multivalence in the scriptures is entirely standard. But in any case the passage shows the importance that Psellos ascribes to Proclus as an exegete and as a resource for hermeneutical principles.⁴⁸

The next text to consider is *Theol.* 1, 11,⁴⁹ in which Psellos interprets a verse composed by John of Damascus, from the fifth ode of the canon for the feast of the Transfiguration: "O Christ, who with invisible hands have fashioned man in your image, you displayed your archetypal beauty in the body (or "created form" = πλάσματι), not as in an image, but as you yourself are according to substance, being both God and man."⁵⁰ After quoting portions of this text, Psellos states:

It is fitting to inquire what is the archetypal beauty, and how this is manifested in the created forms (πλάσμασι), sometimes being depicted in images, sometimes being shown according to substance, and how here, although the paradigm has come to be in the image, it is not manifested according to the existence of the image, but is shown according to the property of its own nature.⁵¹

It seems that Psellos wishes to understand the difference between the manifestation of divine beauty "in images," such as occurred in the Old Testament

48 See Papaioannou 2013, p. 35 and 55.

49 Cf. Lauritzen (2012), who asserts that Gautier has misidentified Psellos' citation of Proclus as *Elements of Theology* 103, whereas, according to Lauritzen, the better parallel would be *Elements of Theology* 71, which contains the terms ὑπέρτερα and ὑφείμενα. In fact, however, these particular terms are less relevant than the principle stated in *Elements of Theology* 103 that "All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature." Cf. also Proclus' application of this principle to the soul in *Elements of Theology* 195.

50 From *Ode* 5 of the *Canon for the Transfiguration*; text is in the *Menaion* (6 Aug), discussed in Louth 2002, p. 268–274.

51 Psellos, *Theologica* 1, 11.7–11: καὶ ζητεῖται εἰκότως τί τὸ ἀρχέτυπον ἀλλος, ὅπως δὲ τοῦτο ἐμφαίνεται ἐν τοῖς πλάσμασι, νῦν μὲν εἰκονιζόμενον, νῦν δὲ κατ' οὐσίαν δεικνύμενον, καὶ πῶς ἐνταῦθα ἐν τῇ εἰκόνι γεγόμενον τὸ παράδειγμα οὐ κατὰ τὴν τῆς εἰκόνος ἐμφαίνεται ὑπαρξιν, ἀλλὰ κατὰ τὴν τῆς οἰκείας φύσεως ιδιότητα δεικνύται.

theophanies, and the manifestation of God in the Incarnation, the distinctiveness of which was made preeminently apparent in the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. Before attempting to answer the questions he has posed, Psellos introduces what he calls “two canons of philosophy” as interpretive tools that will aid in answering these questions. This passage thus involves explicit reflection by Psellos on his own hermeneutical method.

And so that we do not grasp the discourse in a careless way,⁵² and so that we interpret the wise things wisely, the discourse must be referred to the canons of philosophy, and from there must be contributed the solution to the problems under investigation; and I do not mean the philosophy that is involved in nature—nature with which place, time, body and motion co-subsist, nor do I mean that philosophy which has as its object the unmoved forms that lie in conceptual thinking, which they call mathematical, but I mean this philosophy of what lies above, which is unhypothetical and foundational,⁵³ which exists in pure and unmoved and dimensionless forms; to it we who have geometrized must go, according to the divine inscription of Plato.⁵⁴ But whereas he [Plato] sends the theologizer to it through the mathematical objects, Proclus, who received Plato’s teachings, going beyond the mathematical itself,⁵⁵ composed another *Elements* pertaining to theology. So he says somewhere in his chapters [τὰ κεφάλαια, i.e. the *Elements of Theology*] that the higher things are in the lower things and the lower things are in the higher things;⁵⁶ but again, in the writings where he Chaldaizes, he speaks in another way, saying concerning the same things that on the one hand, the heavenly things are in the earth in an earthly way (on the one hand, the higher things are in the lower things as paradigms, and on the other hand, the lower things are in the higher things as images), but on the other hand, the earthly things are in heaven in a heavenly way. So then, following these two canons, we will show that the paradigms that come to be in the images show their own reflections in one way in relation to the nature of those [images], but subsist in another way according to their own substance.⁵⁷

52 I.e., the opposite of ἀκριβεία.

53 Or “dealing with first principles.”

54 The inscription over the Academy: “Let no one ignorant of geometry enter.”

55 E.g. Euclid’s *Elements*.

56 Cf. *Elements of Theology* 103 and 195.

57 Psellos, *Theologica* I, 11.12–31: Καὶ ἵνα μὴ ἀμελῶς τοῦ λόγου ἀψώμεθα, τὰ σοφὰ δὲ σοφῶς ἐρμηνεύσω μὲν, ἐπὶ τοὺς τῆς φιλοσοφίας κανόνας ἀνακτέον τὸν λόγον ἀκακείθεν τοῖς ζητήμασι τὴν λύσιν

The “two canons” are the two statements from Proclus. They are not to be taken as two different principles, apparently, but as two statements (the second more elaborated) of the same principle concerning how a higher reality can be in a lower reality, and vice versa.

But the wording of the second “canon” requires several comments. First, I have provided here a slightly corrected text on the basis of the manuscript, changing Gautier’s τὰ [δὲ] ὑψηλότερα τοῦ μὲν ὑψηλότερα: “on the one hand, the higher things.”⁵⁸ With the μὲν in place, it becomes easier to see that the order of the sentence is quite awkward. The first and last elements of the sentence (“the heavenly things are in the earth in an earthly way” and “the earthly things are in heaven in a heavenly way”) are together a close paraphrase of a line in Proclus’ *De sacrificio et magica*:

[...] θαυμάσαντες τῷ βλέπειν ἔν τε τοῖς πρώτοις τὰ ἔσχατα καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐσχατοῖς τὰ πρώτιστα, ἐν οὐρανῷ μὲν τὰ χθόνια κατ’ αἰτίαν καὶ οὐρανίως, ἔν τε γῇ τὰ οὐράνια γῆϊως.

[...] being astonished by seeing the last things in the first things and the first things in the last things, the earthly things in heaven in a causal mode and a heavenly fashion, the heavenly things in the earth in an earthly fashion.⁵⁹

ἐρασιστέον· φιλοσοφίας δὲ φημι οὐ ταύτης δὴ τῆς περὶ τὴν φύσιν εἰλουμένης, ἥ δὴ τόπος καὶ χρόνος καὶ σῶμα καὶ κίνησις παρυφίσταται, οὔτε αὖ ἐκείνης, ἥτις ἀκίνητα μὲν ἔχει τὰ εἶδη, ἐν ἐπινοίᾳ δὲ κείμενα, ἣν δὴ μαθηματικὴν ὀνομάζουσιν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὑπερκειμένης ταύτης, τῆς ἀρχοειδοῦς καὶ ἀνυποθέτου, τῆς ἐν καθαροῖς εἰδεσι καὶ ἀκινήτοις καὶ ἀδιαστάτοις· πρὸς ἣν δεῖ γεωμετρήσαντας ἡμᾶς ἵεναι κατὰ τὸ θεῖον γράμμα τοῦ Πλάτωνος. ἀλλ’ οὗτος μὲν διὰ τῶν μαθημάτων ἐπὶ ταύτην παραπέμπει τὸν θεολογῆσοντα, ὁ δὲ γε τὰ ἐκείνου διαδεξάμενος Πρόκλος καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν μαθηματικὴν ὑπερβάς, ἐτέραν Στοιχείωσιν πρὸς θεολογίαν συντίθησι. λέγει γοῦν πού τῶν κεφαλαίων αὐτοῦ ὡς καὶ τὰ ὑπέρτερα ἔνεισι τοῖς ὑφειμένοις καὶ τὰ ὑφειμένα τοῖς ὑπερτέροις· ἀλλὰ πάλιν ἐν οἷς Χαλδαῖζει ἄλλον τρόπον φησί, περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν λέγων, ὡς τὰ μὲν οὐράνια ἐν γῇ χθονίως εἰσὶ (τὰ μὲν ὑψηλότερα παραδειγματικῶς ἐν τοῖς καταδεεστέροις, τὰ δὲ ταπεινότερα εἰκονικῶς ἐν τοῖς ὑπ[ε]ρτέροις), τὰ δὲ] χθόνια ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐρανίως. τοῦτοις γοῦν τοῖς δυοῖν κανόσιν ἐπόμενοι δεῖξομεν ὅπως τὰ παραδείγματα ἐν ταῖς εἰκόσι γινόμενα πῇ μὲν πρὸς τὴν ἐκείνων φύσιν τὰς ἐμφάσεις ἑαυτῶν δεικνύουσι, πῇ δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν οὐσίαν ὑφίστανται. I have added parentheses and made minor changes to Gautier’s text. See further discussion below.

58 At the end of a line, just after χθονίως εἰσὶ τὰ and just before ὑψηλότερα, there is a hole in the parchment. Gautier has supplied the word δὲ here in brackets. It seems, however, that the scribe wrote the text when the hole was already there (so that no text is missing), and in addition, one can also discern a μὲν just after the hole. Hence, τὰ μὲν ὑψηλότερα etc. I am grateful to Stratis Papaioannou for examining the manuscript with me and making this clear.

59 Ed. Bidez 1928, 148.8–9. Bidez gives further references to Proclus in his apparatus. I am

In Psellos' citation, however, the material from *De sacrificio* is awkwardly interrupted by the two middle elements: "on the one hand the higher things are in the lower things as paradigms, and on the other hand, the lower things are in the higher things as images." I have added parentheses in the passage to mark this as an interruption.

Furthermore, for those familiar with Proclus' thought it is clear that the middle two elements present Proclus as speaking in a way that he never speaks elsewhere: in other Proclean texts, "paradigmatically" (παραδειγματικῶς) always describes either how the lower "is in" the higher or how the higher "is" the lower; likewise, "iconically" (εἰκονικῶς) always describes either how the higher "is in" the lower or how the lower "is" the higher.⁶⁰ In Psellos' citation, however, this usage has been inverted, and as a result, the passage gives the impression that Proclus is speaking of four distinct modes, i.e. two ways in which the higher can be in the lower, and two ways in which the lower can be in the higher.

How are we to explain this inversion of Proclus' terminology? We must reject the supposition that Psellos intentionally confused the terms or failed to grasp the distinction, for he is a careful student of Proclus. Either he overlooked the mistake, or (perhaps more likely) the text was corrupted at a later date. In any case, if we correct the middle two elements so that they conform to Proclus' usual usage, and then move them to the end on the assumption that they function as a gloss interrupting the outer two elements, then the whole becomes more comprehensible:

grateful to Dominic O'Meara for the identification of this source, and for additional help in understanding this passage.

- 60 Cf. *Elements of Theology* 195, 170.4–5: "Every soul is all things, paradigmatically the things of sense, and iconically the intelligible things" (Πᾶσα ψυχὴ πάντα ἐστὶ τὰ πράγματα, παραδειγματικῶς μὲν τὰ αἰσθητά, εἰκονικῶς δὲ τὰ νοητά.). Note that here "paradigmatically" is used to describe the way that the higher "is" (not "is in") the lower, and "iconically" is used for the way the lower "is" (not "is in") the higher. On the other hand, when Proclus elsewhere speaks of one thing being "in" another "paradigmatically," he is speaking of the relation of the lower to the higher, and not, as it seems in *Theologica* I, 11, of the higher to the lower. For example, see *In Tim.* I, 8.19: "and in the mathematics both exist, the firsts iconically, the thirds paradigmatically" (καὶ ἐν τοῖς μαθηματικοῖς ἀμφοτέρᾳ ἐστίν, εἰκονικῶς μὲν τὰ πρῶτα, παραδειγματικῶς δὲ τὰ τρίτα), or again, see *In Tim.* I, 13.10: "the sensibles are in the intelligibles paradigmatically and the intelligibles are in the sensibles iconically" (διότι καὶ τὰ αἰσθητά ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς ἐστὶ παραδειγματικῶς καὶ τὰ νοητά ἐν τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς εἰκονικῶς.). This is the opposite of how he speaks in the passage in *Theologica* I, 11 that we are considering. If one took Psellos' citation here for a model, one would expect Proclus to put it the other way round in his commentary on the *Timaeus*, and to say that "the intelligibles are in the sensibles paradigmatically."

τὰ μὲν οὐράνια ἐν γῇ χθονίως εἰσί, [τὰ δὲ] χθόνια ἐν οὐρανῷ οὐρανίως. τὰ μὲν ὑψηλότερα εἰκονικῶς ἐν τοῖς καταδεεστέροις, τὰ δὲ ταπεινότερα παραδειγματικῶς ἐν τοῖς ὑπ[ερτέροις].⁶¹

on the one hand, the heavenly things are in the earth in an earthly way, and on the other hand, the earthly things are in heaven in a heavenly way; [for] on the one hand, the higher things are in the lower things as images, and on the other hand, the lower things are in the higher things as paradigms.

Neither this postponement of the middle elements nor the transposition of εἰκονικῶς and παραδειγματικῶς have any support in the manuscript; nevertheless this arrangement does seem to make the most sense of the text, and the transposition at least is necessary if this citation is to be consistent with Proclus' known writings.

Fortunately for our purposes, Psellos' exegesis does not seem to depend upon the inversion of the two adverbs, nor, consequently, does my explanation of his exegesis depend on my proposed emendation, so long as it is clear that the second "canon," while more elaborate, still only involves two modes, namely that by which the higher is in the lower, and that by which the lower is in the higher. While Psellos' initial statement of the questions to be addressed might lead one to expect that he will enlist Proclus to explain the difference between manifestation "in an image" and manifestation "according to substance," it turns out that Psellos seems to employ the Proclean canons only in order to introduce the general principles of how archetypes or paradigms (higher realities) are manifested in images (lower realities) according to the mode or level of the images. Psellos uses Proclus' canons (or canon) in order to mark the distance between the paradigm and the image, so that, having done so, he may put into stark relief the distinctiveness of the Incarnation as that event in which the paradigm fully descends into the image.

Psellos wishes to show the difference between, on the one hand, the great variety of ways in which God manifested himself prior to the Incarnation, and on the other hand, the unique way in which he showed himself in the Incarnation, and specifically in the Transfiguration. He explains the former category

61 I would like to thank Dominic O'Meara, Carlos Steel and Stratis Papaioannou for their help with this passage. O'Meara identified the parallel in *De sacrificio*, Steel confirmed my conviction that παραδειγματικῶς and εἰκονικῶς are transposed and also noted the awkward interruption of the two middle elements, and Papaioannou assisted me in examining the manuscript and correcting aspects of Gautier's reading.

first of all in terms of the universality of creaturely participation in God. This participation is diverse, according to the receptivity of the creature, and thus God may be manifest in one way to the angels and in another to human beings:

For the illuminations sent from the One, being images of its substance, appear in one way in the higher orders but in another in the lower [orders]. And so, in all these the divine is beheld, not according to substance, but in certain images and in [...] faint and obscure tracks, since there is no generated nature that is able to contain God's substance.⁶²

Thus, if God is seen as shining amber or as a wheel (two of Psellos' examples), this is not because these images are adequate to God's essence, but rather,

since the nature of the beholders was unable to contain the substance of the divine, it appeared to them in those forms which in fact they were able to see; for the diminishment of the images is not from the side of the nature of the divine, but from the weakness of the beholders [...]. We depict God in images because he is not embodied so that he might be entirely visible to us [literally: "fall under our whole eyes"], but is wholly uncircumscribable and invisible.⁶³

The point to grasp is that while these are genuine manifestations of the divine, they nevertheless involve a kind of diminution or transposition in accordance with creaturely capacity. The case is different with the Transfiguration, however, for when the Word of God became incarnate, he

dwelt substantially with his own image, not shining his theophany on us, but making our nature subsist substantially with his own person. Henceforth therefore the pure beauty is hidden under the assumption, and since it was necessary that sometime this [beauty] be seen by the creature as

62 *Theologica* 1, 11.41–47: αἱ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐλλάμψεις πεμπόμεναι, εἰκόνες τῆς ἐκείνου οὐσίας τυγχάνουσαι, ἄλλως μὲν ταῖς ὑπερτέραις {οὐσίαις} ἰνδάλλονται τάξεσιν, ἄλλως δὲ ταῖς ὑφειμέναις. ἐν πάσαις γοῦν ταύταις οὐ κατ' οὐσίαν ὁράται τὸ θεῖον, ἀλλ' ἐν εἰκόσι τισὶ καὶ ἐν [.....] μασὶ καὶ λεπτοτάτοις καὶ ἀμυδροῖς ἔχουσιν, ἐπεὶ μὴδ' ἔστι τις γεννητὴ φύσις οὐσίαν χωρῆσαι δυναμένη θεοῦ.

63 *Theologica* 1, 11.59–80: ἀλλ' ἐπειδὴ περ ἡ τῶν θεωμένων φύσις χωρεῖν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν οὐσίαν ἀδύνατος ἦν, ἐν ἐκείνοις τοῖς εἶδεσιν αὐτοῖς ἐμφαντάζεται ἃ καὶ ἰδεῖν δεδύνηνται· οὐ γὰρ παρὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ φύσιν ἡ τῶν εἰκόνων ἐλάττωσις, ἀλλὰ παρὰ τὴν τῶν ὁρώντων ἀσθένεια. [...] ἐν εἰκόνι τοῦτον καὶ σκιαῖς φανταζόμεθα· τὸν δὲ θεὸν καὶ μᾶλλον εἰκονίζομεθα, ὅτι μὴ σεσωμάτῳται, ἵν' ὅλοις τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν ὑποπέσῃ, ἀλλ' ὅλος ἐστὶν ἀπερίληπτος καὶ ἀόρατος.

though from some mirror, he prepared Tabor as a limit for himself in relation to this [...]. Moses and Elijah appear to him, who [...] foreshadowed his descent iconically so that, what they saw in shadows, this also they might see shining truly.⁶⁴

The “archetypal beauty,” according to Psellos, is “the truly flashing of the pure hypostasis of the Son.”⁶⁵

[...] having the whole divinity that is in the Father and in the Spirit, the Son came down, and *hypostatizing* our whole nature with his filial hypostasis through his body, by his divinity he mixed and joined together divided things, i.e. humanity and divinity, through his one hypostasis. For since the Son is one hypostasis, he had the divinity of Father and Spirit indivisibly in this [hypostasis], and he united man to his own hypostasis—not this or that man, but the whole nature—and in fact altogether united this with the divinity.⁶⁶

It is as though the archetype descended to the level of its image, wholly uniting that image with itself. While one might have expected that Psellos would employ Proclus’ ‘canons’ in order to explicate God’s distinctive manifestation in the Incarnation, it seems that in fact the role of Proclus is limited here to elucidating the usual or ‘normal’ modes of divine manifestation, precisely so that the entirely new character of the Incarnation may be made plain. By elucidating the structure of manifestation “in images,” Psellos shows how, in the usual order of things, images always fall far short of their paradigms. The starkness of the polarity (paradigm/image) then serves as the backdrop for something

64 *Theologica* I, 11.84–93: ἐπὶ τὴν ἰδίαν εἰκόνα οὐσιωδῶς κεχώρηκεν, οὐκ ἐλλάμψας ἡμῖν τὴν αὐτοῦ θεοφάνειαν, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἑαυτοῦ προσώπῳ οὐσιωδῶς τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν ὑποστησάμενος. τέως μὲν οὖν ἐκρύπτετο τὸ ἀκήρατον κάλλος ὑπὸ τὸ πρόσλημμα, ἐπεὶ δὲ ἔδει ποτὲ οἶον ἀπὸ τινος δίσκου ἐναυγάζειν τοῦτο τῷ πλάσματι, ὅρος μὲν αὐτῷ πρὸς τοῦτο ἡτοίμαστο τὸ Θαβώριον, [...] Μωυσῆς αὐτῷ καὶ Ἡλίας ἐμ[φ]αίνονται, οἱ [...] τὴν τοῦτου κάθοδον εἰκονικῶς προτυπώσαντες, ἵν’ ἐν ἐν σκιαῖς [εἶδον], τοῦτον καὶ ἀληθῶς θεάσωνται λάμποντα·

65 *Theologica* I, 11.98–99: ἀρχέτυπον δὲ κάλλος ἡ τῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ ὑποστάσεως ἀκήρατος τῷ ὄντι μαρμαρυγή.

66 *Theologica* I, 11.118–126: ὅλην γοῦν ἔχων τὴν θεότητα τὴν ἐν τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι κατελήλυθεν ὁ υἱός, καὶ τῇ αὐτοῦ ὑποστάσει τῇ υἱικῇ ὅλην τὴν ἡμετέραν φύσιν διὰ τοῦ κυριακοῦ ὑποστησάμενος σώματος, κατέμιξε τῇ θεότητι καὶ συνῆψε τὰ διεστώτα, ἀνθρωπότητά φημι καὶ θεότητα, διὰ τῆς μιᾶς αὐτοῦ ὑποστάσεως. ἐπεὶ γὰρ μία τυγχάνων ὑπόστασις ὁ υἱός, ἀμερίστως ἐν ταύτῃ τὴν τε πατρικὴν εἶχε θεότητα καὶ τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος, ἤνωσε δὲ καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ ὑποστάσει τὸν ἄνθρωπον, οὐ τόνδε ἢ τόνδε, ἀλλὰ τὴν ὅλην φύσιν, πάντως δήπου καὶ τῇ θεότητι τοῦτον συνήνωσε.

like a collapsing of this polarity: the paradigm (Christ the archetypal beauty) is united with its image (humanity) in such a way (namely, according to substance) that, nevertheless, no reduction of the paradigm has occurred. That this is so is the revelation of Tabor, showing forth Christ the eternal Son in all his glory.

In *Theol.* I, 11 Psellos thus seems to rely upon Proclus' precision in order to give an explanation in philosophical terms of a principle that is shared between Christianity and Neoplatonism, namely the image/paradigm relationship or (put in other terms) the fact that God is manifest in creation itself and in 'theophanies,' yet "through a glass darkly." Psellos does not confine himself to this common ground, however, but deals forthrightly with the mystery of the Incarnation, conceiving of it as a "substantial" descent of the archetype into the image, yet without raising the question of whether Proclus himself could have admitted this possibility. *Theol.* I, 11 thus represents a substantial (i.e. not merely incidental or ornamental) use of Proclus in which Psellos neither transgresses the bounds of orthodoxy nor sees a need to point out differences between Proclean and Christian teaching.

My remaining two examples, however, seem to involve genuine doctrinal conflict, partially acknowledged by Psellos in the first case, and unacknowledged in the second.

In *Theol.* I, 105 Psellos explicitly refers to Proclus' teaching on the doctrinal question being considered, but then explicitly rejects that teaching. The context is a discussion by Psellos of the two different senses that the adjective *anarchos*, "unoriginate," may have in Christian theology. Having noted that the Father is "unoriginate" in two senses, both as not begotten (ἀτέκτου) and as not generated (ἀγεννήτου),⁶⁷ whereas the Son and Spirit are "unoriginate" only

67 *Theologica* I, 105, 416.75–84: "Father," he says, 'the father and unoriginate; for [he is] not from something.' For the sense of *anarchos* is double, applied on the one hand to the *atektos*, and on the other to the *agennetos*. And the *agennetos* is, both according to the outside philosophers and according to us, what does not have an older hypostasis than its own existence; for in this way the philosopher Simplicius, interpreting the *De caelo* of Aristotle, defines the *agennetos*. Nothing therefore among beings is *agennetos*, except the One for them, and God for the Jews, and for us the triadic hypostasis commonly and the Father individually. For the others are generated (γεννᾶται), some from each other, some from the first cause, and so in this way Greeks produce (γεννώσι) soul from intellect, and intellect from being, and being from the one." ('Πατήρ' φησὶν ὁ πατήρ καὶ ἀναρχος· οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τινος· διττὴ γὰρ ἡ τοῦ ἀναρχοῦ σημασία, ἡ μὲν ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀτέκτου φερομένη, ἡ δὲ ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀγεννήτου. ἀγεννητον δὲ ἐστὶ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἔξω φιλοσόφους καὶ καθ' ἡμᾶς τὸ μὴ ἔχον πρεσβυτέραν ὑπόστασιν τῆς ἰδίας ὑπάρξεως· οὕτω γὰρ ὁ φιλόσοφος Σιμπλικίος τὴν Περί οὐρανοῦ πραγματείαν ἐξηγοῦμενος τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους ὠρίσατο τὸ ἀγεννητον. οὐδὲν οὖν τῶν ὄντων ἀγεννητον, εἰ μὴ παρ' ἐκεῖνους τὸ ὄν [Gautier: scr. ἐν?] καὶ παρ' Ἰουδαίοις θεός καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν κοινῶς μὲν ἡ τριαδικὴ ὑπόστασις,

in the second sense, as not generated, Psellos then cites an axiom from Porphyry's *Sententiae* that he had also considered and rejected in *Phil. min.* II, 35, namely the claim that "everything that generates generates something inferior to its own substance."⁶⁸ He suggests that this claim derives from the assumption of a hierarchy in which "the One generates Being, Being generates Intellect, and Intellect generates Soul," and he summarizes part of Proclus' proof of the same claim (though expressed in different terms) in Prop. 7 of the *Elements*, calling him here "the most philosophical Proclus." Proclus had expressed Porphyry's claim as follows: "Every productive cause is superior to the nature of what is produced," and he began his proof with a tri-lemma that Psellos paraphrases: "for either [...] things that generate will generate something similar to themselves or something inferior to themselves or something superior to themselves."⁶⁹ Curiously, while Psellos reports Proclus' refutation of the possibility that one thing might generate something *superior* to itself, he conveniently

ἰδίως δὲ ὁ πατήρ. τῶν γὰρ ἄλλων τὰ μὲν ἐξ ἀλλήλων γεννᾶται, τὰ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ πρώτου αἰτίου· οὕτω γοῦν "Ἐλληνες ψυχὴν μὲν ἀπὸ νοῦ γεννῶσι, νοῦν δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος, τὸ δὲ ὄν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐνός.) It seems that Psellos' philosophical sources have led him to ignore the patristic convention, from around the time of Nicaea, of reserving *agennetos* (with two 'nu's) for the Father, in the sense of unbegotten, while *agenetos* (with one 'nu') could apply to the whole Trinity, as uncreated. The loss of this distinction here is perhaps a symptom of the difficulty in applying the features of an emanative system to the Christian vision of reality, where neither the idea of creation nor the intra-trinitarian relationships correspond exactly to the features of an emanative continuum. Cf. John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, I: "Now, one ought to know that ἀγένητον written with one ν means that which has not been created, or, in other words, that which is unoriginated; while ἀγέννητον written with two ν's means that which has not been begotten. Therefore, the first meaning implies a difference in essence, for it means that one essence is uncreated, or ἀγένητος; with one ν, while some other is created, or originated. On the other hand, the second meaning does not imply any difference in essence, because the first individual substance of every species of living being is unbegotten but not unoriginated. For they were created by the Creator, being brought into existence by His Word. But they were certainly not begotten, because there was no other like substance pre-existing from which they might have been begotten. Thus, the first meaning applies to all three of the super-divine Persons of the sacred Godhead, for they are uncreated and of the same substance. On the other hand, the second meaning definitely does not apply to all three, because the Father alone is unbegotten in so far as He does not have His being from another person. And only the Son is begotten, for He is begotten of the substance of the Father without beginning and independently of time. And only the Holy Ghost proceeds: not begotten, but proceeding from the substance of the Father. Such is the teaching of sacred Scripture, but as to the manner of the begetting and the procession, this is beyond understanding" (trans. Chase 1958, p. 181–182).

68 *Theologica* I, 105.86: πᾶν τὸ γεννῶν χειρὸν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ οὐσίᾳ γεννᾷ; cf. *Philosophica minora* II, 35 (120.3–4).

69 *Theologica* I, 105.89–90: ἦ, γὰρ φησιν, ὅμοια γεννήσει τὰ γεννῶντα ἑαυτοῖς ἢ χεῖρονα ἢ κρείττονα.

omits Proclus' denial that one thing could produce another that is like or equal to itself. Yet this in fact is precisely the position that Psellos, as an orthodox trinitarian, wishes to maintain, and so he asserts, just as Nicholas of Methone will, that Prop. 7 simply is not applicable to the Trinity:

But in regard to the divine generation this philosophical theory is nonsense; for the Father has not begotten a Son who is inferior to himself, but one who is equal to himself. And if someone wishes to live philosophically by reason, he might say that this theological saying of the Greeks holds in the case of those things that generate and are generated where the one that generates is older by time than the one that is generated; but for us no age, still less time, intervenes between Father and Son, and because of this the Begotten is not inferior to the Father.⁷⁰

Psellos certainly recognizes the problem that this fundamental Proclean principle raises vis-à-vis Christian doctrine, but he seems to avoid dealing with Proclus' argument in detail, dismissing the entire proposition as only pertinent to generation *in time*. This is perhaps disingenuous on his part, for he surely knows that Proclus' proposition intends to describe a non-temporal truth. Indeed, in an important sense, as Nicholas will later point out, it is demonstrably false that in time-bound generation the cause is superior to the effect, for it is characteristic of natural generation that the offspring are fully equal in nature or species to their progenitors: humans beget humans, horses beget horses, and so forth.⁷¹

I turn now to my final example of Psellos' use of Proclus' *Elements*. Whereas, in the passage just discussed, Psellos takes pains to limit the application of a Proclean principle so that it will not conflict with orthodox doctrine, in *Theol.* 1, 62 we find that Psellos not only uses Proclus in a substantive way, but even thoroughly integrates problematic Proclean structures into his own exposition of the topic, doing so with no hint of disagreement.

The treatise concerns a line from Gregory of Nazianzus's *Oration* 14, "On the Love of the Poor," which I provide here in its context:

What is this wisdom that concerns me? And what is this great mystery? Or is it God's will that we, who are a portion of God that has flowed down from above, not become exalted and lifted up on account of this dignity, and so despise our creator? Or is it not rather that, in our struggle and

⁷⁰ Psellos, *Theologica* 1, 105.95–96; cf. Nicholas of Methone, *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*, ch. 7.

⁷¹ Cf. Nicholas, *Refutation of the Elements of Theology*, chs. 18, 25 and 151.

battle with the body, we should always look to him, so that this very weakness that has been yoked to us might be an education concerning our dignity?⁷²

Psellos is concerned with the phrase, "we who are a portion of God that has flowed down from above." He divides it into two parts, first considering the words, "portion of God," and later the words, "flowed down from above." Psellos imagines that someone might ask how we are "a portion of God," given the corporeal connotations of this language. He observes that while thinking of corporeal 'parts' of God might be consonant with the perspective of the Stoics,

both the older Academy and the new [Academy] agree explicitly that the divine, whatever it is, is incorporeal, creator of bodies and souls and intellects. And our philosophy as well, following them in fact, lays it down clearly that nothing among beings is like it. How then does this great one, speaking concerning men, say that these are a portion of the greater?⁷³

In effect, though without citing it explicitly, Psellos provides as an answer an extended meditation on Prop. 1 of the *Elements*: "Every manifold participates in some way the One." His eventual answer to the question posed is that we are a "portion" of God because we each after our fashion participate in the One, as do all things. "If someone would approach [the saying] philosophically," he begins, "using the division of Plato, then he would discover how the truth is hidden. That nothing among beings is purely one, then, philosophers and noble men are agreed." Psellos proceeds to argue in very Proclean terms that everything short of the unique and transcendent One is not purely one: not matter, not form, not soul, not intellect, not being, not unification, and not henads. It is a remarkable passage, worth quoting at length:

[...] for matter is immediately indefinite; for this reason you can keep on cutting it to infinity. And form, plunged into misery with matter and suf-

72 Τίς ἢ περὶ ἐμὲ σοφία καὶ τί τὸ μέγα τοῦτο μυστήριον; ἢ βούλεται μοῖραν ἡμᾶς ὄντας Θεοῦ καὶ ἄνωθεν ρεύσαντας, ἵνα μὴ διὰ τὴν ἀξίαν ἐπαιρόμενοι καὶ μετεωρίζομενοι καταφρονῶμεν τοῦ κτίσαντος, ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸ σῶμα πάλῃ καὶ μάχῃ πρὸς αὐτὸν αἰὲ βλέπειν, καὶ τὴν συνεζευγμένην ἀσθένειαν παιδαγωγίαν εἶναι τοῦ ἀξιώματος; Trans. Constanas 2014, p. 75.

73 *Theologica* 1, 62.19–24: οἱ δ' ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀκαδημίας τῆς τε πρεσβυτέρας καὶ τῆς νέας ἀσώματων διαρρήδην τὸ θεῖον, ὃ τι ποτὲ ἐστίν, ὡμολόγησαν, σωματῶν καὶ ψυχῶν καὶ νόων δημιουργόν. τοῦτοις δὴ καὶ ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς φιλοσοφία συνεπομένη αὐτά τε σαφῶς διατάττεται καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲν τῶν ὄντων ἐκείνῳ προσείκασται. πῶς οὖν οὗτος ὁ μέγας περὶ ἀνθρώπων διαλεγόμενος ἀπόμοιραν τούτους εἶπε τοῦ κρείττονος;

fering all things through it, is changed from its name of being one. But in fact even soul, keeping itself beyond matter, has a confused and multi-powered nature, but it is not free from separation; so it does not have the forms of beings in a concentrated form, but unrolls them, going from the premises to the conclusions. And the intellect has a certain reflection of the One, as also ancient philosophy says, not separated, and not seeing another through another intermediate, but it gathers the forms of beings together in itself in a compacted way. Yet it is also many; for the intellect is the beings themselves, which in fact are many, but it intellects itself, and in intellecting itself it intellects beings, and the beings are many; and therefore the intellect is many. But if it is many, then what else would exceed so as not to be many? Yes, he says, but being exceeds intellect; however far intellect extends, so too does being; but the converse is not the case, that however far being extends, so too does intellect. For as many things as are intellects or have an intellect, these are also beings; but as many things as are beings, not all of these also intellect (νοεῖ). But [then] the argument proceeds of itself; for if being has the power over many, then it is not in fact purely one, but even beyond these is unification, and unification is a union either of henads or of composites, so that this too is many. What then would someone say concerning the henads? For is not each of these one? How would a henad not be one? But because of this, O good man, it is not one, because it is a henad; for the One transcends; but that which something transcends is not purely that to which it is subordinated.⁷⁴

74 *Theologica* 1, 62.28–49: ἡ τε γὰρ ὕλη εὐθὺς ἄπειρος. διὸ καὶ κατὰ ταύτην ἐστὶν ἡ εἰς τὸ ἄπειρον τομή, τό τε εἶδος τῇ ὕλῃ συνδυαστὸν καὶ παντοπαθὲς διὰ ταύτην γενόμενον τῆς τοῦ ἐν εἶναι προσηγορίας ἀπήλλακται. ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ ψυχὴ, ὑπὲρ τὴν ὕλην ἑαυτὴν στήσασα, πολυμυγῆς καὶ πολυδύναμος πέφυκεν, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ αὕτη ἀπήλλακται διαστάσεως· ὅθεν οὐδ' ἔχει τὰ εἶδη τῶν ὄντων συνεσπειραμένως, ἀλλ' ἀνελίσσεται ταῦτα, ἀπὸ τῶν προτάσεων χωροῦσα ἐπὶ τὸ συμπέρασμα. ὁ δὲ νοὺς ἔχει μὲν τινα τοῦ ἐνὸς ἔμφασιν, ὡς καὶ ἡ ἀρχαία φιλοσοφία φησὶν, οὐ διιστάμενος, οὐδὲ δι' ἄλλου μέσου ὁρῶν ἔτερον, ἀλλὰ συνεπτυγμένως τὰ τῶν ὄντων εἶδη ἐν ἑαυτῷ συλλαβών. πλήν ἀλλὰ καὶ οὗτος πολλά· αὐτὰ γὰρ τὰ ὄντα ὁ νοὺς, ἃ δὴ πολλά εἰσιν, ἀλλ' οὗτος ἑαυτὸν νοεῖ, ἑαυτὸν δὲ νοῶν τὰ ὄντα νοεῖ, τὰ δὲ ὄντα πολλά· καὶ ὁ νοὺς ἄρα πολλά. εἰ δ' οὗτος πολλά, τί ἂν ἄλλο ὑπερβαίῃ ὥστε μὴ εἶναι πολλά; ναί, φησὶν, ἀλλὰ τὸ ὄν τὸν νοῦν ὑπερπέπτωκεν· ἐφ' ἃ μὲν γὰρ ὁ νοὺς, καὶ τὸ ὄν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐφ' ἃ τὸ ὄν, καὶ ὁ νοὺς· ὅσα μὲν γὰρ νόες εἰσιν ἢ νοῦν ἔχει, καὶ ὄντα εἰσιν· ὅσα δὲ ὄντα τυγχάνει, οὐ δήπου πάντα καὶ νοεῖ. ἀλλ' αὐτόθεν ὁ λόγος ἐρχεται· εἰ γὰρ τὸ ὄν ἐπὶ πολλά ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν, οὐ δήπου ἐν ἐστὶ καθαρώς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτων ἔνωσις, ἢ δ' ἔνωσις ἢ ἐνάδων ἢ συνθέτων συναθροισμός, ὥστε καὶ αὕτη πολλά. τί δ' ἂν εἴποι τις περὶ τῶν ἐνάδων; ἄρα γὰρ οὐδὲ τούτων ἐκάστη ἐν; πῶς οὖν ἐνάς; ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτο, ὧ λῶστε, οὐχ ἓν, διότι ἐνάς· ὑπερβέβηκε γὰρ τὸ ἐν· ὁ δὲ ὑπερβέβηκε τι, οὐ καθαρώς ἐκεῖνόν ἐστιν οὐ ὑφέϊται.

Psellos introduces the passage by speaking of “the division of Plato,” and perhaps he has Plato’s divided line in mind. But in fact Psellos here follows Proclus’ *Elements* in several particulars, reflecting much of the content of Propositions 20–22 (especially 20), as regards the increasing causal scope in the ascending series: soul, intellect, being, one. It is a striking passage of philosophical ascent, but also surprising, for whereas Psellos often simplifies the Neoplatonic hierarchy, here it is notable and puzzling that Psellos retains the distinctive term “henads” without any explanation or qualification. Here if anywhere Psellos seems to be stepping outside the bounds of orthodoxy. He concludes the passage thus:

So, since the divine is something other than beings, it is uniquely one, whereas being and intellect are called one according to secondary and tertiary senses. But on the one hand, being itself truly what it is called, it exists in an unmixed way in relation to the opposed; for it is purely one, and [is] being in the proper sense, and inviolate and blessed intellect.⁷⁵

Psellos then gives the complementary conclusion as well: only the One is truly one, but for this very reason we must also affirm that all things participate in the One:

but if something among other things is called one, then it is named one and is one by virtue of its participation in that One. And so, the great father here calls “portion” that which those who belong to the outside [i.e. pagan] philosophy called imparting and participation. For it seems to many that man has his subsistence from soul and body alone, and they say that he is “intellectual” because the intellect is the most sovereign part of the soul. But to me and those who rightly philosophized, the intellect both is and is called something other than the soul. And just as the body both lives and is moved by its participation in soul, so also the soul intellects by its participation in intellect; and where there is intellect, there also is being; and where there is being, there also is the One. The result is that although we subsist by participation in the One, nevertheless God is con-

75 *Theologica* 1, 62.50–53: Ἐπεὶ οὖν τὸ θεῖον ἄλλο παρὰ τὰ ὄντα, ἓν ἐστὶ μόνως κατὰ δευτέρους καὶ τρίτους λόγους καὶ ὄν καὶ νοῦς καλούμενος. ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνο μὲν, αὐτὸ δὴ ὅπερ λέγεται, ἀμυγῶς ἔχει πρὸς τὸ ἀντίθετον· εἰλικρινῶς τε γὰρ ἐστὶν ἓν καὶ κυρίως ὄν καὶ νοῦς ἀκήρατος καὶ μακάριος [...] This is more Dionysian than Proclean, insofar as Dionysius identifies the One, Being and Intellect in a transcendent sense in God, whereas Proclus preserves a hierarchy of the One over Being and Intellect.

fessed as “One” properly speaking, so that we have acquired images and reflections of God in ourselves, because of which we are in fact “a portion of God.” But we were once one, not in nature, but in identity of inclination and motion;⁷⁶ for the one in us agrees with our being, and this agrees with the intellect, and this agrees with the soul, and this agrees with the body; or rather, so that I may speak more precisely, the body followed the soul, and this followed the things that went beyond it and the One itself, and by means of soul, intellect and being the body was led up to the One and was itself one by participation.⁷⁷

“We were once one,” but Psellos proceeds to recount the fragmenting effects of the Fall.

This is how it was formerly; but when the soul cast off its iconic beauty, turning its back on the divine command, then the divine series itself was torn asunder, and because the impartations were not distributed according to the analogy of the existence, the parts were torn asunder, the wholeness became a part, and the commonality became a great quantity. Because of this Christ is named “corner stone,” and he was unified by means of soul so that he might join together the extremes, i.e. One and body, and so that we might become spirit, intellect and god, with “death being swallowed up in” and giving way to “life.”⁷⁸

- 76 Cf. Gregory, *Or.* 29.2, when speaking of the Trinity: γνώμης σύμπνοια, καὶ ταυτότης κινήσεως.
- 77 *Theologica* 1, 62.53–72: τῶν δ' ἄλλων εἴ τι οὕτως λέγεται, κατὰ μετοχὴν ἐκείνου ἔστι τε καὶ ὀνομάζεται. ἦν οὖν οἱ τῆς ἔξω φιλοσοφίας μετάδοσιν καὶ μετοχὴν κατωνόμασαν, μοῖραν ἐνταῦθα ὁ μέγας πατὴρ προσηγόρευσε. τοῖς μὲν γὰρ πολλοῖς ἐκ ψυχῆς μόνης καὶ σώματος ὁ ἄνθρωπος δοκεῖ τὴν σύστασιν ἔχειν· ἔνουν δὲ αὐτόν φασι εἶναι, ὡς τοῦ νοῦ μέρους τοῦ κυριωτάτου τῆς ψυχῆς τυγχάνοντος. ἔμοι δὲ καὶ τοῖς κυρίως φιλοσοφῆσασιν ἄλλο τι παρὰ τὴν ψυχὴν ὁ νοῦς ἔστι καὶ λέγεται. καὶ ὥσπερ τὸ σῶμα ψυχῆς μετουσίᾳ ζῇ τε καὶ κινεῖται, οὕτως καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ νοῦ παρουσίᾳ νοεῖ· ὅπου δὲ νοῦς, ἐκεῖ καὶ τὸ ὄν· ἐνθα δὲ τὸ ὄν, ἐκεῖ καὶ τὸ ἐν. ὥστ' εἰ καὶ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἐν μετοχῇ καθέσταμεν, ἀλλ' ἐν κυρίως ὠμολόγηται ὁ θεός, ὥστε καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰκόνας ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐμφάσεις κεκτήμεθα, δι' ἃ δὴ καὶ μοῖρα τυγχάνομεν τοῦ θεοῦ. Ἀλλ' ἤμεν ποτὲ ἐν οὐ τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν ταυτότητα τῆς γνώμης καὶ τῶν κινήσεων· ὠμολόγει γὰρ τὸ ἐν ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ καθ' ἡμᾶς ὄντι, καὶ τοῦτο τῷ νῷ, καὶ οὗτος τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ αὕτη τῷ σώματι· μάλλον δέ, ἵνα τὰκριβέστερον εἴπω, τὸ μὲν σῶμα τῇ ψυχῇ εἴπετο, ἐκείνη δὲ τοῖς ὑπερβεβηκόσι καὶ αὐτῷ τῷ ἐνί, διὰ δὲ μέσης ψυχῆς καὶ νοῦ καὶ ὄντος καὶ τὸ σῶμα πρὸς τὸ ἐν ἀναγόμενον καὶ αὐτὸ ἐν ἦν κατὰ μετοχὴν.
- 78 *Theologica* 1, 62.70–77: ταῦτα μὲν πρότερον· ἀφ' οὗ δὲ τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα κάλλος ἡ ψυχὴ ἀπεβάλετο, κατὰ νώτου ἑαυτῆς τὸ θεῖον ποιησαμένη παράγγελμα, διεσπάσθη ἡ θεία αὕτη σειρά, καὶ τῶν μεταδόσεων μὴ διαδιδομένων κατ' ἀναλογίαν τῆς ὑποστάσεως, διεσπάσθη τὰ μέρη καὶ γέγονεν ἡ μὲν ὁλότης μέρος, ἡ δὲ κοινότης πολυπλήθεια. διὰ τοῦτο Χριστὸς ἄκρογωνιαίος λίθος ὠνόμασται καὶ ἡνώθη διὰ μέσης ψυχῆς, ἵνα τὰ ἄκρα συνάψῃ ἐν καὶ σώμα καὶ γενώμεθα πνεῦμα καὶ νοῦς καὶ θεός, ἡκαταποθέντος ὑπὸ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ θνητοῦ· τε καὶ βέοντος.

Psellos next traces, in a way that mirrors his earlier metaphysical statements, a corresponding course of redemptive personal unification:

And observe how much force his phrase “and have flowed down from above” has; for the One is praised here, the One that the argument has in fact shown to be higher than our intellect and being; so truly we established the flowing down from above. For just as in the case of the Heracleian bonds (which in fact are customarily understood as magical in regard to comprehensive magic) if you destroy the beginning of the bond then the whole will be destroyed, in the same way in fact in the case of our series too, if you tear away the one of the bond, then straightway being, intellect, soul and body—the divine series itself—will also be torn apart and destroyed. It is necessary therefore that we, if we live in body alone, run back up to soul and discover from philosophy the bond by which we will bind and loose matter in relation to soul; and if we are “soulish men,” on the one hand existing beyond bodies but on the other hand living a life fitting for a man, so that we are not able “to receive the things of the spirit,” then it is necessary to ascend to the intellect; but not even this is being in the proper sense, and so from this it is necessary that we be assimilated to being, and then that we run up to the principle of our bond, the One, because in fact we are “a portion of God” according to this alone. For God is one properly speaking, but he is not intellect in the proper sense, since intellect is constitutive of forms, and a form is itself what is unmixed even with privations. But if God were intellect in the proper sense, then where would privations come from, unless we will understand somehow that they come from the demiurge and being? But because there are many privations, it is necessary that the unifications and the henads exist before the others; for this reason, in fact, the One is before all.⁷⁹

79 *Theologica* 1, 62.78–98: Σὺ δέ μοι ὄρα τὸ ‘καὶ ἄνωθεν ῥεύσαντας’ ὅσῃν ἔχει τὴν δύναμιν· τὸ γὰρ ἐν ἐνταῦθα αἰνίττεται, ὃ δὴ ὁ λόγος ἀνωτέρω τοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν νοῦ καὶ τοῦ ὄντος ἀπέδειξεν· ἄνωθεν γοῦν ἀληθῆ ὑπέστημεν τὴν ῥοήν. ὥσπερ γὰρ ἐπὶ τῶν Ἡρακλείων δεσμών, οὓς δὴ νόμος τοὺς γόητας παραλαμβάνειν ἐπὶ τῶν συλληπτικῶν μαγειῶν, ἦν τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ δεσμοῦ διαλύσης, τὸ πᾶν ἔση διαλυσάμενος, οὕτω δὴ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς καθ’ ἡμᾶς σειρᾶς, ἦν τὸ ἐν ἀποσπάσης τοῦ δεσμοῦ, εὐθὺς καὶ τὸ ὄν καὶ ὁ νοῦς καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ σῶμα, ἡ θεία αὕτη σειρὰ συνδιασπάται καὶ συνδιαλύεται. δεῖ οὖν ἡμᾶς, εἰ μὲν ζῶμεν σώματι μόνῳ, πρὸς ψυχὴν ἐπαναδραμεῖν καὶ τὸν δεσμόν εὐρεῖν παρὰ φιλοσοφίας ὅτῳ τὴν ὕλην εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν συνδήσομέν τε καὶ ἀναλύσομεν· εἰ δὲ ‘ψυχικοί’ ἐσμεν ‘ἄνθρωποι’, σωμάτων μὲν ὑπερκείμενοι, τὴν δὲ ἀνθρώπων προσήκουσαν ζῶντες ζῶν, ὥστε ‘μὴ’ δύνασθαι ‘δέξασθαι τὰ τοῦ πνεύματος’, ἐπανελθεῖν πρὸς τὸν νοῦν· ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ οὗτος τὸ κυρίως ὄν, ἀπὸ γοῦν τούτου καὶ τῷ ὄντι προσεικασθῆναι ἡμᾶς χρεῶν, εἴτα πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦ καθ’ ἡμᾶς δεσμοῦ τὸ ἐν ἐπαναδραμεῖν, καθ’ ὃ δὴ μόνον μοῖρα τυγχάνομεν τοῦ θεοῦ. ὁ γὰρ θεὸς κυρίως

Theol. I, 62 is a good illustration of how thoroughly Psellos has absorbed Proclean structures into his own thought. The significance of ‘henads’ is not made clear here, but in Proclus’ works the henads are, as Nicholas repeatedly points out, a polytheistic feature. The fact that without any explanation Psellos integrates ‘henads’ into his exposition of the participatory relation of all things to the One suggests either that he has lost sight of the boundaries of orthodoxy, or that he is not in this instance very concerned about these boundaries.

6 Conclusion

As we have seen, Psellos uses Proclus’ *Elements* in different genres and in different ways. In some texts he simply quotes or paraphrases him without comment, in others he quotes passages from Proclus and appends brief comments on the compatibility of Proclus’ philosophy with Christian teaching, and in others (most notably in his discussions of Gregory of Nazianzus), he uses Proclus as a hermeneutical tool. I suggest that this last way of using Proclus provides the clearest measure of Psellos’ commitment to Proclus’ philosophy, since his compilation of Proclean texts is not a proof of his own commitment to the ideas. On the other hand, it must be recognized that the large volume of Proclean material in Psellos’ compilations, especially in the *De omnifaria doctrina*, and especially in light of his frequent use of Proclus in other non-compilatory texts, shows his deep investment in Proclus’ thought. This is not surprising, given the prominence Psellos himself ascribes to Proclus when describing the course of his education. Furthermore, whether or not he endorses a given philosophical source, his high regard for the role of reason in theology makes him far more inclined to expect common ground with philosophical sources in the first place, and therefore to consult and employ them.⁸⁰ The depth of Psellos’ interest in Proclus, quite apart from particular doctrinal questions, prob-

μὲν ἔν, οὐ κυρίως δὲ νοῦς· ὁ γὰρ νοῦς εἰδῶν ἐστὶν ὑποστάτης, εἶδος αὐτὸς τυγχάνων τὸ ἀμιγές, οὐ μὴν δὲ καὶ τῶν στερήσεων. εἰ δὲ νοῦς κυρίως ὁ θεός, αἱ στερήσεις πόθεν; εἰ μή που τὸν δημιουργὸν καὶ ὄντα νοήσομεν. ἀλλ’ αἱ στερήσεις πολλαί, δεῖ οὖν πρὸ τῶν ἄλλων τὰς ἐνώσεις εἶναι καὶ τὰς ἐνάδας· διὸ δὴ πρὸ πάντων τὸ ἔν.

80 Regarding the different genres, Graeme Miles remarks (2017, p. 89): “The most immediately striking feature of Psellos’ *Theologica*, for a reader acquainted also with his *Philosophica Minora*, is the continuity of the two. These lectures as a whole, whether designated philosophical or theological in recent editions, are parts of a continuous pedagogical and philosophical undertaking.”

ably would have troubled Nicholas of Methone, who also probably would have regarded Psellos as treading dangerously close to the 'rationalism' for which Nicholas criticizes Proclus.⁸¹

Psellos uses Proclus in a variety of ways in the exegetical works we have considered. Some of his citations of the *Elements* are inconsequential, some are doing real hermeneutical work but are entirely uncontroversial because they involve principles shared between Christianity and Neoplatonism, and finally, some seem to me to push the bounds of orthodoxy. *Theol.* 1, 62 at least seems to be in this category, though I must add that the text is puzzling in several ways, and that Psellos' use of 'henads' here must be studied in relation to other texts where he uses this word.⁸²

Michael Psellos and Nicholas of Methone thus have starkly contrasting attitudes towards the *Elements of Theology*. Psellos approaches it with great respect and sympathy, and on occasion this sympathy may lead him to see a greater common ground between Proclus' thought and Christian doctrine than actually exists, or even to transgress the bounds of orthodoxy. Yet such occasions are not as frequent as Psellos' reputation among scholars might lead one to expect, and in several cases Psellos quite clearly rejects aspects of Proclus' thought. For his part, Nicholas is so thoroughly devoted to the teaching of Dionysius that he shares more common ground with Proclus than he realizes: one finds him, for example, using emanative metaphors to characterize divine creation, even while criticizing aspects of Proclus' emanative system. Psellos in any case is in some passages clearly conscious that philosophy can lead into heresy. As the quotation at the head of this article indicates, learnedness must be mixed with piety, and Gregory of Nazianzus represents for Psellos the perfection of this mixture. It is difficult to think that anyone who admired Gregory as deeply as Psellos did could have been very offensive to Nicholas.

Despite their real differences in both substance and rhetoric regarding Proclus, it seems to me unlikely that Psellos' use of the *Elements* was a sufficient reason for Nicholas to write his *Refutation*. While Psellos does seem to push the bounds of what Nicholas would have found acceptable, he does not do so often

81 Whether Proclus should be considered a 'rationalist' is of course another matter, but if 'rationalism' in theology is understood as a confidence in the power of reason to understand transcendent reality, then it is clear that Nicholas regarded Proclus as a rationalist, and would surely have thought the same of Psellos in some instances.

82 In the texts by Psellos included in the TLG, the word ἐνάς occurs twenty-nine times in the singular and thirteen times in the plural. For plural uses see *Theologica* 1, 20 (52), 56 (42), 72 (73), 76 (69) and 93 (45); *Theologica* 11, 8 (55); *Philosophica minora* 11, 38 (144.23); *Epistulae*, 13a (31) = ed. Maltese 1 (47); *Orationes panegyricae* 17 (328).

enough or to a sufficient extent to match plausibly Nicholas' description in his prologue of those who have been led into heresy by Proclus' teaching, especially since Nicholas presents them as his own contemporaries.⁸³ Two alternatives remain then, as explanations for Nicholas' critique of Proclus: either it responds to a real enthusiasm for Proclus among his own contemporaries, enthusiasm inspired partly by Psellos himself, presumably, but more offensive because less nuanced and discriminating, or it is directed not so much at actual persons as at 'straw men' representing hypothetical appropriations of Proclus, appropriations anticipated in Psellos' use of Proclus, but now envisioned as more thorough and unambivalent, and thus more hostile to Christian teaching. In either case, I suggest, Nicholas' own twelfth-century context holds (hides?) the explanation for his assault upon Proclus' new tower of Babel.⁸⁴

83 In this article I have limited myself to a consideration of Psellos' use of the *Elements of Theology*. A full assessment of Psellos' relationship to Proclus can of course only be made on the basis of a complete survey of all his citations of Proclus.

84 My reading of Psellos here takes for granted his sincerity, but as Anthony Kaldellis has argued (2012) there are reasons to doubt this in some contexts, if we consider his demonstrable tension with the ecclesial and especially monastic mainstream, and take account of the fact that he needed to *appear* to be orthodox even if and when he was not. This consideration must be taken seriously, but I have not yet read widely or deeply enough in Psellos to be able to factor this ambiguity into my account. If we stipulate that Psellos may indeed have been more heterodox than his writings explicitly show, then the question as regards Nicholas' *Refutation* would be, to what extent might Nicholas have 'seen through' Psellos' facade of orthodoxy? If Nicholas could see a greater threat in Psellos' works than lay on their surface, then Psellos may have played a greater role in provoking Nicholas than I have here argued. Whatever the case with Psellos, however, I am confident that we need not apply the same hermeneutic of suspicion to Nicholas himself, who shows no signs of wavering in his orthodoxy. Whatever Nicholas' reasons for writing a lengthy refutation, he was no doubt sincere in opposing Proclus, and did not engage merely in an elaborate 'display' of orthodoxy. For an account of Psellos that acknowledges the ambiguity of his persona and writings while nevertheless reading him as operating with established traditions of Christian reflection and scholarship, see Louth 2007, p. 334–343. Louth stresses, as I have, Psellos' great admiration for Gregory of Nazianzus. While this admiration was certainly based in large part on Gregory's rhetorical and stylistic abilities, it seems unlikely to me that Gregory's writings would have attracted such extensive engagement by Psellos had not both form and content interested him deeply.

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