Authentic Selfhood in the Philosophy of Proclus: Rational Soul and its Significance for the Individual

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Abstract

This article presents a synoptic account of the faculties of rational soul in the philosophy of Proclus and an interpretation of the unity which this soul constitutes despite the plurality of its faculties and objects of its attentions. It seeks to demonstrate that Proclus, through his conceptual construction of a rational soul grounded in an objective and cosmic framework, accounts for at least some of the subjective aspects of selfhood which many contemporary philosophical theories take to be necessary for a concept of self, but that he does so on his own terms. This means, among other things, that Proclus posits each rational soul as a subjective entity with its own perspective on the world, but a perspective which is always grounded, more or less, in an objective knowledge of the world which belongs to it essentially and eternally. Despite grounding the subjective in the objective, Proclus is able to account for the individuality and uniqueness of souls within the limits of his objective framework.

Keywords

Proclus - Neoplatonism - rational soul - self - philosophical psychology

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In contemporary philosophy the concept of self is notoriously protean, at least when it is not rejected altogether as a meaningless fiction. When it comes to ancient philosophies the difficulties associated with this concept intensify, since there was no precise equivalent of the word “self” in the languages in which these philosophies were developed. Nevertheless, as has been widely recognized, the role of the English word self (and its cognates in other modern languages) is fulfilled in ancient philosophies primarily by ἰσχύς, what is usually translated into English as soul. However, the meaning of ἰσχύς, like soul, implies or includes more than what most thinkers, from the early modern period and onward, would allow for the word self. This only means that ἰσχύς, in particular λογικὴ ἰσχὺς for Proclus, is a broader concept than self, insofar as it not only refers to a particular real being, but also for some of the features which some contemporary theorists consider necessary for a concept of self.

This state of affairs is not unknown to scholars of Proclean Neoplatonism, just as it is not unknown to them that Proclus builds his conception of the rational soul, and thus self, upon an analogy with the nature of Intellect, a higher principle and ground of the essence and activity of soul. On the other hand, I do not think that everything which needs to be said about this conception of self has yet been said; in particular, much more work needs to be done with respect to the rational soul’s faculties, especially concerning the faculty of λόγος, and concerning the division of the soul’s other faculties into the appetitive and cognitive varieties along with the relations between these two. What I propose to do in this essay, then, is to take a step in this direction by presenting a synoptic account of rational soul’s faculties within the context of the soul’s status as an image of Intellect. This will provide the necessary background with which to consider whether, how and to what extent rational soul accounts for features of selfhood such as individuality and personhood.

Throughout the following essay, I will always be considering rational soul as Proclus’ expression of selfhood, and so I find that it will be useful to think of rational soul as an “authentic self,” a compound term which just stands for any kind of conception of self which posits an essential core of identity, an ideal self, which is the aim and end of the individual soul’s activity, whether or not that soul is actively seeking this end during its lifetime. With respect to Proclus’ way of thinking, the “essential” component of this concept is crucial: it points to a core identity which remains unchanged in structure and content throughout the contingencies and experiences of a soul’s life and, in some way, is determinative of that life. In order to demonstrate more clearly what I take to be involved in the kind of authentic self which rational soul constitutes, I will proceed by way of a brief critique of a recent attempt to broadly characterize Ancient Greek conceptions of self. It is with this critique that I will begin,
and this shall set up the framework within which the following survey of faculties and interpretation of the soul as a whole will be performed.¹

**The Subjective-Objective Character of Proclean Soul**

Christopher Gill has argued that Ancient Greek conceptions of self fall under what he calls the “objective-participant” type² of personality or selfhood.³ He opposes this type to the “subjective-individualist” type⁴ which he claims to be representative, broadly speaking, of post-Cartesian conceptions of self. Gill claims that the latter type points to a Kantian “I”-centred conception in which self is determined by the autonomous volitions of a self-conscious subject, independently of any reasoning according to public (objective) standards of behaviour and identity. The “objective-participant” type is just the opposite: this type points to a conception of self in which the self is determined according to reasonings operating within a domain of public (objective) notions of behaviour and identity. In Gill’s view, then, the Ancient self is a product of the individual’s involvement in his community, so that self-consciousness and autonomous volition are not decisive factors for personhood (which is not to say that they are not present as factors in some sense).

In his *Knowing Persons: A Study in Plato*, Lloyd Gerson has argued, contra Gill, that both the subjective-individualist and objective-participant types are present in the concept of personhood which he claims is present in Plato’s dialogues. However, he makes a distinction between two “kinds” of person in Plato’s thought, the disembodied person and the embodied person who is an imperfect image of the former. In Gerson’s way of thinking, Gill’s “subjective-individualist” type would be appropriate to the disembodied person as “knower”, and the “objective-participant” to the embodied image. Attainment of self and personal identity is then a process of reversion from the objective-participant to the subjective-individualist stance, although Gerson does not put it that way himself. Regardless of whether one agrees with this view of Plato’s thought, it seems to be a reasonable description of the Neoplatonic

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¹ In what follows, all translations from Greek sources are my own, but I have regularly consulted the available translations.
² It is uneconomical to reproduce all of Gill’s criteria here, so I refer the reader to Gill (1996) 11.
⁴ Again, for the criteria pertaining to this type I refer the reader to Gill (1996) 11.
conception of the philosophical life which, of course, is developed to a great extent out of Plato’s dialogues.

Indeed, Proclus’ notion of an authentic, disembodied, self is that of a “knower” who is an individual, self-determined, subject. The limited applicability of Gill’s categories to Proclus’ thought is guaranteed by his assumption that the Kantian concept of radical subjectivity and its post-Kantian variations are the only ones which can be adequately called “subjective-individualist.” This might be true if we could maintain that a distinction between the subjective and objective is characteristic of the philosophical endeavour in Antiquity. This is precisely not the case, at least with respect to Neoplatonism where the objective and the subjective coincide within the subject who is both an individual knower with its own self-determined identity as well as a participant in an intelligible community which informs its participation, when embodied, in a human community and in the greater cosmos. It is just this disembodied self—Gerson’s knower—which is to be understood in the notion of the authentic self. Nevertheless, the embodied self, what Gerson refers to as the image, will become important toward the end, where I will briefly consider its importance for attainment of the authentic self. In the end, we will see that Proclus’ authentic self is not only an objective knower, but also, on account of the contingency of its acts, a unique subject who retains his or her individuality. Furthermore, it will become clear that this is a result, despite

5 As is well known, Neoplatonism—particularly Late Ancient Neoplatonism—could count a plethora of influences including Aristotle, Stoics, Skeptics, the Chaldean Oracles, Orphic poems, the whole Platonic tradition, Presocratic writings, Hermetic works, and the list goes on.

6 To be sure, Proclus does not offer any conception of radical will or radical choice such as we find, for example, in Kant. On the other hand, Kant’s conception of autonomous will only attains its radical appearance by virtue of Kant’s rejection of the human agents’ ability to access an objective standard of action which exists prior to the agent’s own choice and judgment. Of course, he does not reject the existence of such a standard; rather, he places it within the individual agent’s own capacity for determining his own universal maxims or rules. Proclus could well say to Kant that his doctrine of practical reason itself points to an objective innate content in the soul and that Kant is being disingenuous in the sense that he wants the benefit of an objective content (universal ethics) without recognizing the individual’s innate possession of it or the cause of that possession (Nous), and that he therefore gives the human being too much power.

7 All of this is summed up in a fragment from Proclus reported by Olympiodorus: “Well, the philosopher Proclus says that there are three things: self {auto}, the tripartition of the soul; he calls the self itself {auto to auto} the rational soul {logikē psuchē}; the self itself for each {auto to auto hekaston}, the individual. For if—the text says—we should like to know what the self itself is, we must learn what the self itself for each is, since it is not sufficient simply
what may appear to be the case at first sight, of the quest for, and occasional attainment of, union with the highest principles (the One and henads). Finally, the case which I will try to make for Proclus is for a conception of self which posits the human soul as an objective subject\(^8\) (and perhaps also a subjective object) which acts as an individual agent \textit{within} a participatory framework which belongs to all genuine human, individual agents.

Demiurgic Intellect and Selfhood

The life of the Demiurgic Intellect, Maker and Father of the \textit{kosmos}, stands as the ultimate paradigm of the life for which each rational soul ought to strive.\(^9\) Although He is the Maker and Father of the \textit{kosmos}, it is the functions associated with His character as Maker that predominate. In other words, the Demiurge's primary function is His productive self-intellection which fashions the objective organism which is the \textit{kosmos} and preserves it in its being. As Maker, then, the Demiurge is also the origin of all souls: the life principle which constitutes the bare existence of souls is mediated through Him and the participated intellect (\textit{metechomenos nous}) which constitutes the intellec
tive essence of human souls proceeds or irradiates from His own self-intellection.\(^10\) For Proclus, the self-intellection exemplified by the demiurge as imparticipable Intellect is the paradigmatic act which, on the one hand, eternally grounds the cognitive activity and content which, when perfected, is constitutive of authentic human selfhood and thus the proper goal of all human endeavour.

The Demiurge's self-intellection, like that of all intellects, is an eternally immediate act in which there is no distinction between intellect, the act of intellection and what is intellected\(^11\)—in contemporary terms, there is no

\(\) to know man, but we must know what the individual is since the task before us is to help Alcibiades to know himself, to know who he is, namely his soul." (Pr.\textit{Alc.fr}11.3-9 (\textit{Ol.Alc}203, 22—204, 7). Here we have the contrast between disembodied self (\textit{auto to auto}) and the embodied self (\textit{auto}) and an indication of the uniqueness of each individual (\textit{auto to auto hekaston}).

\(\) This this phrase is suggested already in Remes (2007) in an attempt to understand intellectual subjectivity in Plotinus.

\(\) The One is the ultimate principle of all things, of course, but that principle is beyond Being and so is not conceivable as a \textit{being}. The Demiurge stands, in some sense, as the analog of the One at the level of beings.

\(\) Pr.\textit{PlTh}v.43.9-17; \textit{ibid.}, v.19, 70.6-72.5; \textit{ibid.}, v.15, 51.23-52.7.

\(\) Pr.\textit{Inst}146.24-148.3. I am drawing on Proclus’ account in his \textit{Elements of Theology} of Intellect in general. Although Proclus does not specifically address the Demiurge there,
distinction between subject and object, except in thought.\textsuperscript{12} As Intellect, He knows Himself not just as what He intellects but also as the one doing the intellecting: He has an awareness of Himself as an agent simultaneous with the intellectation of his own content.\textsuperscript{13} Thus, in terms of what we might call internal economy, the Demiurge’s essence (\textit{ousia}) is indistinct from His activity (\textit{energeia}), so that He just is His activity.\textsuperscript{14} This self-presence is a mark of His self-sufficient (\textit{autarkes})\textsuperscript{15} and self-constitutive (\textit{authupostatos})\textsuperscript{16} character. The counterpart to this inwardly directed self-intellection is the Demiurge’s externally directed activity, His cosmic production, which itself just proceeds from His self-intellection.\textsuperscript{17} This activity, unlike human outward attention, requires no deliberation or intention on the part of the Demiurge. In fact, there is no intentionality, not even in the sense of “aboutness”, at all in this kind of double activity.\textsuperscript{18}

In His own being, the Demiurge is a totality of Forms, a totality which is characterized by unity. This unity is primarily expressed in His eternal and simultaneous grasp of his whole content in self-intellection, an act which therefore involves no temporal succession, as in human thinking.\textsuperscript{19} At the same time, each of the Forms which it intellects maintains its own individuality in distinction from the others.\textsuperscript{20} The Forms co-exist in Intellect similarly as the theorems of a science co-exist within a human soul: each one can be unfolded as it is in itself, but still maintains its implicit links to the other theorems of the science.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, this unity is expressed in an absolute individuality in}

\textsuperscript{12}Hence de Libera’s pertinent comments concerning Neoplatonism and the difficulty for modern scholars of thinking intellectual self-intellection on its own terms and not in terms of subject and object, (2006) 276.

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, 146.16-23.

\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Pr.Inst.}146.24-148.3. For a useful discussion of these two terms see S. Gersh (1973) 30-38.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Pr.Inst.}10.14-12.7; \textit{ibid.}, 18.7-20; 42.8-29; \textit{ibid.}, 44.11-24; \textit{ibid.}, 46.20-28; \textit{et alia}.

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, 42.8-48.15; \textit{ibid.}, 50.1-6.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Pr.Inst.}152.8-18.

\textsuperscript{18}This point has been correctly made in the scholarship on the subject of Neoplatonic intel-lect. Cf. Sorabji (2001). Sorabji makes his case using only Plotinus, but it stands for Proclus (and all Neoplatonists without doubt) as well. Unlike Plotinus, Proclus does not waver in his affirmation the Forms have their origin in a principle (a henad) prior to Intellect.

\textsuperscript{19}\textit{Pr.Inst.}148.4-27.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Pr.Inst.}154.3-34.

\textsuperscript{21}This clearly recalls, as Dodds points out in his commentary \textit{ad loc.}, Plotinus’ use of the same analogy at \textit{PLenn.}iv.9.5, although Plotinus puts it to a rather different, but perhaps not unrelated, use.
terms of the Demiurge’s unique cognitive perspective—no other being knows the *kosmos* and itself in the way that the Demiurge does.\(^{22}\)

**Rational Soul as Self**

Human selfhood is grounded and preserved by the Demiurgic Intellect. As I have already shown, the Demiurgic Intellect enjoys a perfect self-intellection which is simultaneously a non-self-othering engagement with the world which it makes and is inferior to it. Conversely, soul experiences broken self-reflection precisely *when* it engages with the world on which it acts and which is inferior to it, and so its engagement with the world is essentially self-othering. Both this self-othering engagement and the self-unifying nature of its self-contemplation are therefore inherent in soul’s very essence and constitute its median mode of existence in the *kosmos*. Proclus, like Iamblichus, describes this median mode of existence by attributing to it simultaneously opposing terms which are characteristic of the intelligible and sense-perceptible realities which constitute the upper and lower limits of the soul’s existence as a mean between them. Thus, the soul is indivisible and divisible, eternal and temporal, immortal\(^{23}\) and mortal, un-generated (*agennētos*) and generated (*genētos*), and so on. The simultaneous inherence of these contradictory attributes earns soul its designation as a “middle” being, an intermediary between incorporeal intelligible things and sense-perceptible things.\(^{24}\)

Like the Demiurge, then, soul is an intermediary between higher and lower realities. Whereas the Demiurge is an intellective intermediary between the intelligible paradigm amongst the henads and the *kosmos*, human soul is an intermediary in accordance with its own ontological status. It is the last (or lowest) of the intelligible entities and presides over the sense-perceptible as their principle. Soul’s incorporeality and thus separability from body are demonstrated from the soul’s capacity for self-reversion and self-knowing—in good Aristotelian fashion, the character of soul’s essence is determined by

\(^{22}\) *Ibid.*, 150.22-31. This true, in fact, of all intellects, as each comprises a unique perspective on the world, seeing the world in accordance with its own individuality (*kath’ hen*), even if that perspective is deficient in relation to the Demiurge’s (*Pr.Inst*.148.4-27).

\(^{23}\) The Neoplatonists took seriously Plato’s claim in his *Phaedo* that the soul must recollect its knowledge if it is to be able to know anything at all and that recollection entails immortality. See, e.g. Dam.*Phaed*.1, §§253-310 and Ol.*Phaed*.11 *passim*.

\(^{24}\) This median aspect of the soul’s life is a constant theme in Proclus’ writings on soul; cf. *Pr.Tim*.11.102-4-108.32; *idem*, *Inst*.74.27-78.18; *idem*, 160.21-184.20; *idem*, *Pr.Inst*.166.1-25.
its activities. This capacity and its resultant activity separate soul from both the purely indivisible (intellect) which remains unmoved in its intellective activity and from the forms or natures of bodies whose existence is dependent upon those bodies. In unfolding soul’s middle nature, it will be possible to show just how soul as self can be both a subjective individual and an objective participant in a greater cosmic scheme.

The subject of Proposition 188 in the *Elements of Theology*, the fifth proposition concerning the soul directly, addresses the soul’s role as mediator between the primal life principle and the body which has the potential for animation. Soul is a principle of life for a body and is also a living thing in its own right. The fact that it is a living thing indicates that it participates in a primal principle of life which is not itself a living thing since, as the principle of life, it is prior to all those things participate in life. The succeeding proposition argues that soul animates itself, and that the proof of this is the fact that it can revert upon itself—in other words, the fact that the soul can think or reflect upon itself is proof that it is self-constituted (*authupostatos*).

The soul, as a self-animated and self-constituted life-principle holds together and actualizes a body by giving it life. Thus actualization of another (the body) is the psychic analogue of Intellect’s productive activity. Like the Demiurge in its making of the *kosmos*, soul need not engage in any calculation or deliberation in order to give life to the body: its life-giving activity proceeds directly from its essence. However, the difference between the two is important: the soul’s out-going activity is its primal, essential activity, whereas such activity is only a secondary activity for the Demiurge, even though it is not distinct from its intellection. It is just the life-giving characteristic of the soul that makes it a “middle”—as Proposition 190 makes clear—in the sense that it is intermediate between that to which it gives life and the primal principle of life in which it participates. Thus, soul, as a principle of life and a living thing, is a mediator of vital activity from the intelligible to the sense-perceptible.

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25 These characteristics of rational soul are distilled from a number of propositions: Prop.190 (*Inst*.166.1-25) which refers back to Propositions 15-17 (*Inst*.16.30-20.2) through Propositions 189 (*Inst*.164.20-32) and 186 (*Inst*.162.13-24).

26 Proclus gives a concise summary of mediate conditions of the soul in relation to those of the indivisible principles prior to it and to those of the principles divisible about bodies posterior to it at Pr.*Tim*.11.128.11-129.2.

27 Pr.*Inst*.164.1-3.


30 Pr.*Inst*.166.1-25.
In the same proposition, Proclus makes a case for the soul’s status as middle between indivisible and divisible principles by pointing out the derivative nature of its being. What constitutes its essence—life and capacity for knowledge (it is *gnōstikos*)—belong to it only by participation in higher principles. This is especially the case with respect to knowledge, since the division between the soul’s being (*to einai*) is great enough that that there are some souls which have no share in it at all.\(^{31}\) This ontological distinction between soul and intellect provides the foundation for showing, in Proposition 191, the soul's nature as “middle” between eternity and temporality, the content of which is absolutely fundamental for an understanding of soul as self: “Every participated soul has an eternal essence, but a temporal activity.”\(^{32}\) We have seen that these two terms provided a useful tool for describing Intellect’s manner of self-intellection. In the case of Intellect, these elements are united uninterruptedly in their diversity, so that Intellect’s essence just is its activity. In a similar way, soul’s life-giving activity has been tied to its essence, which is eternal. However, the soul’s cognitive activity has been dissociated from this same essence, as Proposition 190 shows, and so it is this cognitive activity which is the temporal activity in question here. It is precisely in order to further differentiate “psychic nature” (*hē psuchēs phusis*) from the “intellectual hypostasis” (*tēs noeras hupostaseōs*) that Proclus asserts that soul’s activity is a temporal movement. The soul’s temporal self-intellection, then, does not take the same form as the Demiurge’s self-intellection, but rather is a divided image of it.

Before examining the complicated nature of soul’s self-intellection we should consider what it is that the soul grasps in this activity. In Proposition 193 Proclus asserts that “Every soul has been made to subsist proximately by an intellect,”\(^{33}\) so that Intellect contributes something to the soul’s existence in addition to its life-giving function. This contribution is a participated intellect which proceeds from a particular intellect and is incorporated in the soul’s essence.\(^{34}\) In Proposition 194, Proclus asserts that the content of this participated intellect is the “essential reason-principles” (*ousiōdes logoi*), the “irradiations” (*emphaseis*) or derived images of the Forms inIntellect.\(^{35}\) On account of the possession of these essential reason-principles, the soul, like the Demiurge, is all things: whereas the latter is all things intellectively, the soul is all things psychically. Soul is all things according to its ontological perspective, so that

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\(^{31}\) Pr. *Inst*. 166.11-25.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 166.26-27.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 168.20.

\(^{34}\) The identity of this participated intellect will be considered below.

\(^{35}\) Ibid., 168.30-170.3; cf. Syr. *Met*. 82.20-32.
“Every soul is all things, sense-perceptible things paradigmatically, but intel-
ligible things iconically.” The soul has an essential knowledge of all things just like the Demiurge (and Intellect in general) and it is derived from the very intellectual content which informs the kosmos and thus the participatory framework within which soul lives and acts. To put it another way, the soul has an innate knowledge of the elements of the world and its structure and so the world is, in principle, fully intelligible to it.

Beyond what has just been presented, the description of soul’s self-intel-
lection in Elements of Theology lacks some elements which would seem to be necessary to complete its analogy with Intellect’s self-intellection. However, these elements may be found elsewhere in the Proclean corpus. In his Timaeus commentary, for example, Proclus writes,

> Therefore, when [soul] sees itself and unfolds itself, it knows all things without departing from its own proper power. For it is not necessary for it to turn itself elsewhere to see the beings, but it has intellected itself.

Just as with Intellect, there is an identity here between self and cognitive con-
tent. The soul’s self-intellection is a seeing of its reason-principles, a self-vision which regards these principles one at a time, unfolding their simplicity into the discursiveness of language and mathematics, moving from one to the next in a continuous, temporal, internal discourse.

Soul’s self-vision is accomplished by means of a psychic power which Proclus refers to variously as logos, “eye of the soul” (omma tês psuchês), “summit of the soul” (to akrotation tês psuchês), and “one [power] of the soul” (tês psuchês hen). Of the soul’s numerous powers (dunameis), the dianoia

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36 Ibid., 170.4-5.
37 Pr.Tim.11.296.14-18. This particular passage concerns the inwardness of the World Soul, but is equally applicable to the partial, human soul when it has separated itself from matter.
38 Much of what we know about Proclus’ understanding of this activity arises out of Proclus’ comparison of World Soul’s cognitive activities with those of partial souls (namely our souls) at Pr.Tim.11.306.1-307.30.
39 The term logos has many uses and meanings, but this particular usage Proclus derives from a passage in Plato’s Timaeus (28a) upon which he is commenting.
40 Pr.Alc.194.17-195.2.
41 Pr.Tim.1.246.28-31.
42 Pr.Parm.958.1-10. Dillon, ad loc. in his and Morrow’s translation, inserts “power” here and this seems to me to be necessary and correct. Proclus cannot be talking about the power which unites soul to the One—see note 25 just below.
is the one most akin to Intellect and the *logos* is the aspect of *dianoia* having most the form of the One (*henoeidestaton*). Dianoia as *logos* is present and active in all of the soul’s cognitive activities, guiding or cooperating with each of them:

Therefore, if judgment is a thing of the soul [...] and the soul is one and a multiplicity, then too what is capable of judging is both one and many, and the power to judge is both uniform and multiform. And so someone might ask, what is this one power? We will say, the *logos*. This [*logos*], ordering itself to the contemplation of intelligibles, uses both itself and intellection, not that intellection is its instrument, and [*logos*] what uses it [...] Proceeding toward judgment of the middle intelligibles it uses *dianoia* and not itself alone, and it reverts toward itself through this, but when judging objects of opinion it moves *doxa*, and likewise for *phantasia* and sense-perception.

The cognitive faculties are meant to be understood as the many forms of a single power of judgement or of apprehending the essence or knowledge of things. *Logos* stands then as the unitary aspect of human consciousness and is only pluralized as a hierarchical series of powers in accordance with its various activities and their respective objects. The hierarchy is organized according to the relative formal, and thus more or less unitary, character of the objects of the soul’s attention: *dianoia* (discursive reasoning) and *boulēsis* (will directed unwaveringly toward the Good) are at the summit of soul’s powers, followed by *doxa* (opinion-founded reasoning) and *prohairesis* (choice of good or bad), and these are the powers of the rational soul; then follow the powers of the irrational soul, *phantasia/koinē aesthesis* (imagination/the common sense) and *thumos* (honour seeking faculty), and finally *aesthesis* (sense-perception) and *epithumia* (material desire). Soul’s *logos* is the expression of unity in the action of all of these faculties, and of the primacy of dianoia as the unitary ground of the lower faculties. Thus, the soul’s *logos*, the importance of which has scarcely if at all been noticed by scholars, is simultaneously a single power as well as a multitude of powers, both prior to and present in all of them—this recalls the “I” of Intellect which is simultaneously present alongside its content and is its content.

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43 Pr.Tim.1.246.28-31.
44 Ibid., 1.254.29-255.3.
45 These faculties will be discussed in somewhat greater detail below.
This same present and active logos is manifest also in the appetitive life of the soul, in its powers of desire and and choice:

What is more, prior to both of these there is a one of the soul\textsuperscript{46} which often says “I perceive”, “I reason”, “I desire”, and “I will [something]”, which pays attention to all of these activities and cooperates with them. We could not know all these things, nor could we say in what way they differ, unless there were some one indivisible [power/life] in us which knows all these things, which is prior to the common sense, prior to doxa, prior to epithumia and prior to boulēsis. It knows their cognitions and gathers indivisibly their appetitions, saying for each one, “I” and “I am acting”.\textsuperscript{47}

If, as seems likely, Proclus is amongst the “recent” interpreters of Aristotle about whom Philoponus writes in his commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima, then Philoponus has given us another name for this power which says “I”, namely the prosektikos power.\textsuperscript{48} According to his report, this power is an addition to the usual five powers of the rational soul (nous, dianoia, doxa, prohairesis and boulēsis) and his account of it is nearly identical to that which Proclus gives of the soul’s logos:

The prosektikon, they say, stands over what comes to be in a man and says “I intellected,” “I thought,” “I opined,” “I became angry,” “I desired”; simply said, this prosektikon part of the rational soul traverses all of the powers, through the rational, irrational and vegetative.\textsuperscript{49}

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\textsuperscript{46} This is evidently not the principle, discussed below, which unites the soul to the One. Others disagree, for example Lankila (2010) in note 9. Lankila believes this to be a reference to the One of the Soul (discussed briefly below), but this seems not to be likely, considering the context in which it is used here. The One of the Soul is the grounding element of the Soul which does not properly belong to it and through the awakening of which in consciousness, so to speak, the soul experiences ineffable union with the One. (Whether this union is an immediate union with the One Itself or union by means of henadic mediation does not need to be determined here—but see Lankila, \textit{op.cit.} for an argument in favour of the latter.) The “one” considered here is integral to the soul’s daily functioning and is an expression of the soul’s own (intellective and animating) essence, and thus, so far as I can see, cannot be the One of the Soul.

\textsuperscript{47} Pr.\textit{Parm} 958.1-10.

\textsuperscript{48} At Phil.\textit{DeAn} 465.15, Philoponus adds that “if it goes through the vital powers, it is called suneidos”.

\textsuperscript{49} Phil.\textit{DeAn} 464.36-465.3.
Philoponus goes on to argue that this faculty ensures the unity of the soul, just as the *logos* does for Proclus. Proclus enumerates a faculty called *prosochē*—which derives from the same root form as *prosektikon*—in a list of the soul’s powers at Pr.Ecl.211.1-2, although without elaboration. If these two faculties are equivalent, as I think they are, then *logos* is also *prosektikos* and *prosochē*. The terms *prosektikon* and *prosochē* point to an attentive capacity, here a power to direct one’s attention towards some particular object of some particular action by using the requisite auxiliary power. This *prosektikon/prosochē* power, or *logos*, gives unity to soul’s various powers by being present with them and, I suggest, by being identical to them during each performance. Although Proclus does not put it this way, this constitutes a certain kind of awareness of oneself as a multi-faceted agent.

If my analysis is correct, then this power of attentiveness is the imperfect psychic analogue of the Demiurge’s perfect self-awareness. The difference between soul’s attentiveness and Intellect’s self-awareness is significant: unlike the Demiurge’s single and productive act of self-intellection, which is always directed toward Himself, under its own power the soul’s attention is divided, attending to the objects of both the soul’s self-reflective and other-regarding powers. In other words, the soul as *logos* is always identical with the powers it exercises, but it is *not* always identical to its activities, and this is because the objects of some of its powers are other than itself. The soul’s “middle” nature necessitates this: the soul is not able to direct itself at the same time to both its incorporeal reason-principles and to things outside of itself in the sensible world. Thus, although it is aware of itself throughout its activities, the rational soul is in internal conflict, unable to exercise simultaneously its engagement with intelligibles through *dianoia*, and its engagement with sensible particulars through *doxa*, although both are essential aspects of its life.

This conflict is the implicit source of error in the soul’s activities and of its inability to attend perpetually to its innate content: associations with external objects, and with one’s body in particular, draw soul’s attention away from

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50 Phil.DeAn.465.6-11.
51 Interestingly, this list omits *boulēsis*.
52 Pr_TIM.11.296.1-302.10 & 306.1-309.2; cf. Pr.Prov.23. Conflating Plato’s accounts of the forms of human cognition in the *Republic* (509d-511e) and of the construction of the soul in *Timaeus* (34b-36d), Proclus identifies soul’s capacity for self-motivated self-reflection as *dianoia*, discursive reasoning, rational soul’s self-identical motion in the circle of the Same; at the same time, he identifies the soul’s capacity for other-regard as *doxa*, opinion-founded reasoning, rational soul’s self-othering motion in the circle of the Different.
itself, impeding its dianoia, and engaging doxa instead.⁵³ If dianoia is not regularly engaged, soul's attention to the objects of doxa becomes excessive, so that it no longer has a clear grasp of the logoi by which it judges sensible-perceptible things. The soul's ability to attend to its logoi has to be restored through the process of recollection (anamnēsis) which is sparked by the formation of concepts (“later-born” or husterogeneis logoi) through abstraction of forms in matter, a process which is not itself immune to error.⁵⁴

The internal conflict inherent in the rational soul's cognitive life is manifest also, but in a somewhat different way, in the rational soul's appetitive life, in terms of its ability to choose the object of its desire. The rational soul has two appetitive (orektikē) faculties, boulēsis and prohairesis. Boulēsis is a faculty which is always directed toward the Good. However, this faculty is not characteristic of soul, but properly belongs to Intellect and the Gods.⁵⁵ It is difficult to affirm the role attributed to this faculty in the life of the soul, whether it has a similar function as soul's noēsis, which is to say that it would only be activated when the soul is possessed or inspired by an intellect, or whether it is somehow similar to dianoia which can be impeded by soul's association with body.⁵⁶ The faculty in which conflict appears is the soul's faculty of choice, prohairesis.⁵⁷

Prohairesis lacks the unwavering fixation on the good which characterizes boulēsis: "In fact, they [the ancients] do not say that will [voluntas, boulēsis] and choice [electio, prohairesis] are the same, but that the former is of the good alone whereas choice is similarly of the good and of the not good."⁵⁸ In other words, through prohairesis, the rational soul can choose to pursue apparent goods—like wealth or honours—rather than real goods—like purification from desires for material goods. The ability to keep itself focused on its proper good and to use its prohairesis to choose that good depends on the soul's knowledge of what is in its power as a soul to do, what the Neoplatonists call “what is up to us” (to eph' hēmin).⁵⁹ In essence, what is in the soul's power is the

⁵³ Ibid., 111.332.18-336.2.
⁵⁴ Pr.Alc.280.19-281.1; idem, Parm.895.24-897.2; cf. Syr.Met.163.4-14; de Líbera (1996) 105-109.
⁵⁵ Pr.Prov.60; idem, Crat.5.20-22.
⁵⁶ I am inclined to support the latter view, although there is little evidence to go on. Boulēsis is found in the accounts of psychic faculties in other Late Ancient Neoplatonists as well (e.g. Damascius, Olympiodorus, Philoponus and Simplicius) but they give just as little description of its function in soul and relation to other psychic faculties as Proclus does.
⁵⁷ That prohairesis is a rational faculty is argued at Pr.Prov.59 and stated positively at Pr.Remp.11.324.3-4.
⁵⁸ Pr.Prov.57.8-10.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 57.4-5 (le in nobis); idem, Remp.11.355.11-356.2.
ability to judge the goodness of things and to choose accordingly. For Proclus, the proper functioning of this faculty is of capital importance in the life of the soul: the whole character of a life depends on it.60

The significance of “what is up to us” for later Neoplatonism is explained in a near-comprehensive way only in Simplicius’ commentary on Epictetus’ Encheiridion. According to Simplicius, the individual’s discovery of “what is up to us” is a necessary step prior to beginning a philosophical education.61 Indeed, in the prologue to his commentary on Encheiridion, Simplicius explains the importance of the discovery of to eph’ hēmin as the first step in one’s self-reversion.62 Prohairesis, then, is connected to the soul’s self-motion, itself an expression of its nature as an active power which is in direct contrast to the passive nature of the parts of the irrational soul, the thumos63 and epi-thumia, which depend upon another to stir them to motion. Although once stirred their motion is their own, these irrational parts are nevertheless bound up with the body and take their cues from it. Like Proclus, Simplicius asserts that despite the rational soul’s essential freedom and self-sufficiency, it can surrender its autonomy by allowing itself to be led by these irrational motions, instead of directing itself.

Each individual must learn how to order the parts of his soul in order to experience himself as an autonomous agent, a soul freely determining his relations to his body, to other people and external circumstances. In other words, in order to contemplate and unfold the soul’s objective, self-determined content which is always operating in the “psychic background”, and which is to be made one with the soul’s activity or—brought fully to consciousness, as a contemporary thinker might say—by the Platonic teaching, the individual must first recreate the conditions of this self-movement and self-determination in his embodied life.64 When considered in relation to Proclus’ accounts

60 Pr.Remp.11.275.1-19.
62 Simp.Ench.1.3-174.
63 It is notoriously difficult to translate this term. It generally refers, amongst the Neoplatonists, to that aspect of the soul which is moved by desire for honour, reputation, etc. In order to avoid misunderstanding, I have simply transliterated the term.
64 This same emphasis on self-determination drives Proclus’ reflections on to eph’ hēmin in his commentary on Plato’s Republic. These reflections appear within two different, yet related contexts (with respect to celestial determinism and free will and to the distinction between to eph’ hēmin and hekousion), although neither has much to do with the context of the Simplician account (Pr.Remp.261.11-264.30 & 355.11-356.2). Despite this, it seems reasonable to consider Simplicius’ views on the importance of this discovery as a plausible development of Proclus’ own thought.
of *prohairesis* in *De Providentia* and his commentary on Plato’s *Republic*, this account of *prohairesis* seems to be nothing less than commensurate with Proclus’ psychology.

In addition to these faculties, there are two more at the least which soul can only employ with the aid of some higher principle, and which intensify soul’s inward vision. The first is an activity which draws the analogy between intellect and soul tighter, and which is attained on those rare occasions when a soul is possessed by an intellect—we may reasonably call this aided self-intellection.\(^65\) This intellection is the ultimate goal of philosophical reasoning and it constitutes the strongest connection of the soul with itself, but it is only attainable through the aid and mediation of a partial intellect (*merikos nous*).\(^66\) This intellect is partial because, properly speaking, what the soul joins with in intellection is the Form of soul in an intellect of which the Form constitutes an essential part.\(^67\)

Yet, as Proclus makes clear, the soul does not see this intellect directly.\(^68\) Instead, soul sees the content of this intellect by intellecting its irradiation in the soul; this irradiation, as explained earlier, is just the soul’s *logoi* which act as an intermediary between intellect and soul, preserving intellect’s transcendence and ensuring that something of intellect is in the soul. Through the *logoi* the partial intellect is grasped in simple intuitions and not in the discursive formulations of *dianoia*, the highest cognitive power which the soul can activate unaided. The summit of the soul’s *gnōsis* is attained when the soul’s *logos*, that power of the soul which has most the character of unity, is able to join with this partial intellect.\(^69\) This is as far as soul’s rational capacities extend themselves; there is no direct intuition or intellection of the Forms in themselves.

As is to be expected, despite its union and cooperation with intellect, the manner of rational soul’s intellection of its essence is not identical with that of the intellect to which it is joined. On the one hand, soul intellects each of the *logoi* as a whole, as the simple principle that it is, rather than unfolding it in the manner of *dianoia*; on the other hand, it can only intellect the *logoi* one at

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\(^{65}\) This state seems not even to be attainable by all souls (Pr. *Tim*. I.245.31-246.2). MacIsaac (2011) has recently examined the relation of soul to the partial intellect through an analysis of the analogies between Socrates’ relationship to Alcibiades and *Nous’* relationship to *Psychē* which constitute a good part of Proclus’ commentary on Plato’s *Alcibiades I*. This is the only detailed scholarly attempt to elaborate the role of partial intellect of which I am aware.


\(^{67}\) Ibid., I11.269.3-270.16.

\(^{68}\) Pr. *Alc*.246.18-247.7.

a time, intellecting them in a temporal series.\textsuperscript{70} Soul’s possession by intellect, then, results in an enhancement of the psychic nature so that it simultaneously takes part in a higher, eternal and intellectual activity while still doing so in the temporal manner which is characteristic of its own activity.\textsuperscript{71}

The second faculty which takes soul beyond its own powers is the cause of the highest mode of being attainable by the soul. Unlike the other powers in the soul, that which is responsible for this highest activity brings our discussion, and soul itself, outside the analogy of soul and Intellect. This highest mode of being is attained when the soul knows the One by the “One of the soul” (\textit{to hen tēs psuchēs}),\textsuperscript{72} the “flower of our essence” (\textit{anthos tēs ousias hēmōn}), the “summit of the soul’s \textit{hyparxis}” (\textit{tēn akran tēn huparxin tēs psuchēs})\textsuperscript{73} and the “flower of the intellect” (\textit{pasēs hēmōn tēs psuchēs anths}).\textsuperscript{74} Just as the soul is composed of the \textit{logoi} which it has received from intellect, it is also composed in some way of tokens (\textit{sunthēmata})\textsuperscript{75} of the divine \textit{henads} or Gods.\textsuperscript{76} The presence of this “one” in the soul allows the soul to unite with the One in order to experience union (\textit{henōsis}) with the One, a mode of being in which soul has abandoned all multiplicity and attains a unity beyond its own power to achieve.\textsuperscript{77}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{70} \textit{Ibid.}, 1.246.5-9.
\bibitem{71} One might expect that some sort of theory of memory would be required in order to explain how a soul avoids losing its connection to its \textit{logoi} as it transitions from one to another. In fact, we know that Proclus did have a notion of the role of memory in the life of the soul, and we know that it appeared in his commentary on Plato’s \textit{Phaedo}. However, we only know this because of references made to it by Damascius in both his own commentary on the same dialogue (primarily at Dam.\textit{Phaed}.1.§§256-7) and in his commentary on Plato’s \textit{Philebus} (Dam.\textit{Phil}.§71 & §§158-9).
\bibitem{72} Pr.\textit{Tim}.1.211.25; \textit{idem}, A\textit{lc}.2.247.14.
\bibitem{73} “Flower of our essence” and the “summit of the soul’s \textit{hyparxis}” are both found at Pr.\textit{Alc}.2.246.18-248.4.
\bibitem{74} Pr.\textit{Ecl}.210.29.
\bibitem{75} On the \textit{synthēmata} in Proclus see Sheppard (1980); van den Berg (2001); Coulter (1976); Struck (2004); on the related use of the term by Iamblichus, see Shaw (1995); Addey (2013 forthcoming).
\bibitem{76} Pr.\textit{Ecl}.2.215-212.4.
\bibitem{77} Pr.\textit{Alc}.2.247.9-16 (cf.Pr.\textit{Parm}.1094). My thanks to an anonymous reviewer who pointed out that, at Pr.\textit{Ecl.}3.12, Proclus calls the one of the soul “the centre [\textit{kentron}] of our whole essence and of all the various faculties around it.” This seems, at first glance, to suggest that the one of the soul is an integral part of the soul itself. In one sense, this is true: the one in the soul is the necessary ground of the soul’s essence, its ultimate source of unity, and so without the one in the soul the soul would not possess the unity required for the soul to be what it is. On the other hand, the one in the soul is such a source, I suggest, in
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The One’s causation of all things is prior to all activity and is no activity itself. Since there is no activity within the One Itself, in its union with the One the soul must cease all of its own cognitive activity. Since like is known by like, then the One can only be known by an activity-less soul. Union with the One, then, transcends even the activity and existence which are characteristic of Intellect. Soul’s union with the One is a possession by and experience of the One in a kind of complete, but silent awareness of it. In this condition the soul has abandoned its own life for that of the One. Soul becomes something other than what it is when it assumes the life of the One; rather, soul experiences an intensification or radical simplification of its existence. In other words, in this union soul must attain an identity with itself which goes beyond the one it attains to even in self-intellection, an identity which must remain indescribable.

Proclus on Personality and Individuality

What I call the “authentic self” in Proclus’ philosophy is the rational soul in its perfection. This soul expresses itself, through its logos, in each of its activities the way that Proclus argues, in the Elements of Theology, that unity is the source of existence for the not-one. According to Proposition 2 (“Everything which participates unity is both one and not-one”), and repeated in Proposition 3, unity is experienced by things (everything which is not the One Itself) as something which happens to them or comes to them from outside. The implication is that there are things, each of which is some kind of plurality as per Proposition 1 (“Every plurality participates unity”), and there is the One Itself, and things exist because they participate in the One Itself. Since the one of the soul is the ultimate expression and ground of soul’s unity, it is what has come to the soul from outside, from the One Itself, and so is not, properly speaking, the property of the soul itself. The image of center and concentric circles which the passage from the Eclogae invokes does, I suggest, emphasize the difference between the unitary one of the soul and the plurality (in number, circumference and distance from the centre) of the soul’s proper faculties. A proper exegesis of Proclus’ texts would be necessary to strengthen the argument just presented, but cannot be undertaken here.

78 Presumably, the soul does not cease all of its activity in the sense that it does not cease to give life to the body which it inhabits (whichever body that might be).
80 The means by which this union comes about will not be considered in this essay; rather, the point was just to show the extreme alienation of the self, even in its perfection.
81 On the notion of possession in Iamblichus which lies behind Proclus’ own see Addey (2013), esp. Chapter 6.
82 Pr.Tim.1.211.24-28.
as an I. In each of soul's activities, the soul acting through its logos is not other than the auxiliary faculty which it uses. Rational soul seeks to attain to its authenticity through imitating, as much as possible, the activity of its intellectual paradigm, only in order (in some cases) to eventually abandon it in a possession by the One which intensifies the soul's self-unity but which does not annihilate its self-identity. Like Intellect, soul's essential content is a totality of objective realities, although its content is more particular than Intellect's, because more divided and multiple. This variation in degree of objectivity or reality is an expression of the varying forms of subjectivity within the realm of intelligible beings, where each being is a unique subject whose objective content differs from that of other beings in virtue of the degree of simplicity of that content. Thus, the participatory framework which Gill claims—and which I discussed at the beginning of this paper—is the scheme within which individuals determine and carry out their actions belongs to those individuals as the content of their own essence, and thus of their own selves. The individual is inseparable from this cosmic framework not only when moving and acting in the world by means of a body, but also as a disembodied intelligible entity which knows and, in some sense, is this framework.

Yet this account of self poses some potential problemata which ought to be addressed. First, some scholars have argued that the rational soul, even in its dianoetic activity, can be considered a subject with an intentional stance towards sensible-perceptible things and towards itself. Inasmuch as the soul produces representational concepts (ennoiai) of its essential content, this seems indeed to be the case. However, at least two qualifications are necessary. First, one must keep in mind that Ancient philosophers could not have conceived of a notion like intentionality as it was intended for use by Franz Brentano when he devised the concept. Brentano used intentionality (or intentional in-existence) as a criterion for distinguishing the mental from the physical without positing a separate immaterial substance for the former. Clearly, this was not a concern for Proclus or any of the Neoplatonists, anymore than

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83 O'Meara (2001).
84 An example of the kind of distortion which can follow upon a failure to keep ancient concerns separate from modern can be found in Rappe (1997). In following the author's train of thought there, one could easily come to think that somehow consciousness is a primary feature of Plotinus' conception of self. (The author also refers to rational soul as "mind" which is equally problematic). This leads to a way of considering Plotinus' arguments which is often alien to the way Plotinus thought them. For instance, Rappe finds in Enn.VI.5.9 a Cartesian-like internalism, where the contents of the sphere in Plotinus' "thought-experiment" represent the contents a consciousness which is and owns those contents (263). This reading entirely ignores the context in which the passage appears,
was the contemporary use of the concept in philosophy of mind as a criterion of subjectivity. Insofar as Proclus can be said to have a concept of intentionality it is only as a means by which to explain the all too frequent occurrence of human error despite the objectivity of soul’s innate knowledge. This leads to the second qualification which is just that the intentionality of the rational soul (such as it is) must be understood in the context of the *logos* faculty and the *logoi* which are projected in company with it in all of the soul’s activities. The soul projects itself as “I” and as intelligible world (at least partially) in all of its dealings with the world. The world is perceived, imagined and understood always in light of the objective world within the soul. Even when producing a false concept of something, the soul’s *logoi* are “breathing out” (*apopneontes*) from the soul’s essence and informing the soul’s activity.\textsuperscript{85} The degree of intentionality then varies according as the soul’s projection of the *logoi* is more or less perfect or, in other words, not mingled with sense or imaginative data. In full attainment of self through self-intellection, intentionality must, as far as human knowing is concerned, disappear from the soul altogether. Consequently, what corresponds to contemporary intentionality in the conception of rational soul is not a primary feature of the self for Proclus, and in fact must be abandoned in order to attain to authentic selfhood.

The kind of grounding of selfhood in higher principles in which Proclus engages appears to be problematic for scholars who seem to think of self in terms of a “post-Cartesian” concept of person. In such a view, the self belongs to a person who is an intelligent being conscious of himself as a locus of conscious mental events. Thus, it is through consciousness that the person acquires the certitude that he is a self who is different from other selves in the

\textsuperscript{85} Pr.\textit{Alc}.191.5-192.12. Steel (1997) has pointed out the significance of this passage, but does not discuss it in terms of its relation to the *logos* faculty. Also see Maclsaac (2009) for an excellent account of the projection of *logoi* and how it informs sense-perception in Plato, Plotinus and Proclus.
world. This line of thinking seems to underlie, for example, in his book *Self* where Richard Sorabji discusses the problem of personal identity in relation to Plotinus’ reflections on metempsychosis. Sorabji writes that:

> He [Plotinus] was torn between thinking that we should not separate ourselves out from the timeless universal intellect from which we derive, lest we lose our identity as much as those who do not know their father (5.1[10] 1 (1-17)), and seeking after all to retain some separate individuality when we return to intellect.

Insofar as this statement is correct, it is so just as much for Proclus as it is for Plotinus. On the other hand, the “tension” indicated in this statement is more apparent than real. The tension is only real if one thinks of the individual in terms of a modern concept of personhood; in this case, the kind of personal identity which informs the above statement is that which belongs to the individual, embodied consciousness. Accordingly, in his discussion of Plotinus’ attempt to explain how a soul can become different people at different times in successive incarnations, Sorabji privileges the embodied person (e.g. Socrates) over that person’s soul. Only such a reversal of the Neoplatonist’s own priority could allow Sorabji to ask, “How could Pythagoras continue if the soul that was his self had been borrowed by a different individual […]?” The soul or self is the individual, whereas Socrates is just the name which belongs to a particular incarnation of that individual during a particular period of time, and under the particular circumstances which take place within that period. There is no “borrowing” since there is no Socrates who exists apart from his soul or

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86 Gill (1991) finds no such concept of person in Aristotle or the Stoics. He points to Descartes and Locke as the source of this way of thinking, and argues that the primacy which these two philosophers attach to consciousness is not present as a determinative concern for the Ancient Greeks. This seems to be correct; however, this is not to say that the Neoplatonists were not aware of states of the soul which we would refer to as consciousness or awareness. On the contrary, these states were known but not considered to be determinative in any important way for the individual.


88 Plotinus’ student, Amelius, stands out as a notable exception, among later Neoplatonists, in his willingness to accept the absorption of individual souls into the World Soul. See *Pr.Tim.11.213.9ff* and *Iamb.DeAn.50.10-18* for rejections of this position.

89 Admittedly, Sorabji’s stated intent in his book is to define an acceptable notion of self which does not rely upon positing the existence of a soul.

self such that one could distinguish between a soul which is borrowed and a person who borrows it.

Proclus affirms the individuality of the soul without also affirming its personal identity, if personal identity is to be understood in the sense that Sorabji understands it. Proclus is most explicit about this in two important passages, one from his commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* and the other from the *Extracts from the Commentary on the Chaldean Philosophy*, both of which I reproduce here:

We ought to posit that there is an order of Forms, and that there is a simple Form of every soul; every soul is monadic and subsists according to one formula *logos* which is proper to it. For one soul does not differ from another by means of matter; either it will differ by nothing at all or according to Form.91

For it is necessary to know this, that every soul is distinguished from every other by Form, and for every soul there is an equivalent number of Forms of souls. In the first place, according to a single Form, there is an hypostasis of many individuals [which bear] the form of the One in both matter and the composites among beings, a single underlying nature participating the same Form in various ways. Therefore, if soul’s being is *logos* and simple Form, either a soul will not be differentiated essentially from any other, or it will be differentiated according to its Form; for ‘that which is’ alone will differ, and Form alone ‘is’. Whence it is clear that every soul, even though it is full of the same *logoi* [as every other soul], has obtained one Form which separates it from the others, just as the heliacal Form characterizes the heliacal soul, and so on.92

The gist of both of these passages is that each soul is differentiated from every other soul, and thus is unique, on account of its unique Form; however, the second passage goes further and explicitly dissociates soul from the individuals (*atomoi*),93 composed of nature and matter, which are the lowest participants

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91 Pr. *Parm.* 819.13-16.
92 Pr. *Ecl.* 212.4-16.
93 In order to make a case for the henads as sources of individuality for souls, Chlup (2012), at 134-5, interprets this fragment by way of Pr. *Parm.* 824-5. While doing so he misunderstands the status of the “individuals” under consideration at Pr. *Parm.* 824-5 where Proclus argues that there are no *eidei tôn kath’ hekasta*. Clearly, Chlup reads, not unreasonably, *kath’ ekasta* as meaning “individuals” However, these individuals are not individual souls (*atomous psuchas*) as Chlup assumes: Proclus addresses the Forms of souls already at
in Forms. Although he does not say so here, these individuals must also include the particular incarnations of the soul, the various individual composites of soul in body (e.g. Socrates), which come closest to what counts as a person in Sorabji’s view. The kind of personhood which find here, if we care to use that term, is one that is founded on the individuality of soul as immaterial substance, rather than on the individuality of embodied consciousness.

Incidentally, the second passage which I quoted just above points to another important aspect of soul’s individuality. Proclus fleshes this out in a little remarked upon passage in his commentary on *Timaeus* in which he asserts that souls are individuated according to the Gods who govern their respective series. In the same passage, Proclus offers two other sources of individuation: 1) the choice of a life and 2) the manner in which the chosen life is lived, which can be characterized by success or failure. The second and third sources are determined by the projection of the *logoi* which have been

Pr. Parm. 819.13-16 (quoted above), where he affirms that such Forms do indeed exist. Just a line later, Proclus explains that souls—as Chlup argues—are ranged under the Form which pertains to the divine leader of the series from which they are suspended; on the other hand, he goes further and explains that “an intelligible Form of each soul pre-exists in the producer” (νοητὸν ἑκάστης εἴδος ἐν τῷ παράγοντι |προ|ὑπαρχειν), in other words in the divine souls which lead their respective series (Pr. Parm. 819.17). When we combine this with Proclus’ statement in fr.5 that there are as many souls as there are Forms of souls, it becomes clear that the *atomoi* in fr.5 cannot refer to the *atomoi psychai* in Pr. Parm. 817-19. Rather, the sentence in which the *atomoi* figure is a statement about the participatory relationship between natures of material beings and the Forms in which they participate. That this does not apply to souls is argued by way of exclusion in the following sentence (Pr. Ecl. 212.6-10), and the argument may be broken down in the following way: 1) “if the being of the soul is *logos* and simple Form,” a hypothetical statement, the truth of which Proclus has asserts in fr.5 already at Pr. Ecl. 211.21-212.4; 2) “either a soul will not be differentiated essentially from any other,” like the *atomoi* which are grounded by the *hypothesis* which is “a single underlying nature participating the same Form in various ways”; 3) or “[a soul] will be differentiated according to its Form,” which, again, has already been asserted as true. Thus, the *atomoi* in fr.5 belong to the side of the disjunction which must be excluded as a characterization of the differentiation of souls. Thus the argumentation in fr.5, although it has perhaps not been formulated as clearly as it could have been, agrees substantially with what Proclus has written at Pr. Parm. 819.13-17.

Pr. Parm. 824.5. It may be better to restrict the use of “person” and “personhood” to the particular embodiments of an individual soul which invariably fall short of the authentic self, except in the case of a very small number of exceptional souls. A very good case could be made for doing this.

Pr. Tim. 111.279.11-30.
stamped beforehand by the God to which an individual soul is attached. In terms of soul's individuality, what is paramount in this passage is the notion that it is activity and power (in the form of life) which differentiate one soul from another, and thus ensure the individuality of each soul. Of equal importance is the determinative character of the relationship between God and soul. This agrees completely with what I have already shown, namely that the self belongs both to itself and to another, insofar as it fundamentally depends upon that other as its ground. Accordingly, the soul is an individual, but one whose own individuality is grounded upon a superior unity. Ultimately, it is from this superior unity that it both receives its place in the cosmic hierarchy and receives that hierarchy itself as its own content according to its own mode of being.

Although I regard it to be erroneous to think of authentic self in Proclus in terms of a post-Cartesian concept of personhood, this is not the whole story. I suggest that Proclus’ view on individuality does result in the notion of the development of an embodied individual identity which one could argue approximates to a post-Cartesian concept of person. Yet, Proclus attaches a very different value to this embodied identity than do our more contemporary philosophers. These latter generally reject any “realism” which posits the subject in terms of a substance such as soul and consider essential for an account of personal identity the facts of mental existence which occur in the individual’s embodied, conscious experience. The majority of these facts of experience are precisely what Proclus refers to as the multiplicity which is to be abandoned. And yet, engagement with this multiplicity, through the powers of dianoia and doxa in conjunction with the powers of the irrational soul and guided by soul’s logos, constitutes a great part of human soul’s life—in fact, for the majority of humans this engagement constitutes the greatest part, whether in an embodied or disembodied state. Accordingly, a significant portion of Proclus’ discussion of soul—much more than one might guess from the current exposition—is concerned precisely with the development of these embodied personal identities as proving grounds for the return to the authentic self which I have sketched here.

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97 The relation between the attachment and the projection of logoi, and also to the soul’s Form, is confirmed elsewhere by Proclus Pr.Tim.111.262.6-10.
98 This curious entity, offspring of the celestial Gods, and explanatory of the irrational life of the individual, has appeared only incidentally in this exposition, precisely because it does not belong to the authentic self of the soul, despite its being intimately involved in the individual’s return to self.
Proclus’ authentic self, as both ontologically and ontically prior to it grounds what we could call an individual’s embodied personal identity, and it does so precisely as the individual’s true self-identity. As such a being, rational soul has its own characteristic activity and life which imitate the activity and life of the Demiurge, however defectively. The goal of all of this authentic self’s activities is its ultimate perfection, beginning with the perfection of its own characteristic powers, *dianoia*, *doxa*, and *prohairesis* (and *boulēsis* in some unspecified way). By focusing its attention on its own innate content and proper goods, the individual soul advances to intellection of real Being (the Forms) through simple intelliuctions of its own essential *logoi* with the aid of higher beings, and, finally, advances to silent union with the One by means of the highest part of its essence, the “One of the soul”. Soul’s ultimate perfection, then, is simultaneously a perfection of self and an exceeding of self, a paradox which is perfectly consistent with the character of Neoplatonic metaphysics.

Thus, Gill’s description of personhood in Ancient Greek philosophy is partially correct when it is applied to Proclus, insofar as in Proclus’ philosophy the individual self is developed within the purview of an objective, participatory framework of moral evaluations. Although the individual makes his own choices, the guiding standard by which he makes his evaluations has its existence outside of him and prior to him; self is not the result of a radical choice, for which there is no authority but the individual himself. Yet, it is just this individual authority that is present for the Proclean soul, although on different grounds than it is, for example, for Kant. For Proclus, the soul finds the authority—the objective and evaluative framework for all possible actions—within itself, as what most belongs to it and constitutes its essence. Although Proclus does not say so explicitly, it is a necessary consequence of this view that each individual must choose for himself whether or not to accept the Neoplatonic vision of reality, to choose whether or not he is willing to try to experience έφ’ ἑμίν and then to go on to discover his own soul’s innate content. In the end, each individual who makes the attempt must judge for oneself the validity of the Neoplatonic worldview and he is self-authorized to modify that view according to his own judgment.99 According to Proclus’ view, the cosmos does not compel the individual to accept its authority or to live according to its laws—laws which he believed the Platonic tradition of philosophy brought to light more faithfully than any other—although it does

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99 This is manifest in the various forms which Neoplatonic philosophy takes in the hands of its various practitioners who, although they share the same basic principles, each develop their own understanding of reality from them.
punish the failure to do so.\textsuperscript{100} Thus, there are still choice and autonomy here, akin to the modern sense, but I rather suspect that Proclus would consider true autonomy to lie in choosing a life lived in accordance with the cosmic framework which constitutes the self and, at the same time, is self-determined.

It is just the fact this aspect of soul's life in Proclus' philosophy that makes Gill's account one-sided in respect to it and, as I would further argue, to Ancient Greek Neoplatonism in general. Proclus consciously casts partial, human soul as a kind of \textit{complexio oppositorum}, and so the attempt to artificially distill the opposites which are combined therein can only do harm to our understanding of this remarkable Platonic philosophy. It is an attempt to come to grips with, and to explain the sources of, the complexity and contradictions of human life and an experience of that life as a unitary self which yet seems to be divided against itself. In this chaotic existence the authentic self—the authentic core of the individual human being—stands as a bulwark and safeguard against this division and chaos and as a guide to the return to soul's divine origins.

Bibliography


\textsuperscript{100} Proclus accepts and affirms the punishment and reward of souls in an afterlife which is just a transitional period between successive terrestrial incarnations. See, e.g., Pr\textit{Remp}. 11.125.1-128.2, for a good account given in terms of soul's entrance and exit from the terrestrial body.


———. "Non enim ab hiis que sensus est iudicare sensum: Sensation and Thought in *Theaetetus*, Plotinus and Proclus." (forthcoming).


