Let us run towards the heat, escaping from the cold.
Let us become fire, let us walk through the fire.
We have an easy way for the ascension; the Father guides us unfolding ways of fire.

*Hymn to the God or Fire-song (7–12)*

Hearken, you gods holding the helm of holy wisdom, who, having kindled an upward-leading fire, draw to the immortals human souls, who leave the dark hole behind, purified by the secret initiations of hymns.

*Hymn common to the gods (IV, 1–7)*

Theurgists on Fire

By praying, theurgists return to the gods their loving gift to us humans: prayer, given to us by the gods through the theurgists, who by praying, singing hymns, imitate the gods, assimilating to them. A “kind of circle that both begins from the gods and ends with them”, says Proclus, in his well-known passage on prayer from his *Commentary on the Timaeus*.¹ A conception of prayer in agreement with what seems a goddess of theurgy itself, Hecate, who in the *Chaldean Oracles*, when manifesting herself in response to the eloquent prayers of the theurgists, declares right at her arrival that human beings have discovered

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¹ *In Tim. I 210.10–11.*
prayer “at the suggestion of the gods” (f. 222)\(^2\). For the theurgists, “athletes of fire”\(^3\), when possessed by love to/from the gods, their soul is ablaze. Being ignited (“... the fire-heated thought ...”); “has lit the fire ...”; “By making the soul bright with fire”),\(^4\) catches the fire of erotic mania (μανία), which works like a symbolic reminiscence analogous to intellectual reminiscence but not identical; its counterpart or other side, so to speak. It is activated by sympathy (συμπάθεια) and persuasion (πειθώ), the way we may say that Socrates, trying to persuade beautiful Phaedrus on the nature of love (in the Platonic dialogue of the same name), acts as a divine statue (ἅγαλμα) of love. As I will point out later in the text, the metaphor of the theurgist who animates a statue of a god, preparing himself and becoming a statue of the god, I think it is important for understanding theurgy: in a manner suitable, the theurgist prepares himself to take the form of the god, the way he prepares a statue to receive a god, so as to become unified with it, the same way a statue does.

This symbolic reminiscence activated by sympathy and persuasion cannot be demonstrated, occurring beyond intellect; both above and below it, all around it but from its very center, if I may recur to a rather cryptic description. It may be beyond intellect but it is innate in us\(^5\) and works in a similar way as myths do, as Proclus will persuasively argue regarding how Plato cared in his dialogues that we may not only exercise the intellectual part of the soul, but that we may also perfect the divine part through sympathy with the mysteries by a kind of inspired, enthastic (ἐνθεαστικόν) discourse, not demonstrative (ἀποδεικτικόν).\(^6\) This double aspect of theurgical activity, erotic and intellectual, I will argue, may be contextualized in Proclus’ double metaphysics: henadology and ontology. Two aspects that seem to have been considered by modern research in a rather literal, separate, linear way, where one comes first and then the other. However, I think it is possible that Proclus might be thinking of both as simultaneous; actually, if I may put it so, as equally both linear and simultaneous. If this were the case, then the resulting model of theurgy, we may infer, may be, in some important though subtle aspects, somewhat different than what has been supposed. It seems that the problem of the relationship between the gods and the forms is of great relevance here. The forms are the causes of the sensible

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\(^2\) Considered a doubtful fragment.

\(^3\) DM II 10, 92.10.

\(^4\) Chaldean Oracles, fr. 139 (“... the fire-heated thought ...”), 126 (“has lit the fire ...”) and 122 (“By making the soul bright with fire”).

\(^5\) For Iamblichus an ἔμφυτος γνώσις, natural, innate knowledge superior to all reasoning and demonstration; DM I 3, 7.11–12.

\(^6\) P.T. I 6.