"Ad intellectum ratiocinatio"[1]: Three Procline logics, *The Divine Names* of Pseudo-Dionysius, Eriugena's *Periphyseon* and Boethius' *Consolatio philosophiae*
a communication to the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies, Oxford, August 21 -26, 1995, *Studia Patristica,* vol. XXIX, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 244-51.

In the opening address of this Conference, H.-D. Saffrey distinguished two directions within pagan Neoplatonism. One of them led to the development of theology as science by Iamblichus and its first treatise, *The Platonic Theology* of Proclus.[2] He then looked beyond Proclus to Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, and, in particular to his treatise on *The Divine Names*, not only to indicate that the theological science of Iamblichus and Proclus had a Christian future, but also to suggest the extent of its influence, until the thirteenth century in the West, an influence usually clandestine, but, nonetheless, generally pervasive.[3]

Unless viewed within this particular Neoplatonic context, where "the oracles, held to be divine, are included among the authorities of philosophy" and where "philosophical texts themselves, in the first place those of Plato, are raised up to the level of divine revelations"[4], *The Divine Names* is completely enigmatic. A central puzzle is that, though Dionysius makes Biblical revelation the absolutely necessary condition for the activity of naming God and the source of the particular names ascribed to the deity, he clearly both derives many names from Proclus, and also orders the whole treatise according to a

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[1] Boethius, *Consolatio Philosophiae,* ed. H.F. Stewart & E. K. Rand, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), IV, vi, p. 362, l. 79; discussed by John Magee, *Boethius on Signification and Method*, Philosophia Antiqua 52 (Leiden, 1989), 128, n. 140, see also his "Afterword", 142-149.

[2] H.-D. Saffrey, "Theology as Science, 3rd-6th centuries," *Studia Patristica,* vol. XXIX, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 321-39.

[3] Decisive in uncovering the extent of this tradition is the translation by William of Moerbeke of the *Elements of Theology* of Proclus which made possible its comparison with the *Liber de causis* and the *De Divinis Nominibus.* See H.-D. Saffrey, "L'état actuel des recherches sur le *Liber de causis,* comme source de la métaphysique au moyen âge," *Die Metaphysik im Mittelalter,* 2 vol., ed. F. Wilpert, Miscellanea Mediaevalia (Berlin, 1963), 269-277, W.J. Hankey, *God In Himself. Aquinas' Doctrine of God as Expounded in the Summa Theologiae*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford, 1987), 47, note 39, and *passim* on the general influence of the Procline - Dionysian tradition on Aquinas. On which also, idem, "'Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere': Aquinas, hierocracy and the 'augustinisme politique'," in *Tommaso D'Aquino: proposte nuove di letture. Festscrift Antonio Tognolo,* edited Ilario Tolomio, Medioevo. Rivista di Storia della Filosofia Medievale 18 (Padova, 1994), 119-150, idem, "Dionysian Hierarchy in St. Thomas Aquinas: Tradition and Transformation," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994,* édités Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997), 405-438. On the general influence of this tradition, see Cristina D'Ancona-Costa, *Recherches sur le* Liber de causis, Études de philosophie médièvale 72 (Paris, 1995), Paul Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius. A Commentary on the Texts and an Introduction to their Influence*, (Oxford, 1993), E.P. BOS and P.A. MEIJER, eds., *On Proclus and his Influence in Medieval Philosophy*, Philosophia Antiqua 53 (Brill, 1992), Edward Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic Ontology in Islamic and Christian Thinkers*, Cambridge Studies in medieval life and thought (Cambridge, 1983), Stephen Gersh, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena. An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition*, Studien zur Problemgeschichte der Antiken und Mittelalterlichen Philosophie 8 (Leiden, 1978).

[4] Saffrey, "Theology."

Neoplatonic logic primarily, though not exclusively, Procline.[5] What is presented as Christian and Biblical is in logic and content also a continuation of pagan Neoplatonism.

At about the same time that Dionysius' reflections on his reading of Proclus were producing his peculiar treatise on *The Divine Names*, a Latin Christian author who had also read Proclus,[6] was writing a book puzzling in the opposite way. About to be martyred, he wrote about what consoled him, fallen, as he was, from social and political heights, into disgrace and prison on the way to torture and death. Though the work of this Christian facing death became a Christian devotional classic, it contained not a single explicit, nor even perhaps an implicit, reference to the Christian Scriptures. Its doctrine was a Neoplatonism common to cultivated pagans and Christians living at the very limit of late antiquity.[7] The *Consolation of Philosophy* records the purely philosophical doctrine which persuaded and comforted, and would persuade and comfort, Christians even *in extremis* for a millennium and a half.

This philosophical consolation of the fallen soul proceeds by grace, adoring contemplation and prayer. Lady Philosophy comes to the needy and distracted soul as grace. She drives away the sentimental and self-indulgent muses and substitutes didactic and fortifying poetry.[8] She arouses reason by uncovering its forgotten convictions.[9] Philosophy purges reason by exhortation, and by contemplation and praise of the good operation of Providence. By diagnostic questions, she at once discloses the disease and begins its cure. Thus, reason recovers memory; the prisoner recollects his proper self and what he once already knew.[10] So, at the beginning of Book Two, Philosophy can allow a little silence and will soon permit the activity of dialogue.[11] She assists reason's conversion from a pathetic absorption in the false outer self where it has been distracted by the flux of the divided and sensible. Throughout the second book, as reason penetrates (to use her language), Philosophy pushes the prisoner to reach further within himself to what is his own and can belong to him independently of all externality.[12] Though religious as well

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[5] See, on the Scriptural aspect, Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius,* 134-137.

[6] See Volker Schmidt-Kohl, *Die Neuplatonishe Seelenlehre in der* Consolatio Philosophiae *des Boethius,* Beiträge zur Klassischen Philologie 16 (Meisenheim am Glan, 1965), Luca Obertello, *Severino Boezio,* 2 vols., Accademia Ligure di Scienze e lettere. Collana di monografie 1 (Genova, 1974), i, quarta parte, esp. 571-576, Henry Chadwick, *Boethius. The Consolation of Music, Logic, Theology, and Philosophy*, (Oxford, 1981), Booth, *Aristotelian Aporetic,* 66-75, Gerard J.P. O'Daly, *The Poetry of Boethius,* (London, 1991), 66.

[7] On the common character of the doctrine see O'Daly, *The Poetry,* 25 (accepting the conclusions of H. Chadwick).

[8] Boethius, *Philosophiae*, I, i & ii, pp. 134-138.

[9] "Sui paulisper oblitus est; recordabitur facile," I, ii, p. 138, ll. 13-14.

[10] These are the methods of Book I generally. At I, vi, p. 166, ll. 1-3, she asks permission: "me pauculis rogationibus statum tuae mentis attingere atque temptare, ut qui modus sit tuae curationis intellegam?" She concludes "quid ipse sis, nosse desisti" (I, vi, p. 168, l. 40).

[11] II, i, p. 174, l. 1: "Post haec paulisper obticuit"; II, iii, p. 184, l. 4: "Dabimus dicendi locum." The complexity of Philosophy's art is brought out not only by Gerard O'Daly's study already noted, but also by Magee, *Boethius,* and magisterially by Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue. Literary Method in "The Consolation of Philosophy",* (Princeton, 1985).

[12] II, iii, p. 186, ll. 12-13: "Nam quae in profundum sese penetrent, cum tempestivum fuerit admovebo." II, iv, p. 194, ll. 72-73 & p. 196, l. 75: "Quid igitur o mortales extra petitis intra vos positam felicitatem? ... Estne aliquid tibi te ipso pretiosius?"

as medical language is appropriate to describe Philosophy's activity, these are the techniques of rational recollection, not cult.

The second Book of the *Consolation* is still primarily negative, detaching the self from the dispersion which allowed its fall into self-forgetful despair.[13] But, at the beginning of Book Three, the prisoner is spell bound, absorbed by the words of Philosophy, who retreats into the recesses of thought.[14] Thus lifted inward and upward, the prisoner is able to turn around "toward true happiness"[15] and to actively move himself, in virtue of "a dream" of his origin, a "kind of notion", and an "instinctive sense of direction" toward "the true goal of happiness".[16] The quest for true happiness which is a quest for self-sufficiency, power,[17] and freedom forces him to move from the periphery to the motionless center, the simple undivided good. This properly belongs only to the simple undivided self, and so reason raises itself toward the intellection it requires. The union sought is for intellect beyond ratiocination. But because the self is also discursive reason, which by its nature divides the simple and undivided,[18] the self can only reach beyond itself to its proper self, and its beatifying end, by prayer.[19]

Plato in the *Timaeus* is cited as an the authority for praying in a philosophical context, and prayer to the "Father" is actually made in the following poetic section. This is not the only reference to prayer in the *Consolation,* indeed the last Book argues against determinism caused by the divine foreknowledge in order to defend the possibility of prayer, the connection between God and humans.[20] Its initial occurrence, about midway through the *Consolation*, belongs to a consideration of the relations between unity and division, intellect and reason, power and weakness. So the question of the necessity of prayer is directly related to that of the sense in which our higher self, our unified, free intellectual self, is genuinely our own. While prayer is required because we need outside help to reach our unified self, the intellect which can see simple things simply does belong to humans, even if such intelligence defines the divine nature in its difference from ours.[21] Gracious movement of the divine toward the fallen human soul and our

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[13] II, v, p. 204, ll.70-72: "Itane autem nullum est proprium vobis atque insitum bonum ut in externis ac sepositis rebus bona vestra quaeratis?"

[14] III, i, p. 228, ll. 1-2: "me audiendi avidum stupentemque arrectis adhuc auribus … defixerat." III, ii, p. 280, ll. 1-2: "in augustam suae mentis sedem recepta".

[15] III, i, p. 230, ll. 17-18: "Ad veram … felicitatem".

[16] III, iii, p. 240, ll.1-5: "imagine vestrum tamen principium somniatis verumque illum beatitudinis finem licet minime perspicaci qualicumque tamen cogitatione prospicitis eoque vos et ad verum bonum naturalis ducit intentio". See also, IV, ii.

[17] III, ix, p. 264, ll. 17-18: "Igitur sufficientiae potentiaeque una est eademque natura."

[18] III, ix, p. 264, ll. 10-12: "Quod enim simplex est indivisumque natura, id error humanus separat et a vero atque perfecto ad falsum imperfectumque traducit." See, also, III, ix, p. 266, ll. 45-46.

[19] III, ix, p. 270, ll. 103-104: "'Invocandum,' inquam, 'rerum omnium patrem, quo praetermisso nullum rite fundatur exordium.'" The prayer is in the following poem: "Da pater augustam menti conscendere sedem, …" III, ix, p. 274, l. 22. On the role of prayer for this elevation, see Magee, *Boethius,* 141-149. John Magee refers to both Proclus and Porphyry in respect to the need for prayer, and this is of course right, the question on which they divide is not the necessity but the kind.

[20] V, iii, p. 400, ll. 101-102: "Auferetur igitur unicum illud inter homines deumque commercium sperandi scilicet ac deprecandi."

[21] I agree with Magee, *Boethius,* 141-149; see the differing texts cited by him which reproduce the ambiguity of Aristotle; on which and on the position of Aquinas, who is influenced by both Boethius and Pseudo-

prayer as the requisites for the simple intellection which leads to union with the simple divine unity[22] are constitutive of the Neoplatonism common to pagan and Christian in this period. Philosophy is religion and religion philosophy. But the identification of the two which is *The Consolation of Philosophy* has, in respect to content and spiritual method, more the characteristics of the Plotinian - Porphyrian tradition than of the Iamblichan - Procline alternative.

Dr. Saffrey reminded us that Plotinus "affirmed that one part of the human soul remained eternally on high, dwelling in the intelligible and divine realm from whence it never departed." The Iamblichian "return in strength of ritualism, and of mantic and hieratic practices," based in his notion that the whole soul descends completely, "becomes the ground of a conflict with Porphyry who defends the philosophic life and the memory of his master Plotinus in regard to these mysterious procedures for the sake of the divinization of the soul." Porphyry continues to defend "the superiority of philosophy as the way of salvation in comparison with all other religious teaching."[23] Lady Philosophy's success without recourse to religious acts other than verbal and mental prayer, praise and contemplation places Boethius on the Porphyrian side of what divides these streams in this period. I agree with Gerard O'Daly that the poetry in the *Consolation,* though evidently essential to raising the prisoner to reason and intellection is not oracular, it is not inspired in the Procline sense.[24] With Proclus and Dionysius, religious oracles and ritual acts become essential to philosophy's "way of salvation", its work to restore the soul to union with its principle. In contrast, with Porphyry and Boethius, philosophy piously does the work of religion. Do the Greek *Divine Names* and the Latin *Consolation,* show the two faces of Neoplatonic philosophical theology when it became Christian at the beginning of the sixth century?

In an article which Salvatore Lilla will publish in the proceedings of the "Colloque international: Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident", held in Paris last September,[25] the influence of Porphyry on Dionysius will be indicated. Just so, although Boethius evidently knows the Porphyrian presentation and development of Plotinus directly and through the work of Augustine, Proclus is also known and his influence present. Boethius, at least in the thirteenth century, was explicitly associated with the origins of theology as science, because Thomas Aquinas wrote some of his most important reflections on that subject when commenting on his *De Trinitate.* Aquinas finds in the *Theological Tractates* taken together the essential elements of a system of

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Dionysius, consult Hankey, *God in Himself,* Endnote 3, 165. A. Ghisalberti, "L'ascesa a Dio nel III libro della *Consolatio,*" in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani,* ed. L. Obertello, (Rome, 1981), 187-188 treats what is common to Boethius, Plato and Proclus in terms of the dependence and participation of the one seeking happiness on the divine beatitude. Participation is the language of the tradition's solution because it can leave open the question as to the sense in which humans possess intellect.

[22] Saffrey, "Theology": For Plotinus, "the yearning and destiny of every human is to mount up and return to the first principle, each finds his own unity in uniting himelf with the One."

[23] Saffrey, "Theology."

[24] O'Daly, *The Poetry,* 60-69.

[25] Salvatore Lilla, "Pseudo-Denys l'Aréopagite, Porphyre et Damasius," *Denys l'Aréopagite et sa postérité en Orient et en Occident, Actes du Colloque International Paris, 21-24 septembre 1994,* édités Ysabel de Andia, Collection des Études Augustiniennes, Série Antiquité 151 (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 1997).

Christian theology proceeding rationally from the simple unknowable divine unity to creatures and returning to its principle through Christ. This direction of spirit by which the cosmos comes forth and is redeemed, Thomas both discerns in Boethius and imitates. Here, moving in the opposite direction from the *Consolation,* is the thoroughly systematic mentality, which we and Thomas also discern in Dionysius and which for us is associated with the connection of both to Proclus.[26]

This spirit gives to the *Consolation* an unrelenting step by step logical structure. This order, in the half of the work we have followed, is intended to raise the fallen along a physical, emotional, aesthetic, rational and intellectual *itinerarium*, the stages of a complete psychological journey, determined by the Neoplatonic logic in accord with which the divided forms of mind are simplified. The last two books treat in a scholastic way questions about evil and freedom which arise on the journey and which must be solved in order to secure its result.

Salvation in the *Consolation* is a movement toward the perspective of the divine Providence, the pure intellectual vision of reality from the eternal present of the unmoving center, the simple dimensionless point.[27] The self is gathered and at home where vision, unity, goodness, and happiness meet.[28] While I judge the relation of religion and philosophy in the *Consolation* to be more that of Plotinus and Porphyry than that of Iamblichus and Proclus, the determination of Boethius to make logical form explicit in literary structure, and his development of that structure to include every persuasive art in order to be appropriate to every level and aspect of the soul as it moves toward the unity which is the good and our happiness, I take to be Procline.

The Divine Names, as indeed the whole Dionysian *corpus*, has also the obsession with explicit structural order which we associate with Proclus. It begins by considering the priority of the *de deo uno* and within its subject, the conceptual names common to the whole divinity, it proceeds from good as the first and preeminent. Our naming passes in order by way of being, life, thought, power. In the midst are, as Dr. Saffrey has noted, "great and small, identical and different, like and unlike, motionless and moving … characteristics which Proclus had himself selected when he had pulled them out of his own exegesis of the *Parmenides*", from which we return to perfect and one by means of omnipotence, peace and government. When the epistemological context of this naming is considered, along with the whole list of names and their ordering, it is hard not to see here the logical movement within God according to which the differentiated creation comes forth and returns. Here is then both a divinity and a cosmology.

After Boethius the next great meeting of these two opposing but interacting Neoplatonic traditions is in Eriugena and here the Procline side is above all encountered

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[26] See W.J. Hankey, "The *De Trinitate* of St. Boethius and the Structure of St. Thomas' *Summa Theologiae,*" in *Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Studi Boeziani,* ed. L. Obertello, (Rome, 1981), 367-375.

[27] See III, xi, p. 306, ll. 107-108, and IV, vi, p. 362, ll. 78-82: "Igitur uti est ad intellectum ratiocinatio, ad id quod est id quod gignitur, ad aeternitatem tempus, ad punctum medium circulus, ita est fati series mobilis ad providentiae stabilem simplicitatem."

[28] See III, xi, pp. 286-296.

through the Pseudo-Dionysius, just as the other is primarily known in Augustine.[29] I will conclude by briefly comparing the large scale structure of Eriugena's *Periphyseon*[30] and Boethius' *Consolation.*

I wish to attend to the reversal of the direction of movement in the two works. Whereas the direction in the *Consolation* is from multiplicity to simplicity, a gathering of the whole self, including dividing reason, into intellect unified at the still divine center, the direction in the *Periphyseon* is from the uncreated and unnamable simplicity above being, through intellect, reason, imagination and sense, as created and creative means, to the created material cosmos, from which the return to the uncreated is effected. There is much to recall Proclus: the beginning beyond being, the Plotinian interpretation of the *Parmenides*[31] used to determine a cosmology described in its descent from the divine simplicity, the assimilation of literary structure to logical order, and these have similarities to what we find in the Pseudo-Dionysius. But Augustine is also at the heart of this system. His psychological unification of the divine Trinity and the human soul is crucial for the coming into being of the divine simplicity beyond being through intellect and reason and the subordinate forms of mind. In this sense we have a reversal of the *Consolation*. The hypostatic telescope closed in Porphyry and in the *Consolation* is opened in Proclus, in Dionysius and, above all in Eriugena.[32] John the Scot unites the Boethius of the *Consolation* with the logic by which Aquinas connects the *Theological Tractates.*

His may be the first explicitly systematized Christian theological cosmology though it is surely not the last.[33] Its spirit is new and altogether optimistic in the sense that the whole world is something for the Christian spirit to contemplate and that

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[29] There is a large literature on this meeting in Eriugena, a recent article gives access: Giulio D'Onofrio, "The *Concordia* of Augustine and Dionysius: Toward a Hermeneutic of the Disagreement of Patristic Sources in John the Scot's *Periphyseon,"* in *Eriugena: East and West*. *Papers of the Eighth International Colloquium of the Society for the Promotion of Eriugenian Studies, Chicago and Notre Dame, 18-20 October 1991,* ed. B. McGinn and W. Otten, Notre Dame Conferences in Medieval Studies V (Notre Dame, 1994), 115-140.

[30] Considerations of the structure will be found in Mark Zier, "The Growth of an Idea," in *From Athens to Chartres. Neoplatonism and Medieval Thought. Studies in Honour of Edouard Jeauneau,* ed. Haijo Jan Westra, (Leiden, 1992), 71-83, Édouard Jeauneau, "The Neoplatonic Themes of *Processio* and *Reditus* in Eriugena," *Dionysius* 15(1991), 3-29, idem, "Le Thème du retour. Inédit. Résumé des cours donnés à Rome et à Genève en 1982," in *Études Érigéniennes,* Études augustiniennes 18 (Paris, 1987), 365-394. References to the text of the *Periphyseon* and to secondary literature supporting the particular interpretation I offer here will be found in Hankey, *God in Himself,* 52-53.

[31] Saffrey, "Theology": Plotinus "inaugurates then a new way of interpreting the *Parmenides,* by giving, to the hypotheses regarding the One in the dialogue, not only a logical but also an ontological signification, because, in his view, the hypotheses describe the successive degrees of being."

[32] See W.J. Hankey, "Aquinas' First Principle, Being or Unity?" *Dionysius* 4 (1980), 168-172.

[33] See W.J. Hankey, "Theology as System and as Science: Proclus and Thomas Aquinas," *Dionysius* 6 (1982), 88. Some assert that the distinction of being the first systematic theologian belongs to Origen, see Robert D. Crouse, "Origen In The Philosophical Tradition of The Latin West: St. Augustine and John Scottus Eriugena," in R. Daley, ed., *Origeniana Quinta: Papers of the 5th International Origen Congress, Boston College, 14-18 August 1989,* (Louvain, 1992), 565-569, for further developments see Rainer Berndt, "La théologie comme système du monde. Sur l'évolution des sommes théologiques de Hughes de Saint-Victor à Saint Thomas D'Aquin," *Revue des sciences théologiques et philosophiques* 78 (1994), 555-572.

contemplation is also a creative running through it in all its levels. There is no flight to the peace of an unmoving center. What makes this new spirit we cannot determine here, but certainly Gregory the Great's reclaiming of the world for the Church is already the beginning of the transition from consolation to creation.[34] In Eriugena the Christian West takes Greek Christian Neoplatonism into itself; the result will be Western Christendom's medieval and modern worldly confidence.[35]

Wayne Hankey

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[34] W.J. Hankey, "'Dionysius Dixit'," 132-133, Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great. Perfection in Imperfection,* Transfomation of the Classical Heritage 17 (Berkeley, 1988), 8ff., R.A. Markus, "The Sacred and the Secular: From Augustine to Gregory the Great," *JTS* 36 (1985), 84-96, R.D. Crouse, "*Semina Rationum*: St. Augustine and Boethius," *Dionysius* 4 (1980), 75-85, especially 84.

[35] See my "'Dionysius Dixit'," *passim* and the conclusion of my "Dionysian Hierarchy".