

Is there a dialectical imagination in Proclus?

A. The problem

A1 - *Theologia Platonica* I.11, p. 55.4-9 (VG237) :

Τὰ μὲν γὰρ τοῦ ἀρρήτου καὶ ἀγνώστου καὶ ἐν ἀβάτοις ἐξηρημένου συγγενῆ πρὸς τὴν διὰ λόγων μῆνυσιν ἄλλοτριωτέραν ἔλαχε τὴν ὕπαρξιν, τὰ δὲ εἰς τὸ πρόσω προεληλυθότα καὶ ἡμῖν γνωριμώτερα καὶ τῇ διαλεκτικῇ φαντασίᾳ καταφανέστερα τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν ἐστί.

Some (of the divine causes) are akin to the ineffable, the unknowable, and the transcendent in unreachable places, they received a status more foreign to the expression by the way of reasoning. Others have advanced further, they are both more knowable for us than the former and also more apparent for dialectical imagination. (my transl.)

A2 - Standard Proclean hierarchy of cognitive faculties (see e.g. *In Tim* I.343.7-13):

νόησις (intellection)

διανοία (rational discursive thought, in particular dialectics)

δόξα (opinion)

φαντασία (imagination)

αἴσθησις (sense-perception)

B. One possible reading: λεκτική φαντασία

B1 - *In Parm.* V.1020.8-12 : Parmenides is about to accept to use his verbal imagination

Εἰ μὲν γὰρ πρὸς τὴν ψυχὴν, φαίης ἂν ὡς οὐ προσήκει τῷ νοεῖν τὰ θεῖα δυναμένῳ διὰ τῆς λεκτικῆς φαντασίας καὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐνεργεῖν, ἀλλὰ μένειν ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ περιωπῇ καὶ τοῖς οικείοις ἦθεσιν·

If in reference to his soul, you would say that it is not fitting for one who is able to cognise things divine to operate through verbally expressed imagination and the body but rather to remain “in his own conning-tower” and “in his own habit of life”. (transl. Morrow&Dillon)

B2 - *In Crat.* 51, p. 18.28-19.13: Verbal imagination is the power by which soul creates names

Ὅτι μὲν οὖν ἐστὶ τις ἐν ψυχῇ εἰκαστικὴ δύναμις, δῆλον (καὶ γὰρ ἡ ζωγραφία καὶ αἱ τοιαῦται ταύτης ἐξήρτηνται τῆς δυνάμεως), ἀφομοιωτικὴ οὖσα τῶν δευτέρων πρὸς τὰ κρείττονα καὶ τῶν ἐν συνθέσει φερομένων εἰδῶν πρὸς τὰ ἀπλούστερα. Καὶ πάλιν κατὰ τὴν αὐτὴν δυνάμιν ἢ ψυχὴ δύναται ἑαυτὴν ἐξομοιοῦν τοῖς κρείττοσιν ἑαυτῆς θεοῖς ἀγγέλοις δαίμοσιν· ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ δεύτερα ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς ἐξομοιοῖ πρὸς ἑαυτὴν διὰ τῆς αὐτῆς δυνάμεως, καὶ ἔτι πρὸς τὰ κρείττω ἑαυτῆς, διὸ θεῶν τε ἀγάλματα καὶ δαιμόνων δημιουργεῖ· βουλομένη δ' ἀύλους τρόπον τινὰ καὶ μόνης τῆς λογικῆς οὐσίας ἐγγόνους ὑποστῆσαι τῶν ὄντων ὁμοιότητας, ἀφ' ἑαυτῆς, χρωμένη τῇ λεκτικῇ φαντασίᾳ συνεργῶ, τὴν τῶν ὀνομάτων παρήγαγεν οὐσίαν·

That there is a certain power of representation in the soul is clear (indeed, painting and other such skills depend on it), since it assimilates subsequent things to their superiors, and the forms carried in composition to those that are simpler. Moreover, by the same power the soul can liken itself to its superiors – gods, angels and daemons. But through the same power it likens even the beings descending from itself to itself and, further, to those superior to itself. It therefore fashions images of both gods and daemons. But wishing to institute likenesses of real beings, similitudes which are in a certain way immaterial and products of only the essence of reason, and using linguistic imagination as an aid, it brought forth from itself the essence of names. (transl. Duvick)

C. *Lectio difficilior*: διαλεκτική φαντασία

C1 - *Theologia Platonica* I.9, p. 40.1-10 : Another difficult passage ([] = deleted by S&W ; <> = added by S&W)

Πολλοῦ ἄρα δεήσομεν ἡμεῖς τὴν πρὸ τῶν ἀκριβεστάτων τῶν ἐπιστημῶν ἰδρυμένην καθέλκειν εἰς τὴν ἔνδοξον ἐπιχείρησιν. Αὕτη μὲν γὰρ τῆς ἀποδεικτικῆς [προέχουσα φαντασίας] ἐστὶ δευτέρα καὶ μόνῃς ἀγαπῆν ἂν τῆς ἐριστικῆς <προέχουσα φαντασίας>, ἢ δὲ παρ' ἡμῖν διαλεκτικὴ τὰ μὲν πολλὰ διαιρέσει χρῆται καὶ ἀναλύσει ὡς πρωτοῦργοις ἐπιστήμαις καὶ μιμουμέναις τὴν τῶν ὄντων πρόοδον ἐκ τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸ πάλιν ἐπιστροφὴν, χρῆται δὲ ποτε καὶ ὀρισμοῖς καὶ ἀποδείξεσιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὄντος θήραν.

Transl. Saffrey & Westerink after modification of the manuscripts :

Quant à nous, il s'en faut donc de beaucoup que nous devions rabaisser au raisonnement relevant de l'opinion cette méthode qui est supérieure aux sciences les plus précises. Car ce raisonnement est inférieur au raisonnement démonstratif et il doit se contenter de dépasser les illusions de l'éristique [...]

My translation without modification of the manuscripts :

As for us, we are far from having to drag what is established before the most exact of sciences (i.e. dialectics) down to the examination of common opinion. For the latter, while it projects demonstrative imagination, is of second rank* and contented with mere eristics ; while our dialectics makes abundant use of divisions and analyses as main forms of knowledge, imitating the procession of all beings from the One and their reversion towards it ; it makes also use, sometimes, of definitions and demonstrations in its hunt for Being.

*or: "while it projects imagination, is second to demonstrative (reasoning)"

C2 - *In Eucl.* 56.8-16: The function of imagination

Διὰ ταῦτα γὰρ ἄρα καὶ συστάσεις σχημάτων καὶ γενέσεις καὶ διαιρέσεις ἀναγράφομεν καὶ θέσεις καὶ παραβολάς. Διότι τῇ φαντασίᾳ προσχρώμεθα καὶ ταῖς ἐκ ταύτης διαστάσεις, ἐπεὶ τό γε εἶδος αὐτὸ ἀκίνητόν ἐστι καὶ ἀγένητον καὶ ἀδιαίρετον καὶ παντὸς ὑποκειμένου καθαρεῦον. ἀλλὰ καὶ ὅσα κρυφίως ἐστὶν ἐν ἐκείνῳ, διαστατῶς καὶ μεριστῶς εἰς φαντασίαν προάγεται καὶ τὸ μὲν προβάλλον ἢ διάνοια, τὸ δὲ ἀφ' οὗ προβάλλεται τὸ διανοητὸν εἶδος

We use diagrams to illustrate the structure and construction of figures, their divisions, positions, and juxtapositions. We invoke the imagination and the intervals that it furnishes, since the form itself is without motion or genesis, indivisible and free of all underlying matter, though the elements latent in the form are produced distinctly and individually on the screen of imagination. What projects the images is διάνοια; the source of what is projected is the form in διάνοια. (transl. Morrow slightly modified)

Conjecture: if imagination can allow διάνοια to project mathematical forms, could it have the same function for dialectics ?