

Degrees of error in Proclus

Text 1: How sensations bring disruption in the soul according to *Timaeus*

ὥστε τὰς τοῦ διπλασίου καὶ τριπλασίου τρεῖς ἐκατέρας ἀποστάσεις καὶ τὰς τῶν ἡμιολίων καὶ ἐπιτρίτων καὶ ἐπογδῶν μεσότητος καὶ συνδέσεις, ἐπειδὴ παντελῶς λυταὶ οὐκ ἦσαν πλὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ συνδήσαντος, πάσας μὲν στρέψαι στροφάς, πάσας δὲ κλάσεις καὶ διαφθοράς τῶν κύκλων ἐμποιεῖν, ὅσα ἤπερ ἦν δυνατόν, ὥστε μετ' ἀλλήλων μόγισ συνεχόμενας φέρεσθαι μὲν, ἀλόγως δὲ φέρεσθαι, τοτὲ μὲν ἀντίας, ἄλλοτε δὲ πλαγίας, τοτὲ δὲ ὑπτίας· (*Tim.* 43d5-e3)

The upshot was that they (the sensations) twisted and distorted all three double and all three triple intervals, and the intervening means and bonds (3:2, 4:3, and 9:8) – which could not be completely unbound except by him who bound them together – and caused all kinds of disruption and corruption in the circles, wherever and however they could. As a consequence, the circles became only tenuously linked to each other, and although they remained in motion, their movements were irrational: they sometimes went in reverse, at other times from side to side, and at other times upside down. (transl. Waterfield 2008, slightly modified)

Text 2: The parts, or circles, or means between them can be in conflict with one another

ὁ μὲν οὖν ἐν τῷ Φαίδρῳ Σωκράτης ἠνιόχῳ καὶ ἵπποις εἰκάσας τὰς τῆς ψυχῆς δυνάμεις καὶ τῶν ἵππων τὸν μὲν καλλίονα θέμενος, τὸν δὲ χείρονα, τοτὲ μὲν διαμάχεσθαι φησι τοὺς ἵππους καὶ τὸν ἀμείνω νικᾶν, τοτὲ δὲ φέρεσθαι μόνον κρατηθέντα τὸν κρείττονα τῷ ἀκολάστῳ ἐπόμενον. ὁ δὲ Τίμαιος τὴν ψυχὴν διὰ τῶν μεσοτήτων συνδήσας, τῆς μὲν ταυτοποιοῦ, τῆς δὲ ἑτεροποιοῦ, καὶ τὴν μὲν τοῖς νοητοῖς συγγενῆ, τὴν δὲ τοῖς αἰσθητοῖς, φησὶ ταύτας τὰς μεσότητας τοτὲ μὲν διαφέρεισθαι μαχομένας ἀλλήλαις, τοτὲ δὲ κλᾶσθαι τῆς κρείττονος ἠττηθείσης καὶ πλαγιάζεσθαι παραφερομένας, τοτὲ δὲ στρέφεσθαι παντελῶς, ὑποταττομένης τῇ χείρονι τῆς ἀμείνονος· (*In Tim* III.338.22-339.2)

So Socrates in the *Phaedrus* in likening the soul's powers to a charioteer and horses, and proposing that one of the horses is fairer and the other inferior, says that on occasion the horses fight and the better wins, but at other times the superior one is overpowered and is only able to be carried along following the incontinent one. But Timaeus, who had bound together the soul through the means, one to make the same and one to make the other, [binding] the soul related to the intelligible and that related to the sensible, says that these means are sometimes discordant and conflict with one another, at other times are fractured when the superior one gets overpowered and are carried off course at an angle, and at other times get totally twisted when the better is demoted below the worse. (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 3: Three kinds of disruption

Αἱ μὲν διαφοραὶ τῶν κύκλων ἐναντίας ποιοῦσι φέρεσθαι τὰς συνδέσεις τῶν λόγων, αἱ δὲ κλάσεις πλαγίας, αἱ δὲ στροφαὶ ὑπτίας, καὶ ταῦτα τὰ τριττὰ πάθη θεωρεῖται μὲν περὶ τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν, ὁρᾶται δὲ καὶ περὶ τὴν ἄλογον εἰκότως· καὶ γὰρ ὅταν ἡ λογικὴ ψυχὴ σύμφωνος ἢ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν καὶ ὅταν διάφωνος, πολλῶ πλεον μάχεται πρὸς τὴν ἄλογον· (*In Tim.* III.340.30-341.3)

The discord between the circles causes the bindings of the ratios to be carried against [itself], the fractures make them at an angle, and the twists make them upside down. These three affections are examined in the case of the rational soul, but they are also seen in the case of the non-rational, reasonably so. For both when the rational soul is in agreement with itself and far more when it is in disagreement, it clashes with the non-rational. (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 4: First kind of disruption = ἐναντιότητα (A1)

ἢ τὴν μὲν ἐναντιότητα θεωρήσομεν, ὅταν δόξα πρὸς δόξαν διαμάχηται καὶ ἡ κρείττων μὴ καταβάλληται ὑπὸ τῆς χείρονος· πάντως γὰρ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ψευδοδοξοῦσιν ἔστι τι δόγμα ἀληθές, ἀφ' οὗ καὶ διελέγχονται ψευδοδοξοῦντες. ἢ πῶς ἂν ὁ Σωκράτης Θρασυμάχους καὶ Καλλικλέας καὶ τοὺς οὕτως ἀπηρυθριακότας διήλεγξεν, εἰ μὴ τι δόγμα ἐνῆν καὶ ἐν ἐκείνοις ἀληθές, ἀφ' οὗ κοινῇ παρ' αὐτοῖς ὁμολογηθέντος συνεπεραίνετο τὰ ἐξῆς; (*In Tim.* III.341.5-12)

Surely we shall observe its being against itself when opinion contends with opinion and the better is not vanquished by the worse; for in every case even in those who are opining falsely there is some true doctrine on the basis of which they will be refuted even when opining falsely. Or how else would Socrates have refuted even people like Thrasymachus and Callicles and others who are immune to blushes, unless there were even in them some doctrine on the basis of which, once it had been agreed among them, what followed could be concluded? (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 5: Second kind of disruption = πλαγία θέσις (A2)

τὴν δὲ πλαγίαν θέσιν, ὅταν δύο δόγματα ἢ διάστροφα καὶ τὸ ἀκόλουθον ἑαυτοῖς σῶζεν οὐ δύνωνται ἀνακόλουθα λέγοντα. αὕτη δὲ ἡ θέσις ἢ πλαγία ἐστίν· ὅλη γὰρ ἅμα ἢ δόξα πίπτει εἰς γῆν καὶ τῇ αἰσθήσει συμφέρεται. οὐκ ἄρα ἐστὶν αὐτῆς τὸ μὲν ἀληθές, τὸ δὲ ψεῦδος, ἀλλὰ πᾶσα ψευδῆς· οἷον τὸ τὴν δικαιοσύνην εὐήθειαν εἶναι καὶ τὴν ἀδικίαν σοφίαν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ οἰόμενος τὴν ἀδικίαν πονηρίαν, τὸ ἐναντίον αὐτὸς ἑαυτῷ λέγει (ἅμα γὰρ λέγει τὴν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ εὐήθειαν), ὁ δὲ σοφίαν λέγων ἑαυτῷ μὲν συνάδει, λέγει δὲ ὅμως ἄμφω διαστρόφως, διὸ καὶ δυσελεγκτότερος θατέρου καὶ ἀνιατότερος. (*In Tim.* III.341.18-28)

As for the position at an angle, [we shall observe it] whenever a pair of doctrines get into a distorted relation and are unable to maintain what is consequent upon themselves, making claims that do not follow. This is the position at an angle, for one's opinion falls to the ground all at the same time, and is dragged along by sensation. Hence it is not the case that it is in part true and in part false, but it is all false – for example the supposition that justice is simplicity and injustice cleverness. That is because he who thinks that injustice is wickedness is contradicting himself, for along with this he is claiming that justice is not simplicity, whereas he who says that it is cleverness is self-consistent, but nevertheless both of his claims are perverted, for which reason he is harder to refute and harder to cure than the other. (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 6: Third kind of disruption = ὑπτία θέσις (A3)

τὴν δὲ ὑπτίαν, ὅταν αἱ χείρους δόξαι κρατῶσι πάντη τῶν ἀμεινόνων καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς αἰσθήσεως τῶν ἐνδοθεν προβαλλομένων· ἐν γὰρ τῷ τοιῷδε πάθει τὰ κρείττονα δουλεύει καὶ ὑπόκειται τοῖς χείροσι. (*In Tim.* III.341.29-342.2)

As for the upside-down position, [we shall observe it] whenever the inferior opinions totally overpower the better ones, and sense-evidence [overpowers] that which is pondered within. In an affection of this kind the better is enslaved and subject to the worse. (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 7: Those disruptions can also be observed in the non-rational soul, one causing the other

περὶ δὲ τὸ ἄλογον πάλιν τὴν μὲν ἐναντιότητα θεωρητέον ὡς ἐπὶ τῶν ἐγκρατῶν (ἐπὶ γὰρ τούτων μάχεται τὰ ἀμεινῶ τοῖς χείροσι, φαντασία τοῦ καλοῦ καὶ ὄρεξις τοῦ αἰσχροῦ), τὴν δὲ πλαγιότητα ἐν τῇ ἐξ ἴσου συμφωνίᾳ τῆς κρίσεως πρὸς τὴν ὄρεξιν, ὅταν ἀμφότεροι φέρωνται ὁμοίως καὶ ἐμπαθῶς, τὴν δὲ ὑπτιότητα ἐν ταῖς ἀκολάστοις ζωαῖς, ἐν αἷς καὶ πάμπαν ὑπέστρωται τῷ ἀλόγῳ τὸ λογικόν. καὶ ὄρεξις, ὅπως εὐτάκτως ἀπὸ μὲν τῆς ἐναντίας ἢ πεπλαγιασμένη διάθεσις (ὅταν γὰρ μετὰ πολλήν

μάχην εἶξῃ τῷ ἀλόγῳ, τότε φέρεται πλαγίως), ἀπὸ δὲ ταύτης ἡ ὑπτία (συνεχῶς γὰρ ἐπικρατοῦν τοῦ ἀμείνονος τὸ χεῖρον τελευταῖον οὐδὲ δεῖται μάχης, ἀλλ' ἐξηνδραπόδισται καὶ ἄγει ὄπου βούλεται). (*In Tim.* III.342.3-14)

But again, in the case of the non-rational, being against itself should be studied as [occurring] in self-controlled souls (for in their case the better contends with the worse, one's picture of the beautiful and one's desire for the disgraceful); the horizontal [phenomenon] in the concord arising from equality of the judgment with the desire, whenever both are moved in a similar affective fashion; and the upside down [phenomenon] in the lives of the incontinent, in which the rational is totally flattened by the non-rational. And you observe how in due order there arises from being against itself the horizontal condition, since it is moved into the horizontal whenever after a lot of conflict it yields to the non-rational; and from this [position] the upside-down one, since the worse continually dominates the better in the end and there is no need for a conflict, but it had enslaved it and can take it where it wants. (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Text 8: Each kind of disruption corresponds to a kind of life: rational, non-rational, vegetal

καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν ἔσχατον εἶδος ζωῆς, ὡσπερ τελειότατον τὸ ἑαυτῷ σύμφωνον, τὸ ἀπλαγίαστον, τὸ κατὰ φύσιν, ἐν ᾧ τὸ κρεῖττον ἔχει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τάξιν ἀμάχως. καὶ γίνεταί τὸ μὲν σύμφωνον ἀπὸ τῆς σωφροσύνης, τὸ δὲ ἀπλαγίαστον ἀπὸ τῆς ἀνδρείας, τὸ δὲ κατὰ φύσιν τεταγμένον ἀπὸ τῆς δικαιοσύνης. τὰ δὲ ἐναντία τούτων ἀπεργάζεται τὴν μὲν ἐναντίωσιν ἢ διαφορὰ, τὴν δὲ πλαγιότητα ἢ κλάσις (τὰ γὰρ κλώμενα πλάγια γίνεταί), τὴν δὲ ὑπτιότητα ἢ στροφή· παντελῶς γὰρ ἀντιστρέφει τὴν τάξιν τῶν ἡγουμένων τε καὶ ἐπομένων. καὶ ἔοικεν ἢ μὲν ἐναντίωσις διασπᾶν τὴν μίαν ζωὴν τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ ποιεῖν τὴν λογικὴν ἑαυτῇ ἀσύμφωνον, ἢ δὲ πλαγιότης ἀλογίαν αὐτὴν ποιεῖν (αὕτη γὰρ ὅλη φέρεται πρὸς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὴν ὕλην), ἢ δὲ ὑπτιότης φυτοῖς αὐτὴν ἐγκαταλέγειν· ἐν τούτοις γὰρ ἡ κεφαλὴ προσερρίζεται (*In Tim.* III.342.14-28)

And this is the extreme form of life, just as that which is in self-accord is the most perfect, the unbent and natural form, in which the better assumes its proper station without a conflict. Its accord derives from its tempered behaviour, its unbent nature from its bravery, and its natural position from its justice. As for their opposites disagreement makes it against itself, fracture makes it at an angle, since things fractured are at an angle, and the twist makes it upside down, since the order of leader and follower is totally inverted. And it seems that being against itself tends to pull apart the single life of the soul and makes the rational faculty in disagreement with itself, while being at an angle makes it non-rational (for the whole of it is carried in the direction of the body and of matter), and its being upside down puts it in the category of plants – for among these the head has been turned into a root! (transl. Tarrant 2017)

Some questions

Q1 => How exactly can these kinds of mistake be described as disruptions of mathematical ratios?

Q2 => How are levels A2 and A3 different or exclusive?

Q3 => Why are Thrasymachus or *Callicles* good examples of A1 and not also of A2 (or A3)? (T4)

Q4 => It is possible to have a consistent set of true and false opinions. Would it be a case of A2?

Q5 => If each disruption causes the next one, does it mean that we all tend to become plants?

Text 9: Someone whose reason is a slave to passion is unjust but consistent

Ἴσως δ' ἂν τις ἀπορήσειεν, μήποτε τὴν τελέαν ἀδικίαν οὐ λαμβάνομεν ἐφ' ἑνός, ὅταν λέγωμεν καὶ τοῦτον, εἴπερ ἄδικος εἶη, διχονοεῖν πρὸς ἑαυτόν. τὸν μὲν γὰρ τοιοῦτον ἔχειν τι τοῦ δικαίου, καθ' ὅσον ὁ λόγος ἔτι δύναται μάχεσθαι τῷ πάθει, τὸν δὲ τελέως ἄδικον χρῆσθαι τῷ λόγῳ δουλεύοντι καὶ συνηγοροῦντι τῷ πάθει καὶ ὁδοὺς ὑπαγορεύοντι τῶν πράξεων. πῶς οὖν ἐν τῷ τοιούτῳ διχόνοιαν εἶναι συγχωρῆσομεν, πάσης τῆς ψυχῆς ἐν λεγούσης ὁ φθέγγεται τὸ πάθος, καὶ ὁρμώσης ἐφ' ὅπερ ἐκεῖνο κινεῖ τὴν ζωὴν, καὶ πραττούσης τῆς ἀδικίας ἃ δοκεῖ αὐτῇ, δικαιοσύνης οὐκ ἐνούσης; (*In Remp.* I.21.8-18)

But perhaps someone might raise a problem: Are we in fact failing to assume complete injustice in a person when we stipulate this – that if he were unjust, then there would be cognitive dissonance? After all, the person who is like this has some justice to the extent that his reason is still able to be in conflict with passion. But the person who is completely unjust treats reason as a slave to passion – a slave who advocates on its behalf and brings before it courses of action. So how are we to agree that there is discord in this sort of person, when the one thing that his entire soul says is that which passion utters, and it impels itself towards that goal to which passion moves its whole way of life? Injustice does what it likes in such a soul, while justice is not present in it. (transl. Baltzly 2018)

Text 10: Another ladder for dispositions of the soul regarding knowledge and error

Λέγωμεν οὖν πρὸς τὴν ἀπορίαν ταύτην, ὅτι πρώτη μὲν ἐστὶν ἕξις ψυχῆς, ἐν ἣ πάντῃ κρατεῖ τοῦ πάθους ὁ λόγος καὶ ἔχει τὴν ἑαυτοῦ τελειότητα τὴν διττήν, τὴν τε γνωστικὴν καὶ τὴν ζωτικὴν· ἐσχάτη δὲ ἐν ἣ πάντῃ δυναστεύει τοῦ λόγου τὸ πάθος, ὡστ' ἀπ' ἐναντίας ἔχειν ἐκεῖνη καὶ μήτε διορατικόν τινος εἶναι τὸν λόγον μήτε ὄρεξιν ἔχειν ὀρθήν. τούτων δὲ ἄκρων οὐσῶν, ἐκ μεσοτήτων ἢ μὲν ἐστὶν ἀμείνων, ἢ δὲ χείρων, ἢ δὲ μέση τούτων ἀμφοτέρων. (*In Remp.* I.21.18-27)

Let us say the following in response to this problem: the first [and highest] disposition of the soul is one where reason dominates entirely over passion and possesses its own highest perfections which are double – one a perfection of the cognitive [part], the other of the vital [part]. The final [and lowest] is the disposition in which passion holds power over reason in every way, with the result that it stands in opposition to the former condition and reason is thus neither capable of discriminating anything properly nor has any correct desire. Since these are the limit cases, there come from them intermediates, one of which is better, the other worse, and there is another one that is intermediate between these two. (transl. Baltzly 2018)

Text 11: Level B2 is a fight on both the cognitive and vital fronts

ἐὰν μὲν γὰρ μάχεται τῷ λόγῳ τὸ πάθος, κρατῇ δὲ ὅμως ποτὲ τὸ πάθος, ἀμείνων ἢ τοιάδε ἕξις τῆς ἐσχάτης ῥηθείσης καὶ χείρων τῆς πρώτης καὶ μέση τῷ ὄντι ἀμφοῖν. ἔτι γὰρ ὁ λόγος ἰσχύων ὀπωσοῦν καὶ κατὰ τὸ ζωτικὸν καὶ κατὰ τὸ γνωστικὸν μάχεται τῷ πάθει, διότι δὲ οὐκ ἔχει γνῶσιν τελέαν, ἀλλὰ δοξαστικὴν μόνον, ἐνδίδωσί ποτε τῷ πάθει· παρουσίας γὰρ ἐπιστήμης οὐκ ἂν ἠναντιώθη τὸ πάθος, ἐκεῖνης ἐκ πρῦμνης κοσμούσης πᾶσαν τὴν ζωὴν. (*In Remp.* I.21.27-22.2)

Were passion to be in conflict with reason and passion nonetheless sometimes dominates, then this sort of disposition [among the parts of the soul] is better than the one that is called the lowest, though it is worse than the highest and is genuinely intermediate between these two. After all, reason is yet strong to some extent and fights against passion both in terms of its vital and its cognitive [capacities] but – because it doesn't have perfect understanding (*gnōsis*) but only something more like opinion (*doxastikē*) – it gives in at times to passion. If knowledge were present, passion would not resist since knowledge orders the entire way of life from the top down. (transl. Baltzly 2018)

Text 12: Level B3 does not blind the cognitive power

ἐὰν δὲ μὴ μάχηται ὁ λόγος τῷ πάθει διὰ τὸ ἠνδραποδίσθαι κατὰ τὴν ζωὴν καὶ τὸ αὐτὸ τίθεσθαι ὀρεκτὸν τῷ πάθει, τὸ δὲ γνωστικὸν ἔχη πως ἔτι βλέπειν δυνάμενον, ὃ καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ἐκείνῳ ὁδοῦς ἐξευρίσκη πρὸς τὴν τοῦ πάθους ἀποπλήρωσιν, ἢ τοιαύτη ἔξις χείρων τῆς εἰρημένης τοῦ λόγου κατὰ τὸ ἥμισυ ζῶντος τὸ ἑαυτοῦ· γνωστικῆς γὰρ ἐστὶ δυνάμεως ἴδιον τὸ εὐρίσκειν τὰ προτεθέντα. (In Remp. I.22.3-9)

But if reason is not in conflict with passion because it has been enslaved with respect to its way of life and proposes the same object of desire as passion does, yet somehow its cognitive part is still capable of seeing and, because of this, discovers means for the fulfillment of passion, then this sort of disposition is worse than the previous one in which reason halfway lives its own life. After all, the discovery of means for things that are proposed is the distinctive feature of the cognitive power. (transl. Baltzly 2018)

Text 13: Level B1 consists in good opinions and γνώσις empowering reason against passions

ἐὰν δὲ γινώσκη ὁ λόγος ἃ δεῖ καὶ ὀρέγηται ὧν δεῖ, μὴ τελέως δὲ γινώσκη, τὸ δὲ μὴ τέλειον μὴ οὕτως ἔχη ὥστε δόξας εἶναι μόνον ἐν αὐτῷ βελτίστας ἀλλ' ἤδη καὶ εἰς ἐπιστήμην ὀδεύειν, ἢ τοιαύτη ἔξις ἐστὶν ἐγγυτάτῳ τῆς ἀρίστης, ἐν ἧ οὐδεμία μάχη ἐστίν, τοῦ μὲν πάθους ὅλως μαχομένου, διότι μήπω κρατεῖ ὁ τῆς ἐπιστήμης λόγος, τοῦ δὲ λόγου δυναμένου, καὶ πολεμοῦντος αὐτῷ τοῦ πάθους, κρατεῖν, διότι μὴ μόνον ἔχει δόξας ὀρθάς, ἀλλ' ὅπως οὖν ἐπιστήμης ἤρξατο μετέχειν· δυναμοῖ γὰρ αὐτοῦ τὸ γνωστικὸν ἢ τοιαύτη γνώσις καὶ παρασκευάζει συντονώτερον ἀντέχειν πρὸς τὸ πάθος τῷ μειζόνως ὀρᾶν τὸ ἀγαθὸν καὶ μᾶλλον ἔχειν κατὰ φύσιν. (In Remp. I.22.9-21)

Now suppose reason understands what is needed and desires what is needed, but does not understand perfectly. Nonetheless, suppose that the imperfection were such that only the best opinions were present in it and it was, in fact, already on the road to knowledge. This sort of disposition is the one that is closest to the best in which there is never any conflict. [In this imperfect condition], there is generally conflict with passion. This is because the reason that possesses knowledge does not yet hold power, but [a kind of] potential reason does, although the passions fight against it. This is because it does not merely have right opinions, but has in some way begun to have a share in knowledge. This sort of understanding empowers reason's cognitive part and prepares it to hold out more strongly against passion by virtue of the fact that it has a greater vision of the good and is more in accordance with its nature. (transl. Baltzly 2018)

A possible synthesis (with some additional questions)

A0: Consistent set of true opinions? (T8)	B0: Reason dominates passion (T10)
A1: Conflict between true and false opinions (T4)	B1: Conflict but right opinions and γνώσις (T13)
	B2: Conflict with victories on both sides (T11)
A2: Consistent set of false opinions (T5 & T9)	B3: Passion dominates reason but does not blind it: passion needs reason as a means (T9? & 12)
A3: Sensation and false opinions dominate (T6)	B4: Passion dominates and blinds reason (T10)

Q5 => Is there inconsistency in A3 and B4? (T9 suggests that the answer is no)

Q6 => Could the reason be blinded at least in some cases of A2? (Do T10 & T12 really exclude it?)

Q7 => Are B1, A3 and B4 stable conditions? Is B4 even viable?