

Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene in Their Christian and Platonist Context

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Abstract

The thesis intends to promote the importance of Synesius of Cyrene as a thinker and a philosopher in general. First of all, this is achieved by stressing his influence on Proclus on the one hand and Pseudo-Dionysius on the other. Therefore, the thesis suggests, that in the Athenian philosophical school Christian Neoplatonist philosophers, such as Synesius were indeed read and discussed. The suggestion continues that it was under Proclus that the author of Dionysian corpus got acquainted with Synesius' writings. But while Proclus was probably ignoring the Christian tenet of Synesius' philosophy, Ps.-Dionysius held this very nature of Synesius' thought the most important to "Christianize Proclus", in other words to construct his own Christian metaphysical system to match it with the pagan counterpart. Thus, in the first chapter of the thesis, I stress the influence of Synesius' hymns on Proclus' hymns and Ps.-Dionysius' letters. The second and third chapter of the thesis intends to further emphasize the uniqueness of Synesius' thought. It starts with the rethinking of Theiler's and Hadot's thesis on Christian Platonist philosophers, who were denying the originality of their thought by making them dependent on Porphyry, the student of Plotinus. In the third chapter, I try to reconstruct the metaphysics of Synesius' hymns concentrating on the anthropology of the hymns that I argue to be Christocentric in its nature. This is again in order to emphasize the uniqueness of Synesius' hymns and to stress the novelties that he introduced in Christian and Neoplatonist philosophy in general. In the appendices I provide my own translation of the nine hymns of Synesius with some notes and remarks in the footnotes. There I also present my translation of the hymn Ὁ παντῶν ἐπέκεινα (O, the One who is beyond all), that was attributed to Ps.-Dionysius by Martin Sicherl. Appendices end with my research on the mentioned hymn. In that chapter one can observe how Synesius' hymns are echoed in the Dionysian hymn and it makes the attribution of the hymn to the authorship of Ps.-Dionysius even more credible.

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Introduction

In this thesis, I intend to carry out a complex analysis the nine hymns of Synesius of Cyrene, aristocrat, Platonist philosopher, politician and bishop of Ptolemais in Egypt. The hymns of Synesius are his *magnus opus*, which is full of symbolic meanings derived from the contemporary religious, mythological, and philosophical traditions. This thesis will be an endeavor to decipher those symbols. Moreover, it occurs to me that, in order to achieve a complex understanding of these hymns, the scholar should take into consideration two main points: first, one should study the general context of the previous works and letters of Synesius and, second, one should consider those traditions that had shaped the worldview of the philosopher. By taking into account the general context of Synesius' works, we may even find an answer to the question why he had chosen to write in poetic and not in a prosaic or concise manner. Thus, the main aim of my thesis is to examine the hymns of Synesius of Cyrene from the aforementioned two angles, that is, to scrutinize their background on the basis of his own works and to investigate the influences the philosopher had undergone not only from the philosophical but also from the mythological and the religious traditions.

The backbone of the first chapter is Plato's "Parmenides". The Parmenides was a crucial text in the Neoplatonist philosophical schools. The dialectics of the given dialogue constituted the core of Neoplatonist metaphysics, at least since Plotinus, who was perhaps the first to give a complex metaphysical interpretation to the Parmenides. This must have been the situation also in the Alexandrian Neoplatonist school of Theon and Hypatia, where Synesius received his philosophical training. It is less known that the Parmenides and its metaphysical interpretation was also fundamental for the development of Christian theology. This is the part where Synesius' hymns will be extremely important. First of all, one needs to answer whether or not the nine hymns of Synesius are connected to the nine hypotheses in Plato's Parmenides. One can indeed find the vocabulary of Parmenides here and there in the hymns, the emphasis

that the first principle is beyond being, and the impossibility to utter a word about it. Nevertheless, I think Synesius *per se* didn't use the second part of the dialogue as a pattern for his nine hymns. But it seems to me that it is still connected to the dialogue. What I think is that his works were associated to Plato's dialogue through Proclus and especially Pseudo-Dionysius. I think it was the latter who read Synesius' hymns in the light of Plato's Parmenides. To do so would be of immense importance for him in order to construct his first nine letters out of ten. The nine letters of Pseudo-Dionysius follow the pattern of the nine hypotheses of Parmenides.¹ He followed Proclus' interpretation of the hypotheses but altered them in the light of Christian revelation. For this reason he utilized different sources from the Christian philosophical tradition. The studies already proved that he indeed used various sources from Christian literature, but whether or not he utilized Synesius as well was not yet mentioned anywhere. Thus, in the first chapter of the thesis I will examine how the hymns are reflected in the writings of these two thinkers, I will mainly focus on Pseudo-Dionysius, and on how Proclus' and Ps.-Dionysius' interpretations alter Synesius' hymns and connect them to the nine hypotheses of the Parmenides. Therefore, the first chapter of this thesis and the potential outcome of these first issues will be the main contribution it will present in the field of research.

In the second chapter, I shortly discuss W. Theiler's and P. Hadot's conclusions concerning Synesius. On this account, I stress the usual danger that every scholar confronts in this field, i.e. their dependence mainly on P. Hadot's idea, who, in *Porphyre et Victorinus*, has noticed the influence of the Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides (*Anonymus Taurinensis*) on Marius Victorinus, and also on Synesius. As Hadot tried to reconstruct Porphyry's lost theory on the basis of the *Anonymus Taurinensis*, which he attributed to

¹ This fact was first discovered by Ronald Hathaway, but further developed in a more detailed research by Istvan Perczel, see, Ronald F. Hathaway, "Hierarchy and The Definition of Order In The Letters of Pseudo-Dionysius", The Hague, 1969 and Perczel, I. "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: The Fourth Letter in its Indirect and Direct Text Traditions" *Le Museon* 117/3-4: pp. 409-446.; 2004.

Porphry, on the one hand, and the philosophical speculations of Marius Victorinus (but secondarily also Synesius), on the other, he denied to these Christian thinkers any philosophical originality. I would argue that these hymns contain more traditions than only Neoplatonist, and that, in Synesius, we have an example of a Christian philosopher who is inspired by the Christian tradition as well. As an outcome we will at least question one of the main “prejudices” about Synesius and this will allow us to appreciate the uniqueness of his philosophy. In order to stress the sources that are independent from the Anonymous Commentary on the Parmenides, I will analyze some similarities between Synesius’ hymns and Gnostic sources that will suggest that he didn't depend only on one source.

Lastly, in the third chapter, I reconstruct the metaphysical structure of Synesius' hymns. This is again in order to emphasize the exceptionality of Synesius’ writings and to claim contra Bregman, that it was not Christianity as such, that was alien to Synesius², but a certain manifestation thereof, precisely a non-philosophical, unreflexive Christianity. The reconstruction of Synesius’ Christian metaphysics will focus on the Christocentric nature of his hymns, which, as I will argue, is what makes them remarkable in all Christian literature.

² Bregman, J. “Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher-Bishop” University of California Press, 1982, pg. 5

Chapter 1: Synesius' Hymns in the Context of Proclus' and Pseudo-Dionysius' Philosophies

1.1. "Paganizing Synesius" – Proclus and the Hymns of Synesius

Before I will turn to discuss how Pseudo-Dionysius used the hymns of Synesius, it is important to stress what the relations between Proclus' and Synesius' hymns are. The reason as to why this relation is relevant lies in the fact that if one clarifies the influence of Synesius in Proclus' writings, then it will allow one to make two following conclusions that a) although Proclus never explicitly mentions Synesius' name, it will give an idea that in inner circles of the Athenian academy they read and discussed his works, but Proclus was cautious to openly discuss the philosophical notions of the bishop of Ptolemais and b) if Pseudo-Dionysius were indeed a pupil of Proclus and member of the Athenian academy, as it is claimed³, then one can assume that he got acquainted with Synesius' hymns through Proclus. Moreover, he should have witnessed how Proclus was changing and refuting the Christian elements of Synesius' hymns. Thus, by altering Synesius' Christian philosophy and introducing his own, Proclus was at the same "paganizing Synesius"⁴. I think Pseudo-Dionysius' letters and probably the hymn

³ The latest proof for the author of the CDA belonging to the Athenian school's inner circles is Istvan Perczel's discovery that the most important Proclian work for the construction of the CDA is the *Platonic Theology*, in "Pseudo-Dionysius and the Platonic Theology," in Alain-Philippe Segonds et al., ed., *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne. Actes du colloque international de Louvain (13-16 mai 1998) en l'honneur de H. D. Saffrey et L. G. Westerink* (Leuven and Paris: Leuven University Press and «Les Belles Lettres», 2000), 491-532. According to H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, this work was only known to Proclus' close pupils and was published long after the death of Proclus, perhaps in the times of Simplicius, that is, not before the last years of the Academy; however, it was not much used until the Byzantine Proclus Renaissance in the eleventh century. See H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, ed., *Proclus, Théologie Platonicienne*, livre I (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1968), cl-clvi, especially cliii. See on this, most recently, also E. S. Mainoldi, *Dietro 'Dionigi l'Areopagita,' 116* and Mainoldi, E. S., "The Transfiguration of Proclus' Legacy: Pseudo-Dionysius and the Late Neoplatonic School of Athens" in "Proclus and His Legacy" *Millenium Studies in the Culture and History of the First Millennium C.E.*, Vol. 65, Edited by Butorac D. D. and Layne, D. A. Berlin, 2017, pp. 199-219 - He and others are using Perczel's philosophical work here.

⁴ In this context it is not relevant for us if Proclus held Synesius' Christianity as authentic. Either way he would try to cleanse Synesius' pagan philosophy from the Christian elements.

Ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα (O, the One who are beyond all) that is attributed to his name by Martin Sicherl⁵ were the responses to the mentioned endeavor of Proclus. What I mean is that by doing so Ps.-Dionysius tried to systematize what was abrupt in Synesius and in this way persuade his teacher about the correctness of Christian philosophy.

But what are the instances of Proclus' usage of Synesius' hymns? One can find some parallels between the two in the works of W. Theiler⁶, R.M. Van Der Berg⁷, and S. Vollenweider⁸. Given to the scope of the work, I cannot discuss all of these earlier findings in detail, but here I would like to present some of my own observations. It concerns Proclus' hymn four that was named probably by Gemistus Pletho as "common hymn to Gods" (Ὕμνος κοινὸς εἰς θεούς). Let us first look at the lines 1-4: "Hearken, o, gods who are holding the helm of holy wisdom, who, having kindled the anagogical fire, draw to the immortals the souls of the mortals, who have left the dark cave behind, being purified by the ineffable initiations of the hymns".⁹ There are several questions that could be posed with regard to these lines: it is not clear who are the gods that Proclus addresses here, but they are claimed to possess the wisdom, that should direct the suppliant during the ascent. Moreover, it is unclear what the hymns with the ineffable initiations are. Already Willamowitz and Saffrey outlined the obscurity behind these lines "Wilamowitz, arguing against ὕμνων (hymns), observes that it makes no sense to speak of

⁵ Sicherl, M. "Ein Neuplatonischer Hymnus Unter Den Gedichten Gregors Von Nazianz" in „Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies: Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75“, Arethusa, 1988 pp. 61-83. This attribution has divided scholarship. Werner Beierwaltes who had accepted the Dionysian authorship has later changed his view. In a later article, Pietro Podolak has also expressed his doubts, saying that the hymn remains unattributable. See Pietro Podolak, "Un inno dello ps. Dionigi l'Areopagita? Alcune osservazioni sul carme I,1,29 attribuito a Gregorio di Nazianzo," *Auctores Nostri* 5 (2007): 187-202.

⁶ Theiler, W. "Die Chaldäischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesios" *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, Geistw. Kl.* 18 (1942) pp. 1-41 (reprinted in: W. Theiler, *Forschungen zum Neuplatonismus*, Berlin 1966: 252-301. For the similarities see pp. 297-8

⁷ Proclus' Hymns; Essays, Translation, Commentary by R.M. Van den Berg, Köln, 2001, pp. 155; 211, 221, 236; 249-50; 268; 300; 311-12

⁸ Vollenweider, S. „Neuplatonische und Christliche Theologie bei Synesios von Kyrene“, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1984, pp. 37-41

⁹ Translation by me

unspeakable mysteries of hymns ('...But how can one imagine the "ineffable mysteries" of the poetry?'; cf. Saffrey 1981 '...It is absurd to speak about "the ineffable initiations of the hymns")'.¹⁰

My suggestion is that this hymn of Proclus alludes to Synesius' hymns. There are many places in Synesius, where God is described either as being wise, or the begetter of Wisdom¹¹, let's look at the following passage, "Yeah, Father the source of pure Wisdom, [530] kindle in my mind intellectual light from your bosom, shine into my heart from your power [535] the splendor of wisdom, and give me a sign for your sacred path that leads to you, give me your seal".¹² As we can see in this passage, the Father is equated with the source of sacred Wisdom, obviously hypostasized as Christ being the Wisdom of God. Here, as it is also in Proclus' case, the suppliant asks the Father to kindle the wisdom in him in order to proceed with the ascent. In both texts the outpouring of wisdom is described with the symbolism of light (φέγγος in Synesius, πῦρ in Proclus).¹³ "The ineffable initiations of the hymns" in this passage refers to Proclus' hymns themselves, but the similar tenet of the hymns is already present in Synesius. What I think is that this hymn of Proclus is actually the response to Synesius' hymn and it repudiates the latter's Christian character, this we will observe in what follows. If we closely look in the hymns of Synesius we can find the lines that might probably answer Wilamowitz's and Saffrey's concerns. In the hymn II, 80-86, we read the following, "I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with sounds and I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with the silence as well, for just as much as you hear the sounds, [85] so also you hear the intellectual

¹⁰ From R.M. Van Den Berg, 2001, pp. 231-2

¹¹ Here are some references: Hymn I, 156-7; 217-8; Hymn IV, 11; Hymn V, 30, etc.

¹² Hymn I. Translation of Synesius works here and after is mine.

¹³ Cf. also Synes. Hymn I, 375-76, 593-94, 698-99. "σὺ δὲ λαμπρὸν ἄναξ, ἀναγωγὰ φάη" is a refrain in Synesius' hymn I.

silences, O blessed One,”. Thus, it is in Synesius’ hymns that one can find the notion of silent or secret hymns that are also “heard” and appreciated by God. In the end of this chapter I will show how this notion is also related to the rites and mysteries that Proclus mentions here.

In the lines 5-7 Proclus alludes to Homer, “Hearken, great saviours, and from the most divine books incline to me a pure light, scattering the mist, so that I may well discern an immortal god from a man”. Here Proclus cites the passage from the Iliad (5. 121-132), where Athena removes the mist from Diomedes’ eyes so that he can discern Gods from men.¹⁴ Even if Proclus is not replying here precisely to Synesius, it is difficult to miss that he asks here the pagan gods to save him from the error, in which his Christian environment has fallen, namely to fail to discern God from the man Christ. Given the similarities of his hymn to those of Synesius, it is also possible that he refers here to the Christocentric element in the latter’s hymns. The mist that would have surrounded Synesius and that led him astray, according to Proclus, should be that he equated the God and man i.e. Jesus and held that Jesus was God. And this is something that Proclus wants to avoid both for himself in particular and for philosophy in general. This passage allows us to assume that even if it is not the response to Synesius it is still directed against Christians and thus we can claim that Proclus was acquainted with the ideas of Christian philosophy.

Proclus’ further account 7-11 is still closely related to Synesius’ hymn where they both give a negative characterization of the demons of the matter but have a quite different evaluation of the life in the body, which is a pure punishment for Proclus, who wants his soul to be liberated from the fetters of matter, while for Synesius it is only the enmattered passions that are caused by the demon and he aspires to a purification of both soul and body.

¹⁴ ὄφρ’ εὖ γιγνώσκῃς ἡμὲν θεὸν ἡδὲ καὶ ἄνδρα.

“that a daemon, doing deadly things, may not hold me forever submerged in the streams of forgetfulness, and would keep me away forever from the blessed ones, that a chilling punishment may not bind with the fetters of life my soul, which has fallen into the waves of cold birth but does not want to wander all too long”.¹⁵

[540] “Cast away from my life and my prayer the demons of the matter, who are carrying the death with them. [545] Preserve my body in integrity, impenetrable to the adverse damages (shames), and preserve my spirit undefiled, O King”.¹⁶

In the last three lines Proclus repeats the same motive as in the beginning of the hymn, but the allusion to Synesius here is even more evident, “But, gods, leaders towards bright-shining wisdom, hearken and reveal to me, who am hurrying to the path leading to the height (ὕψιφóρητον) track, the secret rites and initiations of the holy words”. First of all, here Proclus uses a neologism introduced by Synesius ὕψιφóρητον, “gird me with the lint of soft-spoken persuasion, so that my unconceiving mind (νόος ἀκύμων) might reap leisure, [35] and that I may not groan among the earthly cares, but from your upward leading (ὕψιφóρητον) streams I might water my mind with the birth-pangs of wisdom”. These two passages are the only instances where this word is used and both in terms of the soul’s ascent. This leaves impression that Proclus was following Synesius.

Lastly, “the holy words” here might again relate to Synesius’ hymns, that indeed speak about such rites and initiations that are hidden from those that are uninitiated “Halt, my courageous lyre, halt and do not reveal to the uninitiated crowd the mystical rites. Go and sing

¹⁵ Proclus, hymn IV. 7-11

¹⁶ Synesius, hymn I

about those things that are below, [75] but may silence cover those above”.¹⁷ Thus, one can understand the parallel in a way that Proclus strives to reveal whatever is hidden in Synesius’ hymns. But there is of course the major difference between the two philosophers. The difference is that Synesius stops his lyre when it approaches the Father that is completely beyond, but still the hymn-singer is united with the Father through Christ and the highest form of merging proceeds with the silent hymns. Whereas Proclus wouldn’t even play his lyre in the first place in order to unite with the One. For Proclus, the hymns are the means to attract the deities and to unite with one of the henads, and it is through this union that one participates in the imparticipable One. To reveal whatever Synesius wanted to hide and to strive towards that must have been interpreted by Proclus as the endeavor to unite with the henads.

In spite of fact that we might observe here the textual closeness one still has to be precautionous. It is not necessary that Proclus used some neologisms precisely from Synesius writings, instead one can claim that he was reading the texts from Alexandrian *milieu* that should have been common with Synesius’ own terminology. The problem is that we do not have the material preserved from many significant figures such are for example Theon and Hypatia. It might be the case that Proclus was reading them instead and utilizing their notions, but this again is the area for the mere speculations.

Still, from what was asserted above in this chapter we can suppose that, Proclus refutes Synesius’ idea that there could be some mysterious way, “silent hymn” through which one can become one with the transcendent God and interprets this idea as an attempt to unite with the highest entities i.e. henads that are also beyond being, but still they are not the One. This would be the highest form of hymns for him that he mentions in the commentary on the Parmenides. Furthermore, I think this will be the main point of disagreement between Pseudo-Dionysius and

¹⁷ Compare the following passages ἐπειγομένω δὲ πρὸς ὑψιφόρητον ἀταρπὸν ὄργια καὶ τελετὰς ἱερῶν ἀναφαίνετε μύθων. (Procl. hymn 4. 14-5) and “μενε μοι θρασεία φορμινξ, μενε, μηδε φαينه δημοισ τελετας ανοργιαστοισ” (Syn. Hymn IX, 71-3) and “ανετον δε ταρσον αιρων περι σας οργια βλαστας τα παναρρητα χορευσω” (Syn. Hymn V, 89-91)

Proclus and the former will further develop the Christian model of ascent found in Synesius' hymns that are Christocentric in their nature.

1.2. Transcendence of God and Cataphatic and Apophatic theologies

The fact that Pseudo-Dionysius was acquainted with Synesius' writings is observable by the quote he makes in the Divine Names concerning his master that he didn't just learn, but also experienced the divine matters¹⁸ and this quote he makes here is precisely from Synesius: "Just as Aristotle considers that those initiated should not simply learn but to experience and to become conform, that is, they should become apt, while the aptitude is irrational"¹⁹ The question is whether there is a further and larger utilization of Synesius' works by the author of the Dionysian Corpus. In this chapter, I will show that Pseudo-Dionysius has indeed used the hymns of Synesius in his first and second letters. As it was emphasized in the introduction, Pseudo-Dionysius follows the pattern of Plato's nine hypotheses to construct his letters. Thus, the first letter is an example of the negative theology, since God, following the first hypothesis of Parmenides, is claimed to be above being. God, according to Ps.-Dionysius, dwells in the transcendent darkness and whoever claims to have perceived God in the *existent* light is in error, for he perceived not God, but the light that belongs to God. Paradoxically, the knowledge of God comes out to be the ignorance concerning God in the transcendent sense. The second letter presents positive theology. God being the transcendent principle of principles is participated through the "gifts", among which the main ones are the Principle-of-divinity and the Principle-of-goodness. In this way, the author changes the Procline ontological pattern, which presented the participation in the One through the Henads, while in the Dionysian scheme the Henads are

¹⁸ οὐ μόνον μαθὼν ἀλλὰ καὶ παθὼν τὰ θεῖα DN II.9, 134, 1-2.

¹⁹ καθάπερ Ἀριστοτέλης ἀξιοῖ τοὺς τελουμένους οὐ μαθεῖν τί δεῖν, ἀλλὰ παθεῖν καὶ διατεθῆναι, δηλονότι γενομένους ἐπιτηδείους· καὶ ἡ ἐπιτηδειότης δὲ ἄλογος Cf. Dion 48a, Ch. 8

replaced by the “Participations”, among which the most important are the Word and the Spirit. In what follows, I will show how these images and patterns that we have in Pseudo-Dionysius’ letters are also present in the hymns of Synesius that will make it plausible to assume that Pseudo-Dionysius was acquainted with Synesius’ writings.

Similarly to Pseudo-Dionysius’ first letter, in various places of Synesius’ hymns one comes across the understanding of God that is beyond being. “How is that That which is beyond everything (ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα), is also beyond the Principle-of-divinity and beyond the Principle-of-Goodness”? This is similar in Synesius i.e. God is above and beyond both the Gods and being, “Mind that is before insubstantiality, beyond the gods, [165] beyond the intellects.”

According to the first letter “the ignorance according to God goes unnoticed by those who have the light that is and the knowledge of the beings”, that is to say, although the light and knowledge belongs to God, nevertheless he is beyond both the existent light and knowledge. This idea, together with the Parmenides’ language, one can also find in the first hymn of Synesius, “You are the Begetter, you are the Begotten, you are the Enlightener, you are the Shining, [195] you are the Manifest, you are the Hidden, Light hidden by its own brightness. One and All, [200] One in itself, and through All”. And “Who has decided about a cut [255] in the unspeakable things? – The godless temerities of blind mortals with crafty tongues”. In the first passage Synesius, similarly to Ps.-Dionysius, describes the light of God in which God is not revealed i.e. he is beyond the light; the second passage is attributed to those people who think to perceive the transcendent God through their own knowledge (language). But in Synesius’ hymns God dwells in the darkness or in the abyss and the mind in order to return to the source as it is in the ninth hymn returns to its origin, “Blessed is the one, who after

the destinies, after toils, after the worries that rejoice in earthly things [115] has followed the paths of the mind and saw the abyss, that shines with divine rays”²⁰

Furthermore, in Synesius’ hymns as it is in the metaphysical system of Ps.-Dionysius the manifestation of the highest principle is the Trinity. Moreover, Ps-Dionysius’ ideas on *principles* might also be influenced by Synesius. First of all, in his second letter the author claims that the God is “the transcendent principle of all the principles” that is similar to Synesius’ claim in the second hymn, where the transcendent God is characterized as “the Principle of principles”²¹.

Thus, in order to re-interpret the first and second hypotheses of the Parmenides in terms of Christian philosophy, the hymns of Synesius could be a unique source for Ps.-Dionysius. He could find many passages in Synesius’ hymns on the apophatic and cataphatic methods concerning God, probably the most vivid example for that are the following lines, “I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with sounds and I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with the silence as well, for just as much as you hear the sounds, [85] so also you hear the intellectual silences, O blessed One,”.²² Ps.-Dionysius’ claims towards the principles, substitution of the Henads with the trinity *per se*, are all present in Synesius. This makes the latter the perfect source for Ps.-Dionysius to construct his Christian philosophy in terms of negative and positive theology, along with the peculiarity of God’s transcendent nature. Thus, the Christian philosophy expressed in these terms will also be graspable to the Neoplatonist philosophical *milieu*. And to make it comprehensible for the pagan philosophers as well is what I think was one of the main aims for the author of Dionysian Corpus.

²⁰ Hymn IX

²¹ Hymn II, 63

²² Hymn II

1.3. The Christology in Synesius' Hymns and Dionysian Letters

In this chapter I will examine the Christological notions in the hymns III-IV and how they are connected with the epistles III and IV of Pseudo-Dionysius. The questions that need to be answered are the following: are there any relations between the two texts and can one actually speak about some kind of dependence? My answer will be affirmative and the main reason for that concerns precisely the Christology.

Interestingly, in both texts the third hymn and the third letter are the first instances when Christ's name is introduced. If we accept the influences stressed in the last chapter, then, one can assume that Ps.-Dionysius continues to follow the pattern of the hymns and, similarly to Synesius, introduces his own Christology in the third letter. It is the fact that the third hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* was considered to be about the soul, although with different interpretations on what kind of soul was concerned. Near the beginning of the third letter of Ps.-Dionysius we read: "As for the manlovingness (*φιλανθρωπίας*) of Christ, I think the theology hints to this as well: that the one who is above being came forth from being hidden and was revealed among us in a form of human substance".²³ First of all, I want to focus on the notion *φιλανθρωπίας*. Christ's manlovingness is thought to be denoting the soul of Christ.²⁴ This is considered to be Pseudo-Dionysius' innovation. What I mean is that, if in the philosophical system of Iamblichus the third hypothesis was dealing with the variety of higher beings i.e. angels, demons, and heroes and if, in Proclus' case it was about the non-divine beings, then in Ps.-Dionysius' thought the hypothesis turns out to be about the very highest soul, that is of Christ's. Next, the soul of Christ, according to Ps.-Dionysius, is concealed even

²³ Translation is mine.

²⁴ Perczel, I. "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite: The Fourth Letter in its Indirect and Direct Text Traditions" pp. 417-421

after it is shown forth, “But it is hidden even after the revelation, or to put it more divinely, even *in* the revelation”. Further, Christ’s soul is regarded to be a mediator between the embodied substance of man and the the Super-substantial. It is Christ’s soul that reveals God and also reveals what it means to be truly man. Thus, the soul of Christ in Ps.-Dionysius is to be considered the path to the transcendent God.

Christological aspects present in Dionysian letters share similarities with Synesius’ texts. In the first lines of hymn III we read the following “The holy travail of the bride revealed the form of a man, who came to the mortals as a light-bearer from the Source”. And in the fourth hymn “for he (Father) gave you as a principle of becoming to the worlds, [15] so that you may bring down forms (μορφάς) for bodies from the intellectual beings” We can observe that in Synesius the Son is claimed to be a transmitter as well, bringing the form (μορφάν) to men. Thus, my suggestion implies that in the letters of Ps.-Dionysius “the form” of Synesius’ hymns was interpreted to be a substance of man. This is all the more natural, because behind both texts there lies Phil. 2:6-7: “being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant (μορφὴν δούλου λαβών), and was made in the likeness of men.” Next, when Ps.-Dionysius speaks about the soul of Christ (φιλανθρωπία) as a mediator, what is important to bear in mind is that in his previous work (*De insomniis*) Synesius’ regards imagination, that is equated with the soul in the mentioned work, to be the intermediary between the two worlds that of human and divine. Synesius mentions two kinds of mysteries. First are the official rites that are available to few and that are restricted by the officials and second are the dreams, that are available to all and no tyrant has the power to restrict them. It is in the dreams that individuals have the access to the divine realm *through* the soul (imagination).²⁵ And what is more important soul is also

²⁵ “In a word, the *pneuma* is a no man’s land (*metaichmion*) between the irrational and the rational, between the incorporeal and corporeal, and the common boundary of both. It is through this that divine beings make contact with the lowest level of being [i.e. matter]. This is what makes it difficult for its nature to be grasped by philosophy,

characterized with the manlovingness when it is mentioned that the soul has the universal nature to initiate not just a few but all into the divine realm, “It does not matter to God who is an Eteoboutades and who a Manes, just bought as a slave. The democratic nature of this <form of divination> is very humane (μάλα φιλόανθρωπον) ; its simple do-it-yourself quality is very philosophical; its unforcedness is pious; its universal availability, its not needing some water or rock or chasm in the earth to inhabit, is the most divine feature of all”.²⁶ The hymns in general share the connections in various places with *De Insomniis*²⁷. One can assume that Ps.-Dionysius knew both texts and the fact that he characterizes Christ’s soul with manlovingness might also be a hint that expressing Christological doctrine he was referring to Synesius and his hymns, precisely the intermediary nature of the soul in Synesius’ works.

Further, similarly to Ps.-Dionysius, in Synesius’ hymns there is the same understanding of the revelation. What I mean is that Synesius repeatedly stresses all over the hymns that although Christ is revealed he still remains hidden, or if he is outpoured nevertheless he resides in the source: “The ineffable travail of the Father’s will revealed the Son from his unknowable bosom (see Jn 1:18), and that [travail] manifested the fertile fruits of the Father and having revealed this there appeared the Mind that is plunged in the middle [that is, the Holy Spirit], [10] and even though poured out, both remain in the Source” and “You are the hidden seed of the Father that shone forth”²⁸ All the more so, Ps.-Dionysius seems to be following Synesius in that as well that in Synesius’ hymns Christ is also characterized to be an “ineffable sprout”²⁹ and this unutterable character of Christ that one observes in Synesius is formulated in the following way in the third letter of Ps.-Dionysius, “For this also of Jesus is concealed and the

for it takes the contributions it needs from both extremes – they are its neighbours, as it were – and forms in its single nature images of things very [B] widely separated from each other”. “On Prophecy, Dreams and Human Imagination, Synesius, *De Insomniis*” transl. Donald A. Russel. Tübingen, Germany, 2014. 137B, pg. 23

²⁶ Ibid. Pg. 37

²⁷ Compare for example Hymn I 570-575 to *De Insomniis* paragraph 8, where the exact narrative is repeated.

²⁸ Hymn IV, 13

²⁹ Hymn III, 10

mystery according him (his mystery) has not been brought out by any word or any mind, but even when it is being uttered it remains ineffable and when perceived unknown.” However, the thought of Synesius is more closely mirrored in DN II.7: “Again, that the Source-divinity is the Father, while the Son and the Spirit are, so to say, sprouts growing from/planted by God and, so to say, flowers and supersubstantial lights – this, we have learned from the holy Oracles.” It is a well-known fact that the second part of this sentence, “so to say ... supersubstantial lights” has been adopted literally from Proclus’ *De malorum subsistentia* 11,23ff, but hitherto it has not been recognized in the literature that the first part of the sentence is an adaptation of Synesius’ Hymn IV, 4-11.

I think there are two more aspects, where Ps.-Dionysius seems to be utilizing Synesius’ Christological doctrine. The first is related to the question that was a subject of debates in theological schools – whether or not the incarnation would take place without the first sin. Pseudo-Dionysius who is claimed to belong to the Antiochian school answers this question affirmatively. According to Antiochian school incarnation is the necessary event, for it entails the very nature of God who is copious with goodness and thus God cannot deprive the substance of man to have a share in divinity. “because of the abundance of this (that is, because of the abundance of this supersubstantiality) he came into substance, he became substance above substance and he was doing the things that man does as being above man”³⁰. Synesius’ understanding of the incarnation seems to be similar, in the first hymn one can observe, that for him incarnation and salvation of the creation is necessitated by god’s own goodness, thus it is his goodness that makes Christ’s descent to be necessary. Therefore, since it is necessary, it is not perceived to be marvelous. In the following passage, in which Synesius describes Christ’s descent he sums up the mentioned idea, “Having sprung out of you he remains in you, in order that he may govern all by means of wise inspirations, [410] and may govern the depth of the

³⁰ Ps. D. Letter IV

grey-haired aeons, govern the layers of the steep [that is, hierarchically arranged] world [415] even to the lowest cave of the beings that have received the earthly lot, and shining forth into the holy minds, he might dissolve [420] the pains and worries of the living mortals – he, the ruler of beneficences, who chases away affliction. It is no wonder that God, [425] the demiurge of the world, keeps away evil from his own works.

The last similarity I would like to mention concerns the “divine ray” in the Dionysian corpus. According to Ps.-Dionysius, one cannot have the direct access to the source of the Father that is transcendent rather only with its divine ray that is equated with Christ.³¹ Interestingly, the case is the same in Synesius, where the Transcendent Father is unapproachable and it is the light or the beam of Father that is also equated with Christ through which one can connect with the Father “You yourself are the light emanating from the Source, the Ray that has shone forth together with the Father who, having smashed the dark matter [15] illuminate the revered souls.”³² Here again, the concept of φῶς παγαῖον/συλλάμψας ἀκτὶς πατρὶ is directly adopted by Dionysius, who speaks about the “Ray emanating from the Source” being the Son emanating from the Father³³.

Thus, one can assume that even though in Synesius’ hymns it wasn’t formulated very explicitly but the fact is that it is Synesius, whose writings bear the character that is later present in Pseudo-Dionysius’ works. We can assert that for Pseudo-Dionysius, while interpreting Proclus’ philosophical system and trying to “Christianize” it, one of the best options to rely on and use for this task was to elaborate upon Synesius’ hymns. All the more so, given the fact that Proclus himself must have been acquainted with the hymns and by the synthesis of Proclus’ philosophy that is pagan and Synesius’ philosophy that can be considered Christian Ps.-Dionysius might have wanted to demonstrate to his mentor that the two can actually come

³¹ Perczel, I. 2000, pg. 509; 518-9

³² Hymn III

³³ DN IV.6, 150.1; CH IX.3, 38.10

together and that the Christian philosophy is in accordance with the Pagan, precisely with Proclus' own philosophy.

1.4. θεῖος γνῶφος and Matter in The Context of Synesius' Fifth Hymn

Proclus' interpretation of the fifth hypothesis of the Parmenides was that it concerned matter. Although its existence derived from the existence of the One, still in the fifth hypothesis according to Proclus, matter didn't have any share in the One. Obviously, Pseudo-Dionysius follows Proclus' interpretation and in the fifth letter presents the antithesis of the first. This should be the meaning of the "divine mist" (ὁ θεῖος γνῶφος) in the beginning of the fifth letter, "Divine mist is the "unapproachable light" in which God is said to dwell". Thus, γνῶφος is the antithesis of the darkness (σκότος) of the first letter, corresponding to the structure of the first and fifth hypothesis of Plato's Parmenides. It is still not clear whether θεῖος γνῶφος represents matter in Ps.-Dionysius' letter and one might doubt whether it really follows Proclus in this case. But if we accept the main assumption of the present thesis, that Pseudo-Dionysius was

following not only Proclus, but also Synesius then it will become clear that the subject of the current letter is indeed a sort of matter. I will explain this in what follows.

Thus, if Ps.-Dionysius was reading Synesius' hymns with the intention to relate them to the nine hypotheses of Parmenides, then one can claim that the fifth hymn indeed would give the reasons to be re-interpreted in that way. Interestingly, just like Ps-Dionysius' letter, the fifth hymn starts with the light imagery. Moreover, it emphasizes the coming of the light after the darkness, just like to be the antithesis of *Parmenides*' first hypothesis "Again light, again dawn, again day shines forth after the nocturnal darkness". Further, the fifth hymn would be extremely important for Ps.-Dionysius since the subject of the first and second half of the hymn is the matter, "Ether hid the back of the matter with many waves, mounting upon the most subtle fire, so that the glorious moon might cut its (ether's) hindermost edge; but above the eight vortexes [15] of the star-borne orbits there is a stream deprived of stars, which is moving the spheres enveloped in its bosom, that are running in opposite direction – [this sphere] is dancing around the great mind, [20] who has covered grey-haired layers the summits of the World-King. And next – blessed silence hides the inseparable separation of the intellectual and intelligible".

As we can see in the given lines according to Synesius the God that is transcendent dwells beyond the eight vortexes in the "blessed silence" and there is the ether which as it seems hides the transcendent God from the matter.

One might speculate whether Synesius *per se* while writing the fifth hymn had the intention to compose the antithesis of Parmenides' first hypothesis? Probably not, but Pseudo-Dionysius, while trying to transform the Neoplatonist philosophy in Christian terms and to "Christianize Proclus", was utilizing various Christian sources and applying them to the nine hypotheses of Parmenides. If we view it in this way, then it becomes clear that the fifth hymn of Synesius would be the perfect model for him. The reasons for this are simple: it depicted the rise of light after the darkness, which followed with the narrative on matter that is also separated

from the transcendent source. Thus, if we assume, that Ps.-Dionysius followed the pattern of Synesius' hymns then in the light of Synesius' hymn V, we can conclude that θεῖος γνῶφος in the fifth letter indeed concerns the matter and shows how it is withdrawn from the highest principle.

1.5. Descent into the Hell

In this chapter I will analyze the connections between Synesius' hymn VIII and Pseudo-Dionysius' Eighth letter. I think, in this case we have the most striking evidence that Ps. Dionysius indeed used and was acquainted with Synesius' hymns. The evidence mentioned is about the image of Christ's descent into hell, which is going to be the quintessence for our discussion.

As it has been demonstrated, there are many *hapax legomena* in the eighth letter and the author's usage of terms and images come from various Christian sources mingled with the passages from Pagan Philosophy³⁴. Here Ps.-Dionysius again follows the pattern of Plato's Parmenides and in order to demonstrate in Christian terms the outcomes for the others in case of the relative non-existence of the one, that is the eighth hypothesis of Parmenides, presents the results following from a putative relative non-existence of the man-loving God.³⁵ And for this he describes the image of hell, where the sinners are being pushed to be tormented. But my suggestion will be that in order to introduce the Christian account of the eighth hypothesis, Pseudo-Dionysius again turns to Synesius' hymns and uses the vision of hell that is present in the hymn VIII. This particular hymn of Synesius with its image of Christ's descent into hell would have been of tremendous importance for Ps.-Dionysius for yet another reason, since Synesius also expresses the idea of universal salvation.

First of all, I would like to emphasize some similarities between the symbols of the two texts. In both texts there are the mention of serpents, who are expelled from heaven by Christ himself in Synesius and who dwell in the hell in the eighth letter. Ps.-Dionysius should also be following Synesius in his usage of a passage from the Phaedrus in the relation with Christ.

In the Phaedrus, in the account of the soul's ascent we read that some souls, those of the immortals, reach the place on the outer surface of heaven: ἔστησαν ἐπὶ οὐρανοῦ νότῳ. Synesius utilizes this passage to describe Christ's ascent and his *locus* in heaven: [55] "But you, having sprung the wings, reached the back of the blue-vaulted heaven, you stood in the undefiled spheres of the mind"³⁶. (Σύ δὲ ταρσόν ἐλάσσας, κυανάντυγος οὐρανοῦ ὑπερήλαο νότων), Similarly in Ps.-Dionysius' eighth letter, when Carpus sees the Christ for the first time in the

³⁴ For the detailed review see: Ronald F. Hathaway, 1969, pp. 85-104, esp. 88-93

³⁵ Ep. VIII, 4, 1096 A, 185, 3-4

³⁶ Hymn VIII

heaven he observes that Christ stands on the back of the sky with the angels around him³⁷, “καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ νότῳ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπείρων ἀνθρωποειδῶς αὐτῷ παρεστηκότων ἀγγέλων”

All the more so, I think the image of Christ reaching out a helping hand to the sinners in hell (χεῖρα ἀγαθὴν ὀρέγειν) might also be taken from Synesius, but in this case from the hymn IX, in which there is also a symbolism of the helping hand of God, “It is a labor to stretch the whole heart with the whole wings of the up-leading love. [120] Just confirm your strife by the songs that lead to the intellectual realitz; and then, the Begetter will appear close to you and will stretch his hand (χεῖρας ὀρεγνύς); for a Ray will run to your encounger [125] and enlighten your paths, and will unfold to you the intelligible plane – the principle of beauty”. Definitively, this is a reinterpretation of the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk 15: 11-32) and so is also the Dionysian text of Letter VIII. While the Father is the Father and the Ray the Son for Synesius, in Ps-Dionysius Christ assumes the role of the Father. Yet, the motif of the extended hand seems to be Synesius’ original addition, adopted also by Ps-Dionysius.

There are two characters in the eighth letter of Ps.-Dionysius Demophilus and Carpus. I think both of them are connected with Synesius and his hymns. Ps.-Dionysius blames Demophilus, who is the addressee of the letter, for insisting on the punishments for the sinners and repudiating them from the Church. Demophilus claims to be the guard of the sacred objects and not allowing impure to approach the pure, “I have providentially saved the holy things that were about to be profaned and I am still guarding them.”³⁸ In the further vision of Carpus the persons like Demophilus are shown to be pushing people to hell. These people are claimed to be the assistants of the serpents, thus, one might say that it is through them that hell is being strengthened and guarded. I would say, that in Synesius’ hymn VIII, these very people are presented in the image of Cerberus. Similarly to Demophilus Cerberus is the guard of Hades,

³⁷ Ps. D. Eighth Letter, 1100 A

³⁸ Ps. D. Eighth Letter, 1088B 11, 1088 C, Hathaway’s translation

who forbids the impure souls to escape it and proceed to the sacred realm. Cerberus also works in company with serpents and interestingly Synesius gives the “incredibly strong hound” (βαρυσθενής) two other names λαοβόρος and δημοβόρος³⁹ (Devourer of crowd, devourer of people). Thus, one can assume that by naming the addressee of the letter δημόφιλος, which means “populist” Ps.-Dionysius implicitly hints, that this populist who is thought to be a guardian of sanctities is actually a devourer of people, since he is the one by account of which the devil preserves the hell. Thus, the idea that δημοφιλος is really δημοβόρος in the sense given above and this is observable only if one reads Ps.-Dionysius' letter in the light of Synesius' eighth hymn.

Further, according to Ps.-Dionysius his whole account concerning hell comes from the holy Carpus, whose “mind through many purifications was most suited to receive the divine visions”⁴⁰. It is important to emphasize few details in order to proceed. The author states that Carpus woke up during the night as he was used to, in order to sing the divine hymns, but this time his dreams were interrupted. Afterwards, during the hymn, as he was cursing some fellows who were driving people to atheism, the vision of Christ came to him. I think there is a possibility to think that the holy Carpus represents Synesius.⁴¹ I think in this story Ps.-Dionysius combines different accounts on Synesius to create the given narrative. To justify this assumption, first of all we need to remember Synesius' *De Insomniis*. In this treatise Synesius indeed claims that through dreams one can receive certain visions. But in order to properly utilize the dreams, first one has to purify himself i.e. one has to know how to handle the visions. Synesius himself draws certain examples as to how he made use of the dream-visions for writing, hunting, and directing his future events. Moreover, I think the emphasis that Carpus

³⁹ Synes. Hymn VIII, 20-25

⁴⁰ Ps. D. Eighth Letter, 1097 B

⁴¹ According to Stiglmayr Carpus represents Nilus, an anchoritic monk, J. Stiglmayr, "Die Eschatologie des Pseudo-Dionysius," Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie 23 (1899)

received the vision during the night might be denoting the very fact mentioned by Synesius in a letter to Hypatia. According to Synesius during the night he received certain vision and being influenced by divinity he wrote the whole treatise “On Dreams” during half of the night, “The whole [book] was completed in one night, or rather in what was left of the night. That night also brought a vision that forced me to write it”⁴². All the more so, the accentuation made by Ps.-Dionysius on Carpus’ “divine hymns” might be hinting to Synesius’ hymns. Additionally, Carpus’ hatred towards the unfaithful person, who was driving people to atheism might remind us of Synesius’ extreme dislike of Andronicus, civil governor of Pentapolis, against whom Synesius was demanding excommunication and was actually equating him with the devil, claiming that he couldn’t have any share in the heaven, in other words, “pushing him into hell” in a manner of Ps.-Dionysius’ characters, “Let the precincts of no house of God be open to Andronicus and his associates, or to Thoas and his associates. Let every holy sanctuary and enclosure be shut in their faces. There is no part in Paradise for the Devil; even if he has secretly crept in, he is cast out.”⁴³ This might be compared to Carpus’ hateful prayer, “Standing there ready for divine converse, he was not guiltlessly vexed and disgusted, saying that it was not just for atheists to live when they make crooked the straight ways of the Lord. While saying this, he supplicated God to cut short the lives of both men suddenly and mercilessly by some stroke of lightning”.⁴⁴ And lastly, Carpus’ vision of the second crucifixion of Christ that is present in the end of the Eighth Letter might again be related to Synesius. During the controversy against Andronicus, It is Synesius who claims that he witnessed the second crucifixion of Christ seeing how Andronicus defiled the sanctities, “On that day, when he hung up the abusive lampoon on the sacred doors with an intention to insult the Christ, I witnessed the second crucifixion of God, both the sun and the people have witnessed this”⁴⁵.

⁴² Synes. Letter 154 (95-97), my translation.

⁴³ Synes. Letter 42, 62-65 =, Fitzgerald’s translation

⁴⁴ Ps. D. 1097D-1100A

⁴⁵ Synes. Letter 42, 21-24

Thus, I think, in his endeavor to construct the Christian metaphysical system from Proclus' account i.e. to re-interpret the nine hypotheses of Parmenides in the light of Christian philosophy, Ps.-Dionysius relied on Synesius' hymns. I think the example of the hymn VIII and the Letter VIII is one of the most certain evidence for that. Ps.-Dionysius took Synesius' imagery to depict the conclusions of the eighth hypothesis of Parmenides that according to Proclus results in a dreamy and shadowy reality. This kind of reality for Ps.-Dionysius is hell and the symbols of it in a Christian philosophical literature he found in Synesius, who was also using the imagery from Plato. Moreover, as we have seen Ps.-Dionysius' usage of Synesius is not limited only by the latter's hymns only, but it seems that he was also acquainted with Synesius' biographical and epistolary backgrounds and utilized them to create the narrative of the Eighth Letter. here, I think the examples provided make the claim plausible that Pseudo-Dionysius while composing his letters on the pattern of the nine hypotheses was at the same time looking at the nine hymns of Synesius.

1.6. Monad and Henad in Synesius and Ps-Dionysius

In this chapter, I will analyze the notions of the Monad and Henad as attributed to God in the writings of Synesius and Ps.-Dionysius. This time the passage doesn't come from Dionysian letters, but I think it is still of huge importance in order to see how he used Synesius' writings. In the passage of Divine Names we read, "You will find, so to say, that the entire hymnology of the theologians prepares the divine names in a revelatory and hymnic fashion according to the beneficial processions of the Principle-of-divinity. For this reason, in virtually all the theological doctrine we see that the Principle-of-divinity is celebrated as monad and henad, because of the simplicity and unity of that supernatural indivisibility, by which, as by a unifying power, we are made one and, by an above-worldly folding up of our divisible othernesses, we are gathered together into a God-like monad and a God-imitating union".⁴⁶ In the given passage as we see, Ps.-Dionysius attributes God with the pair of Monad and Henad, which is very rare in Christian literature. According to the studies of Istvan Perczel, the author here follows Origen, who uses the same pair in relation to God, "Therefore, one should not think that God is a kind of body or in a body, but that He is a simple intellectual nature, not permitting in itself any addition whatsoever.."⁴⁷

"[S]o that one should not believe that in Him there is place for more or less, but that He is entirely a Monad and, so to say, a Henad, and mind, and source, from which comes the beginning of the entire intellectual nature or mind".⁴⁸ Thus, Origen uses these terms to describe God who is both transcendent and possesses the simple intellectual nature. Ps.-Dionysius on the other hand uses the pair of Monad and Henad to describe *πρόοδος* (procession).⁴⁹ Here, I

⁴⁶ DN I. 4, 589 D, 112, 7-14

⁴⁷ "Non ergo corpus aliquod aut in corpore esse putandus est deus, sed intellectualis natura simplex, nihil omnino in se adiunctionis admittens"

⁴⁸ "uti ne maius aliquid et inferius in se habere credatur, sed ut sit ex omni parte monad, et ut ita dicam henad, et mens ac fons, ex quo initium totius intellectualis naturae uel mentis est."

⁴⁹ For the details of Ps.-Dionysius' utilization of Origen's passage see, Istvan Perczel, *God as Monad and Henad: Dionysius the Areopagite and the Peri Archôn*. Quotes from Origen and their interpretation provided in this chapter are from the mentioned article, along with Perczel's translations.

will argue, that in order to alter Origen's idea Pseudo-Dionysius was following Synesius' usage of pairs Monad and Henad that one can observe in the Hymn IX.

In the ninth Hymn of Synesius one reads the following, "The principle that flows from itself, Guardian and Father of the beings, Unbegotten, seated on a high seat [55] above the summits of heaven, rejoicing in the insoluble glory, God sits sturdily, *pure Unity of unities, first Monad of Monads*, [60] *uniting* and begetting the *simplicities* of the highest peaks through superessential births; having sprung from this place [65] through the first-sown form, *the Monad has ineffably poured out* and acquired a force that is endowed with three peaks. The superessential Source is crowned by the beauty of its children, who are rushing from the center and [70] are flowing around the center." One can assert that Pseudo-Dionysius' doctrine is closer to Synesius' rather than to Origen's, this can be claimed for various reasons. First of all, the terms used by Synesius describe the same process as it is in Ps-Dionysius' case i.e. the procession of the first principle. This first principle i.e. God is described in the pair of Monad and Henad. The emphasis on "Monad of Monads" and "Unity of unities" means that Synesius talks about the highest principle from which all the multiplicity derives. This Monad and Unity in Synesius begets the other principles in the *superessential births*, thus making them also undivided although they are divided, "In fact, the good principle of the mortal spirit was divided indivisibly: that immortal mind which descended to the matter, the offspring of its parents the ruling gods - a small one but belonging to them."⁵⁰ Therefore, similarly to Pseudo-Dionysius in Synesius' hymn the entities which are poured from the first Monad and Unity have a share in this nature. They are also united and they are the most simple in their nature since all of them are created in the likeness of the highest principle. Thus, in both texts mind although being divided is still undivided as it proceeds from that source and therefore being an offspring of the

⁵⁰ Hymn IX

first Monad and of the first Unity it also becomes one and united. Moreover, Ps-Dionysius uses the abovementioned passage of Origen, which describes the Origins of the mind and changes it to describe the return to the first principle. Now, what we see in the ninth hymn of Synesius there is the similar pattern. The mention of the first Monad and Unity is followed by the description of the soul's return to the first principle finally uniting with it, "Arise, my soul, drink from [129] the source from which good flows, [130] ascend praying to the Father, do not delay, leave earthly things to the earth; so that you may mingle with the Father, and dance as a god in God".⁵¹

One might make different conclusions from all of this. It is reasonable to consider the possibility, that Ps.-Dionysius, while using the pair of Monad and Henad followed only Synesius. But what I think is that the author of Dionysian corpus utilized them both. He followed the Neoplatonist philosophy of Synesius in order to re-interpret the middle Platonist notions of Origen. But the ideas of these thinkers were important for him since they were representatives of Christian Philosophy, but in this case he related Synesius' philosophy to Origen's as he was using them in Proclus' case. Thus, I think Synesius' Christian philosophy that was at the same time Neoplatonist was closest to Ps.-Dionysius own *Weltanschauung*. I think, by mentioning "theologians" in plural in the given passage he alludes to Origen and Synesius and perhaps his emphasis on the "hymnology" and "revelatory and hymnic fashion" of their writings might actually be a hint towards the hymns of Synesius.

⁵¹ Hymn IX

Chapter 2: One Evidence of Gnostic Influence in the Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene

In this chapter I will demonstrate one parallel and conceptual similarity that can be traced between the hymns of Synesius and Gnostic sources. The similarity concerns the linguistic uniqueness of Synesius i.e. the problem of new terms. With the example provided here I will show that by forming and using neologisms in the hymns, Synesius was encrypting certain philosophical or rather religious notions and doctrines. In this case it will concern Gnostic influence. If the argumentation provided here holds to be true then one might use it against Willy Theiler's and Pierre Hadot's conclusion, the very conclusion that they used to make on Synesius and the brief overview of which will be offered below.

Before we will address the ideas of the mentioned scholars I need to briefly talk about Porphyry, the Neoplatonist philosopher, pupil of Plotinus, who has the most important part in this issues. In a few words Porphyry's philosophy is claimed to be the pattern for the late Neoplatonist authors, precisely for those who were trying to construct the Christian philosophical system. In this sense Porphyry's works are said to be extremely important to construct not only Christian metaphysics but soteriology as well.⁵² This is the case with Synesius as well. It was Wolfram Gang in 1926, who first identified Synesius' *De Insomniis* with Porphyry's ideas.⁵³ Next, Willy Theiler⁵⁴, who studied the influence of Chaldean oracles in the hymns of Synesius also emphasized the influence of Porphyry on Synesius. All the more

⁵² Vollenweider, S. "Ein Mittleres Zwischen Vater und Sohn". *Zur Bedeutung Des Neuplatonikers Porphyrios Für Die Hymnen Des Synesios* in "Synesios Von Kyrene, Politik – Literatur – Philosophie" edited by Helmut Seng and Lars Martin Hoffman, Turnhout Belgium, 2012, pg. 185

⁵³ Das Traumbuch des Synesius von Kyrene, ub. Lang, W. [Heidelberger Abhandlungen zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte 10] Tübingen 1926. 39-45.67.81f.90f. Here I am following the observations of Vollenweider in his article, see Vollenweider, S. "Ein Mittleres Zwischen Vater und Sohn". *Zur Bedeutung Des Neuplatonikers Porphyrios Für Die Hymnen Des Synesios* pp. 184-185

⁵⁴ See Theiler, W., *Porphyrios und Augustin*. [Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft. Geisteswiss. Kl.; 10] Halle (Saale) 1933 [= Forschungen 160-251]. And Theiler, W., *Die Chaldaischen Orakel und die Hymnen des Synesios*. [Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft. Geisteswiss. Kl.; 18, 1] Halle (Saale) 1942 [= Forschungen 252-301].

so, he proclaimed Porphyry as the father of Latin Neoplatonism. And in the end in his various works, but especially in the book “Porphyre et Victorinus,”⁵⁵ Pierre Hadot goes on to argue on the authorship of the “Anonymous Commentary on Parmenides”. There are 95 passages of the “Anonymous Commentary” that are preserved until today, 89 of which are transmitted through Marius Victorinus’ writings.⁵⁶ These fragments P. Hadot attributed to Porphyry. The argumentations of Hadot, are indeed plausible, but they become arguable in the light of Sethian Gnostic sources, which Hadot didn’t take into consideration while making his claims. Although in his favor it should be emphasized that despite the fact that he was unaware of such texts of Sethian treatises as “Zostrianos”, “Allogenes”, or “Marsanes” as, according to Tuomas Rasimus, he only read “Apocryphon of John” in the Till’s (1955) edition of the Berlin Codex⁵⁷, his brilliant intuition still made him to assume that there might have been Gnostic “presence” in the Commentary. Nonetheless, through the attribution of the fragments to Porphyry, Hadot arrived to the further conclusion according to which he denied any original philosophical inventiveness to Marius Victorinus and withal to Synesius of Cyrene⁵⁸ claiming that they were dependent on Porphyryne account and their Christian philosophy or any sort of the philosophy that one might ascribe to them was deprived of any originality.

To come out with the contrary conclusion one ought to delineate the sources in these two authors. One has to make it evident that the sources provided are not in line with Porphyry’s philosophy, hence to make it provable that either of the mentioned authors could shift through traditions and were not reduced to one sole doctrine. Here I will observe how this is possible in

⁵⁵ Hadot, P. “Porphyre et Victorinus. 2 Vols. Paris, 1968

⁵⁶ For the detailed account on the transmission of Anonymous Commentary see. Bechtle, G. 2000, “The Question of Being and the Dating of the Anonymous Parmenides Commentary”, *Ancient Philosophy* 20, 393-414; Kroll, W. 1892. “Ein neuplatonischer Parmenides Kommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest”, *Rheinisches Museum Für Philologie*, 599-627

⁵⁷ „Plato’s Parmenides and its Heritage”, Vol. 2, Edited by, John D. Turner and Kevin Corrigan, *Society of Biblical Literature*, Atlanta, Pg. 82

⁵⁸ Hadot, Porphyre et Victorinus I 461-474; cf. „Porphyre et Victorinus“ Questions et hypothèses 123 („firm kinship that exists between the trinitarian theology of Synesius’ hymns and that of Victorinus”

the case of Synesius. In this respect one ought to examine the existent differences in the triadic system of Porphyry on the one hand and Synesius on the other and compare them to the Sethian doctrines. In case of the Anonymous Commentary the triadic structure is the following Being-life-mind, although as stated by Proclus' in the triadic system used by Porphyry mind preceded life and thus we do not have any evidence that the structure displayed in the Commentary was also used by Porphyry. This applies to the self-producing nature of the mind as well. Now in the case of Synesius and Gnostic sources we have the exact similar structure that is also in accordance with the Anonymous Commentary. In the Apocryphon of John the first principles are constituted in the following way: Father/The Invisible Spirit - Mother/Barbelo - Son/Autogenes. Correspondingly, Synesius uses the following triad: Father -Holy-Spirit - Son/αὐτογενής (Self-producing). This testimony makes it more probable that on the one hand the Anonymous Commentary could be authored by someone from the Gnostic circles and on the other hand it makes Synesius' dependence on them more credible.

Furthermore, as it is observed by Rasimus⁵⁹ there are three fragments in Victorinus' writings (especially §41 Hadot) that share parallel with Zostrianos and they are not present in the Porphyrian philosophy. The problematic concepts mentioned here are (1) God as πνεῦμα (Soul), (2) τριδύναμος (Endowed with three faculties), and (3) μακάριος (Blessed One). In the Sethian treatises these concepts are applied to the triad mentioned above and what needs to be accentuated is that chronologically they are even before Plotinus and it renders it probable to assume, that Plotinus' philosophical *milieu* was being influenced by Gnostic innovations. In any case, what I would like to mention here is the fact that these concepts, in point of fact, can be traced in Synesius' hymns as well, all the more so, with the relation to the Trinity, as it is in

⁵⁹ „Plato's Parmenides and its Heritage", pp. 89-90

the Sethian treatises. In the Ninth hymn, l. 66, Synesius uses the notion τρικόρυμβος ἄλκᾳ (Power endowed with three peaks). Now what we need to understand is that these two terms are denoting the same process related to the same principles. “Especially significant is the term τριδύναμος, which occurs in some later Neoplatonic authors, and which is generally considered to be a Gnostic innovation. This Triple-Power is, as noted above, a metaphysical tool used to describe the derivation of multiplicity from unity in three phases. Similar expressions, τριγλώχης and τριοὔχος, are found in the *Chaldean Oracles* (frgs. 2, 26), but the term τριδύναμος itself is already found in the second-century Sethian *Ap. John*, denoting the second principle”.⁶⁰ Now there is the same process in case of Synesius’ ninth Hymn: the first principle that is labeled as “Unity of unities and Monad of monads” (Hymn 9, 58-9) having rushed on to become manifested it poured itself into the second principle that here is called τρικόρυμβος ἄλκᾳ⁶¹ and in this way it turned from oneness to multiplicity. Hence, we can observe that the terms τρικόρυμβος ἄλκᾳ in Synesius and τριδύναμος in Gnosticism delineate one and the same process. In addition, when Synesius, in various places throughout the hymns, refers to the third principle, to the addressee of the hymns i.e. Christ he uses the term μάκαρ as the third principle is labeled in the Sethian treatises as well i.e. μακάριος. Thus, by forming the new term τρικόρυμβος ἄλκᾳ, what Synesius tries to accomplish is that to use the Gnostic idea on the relations between the first principles for his own philosophy. The hymns of Synesius are the endeavor to construct a Christian metaphysical system. Here coinage symbolizes the very fact, that the author while constructing such metaphysics doesn’t in every respect depend on the sources he uses, but even when it concerns the dogmatic and theological issues he dares to be creative.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Pg. 99-100

⁶¹ This is a neologism invented by Synesius (τρεῖς-three; κόρυμβος-uppermost point; ἄλκᾳ: power)

Hence, my assumption is that the neologisms in Synesius' hymns are containing some philosophical or religious backgrounds. They are not to be understood as they were constructed just in sake of *euphemy* or aesthetical outlook of the hymns. But what we can presuppose here is that the author could be composing such notions with respects to various traditions, be it mythological or philosophical, that preceded him and that were present not only in the Alexandrian philosophical *milieu* where he was educated, but also in the Christian environment, for the latter it will be enough to remind ourselves, that he was introduced to Christian doctrines by Theophilus of Alexandria who were indeed acquainted with philosophical traditions.⁶² One can also assume that the direct usage of terms from the “banned” sources could make a trouble for the philosopher. As a way out, i.e. to avoid the trouble one could cipher the notions, doctrines, and structures of his own philosophy. Nevertheless, encrypted philosophy is still a philosophy and by deciphering the meanings behind it we can grasp its uniqueness. The evidence provided in this chapter is of course not enough to reject Theiler's and Hadot's idea. For that one has to investigate mentioned works and the arguments behind them in details. But the evidence provided here is the endeavor to apply this method on Synesius' case and in this manner question P. Hadot's claims.

⁶² For the relations between Synesius and Theophilus see the following letters of Synesius: 66, 67, 68, 76, 80, 90, “Opere di Sinesio di Cirene” A cura di Antonio Garzya; Unione Tipografica – Editrice Torinese

Chapter 3. Metaphysics of Synesius' Hymns

3.1. Christocentrism of Synesius Hymns

In the following chapters I will reconstruct some aspects of the metaphysics of Synesius' hymns. The focus of each chapter will be on the Christocentric nature of the hymns. Stressing the Christocentric character of Synesius' hymns is important to see the uniqueness of his philosophy. I think the following chapters are important in order to claim contrary to Theiler's and Hadot's conclusions that Synesius' philosophy was not limited only by the Neoplatonist tradition, but Christian revelation was also substantially important to him and the hymns themselves are the clear examples for that.

Since Synesius' hymns are the only instances where he sets forth his theology, for this reason they are the only sources from which we can reconstruct the author's theological viewpoints that is of course intertwined with his philosophy. This, obviously, will be problematic, given that, we don't know exactly how much important the hymns were for Synesius *per se*. One could claim that for Synesius all religious and mythological imagery were the means to philosophize, in other words he regarded them as some kind of the lower stage of thinking or to say it in his own words, "Myths are the philosophemes for the children"⁶³. Thus, one could conclude that the *hymns* are the examples of this claim and Synesius' philosophy in its true sense is absent in them. The other reason for writing in this style could be that in his earlier work "On Dreams", where Synesius describes the importance and the role of the imagination in a subject's mind, we learn that the first principles may be revealed not by intellectual or rational approach but more by intuitive ways. Thus, this is mostly accomplished

⁶³ Synes. On providence, 2.1

in dreams or in dream-like conditions and the highest form of intuitive or irrational “perception” is the poetry, which allows one to get closer to and communicate with the first principles by using images and symbols. Therefore, one might claim, that Synesius’ decision to write poetry was not accidental but had a reason which he developed in his earlier work. But even if the first account comes to be true, it will still allow us to speak about his “true” philosophy expressed through the mythological symbolism.

There are many aspects in Synesius’ hymns that one might discuss. Here, I would like to focus mainly on the part, that I would call the philosophical anthropology of Synesius. I think the anthropological nature of his hymns is what makes his uniqueness most explicit. The peculiarity of Synesius’ anthropology is that it is Christocentric in its nature. But what is most important in Synesius’ Christocentrism is that Christ’s imagery in the hymns are always that of Christ *Pantocrator*. Never throughout the hymns does Synesius explicitly mention the sufferings of Christ, but everywhere we come across the image of Christ being a victor, that is culminated in the eighth hymn, where he even conquers the hell. The hymn-singing of Synesius is always directed to the glorious image of Christ and never focuses on his sufferings on the cross. The ascension of the whole universe is made possible after the revelation of Christ *Pantocrator* and thus every member of the whole universe praises him, “In Synesius the cosmic praise becomes the response to the divine descent and ascent. The Platonic core concepts of return and choirs are fulfilled and reshaped by the Christian praise of the coming God; the harmony of the spheres rings out the triumphal song to Christ.”⁶⁴ But what is important in this respect is that the revelation of this image of Christ and accordingly the whole ascent of the universe was made possible through the hymn-singing *per se* in which in the eighth hymn participates Christ as well ascending to the heavenly throne from the hell.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Vollenweider, S. 1984, pg. 173, my translation

⁶⁵ Hymn VIII, 25-30

I think Synesius' hymns are unique examples of the Christian philosophical anthropology. Synesius emphasizes the role of the human activity in the process of unification with God. By ignoring Christ's sufferings on the cross Synesius doesn't focus on the sinful nature of human being as it was often the case in the Christian theology where, consequently, the salvation didn't depend on the activity of human being. Salvation would come by grace and everything human might be redundant when it concerned redemption. Synesius, on the contrary, as he does it in the "On Providence" stresses the importance of human and philosophical activity. These two could be equated in his case i.e. we can assert that in Synesius' philosophy, divine activity comes forward only in the response to the philosophical activity. God comes forward to lift up the whole universe together with the philosopher only when the divine image will be cleansed and purified through the philosophical inquiries. Another peculiarity of Synesius' hymns is that in them the hymn singer is not some abstract figure or mankind in general, but Synesius' hymns are very personal in their nature. He always addresses God as a person and his own personal or historical tragedy is not forgotten during the hymn singing, but rather the inclination of the hymns is that that the author's personhood and everything that was related to him during the earthly fate should be preserved and salvaged by God⁶⁶, "Kleanthes (and other hymn singers before Synesius) spoke on behalf of the mankind (the ideal mankind), their own person didn't come into play. Synesius speaks only for himself. But it is a great and pure man, who reveals himself to his deity".⁶⁷

I think, this kind of Christocentrism and philosophical anthropology makes Synesius very close to the philosophy of Nicholas Berdyaev. Berdyaev's idea on the "third revelation" is basically what is present in Synesius' hymns. According to Berdyaev, third revelation is not

⁶⁶ For such tenet of the hymns cf. e.g. Hymn III, 31-57; Hymn IV 24-37; Hymn V, 75-91; Hymn VI 6-41

⁶⁷ Zuntz, G., *Griechische philosophische Hymnen*, ed. Cancik, H. Kappel, L. [Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 35] Tübingen 2005. I quote this part from the article of Vollenweider, see Vollenweider, S. "Ein Mittleres Zwischen Vater und Sohn". *Zur Bedeutung Des Neuplatonikers Porphyrios Für Die Hymnen Des Synesios* in "Synesios Von Kyrene, Politik – Literatur – Philosophie" edited by Helmut Seng and Lars Martin Hoffman, Turnhout Belgium, 2012, pg. 199. My translation

the revelation of God to man, but of man to God, this he also connects with his idea on the creative force of human being. The glorious image of Christ that of Christ *Pantocrator* will be revealed only through human activity, when the human being finally ceases to surrender his own freedom but fulfills his duty to create. While the human being dismisses the freedom there should be someone who bears the burden of rejected freedom and that someone is the Christ as savior. But the crucifixion of Christ ceases only when man through the creative activity and force reveals himself not as sinful but glorious being, who doesn't concentrate on his own sinful nature but rather continues the process of the creation by adding to the world his unique, personal energy, derived from his own experience. Only by doing so does the third revelation occur, i.e. the revelation of Christ's glorious Image through the human being, "Creative work is not heteronomous or autonomous, it is not "nomous" at all, it is god-manly (богочеловечно), it is the detection of excessive love of God to man, man's answer on Gods calling, on God's expectation".⁶⁸

Thus, Synesius' hymns are indeed unique. Their uniqueness consists in the fact that the revelation of God, the ascension of the human being and their unification happens through the philosophical intercourse that is expressed in the hymns by means of religious and mythological imagery. Thus, in Synesius' case, it is not the flowers of light or intellect through which one ascends to the God, but through the hymns themselves the revelation of God and ascent are being done. The following chapter will further investigate the importance of Christocentric character of Synesius' hymns, that I think makes them the exceptional exemplars in the Christian philosophical literature.

⁶⁸ My translation, Berdyaev, N. *Salvation and Creative Force, Two Understandings of Christianity*. <http://www.vehi.net/berdyaev/spasenie.html>

3.2. Synesius' Hymns and Theurgy

In order to understand what kind of metaphysical structure there is in the hymns of Synesius one has to view them in relation with the theurgy. Can Synesius' hymns be viewed as the certain theurgical practice and if so what kind of theurgy is present in them? Here, I will argue, that it is reasonable to regard his hymns as theurgy, to be more precise the highest form of such a practice that can be in the Procline language can be equated with "divine philosophy". I will demonstrate that the type of theurgy that can be traced in the hymns are uniquely of Christian nature, this will be shown by comparing Synesius' writings with Neoplatonist philosophical tradition and that of a Christian.

Theurgy can be described as the activity which invokes and attracts divine powers to participate in the human action. It was developed in the Neoplatonist philosophy as the means to achieve the unity with the deities, or even with the One. The "scripture" of theurgists i.e. some Neoplatonist philosophers were the writings of Julian the Chaldean and Julian the Theurgist, called Chaldean Oracles. Main names among these Neoplatonists are Iamblichus, Syrianus, and Proclus.

The fact, that the hymns in the Neoplatonist milieu were regarded as theurgy is known from Proclus' writings. Proclus, who himself wrote hymns⁶⁹, used to distinguish three types of theurgy⁷⁰: a) Theurgy, that used theurgical elements to interact on the material world - "white magic"; b) theurgy, that by rituals, rites, and practices, which also included hymns, were

⁶⁹ See: Proclus' Hymns; Essays, Translation, Commentary by R.M. Van Den Berg, Köln, 2001

⁷⁰ I am following Anne Sheppard's "tripartite theurgy" interpretation of Proclus' views on theurgy. See: Anne Sheppard, "Proclus' Attitude to Theurgy", *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (1982), pp. 212-224

ascending to the intelligible-and-intellectual world i.e. to the second sphere in the ontological structure of Proclus' philosophy and c) theurgy, that involves no ritual, no rite, nor an uttered word, but that which unites the one i.e. the philosopher with the One, that is the first principle in the ontological system. It is remarkable, that Proclus regarded the first hypothesis of Plato's *Parmenides* as "The theological hymn through the negations to the One"⁷¹. What has to be emphasized here is that his own hymns Proclus labeled the theurgy of the second type, that is to say, the one which is attributed to the deity from the lower level of ontological structure and by no means to the One. Thus, for Proclus the union with the first principle were achievable rather with something that we may call mystical theurgy.

To relate Synesius hymns to this topic firstly I will need to briefly discuss some ideas in the *De Insomniis* (On Dreams) – another work of Synesius, which I think are related to this issues. In this work Synesius' distinguishes two kinds of rituals: the one accessible only to the few and the other to everyone. Under the first kind Synesius means the official ceremonies, mysteries, and cults in which only those who are initiated can take part. The second kind of ritual involves dreams, in which everyone is initiated.⁷² The whole treatise then goes on to argue as how to properly use the gifts bestowed through such "mysteries" and the author claims that their highest benefit is philosophical. To proceed with the argument I will need to link with each other Synesius' and Proclus divisions between theurgy and rituals. In my mind, to interpret the divisions of rituals provided in *De Insomniis* in the light of tripartite division of theurgy provided by Proclus we will need to align first two kinds of theurgy in the first group of rituals described by synesius and equate the highest form of theurgy with the universal kind of ritual i.e. with dreams. But this requires some clarification. Obviously, this doesn't mean that by

⁷¹ In *Parm.* VII 1191, 34f. and *Theol. Plat.* III 23, pg. 83, 22ff

⁷² "Opere di Sinesio di Cirene" A cura di Antonio Garzya; Unione Tipografica – Editrice Torinese, Ch. 12, pp. 580-84

simply dreaming one participates in the highest form of theurgy. Rather what it means is that by dreams one's imagination, which Synesius further equates with the soul, mediates between the two realms and only through dreams does one's soul have a direct access to the divine realm. The proper utilization of the dreams means to reflect upon them philosophically: to study and investigate them or to say with psychoanalytic language to expose yourself to the psychoanalysis. The result of this will be the development of intellectual faculty and the ability to be connected with the divinity not unconsciously during the dreams but consciously through the philosophy.

But Synesius' hymns drastically differ from that of Proclus. If Proclus addressed all of his hymns to the lower deities and considered them i.e. hymns as means to gradually ascend on the ontological ladder, then Synesius' hymns on the contrary are attributed to the first principles themselves. And this I think is what makes him a Christian philosopher, for it is by virtue of Christian revelation that such hymns as we have in Synesius' case are possible. For if the Neoplatonist philosopher who ignored the scripture had to gradually climb to the first principles through the mediation of various gods, Christian philosopher had a direct access to the source of sources through the Trinity, where Henads were substituted by the Trinity itself.

I think Proclus, although in his writings there is no single mention of Synesius, was acquainted with Synesius' writings and especially with his hymns.⁷³ The arguments for this claim was provided in the very first sub-chapter of this thesis, but I think the further attention should be paid on Synesius "presence" in the hymns of Proclus.

⁷³ Willamowitz sees a close relations between the salvation motives in the Proclus' and Synesius' hymns, see, Bregman, J. "Synesius of Cyrene, Philosopher-Bishop, pg. 101 in Willamowitz-Moellendorff, U. von. "Die Hymnen des Synesios und Proklos." *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 14 (1907) 272-295. Although I didn't have the chance to see Willamowitz's work and am therefore unaware of his arguments.

Hence, we can assume that given the fact that Synesius' was converted to Christianity towards the end of his life was the reason why Proclus doesn't mention him explicitly in his treatises, even though from what was mentioned above he should have admired him respectively.

I think the nature of Synesius' hymns, that is described here, influenced Pseudo-Dionysius as well, whose ontological structure and the connection of the supplicant with the higher entities are similar with the structure of Synesius' philosophy provided here, all the more so, given to the fact that Dionysius were educated under Proclus one can speculate that he got acquainted with the Synesius' works in the inner circle of the Athenian school. The following passage echoes in some ways the aura of Synesius' hymns "After purifying himself, the hierarch "hymns the holy theurgies of Jesus, exercising his most divine providence for the salvation of our race and, as according to scripture, the satisfaction of the most-blessed Father and the Holy Spirit."⁷⁴ And Synesius: I - heavenly drip [715] am poured upon the earth: give me, abiding wanderer the source whence I was poured: allow me to mingle [720] with the first begotten light. And under your watch along with the kingly choir, allow me to praise you [725] with the holy intellectual hymns.

Hence, we can argue that hymns of Synesius are the kind of the highest theurgy, that Proclus equated with the divine philosophy, uniting the supplicant *with* the Trinity *through* the Trinity and in a manner of Parmenides' first hypothesis poet remains silent when it concerns the God that is beyond Gods "Halt, my courageous lyre, halt and do not reveal to the uninitiated crowd mystical rites. Go and sing about those things that are below, [75] but may those things that are above remain unspoken."⁷⁵

⁷⁴ EH 441C-D

⁷⁵ Hymn IX

Conclusion

The conclusions drawn from the investigations of this thesis, especially from the first chapter, should increase the importance of Synesius' hymns and of him as a thinker in general. Further studies ought to be conducted on Synesius' influence on Proclus, who as it seems read Synesius and his hymns, but as it was the case with Proclus he didn't explicitly mention the Christian authors in any of his writings. Further, one needs to investigate the role of Synesius' Christian philosophy in relation to Pseudo-Dionysius' metaphysical system. As I have argued, the structure of Synesius' philosophy, especially the nature of his hymns would have been extremely relevant to Pseudo-Dionysius. My conclusion is that, Synesius and his hymns were

one of the main aids for him in rethinking Procline metaphysics into the Christian Platonist system. For this reason I have compared and analyzed the “presence” of Synesius’ hymns in the first nine letters of Ps.-Dionysius and concluded that the structure and narratives of the hymns were one of the most suitable source in Christian literature that would be applicable to Plato’s *Parmenides* and furthermore to the Proclian interpretation of the hypotheses. In the appendices as the last two chapters I also provide my study on the correspondences between the hymn Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα (O, the One who is beyond the all) that in various manuscripts came to us under the name of Gregory of Nazianzus, Proclus, and Ps-Dionysius as well, to the hymns of Synesius. I argue that this hymn as well attests Synesius’ influence on the author of the Dionysian Corpus. This is the extent my research has progressed in this thesis, but the further methodical comparison of Synesius’ works to the Dionysian Corpus should provide even more remarkable results. All the more so, the scope of my research was limited only by Dionysius’ letters and it didn’t intend to focus on other works of the author.

The thesis also focused on the originality of Synesius’ philosophy. The conclusions drawn from the second and third chapters are contradicting the conclusions of such scholars as U. von Willamowitz-Moellendorf, Edward Gibbon, Pierre Hadot, Jay Bregman, and Willy Theiler who claim that Synesius’ Christianity was a mere disguise, a veil or mask that the philosopher was forced to wear, or, as Bregman summarizes, “Synesius was a Platonic “philosopher-bishop” whose acceptance of Christianity was provisional and remained secondary to his commitment to Neoplatonism”.⁷⁶ I think the result of this approach is that his genuine thought, being a Christian rethinking of the Hellenistic traditions in general, and of Platonism in particular, becomes distorted. In my opinion, the hymns are the main work of Synesius, through which we can observe the impact that Christianity had on the philosopher. A complex analysis of the hymns allowed us to see that it is not a kind of cosmology that is central

⁷⁶ Bregman, J. 1982, pg. 5

in them, but anthropology and, to be more precise, a philosophical anthropology that, by its nature, is Christocentric. This latter claim is close to the conclusions made by the Russian scholar, T. Sidash.⁷⁷

I emphasized the possible influence of Gnostic sources on Synesius.. I think the nature and narrative of the eighth hymn in the relation with his earlier writings and also to the eighth letter of Ps.-Dionysius makes this hypothesis more convincing.

Thus, to conclude, I think the data provided in this thesis calls for the alteration of our views on a number of matters. First of all, it increases the importance of Synesius of Cyrene in the formation of the philosophical atmosphere in the fourth and fifth centuries. Next, the indications of Synesius' influence on Proclus and Pseudo-Dionysius asks for further studies in this direction that might also redefine the nature of their philosophical inclinations. The content that is present in this thesis suggests that in Proclus' inner circle of the Athenian school Christian philosophy was being read and consequently the thesis contributes to dismiss the idea of Pseudo-Dionysius being a crypto pagan, but rather it shows once again his skillfulness in usage of different philosophical doctrines without implicitly stating the sources but rather leaving it to the readers to understand their origins by themselves, if they would have the philosophical capacity to undertake the decipherment of the philosophical text. All this becomes even more vivid in the light of Synesius' hymns i.e. by stressing the way the thinkers and especially Ps-Dionysius utilized the works of the "philosopher-bishop". This will furthermore make evident the significance of Synesius in the Platonist and Christian context.

⁷⁷ Сидаш, Т. Г. „Синезий Киренский, Митрополит Птолемаиды и Пентаполя“ Vol.1, 2012, pp.296-317

Appendices

Hymns⁷⁸

⁷⁸ In the references to the hymns I am mostly following the observation of Gruber and Strohm. See Synesios von Kyrene Hymnen”, eingeleitet, übersetzt und kommentiert von Joachim Gruber und Hans Strohm; Heidelberg 1991

Hymn I

Arise my soul and being directed by holy hymns [5] soothe the furious desires of matter, equip the mighty armament of mind. We are weaving a crown for the king of gods, [10] bloodless sacrifice, poured with poems. You in the sea, you on the islands, you in the infinities, [15] on the cities and on the rocky mountains and whenever I put to rest [20] two limbs of mine on the renowned plains of our land, I will praise you with the song blessed begetter of the universe. Night brings me, the poet, to you, O king⁷⁹, and I will bring up hymns [25] for you at dawn, for you in the morning, for you in the night. [30] Gleams of the grizzled stars are witnessing for you, the courses of the moon and almighty witness – the sun, ruler of the holy stars, [35] revered dispenser of the holy souls. On your courtyard, in your depth turning away [40] from the far-spread matter I ascended rejoicing with the wings of mind.

[45] Now I, the wanderer came to the revered mysteries of the sacred⁸⁰ temples. Now I, the wanderer came to the edges of the renowned mountains. [50] Now to the deserts to the great ravines I came, to the southern border, which is not befouled [55] with the impious soul, nor shines there any trace of men who watch over the towns, [60] Having rejoiced I came to you in order that for your sake soul might be purified from passions, released from yearnings, it will rest from toils, put an end to tears, [65] [depart] from angers and quarrels. And when the soul shakes off everything that causes misfortune with the pure tongue and hallow thought [70] I will pay you with the indebted hymn.

May ether and earth be silent, let the sea be still, [75] let the ether be still, cease the cravings of the variegated winds, be still the roars of the curved waves, [80] outlets of the rivers,

⁷⁹ Apophatic theology

⁸⁰ Translating thus in the context of epist. 42. (line 64)

mighty streams. May the depths of the universe be voiceless [85] while these holy hymns are sacrificed.

Let the track of the serpents sink beneath the earth, let the winged serpent dive beneath the earth, [90] daemon of the matter, cloud of the soul, one who delights with images, urging his puppies unto us during our prayers.

[95] You, O Father, you the blessed one, keep these soul-devouring hounds away from my soul, away from my prayer, [100] away from my life, and from my efforts. Let the pourings of our minds be ferried_[105] by your honorable ministers, wise transmitters of the blessed hymns. Now I am carried to the limit [110] of the holy hymns. Now the sound echoes around my mind. Blessed one, be merciful upon me, Father have a mercy on me, [115] if beyond the universe and if beyond the fates I came upon yours.

What eyes are so wise, what eyes are so great [120] that they won't be shut having intertwined with your lightnings?⁸¹ To look straight into your radiances is not allowed even to the gods, but when the mind falls down from your summit, he cherishes what is next⁸²: attempting to reach the unreachable [that is,] to have a glimpse of the brightness that shines in the inexplorable abyss, having left the unreachable he sets the gaze of his sight upon the form that has shone forth first, and from this, collecting flowers of light, for your celebration he rests from the uncertain flight (attack) and gives you what is yours. For what is not yours, o King?⁸³

[145]Self-Father, Pre-Father, Fatherless Father of all fathers, Son of thyself, One that precedes the one, [150] Seed of beings, Center of all things, Mind that precedes substancelessness, root of the first-born worlds, [155] Light shining all around, wise Certitude, source of wisdom, Mind hidden by its own splendors, [160] Eye of thyself, Master of the

⁸¹ The One is inaccessible even to Gods i.e. it is imparticipable.

⁸² Joachim Gruber interprets *ta pelas* as the Son, i.e. closest one to the Father, pg. 148

⁸³ ὅταν δὲ ὑποταγῇ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε [καὶ] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὑποταγήσεται τῷ ὑποτάξαντι αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, ἵνα ἢ ὁ θεὸς [τὰ] πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν. (1 Cor. 15:28 BGT), Origenic influence

thunderbolt, Begetter of the Aeon/Eternity⁸⁴, Eternal Life, beyond gods, [165] beyond minds, who directs each of them, begetter of the intelligence of the mind, Irrigator of the gods, the One who works through the Spirit, [170] and Nourisher of the soul. Source of sources, Origin of origins, Root of roots. You are the Monad of the monads, [175] you are the Number of the numbers, Monad and Number, Mind and Intellectual, the Intelligible and prior to the intelligible. [180] One and All, One through All, and One prior to all, the Seed of all things, Root and Sprout, [185] Nature in the intellectuals, Female and Male. The initiated mind says this and that⁸⁵, wandering around [190] in the ineffable abyss.

You are the begetter, you are the begotten, you are the illuminator, you are the one who is enlightened, [195] you are the manifest, you are the hidden, light hidden by its own brightness. One and all things, [200] one in itself, and through all things. For you were poured out, ineffable begetter⁸⁶, in order to beget [205] renowned demiurgic wisdom. But having poured forward you remain with the indivisible divisions of childbirth.

[210] I am singing a hymn to you, o monad, singing to you, triad, you are a monad being a triad, triad being a monad, intelligibly sliced, [215] yet unseparated, not being divided.⁸⁷ You poured thyself on the Son with the wisdoms will, the will itself [220] have sprout,⁸⁸ the inexpressible middle nature. It is not allowed to speak about the being that is prior to essence, about the secondary that is from you: [225] It is not allowed to speak about the third that is from the first.

⁸⁴ Aeons might be comparable with gnostic sources: Three steles of Seth, hymn 3 starts with “Masculine, virgin, first aeon”. According to Brill it is neologism of Synesius, but he could take it from Three Steles of Seth “Aeon-giver”

⁸⁵ In a sense that it cannot express itself when it concerns the One.

⁸⁶ Negative theology – Gruber pg. 156

⁸⁷ Cf. Hymn II 120ff.

⁸⁸ 219-235 – Middle hypostasis

Holy travail, ineffable offspring, you are the limit between [230] generating and generated natures. I feel reverence towards the hidden orders of the intellectual [entities], that occupy some middle place, [235] which cannot be detached.

Inexpressible offspring of the inexpressible Father⁸⁹, your birth is through you and through the travail [240] you yourself were born and you revealed [yourself] together with the father by the will of the Father and being a will you are always with your father. [245] Nor even the time with its deep tides knew about the ineffable childbirths.⁹⁰ And the honorable Aeons [250] were not acquainted with the interminable childbirth, together with the father was it revealed, the one who were to become the producer of the eternity. Who arbitrated to slice [255] the unspeakable things? - Blind mortals with crafty language, impious, daring [humans].⁹¹ But you are a light giver, [260] of intellects light. You are keeping off the minds of the blessed humans from the meandering deceits, so that they don't sink [265] in the dark matter.⁹²

It is easy to praise thee, Father of the worlds, Father of the aeons, only-creator of the gods. [270] All intellectual beings are praising you, o, King, (Σε μὲν οἱ νοεροὶ μέλπουσιν ἄναξ) the governors of the universe, the starry intellects with their radiant glances [275] are singing the hymn to you, Blessed one, those around whom a glorious body is dancing. [280] The whole race of the blessed beings praise you (Πάσα σε μέλπει γένεα μακάρων): those who are around the universe, those who are in the universe, those wise guardians who on the celestial orbits, who outside the celestial orbits⁹³, [285] are governing the parts of the world, those who are around the the glorious helmsmen who are poured forth [290] by the angelic chain."⁹⁴ And "All the things offer you the ageless praise: [345] dawn and night, lightnings, snowflakes, the shining

⁸⁹ Cf. Ps. D. Letter III.

⁹⁰ Apophatic theology.

⁹¹ i.e. whoever tries to express inexpressible and thinks that he or she succeeded – Cf to Ps. D. Letter I.

⁹² Same is in Dionysius: a) φωτοδοτας, b) Christ securing that humans don't wholly descend into the matter.

⁹³ Cf to Prokl. Tim. III 43, 12ff.

⁹⁴ Here Synesius converts the hypercosmic, pericosmic and encosmic gods of the Neoplatonists into angelic powers, just like later Ps-Dionysius.

edge of heaven⁹⁵, and the roots of the earth, water, air, [350] all the bodies, all the spirits, seeds, fruits, plants and grasses, roots, plants, [355] beasts and birds and the shoals of the swimming creatures. Look at this soul [here] as well, [360] as it is exhausted and weary and as it sings [365] with the holy prayers in your Libya and in your blessed priesthood, who is surrounded by the cloud of matter. But your eye, O Father, cuts the matter.

[370] Now my heart, having enriched by your hymns equip the mind with the fiery desires. [375] But you, O King, kindle the anagogical. But observe, O Father, that having fled the body, [soul] might not to get sunk anymore [380] in the earthly madness. But since I am still bound with the chains of the material life, [385] may my fate be humble, O blessed one! May it not be blown by the hindering mind, not having devoured my life with the mournful thoughts, [390] in order that I might not have leisure for divine things nor take part in such cares. But having flew [395] with the divine gifts I will weave the crown [for you] from the meadow and I bring this praise to you, [400] chief of the undivided worlds, and to your son whom with your wisdom itself have sent [405] from the ineffable depths. Having sprung out of you he remains in you, in order that he may govern all by means of wise inspirations, [410] and may govern the depth of the grey-haired aeons, govern the layers of the steep [that is, hierarchically arranged] world [415] even to the lowest cave of the beings that have received the earthly lot, and shining forth into the holy minds, he might dissolve [420] the pains and worries of the living mortals – he, the ruler of beneficences, who chases away affliction. It is no wonder that God, [425] the demiurge of the world, keeps away evil from his own works. [430] I came to you from Thrace, O king of the great universe, [to pay] you this debt. There I lived for three years near the royal house [435] in the ceiling of land. I suffered the toils, suffered the pains having much lamented, bearing with my shoulders [440] the motherland. The earth

⁹⁵ The source of this passage seems to be Psalm 148: αἰνεῖτε αὐτὸν οἱ οὐρανοὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑπεράνω τῶν οὐρανῶν [...] αἰνεῖτε τὸν Κύριον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, δράκοντες καὶ πᾶσαι ἄβυσσοι. I am indebted to Istvan Perczel, who pointed it to me.

was watered by the sweat of my limbs having toiled day by day and [445] and night by night my bed was watered with the drips that having lamented came from the corners of my eyes. All those temples [450] built for your holy mysteries, o King, I visited them all, suppliant unable to rise his head, [455] watering the surface with the tears of my eyelids, being troubled for my journey not be in vain. I prayed for the protection to those gods as well [460] who govern and make Thrace's land fertile, and those on the other side who govern [465] the land of Chalcedon also your blessed ministers⁹⁶ whom you crowned with angelic rays.[470] The blessed ones were praying together with me, they were suffering through many sufferings with me. [475] Life was not dear for me at that time, having homeland and it's land obliterated, but you yourself, O King, ageless, [480] ruler of the universe, restored it from its sufferings. And the soul being already worn out, [485] and body being exhausted, you empowered my joints with force, you breathed the might into the steadfast soul [490] and you found a joyful limit of my toils and having followed my desire you let my works [495] to rest from long labors. O blessed one, preserve all this for the Libyans, all that you have done, [500] for the long noose of time for the sake of the memory of your kindness and for the sake of the soul that suffered so much pains. Give a suppliant [505] painless life: free me from toils, free me from illnesses, free me from death bringing concerns. [510] Direct your servant to the intellectual life, Keep away the earthly showers of gold, O King, [515], that might deprive me from divine leisure nor allow the gloomy poverty to come under my ceiling and [520] to bury the cravings of my heart under the earth. Both these weigh down the soul to earth, [525] both cause the mind the forgetfulness, but only when you, blessed one, don't offer your strength. Yeah, Father the source of pure Wisdom, [530] kindle in my mind intellectual light from your bosom, shine into my heart from your power [535] the splendor of wisdom, and give me a sign for your sacred path that leads to you, give me your seal [540] Cast away from our lives and our prayers the demons of the matter,

⁹⁶ Might imply the Christian monks

who are carrying the death with them. [545] Preserve my soul safe and sound, untrodden by the hateful adversities. And keep my soul undefiled, O King.

I already carry [550] the dark stain of the matter and I am being held with passions - earthly chains. But you are the savior, [555] you are the purifier.⁹⁷ Release me from evils, release me from illnesses, release me from chains. I carry your seed, [560] the sparkle of the highborn mind, sparkle which falls to the abyss of matter. For you placed [565] the soul in the world and through the soul, O King, you sowed the mind into the body. Take a pity [570] on your daughter⁹⁸, O blessed one. I came from you to serve on earth, but instead of a servant I became a slave.⁹⁹ [575] Matter bound me with the magic crafts.¹⁰⁰ Yet inside, inside there still dwells some strength of the eyeball that is hidden within me; [580] It still has some power within, great wave stroke me from above, [585] rendering the soul blind, the soul, that sees god. Father, Take pity upon your daughter, [590] who often while trying to follow the paths upside and longing she is strangled from the depth¹⁰¹ of matter.

But you, O Father, kindle the anagogical light, [595] fire the torch and beacon, so that tiny seed might grow in the finest part of my mind. [600] Enthroned me, O Father, in the strength of light and life-bringing life, [605] in order that the nature wouldn't put the hands on me, where neither earth, nor the allotted spinning of destiny makes me go backwards. Let the treacherous generation be gone, [610] let it flee from your laborer. Let there be a fire, O Father, between me and earthly turmoil. [615] Direct, O Begetter, direct your servant already to spread his intellectual wings. Let your suppliant's soul already carry [620] the seal of the father, fear to hostile demons, [625] who are lurking at the depths of earth breathing impious intentions upon

⁹⁷ Soul must be purified by God, but not in a theurgical way as it is in case of Iamblichus.

⁹⁸ Soul is the mediator, like in Ps. D. and in De Insomniis

⁹⁹ Cf. to De Insomniis par. 8. In De Insomniis it is the soul who is the middle intermediary to divine, here soul seems to need the intermediary in face of Christ.

Compare also to Hymn VI 20-25

¹⁰⁰ Magus' crafts

¹⁰¹ Translating thus in the light of letter 148

mortal men, May it be a sign of your holy ministers, [630] who are the key bearers of the fiery uphill roads of your renowned universe, in order that they might throw open [635] the doors of light and even if I crawl upon the idle earth may I not be earthly. [640] And to the fiery deeds give a fruit as a witness, exact voices, as much as you warm the hope for immortality [645] in the souls.

Earthly life doesn't worry me [anymore], the rheum of the impious mortals, [650] may you vanish and may the powers die, all the sweetness with the joyless joys, may you vanish as well, [655] by which the earth charms the soul and its servant. And the great sufferer drank the forgetfulness of her own good acts, [660] as far as she doesn't come upon the envious portion. For the pimp matter has twofold [destinies]: [665] whoever approaches the table to grab the sweets, will lament much when [670] the bitter lots through the opposite powers [will drag him down]. For such is the law of the earthly necessity. Life pours two kinds of wines to mortals,¹⁰² [675] untouched good and unmixed is the god and all that belong to god. Being drunk by the sweetness of the bowl [680] I touched the earthly evils, I fell in the source, I learned the fatality of Epimetheus. I despise [685] the fickle laws. I hasten to the carefree meadow of the Father, I spread my wings [690] to escape the twofold gifts of matter.

Watch over me, guard of the intellectual life, [695] watch over the supplicant soul on earth as she strives to the upper, intelligible ways. But you, O King, kindle the anagogical light, [700] giving me the bright wings. Cut the knot, loose the pin of the twofold passions, with which [705] treacherous nature binds souls to earth; Give me [the power], me who tries to flee from the bodily misfortune, to jump with swift leap [710] to your dwelling places, to your depths, whence flows the source of soul. Heavenly drip [715] I am poured upon the earth: give me, abiding wanderer the source whence I was poured: allow me to mingle [720] with the first

¹⁰² Il. 24, 527f.

begotten light. And under your watch along with the kingly choir, allow me to praise [725] with the holy intellectual hymns.¹⁰³ Make it so, O Father, that mingled with the light, I wouldn't experience earthly misfortune anymore; [730] But since I am still bound with the chains of the material life, may my fate be humble, O blessed one!

Hymn II

You in the beginning of the day, you when it soars, you in the middle, you in the dawn, [5] and in the holy night do I praise, creator, healer of the souls, healer of the limbs, [10] dispenser of wisdom¹⁰⁴, disperser of illnesses, giver of the toilless lives to souls, life that might not being trampled [15] by earthly concern: mother of sufferings, mother of passions, let my life be free of them, [20] so that I can undertake [to praise] the hidden root of all things, nor may I be turned away from god by the madnesses which try to [25] carry me astray. I sing, to you, O blessed one, ruler of the universe. Let the earth be silent, while the hymns are sung to you and [30] as the prayers are being prayed to you may the whole universe keep the sacred silence, for these are your works, O Father. [35] Let the whistle of winds cease, sound of trees, noise of birds, silent ether and silent wind [40] heard my singing. Let the flow of waters be numb now remaining still all around the earth. [45] May the demons, who rejoice in the lower world and who are stuck wandering around the tombs, vanish from my holy hymns and flee from my [50] revered prayers; But all those who are good, blessed servants of intelligible life's begetter, who are dwelling in the depths and [55] heights of the universe¹⁰⁵, graciously hear the hymns to the Father, may them graciously bring my hymn upwards as well.

¹⁰³ "The hymns of Synesius are themselves the expressions of the ascension" Theiler 292

¹⁰⁴ δῶτορ σοφίας - Dionysius could derive his σοφοδοτῆς from here D.N. 5.2, fem. Of σοφοδωτορ.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. V.20 means the outermost edges, Gruber, pg. 185

[60] O Monad, of monads, O Father, of fathers, Principle of principles, Source of sources, Root of roots, [65] Good of good things, Star of stars, World of worlds, Idea of ideas, abyssal Beauty, [70] hidden Seed, Father of aeons, Father of the hidden intelligible worlds, from where [75] immortal breeze having poured, was filled from the masses of bodies, they already kindle the second universe, [80] I am singing a hymn to you, O blessed one with voice and I am singing hymn to you with the silence as well, O blessed One, for so much as you hear the voice, [85] as much do you hear the silence of intellect.

¹⁰⁶And I sing a hymn to the offspring, to the firstly begotten¹⁰⁷, and to the first light. [90] Most glorious Child of the hidden Father, I sing a hymn to you, O blessed One, together with the great Father and [95] the travail of the father over you, fertile will, central principle, holy breath, center of the Begetter, [100] center of the Son. Mother, sister, and daughter of yourself [105] being begotten with the hidden root. For in order that the father might be poured on Son, this very outpouring found the shot itself [110] and stood in the middle as God from God, through the Son that is God; and through the renowned outpouring of the immortal Father [115] found the Son the shot backwards.¹⁰⁸ You are the Monad being a Triad, Monad that yet remains to be a Triad. [120] And the Intellectual separation retains undivided that which is yet divided.¹⁰⁹ But having sprung the Begotten remains with the Begetter. [125] And directs outside of the Father, bringing down the happiness of life to the universes, whence¹¹⁰ he has the word himself, [130] I am singing a hymn to you with the great Father. The mind of Ineffable Father begets you and being conceived [135] you are the word of the Begetter, you are the first who sprung from the first root, and after your renowned birth [it became] [140] the root of everything.

¹⁰⁶ 87-140 Praise to Son and Spirit. Son is in close terms with father *συνουμνω*.

¹⁰⁷ From the ep. 139, Plotinus' last words.

¹⁰⁸ Same as in line 109

¹⁰⁹ Main part of the hymn 141-226

¹¹⁰ i.e. from the Father

Ineffable Monad, Seed of everything, seed of all things seeded you. [145] For you are in all things and through you do the highest, middle, and uttermost nature¹¹¹ enjoy [150] the good gifts of the Father, of life-begetting. For your sake does the ageless sphere revolve with the toilless course. [155] Under your order, in the mighty vortex of the great hollow seven stars are dancing in time. [160] And all the lights of the universe through your will embellish the sole body, O the most glorious Offspring; [165] For having ran around the mighty sky, you maintain that the course of the aeons do not go astray. [170] With your holy ordains, O blessed One, in the infinitely deep¹¹² heavens the flock of manifold stars are assigned. [175] It is you who distribute the works in the heavens, in the air, on earth and below the earth and [180] you are the one who is directing the lives. You are the ruler of the mind, bestower to the gods and to those from humans who were drawn [185] by the showers of the intellectual destinies. You are the giver of the soul, whose life is stretched out from soul and it is indefatigable in nature. [190] Blind offspring¹¹³ of soul hangs on your chain, and as many things there are deprived from breezes they ripe [195] from your depths the mode of union, having ferried through your strength [200] from the ineffable fatherly depths, from the hidden Monad, whence having sprung forward the stream of life is spread [205] through your power and through the obscure intelligible worlds until it reaches the earth. Thence receives the visible universe [210] the fountain of the down falling blessings, the form of the intelligible mind. It has the second sun [215] the begetter of the later shining light¹¹⁴ that shines the eyes¹¹⁵, the watcher over the becoming and [220] descending matter, the Son, who is the perceptible copy of the intelligible, being an earth-born¹¹⁶ It delivers the good things [225] through your will, glorious Offspring.

¹¹¹ „The corresponding of macrocosmos and microcosmos“ Vollenweider, pg. 189

¹¹² ἀπειροβαθοῦς - Neologism

¹¹³ Cf. 1,256; 2,237

¹¹⁴ ὑστεροφειγγοῦς Neologism – For the Context of its usage and formation see. Gruber, Pg 192. – Rep 508d

¹¹⁵ ομματολαμπη - Neologism

¹¹⁶ ἐγκοσμογενῶν - Neologism

Unknown Father¹¹⁷, ineffable Father, unknown Mind, [230] ineffable Word, you are the Mind of minds, Soul of souls, Nature of natures. In front of you I bend the knee: [235] Behold, the servant falls on earth, blind supplicant. But you are the light giver of the intellectual light, [240] take a pity upon the supplicant soul, O blessed One. Drive away the illnesses and cares that are devouring the soul; [245] drive away the shameless chthonic hound, demon of the earth from our souls, from our prayers, [250] from our lives, and from our works; Keep the demon outside our bodies, outside our souls, [255] outside everything that is ours. Let the Demon of the matter leave and let him flee, who is the force of sufferings [260] who separates against the up-leading way by the wall and who hinders God-seeking cravings.¹¹⁸ [265] Give me, O King, friend and ally, sacred angel of the sacred power, messenger of the prayer that shines with the divine lights,¹¹⁹ [270] friend, dispenser of goods, guardian of souls, guardian of lives, warden of prayers, warden of works. [275] May he preserve the body clean from the illnesses, preserve the soul clean from dishonors, [280] may he bring to soul the oblivion of passions, in order that the soul being nourished with the earth¹²⁰ [285] might augment its wings by your hymns. So that in life after the fates¹²¹, after chains that bind [the soul] to the earth¹²², [290] having cleansed the matter I will accomplish the way on your courtyards, on your depths, [295] whence flaws the source of soul. But you, give me your hand¹²³, call me, you, blessed One, rise the supplicant soul from the matter.

¹¹⁷ Rep. 508e-09a; Parm 134bc – Pg. 193

¹¹⁸ Θεοδιφεῖς - Neubildung

¹¹⁹ Cf. with Gr. Naz. - 194

¹²⁰ Γαιοτραφή - Neubildung

¹²¹ Cf. 9, 112

¹²² Χθονοβριθείς - Neubildung

¹²³ Cf. Hymn IX, 123

Hymn III

We are singing to a son of the bride, bride who didn't share a marital bed to a man having been destined to marry.

Father's ineffable desires [5] gave birth¹²⁴ to Christ's becoming. And holy travail of a bride revealed an image of a man, who came to bring mortal men a light from the source. [10] And the ineffable offspring of yours have seen the root of the aeons. You yourself are the source light, beam of father's splendor, who having smashed the dark matter [15] illuminate revered souls. You yourself are the founder of the universe, one who shaped the spheres of the renowned stars, one who rooted earth's center, you yourself are the savior of men. [20] The titan¹²⁵ drives his horses for your sake, inextinguishable source of the dawn, the horned moon dissolves the shadows of the nights for your sake; it is for you that fruits are begotten and [25] for you are the flocks fed. Having sent life producing beams from your ineffable sources you augment the wings of the universe; from your depths are coming [30] light, mind, and soul. Have a pity upon your daughter who is bound by mortal limbs and by material limits of destiny. [35] Preserve the strength of my limbs unhurt from being mutilated by illnesses. Tend my words towards persuasion and direct my deeds to glory to be worthy of fame of Cyrene and Sparta. [40] May my soul live a moderate life untrampled by griefs, straining eyes towards your light, so that by escaping from the matter [45] I will hasten on the unchanging paths, runaway from the earthly sufferings to mingle with souls source. Provide your lyre-player with such an undefiled life [50] when, addressing to you a song, I am glorifying your Root, o, greatest Glory of the Father, and and the the Spirit that shares the throne between the Root and the Branch [55] and, by praising

¹²⁴ Gospel of Hebrews i.e. Holy spirit as the mother of Jesus, Vollenweider, pg.143

¹²⁵ i.e. the sun

(μέλων) the Father's might through the hymns that I am singing to you I am laying to rest the glorious birth-pang (ᾠδῖνα) of my soul.

Rejoice, the source of the son, rejoice an image of the father, [60] rejoice, the base of the son, rejoice the zeal of the father, rejoice vigour of the son, rejoice beauty of the father, rejoice undefiled soul, [65] center of the son and the father, may you along with the father send it for me¹²⁶ so that wings of the soul will be augmented and the divine gifts¹²⁷ will come forth.

Hymn IV

Along with the self-begetting source¹²⁸, that is transcendent to ineffable unities¹²⁹, immortal God, gods glorious Son, one Son, that is sprung from one Father [5] we crown with the wise flowers of hymns. Ineffable travail of father's will¹³⁰ revealed the Son from the unknown depths, that made the fertile fruits of the Father visible and having revealed brings to light the mind that is plunged in the middle, [10] and although being in the middle those that are poured still remain [in the source]¹³¹

¹²⁶ Filioque?

¹²⁷ Can be equated with soul. Aber noch näher an Synesios führt die origenistische Tradition, wo Geist, Geschenk und „Filioque“ verbunden sind. Orig princ 1,3,7 p 60,19f.

¹²⁸ Vollenweiders claimed that this accounts for the Hymns to be Christocentric - Pg 202

¹²⁹ Cf. 9, 58; 1, 145ff – God is ineffable

¹³⁰ Will of Father here means the spirit.

¹³¹ Being revealed God is still hidden – Ps. D.; See also Plotinus V, 2 [11], 1, 7-11

Wisdom of the Father's mind, splendor of beauty, Father inclined that you, begotten, ought to beget. You are the hidden seed of the Father that shone forth; for he sent you to the universes to be a beginning and to [15] bring down the forms to bodies from the intelligible [world];¹³² you are wielding the wise vault of the sky and always shepherd the flock of stars¹³³; you, O King, rule the chores of angels and the phalanxes of demons; [20] And you dance around with the transitory nature, you divide the undivided mind around the earth¹³⁴, having something outpoured you return it to the source¹³⁵, you free the mortals from the necessity of death.

Be gracious to the crown made from your hymns, [25] direct the life of the poet to the serenity; still the changing mouth of tides, parch the deadly waves of the matter; restrain the illnesses from soul and limbs, lull the accursed strive of passions, [30] keep off the miseries of wealth and poverty, grant my deeds the glorious recognition and give me a good fame among the crowd, may I be adorned with the finest crowns of persuasion, in order that the mind might delight in the serene leisure, [35] and may I not suffer in the chthonic cares, but from your lofty¹³⁶ streams I water the mind with the wise travails.

¹³² God became man, to transmit to men the true substance. Ps.D. Ep. IV

¹³³ If Father is ἀρχὴ ἄρχων the Son is ἀρχὴ κόσμων.

¹³⁴ See comment 21 on pg. 204

¹³⁵ Ps. D.

¹³⁶ ὑψιφώρητος neologism of Synesius used later by Proclus see his hym.4, 14

Hymn V

Again light, again dawn, again day shines forth¹³⁷ after the nocturnal darkness; Celebrate (λίγαινε), [5] with morning hymns, o, my heart, God, who gave to the dawn the light, who gave to the night the stars, the choir dancing around the world.. [10] Ether hid the back from the very fertile matter¹³⁸ and embarks with its finest fire, in order that the glorious moon might cut its (ether's) hindermost edge¹³⁹; but above the eight vortexes [15] of the star-borne¹⁴⁰ orbits there is a stream desolated from stars¹⁴¹, lying at the bosom sets on the opposite curves from those, who move in a circle around the great mind, [20] who covered the farthest grey edges of the wings of the universe. And next – blessed silence¹⁴² covers the inseparable separation of the intellectual and intelligible.

[25] One source, one root thrice splendid¹⁴³ face that kindled; for where there is the depth of the father, there is a glory of the son, some labor of fathers heart, [30] wisdom – creator of the world and the light kindled with the unity of the holy breaths. One source, one root brought up the blessing of good things [35] through the superessential offspring¹⁴⁴ that is being seethed with fertile cravings; It shines forth with its light the wonderful and blessed substances that it has within its mind¹⁴⁵, [40] whence already earthly choir of immortal rulers, [45] who praised with the intellectual hymns the glorious creator and the first sowed form. Near the gracious begetters is the host of the ageless angels, looking towards the mind they gather the principle of beauty and then gazing towards the edge they direct the depth of the universe, [50]

¹³⁷ 4, 13

¹³⁸ Ps. Dionysius

¹³⁹ Last hypothesis

¹⁴⁰ ἀστροφορήτων - Neologism

¹⁴¹ 9th hypothesis

¹⁴² In Father there is no distinctions at all. Comp. 1, 177ff; 1, 214f.

¹⁴³ Τριπαής - Neologism

¹⁴⁴ D.N. 645 B

¹⁴⁵ In being there are two groups: ενουσιοι μάκαρες and angels.

having pulled the universe from above up to the uttermost matters, where the subsiding nature gives birth to the crowd of demons – vociferous and wily; [55] thence a hero¹⁴⁶, thence already being sown around the earth a soul gave life to earthly destinies with the skillfully worked forms.

And these all hangs upon your will: [60] you are the root of things existing before, after, and within; you are the Father, you are the mother, you are the Male, you are the Female¹⁴⁷, [65] you are the voice, you are the silence, you are the nature and begetter of the nature, you, O King, are the aeon of the aeons¹⁴⁸. May it be permitted to cry it out: rejoice greatly¹⁴⁹, the root of universe, rejoice greatly, the center of beings, monad of the immortal numbers¹⁵⁰, of rulers that existed before the being; rejoice greatly, rejoice greatly, for joy is from the God.¹⁵¹

[75] Be gracious to me and listen to the hymns of these choirs; open the light of wisdom, pour down the glorious happiness, pour down radiant graces [80] of the serene life, drive the poverty away and earthly affliction of wealth; keep the illnesses away from my limbs; may you keep away from my life the unordered intention of passions [85] and the cares that afflict the mind, in order that the plumage of mind wouldn't weigh down by earthly madnesses, but soaring freely [90] I will dance around the completely ineffable¹⁵² mystery rites of your offspring .

¹⁴⁶ Hero is subordinate to Angels.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. 1, 186

¹⁴⁸ Three Steles of Seth, Second stele „Aeon of Aeons”

Ps. D. DN, 817 D

¹⁴⁹ μέγα χαῖρε

¹⁵⁰ „Die Zahlen sind, im Gegensatz zu den enousiwn makarwn (37f), die höchsten Wesenheiten über dem Sein“; vgl. Zu 1, 175f.

Ps.D. D.N. 820 D - 821 A

¹⁵¹ This might follow the structure of Steles again.

¹⁵² πανάρρητα - Neologism

Hymn VI

¹⁵³I was the first to find the way to the new tunings, O blessed One, immortal and glorious offspring of the virgin, Jesus of Solyma, [5] so that the strings of lyre may resound them. But may you be gracious to me, O King and accept the music of the pure songs.

[10] We will praise with the hymn immortal God, great Son of the God; God who is the producer of eternity and the Father of the Son who produced the universe, nature that is combined from everything¹⁵⁴, [15] unlimited wisdom, God for the celestial entities, corpse for the subterranean beings¹⁵⁵.

When you were poured to earth through the womb of mortal woman, [20] ingenious craft of Magus was inept¹⁵⁶ and it was astounded by the rising star: who is this infant, who was

¹⁵³ God although revealed is hidden, one ought to strive towards the hidden God to whom all their crafts or capacities fall short. Ps.-Dionysius could compare the magus with the pagan philosophers who try to understand the divine but when it comes to the hidden God their inquiries although they seem to be “judiciously confuting others they still hold no water, for the being escapes their notice since it is hidden. Thus, it is necessary for magus/philosophers to dismiss their own crafts, that is refuting each other’s opinions and to speak in favor of truth i.e. accept the revelation of Christ who is nonetheless hidden in the phenomenal world and in this way animate the philosophical discourses.

¹⁵⁴ God that is God for all, or two natures

¹⁵⁵ Might be a hint to Apokatastasis

¹⁵⁶ Cf. to Hymn I 571-576, where the same craft enslaves the soul. It is through Christ that soul is liberated.

born? Who is this hidden God, [25] king, god, or corpse¹⁵⁷? Come, bring the presents, myrrh¹⁵⁸ for the sacrifices, golden jewelries, fine perfume of incense. [30] You are the God, accept the incense, I bring the gold to king, myrrh will befit the burial. You cleansed the earth, the waves of the sea, [35] the paths of the demons, soft pourings of air, innermost depths of the infernal world, you are the support to dead, God rushing to hades.

[40] But may you be gracious to me, O King and accept the music of the pure songs.

Hymn VII

In Dorian tuning, from the strains [of lyre] that is inlaid with the ivory, I will lift up the shrill voice to you, O blessed One, immortal and [5] glorious offspring of the virgin.

Preserve my life, O Ruler, completely innocuous from evil, give me [the life] completely untrodden by sufferings day and night: [10] may you light up your splendor within my heart from the intelligible source; the strength of healthy limbs, and provide the deeds of my youth with the glory¹⁵⁹, [15] bring the splendid year to the joy of my old age, having augmented the precious wisdom with health.

And may you watch over my brother, [20] O Immortal One, for my sake, who in his youth already passing the earthly threshold by foot, was brought back by you; [25] you quenched my cares and weeps, my tears and blazing fire of my heart, you revived the dead, O

¹⁵⁷ Probably in a sense of mortal being.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. to Or. 224

¹⁵⁹ Procl. Hymn to Helios 40-43.

Father, for the sake of your suppliant. [30] May you watch over my sister and a pair of children, may you cover the whole house of Hesychiu's sons under your hand. And keep away from illness¹⁶⁰ and harm the partner of my marriage bed, O King, [35] who is faithful and unanimous with me and look as she remains ignorant to the secret [love] affairs; May she preserve the bed [40] completely pure, inviolate, untrodden by unjust passions.

And my soul being free from the chains¹⁶¹ of earthly life, may it be devoid from miseries [45] and pitiful harms and let me bring up the hymns together with the choirs of saints.

I will praise again the glory of your father and your force, O blessed One, [50] {again I will sing a song for you} swiftly I will attune all-pure lyre again.

Hymn VIII

I am singing to you, O blessed One, much loved and glorious offspring of the virgin of Solyma, who expelled from the great gardens of the Father [5] earthly serpent, the treacherous snake, who offered the forbidden fruit, nourisher of the grievous destiny to the first born youth. [10] I am singing to you crowned and glorious Father, Son of the virgin of Solyma.

You descended until the earth to reside [15] with the ephemeral beings living in a mortal body; you descended to Tartarus¹⁶², where death ruled over the countless number of men's souls; Then the old, ancient Hades [20] trembled in front of you and the hound – devourer of

¹⁶⁰ ἀπόνουσον - Neologism

¹⁶¹ 3, 32

¹⁶² Gruber links it to Heracles mythos, pg.225

crowd¹⁶³, incredibly strong¹⁶⁴ {devourer of the people} was retained by the threshold.¹⁶⁵ You liberated from miseries [25] the choirs of blessed souls, together with the pure thiasos you lifted up [hymns] to Father.¹⁶⁶ I am singing to you crowned and glorious Father, [30] Son of the virgin of Solyma.¹⁶⁷

As you were ascending, O Ruler, the uncountable races of demons all around the air were trembling; immortal choir [35] of pure stars were astounded; ether illuminated and wise father of harmony from the seven-toned lyre mingled [40] the victory music towards limbs. Light-bringer¹⁶⁸ laughed, minister of a day, and the golden evening star, heavenly body of Cythera; [45] the horned splendor being filled with the stream of fire preceded the moon¹⁶⁹, the shepherd of the nocturnal Gods; [50] Titan letting its hair down – shining with the vast rays under the ineffable track; perceived the offspring of God, mind – finest craftsman, and the origin of his own flame.

[55] But you having sprung the wings reached the back of the blue vault sky¹⁷⁰, you stood in the undefiled spheres of the mind, [60] where there is a source of good things, the heaven of silence. There is neither deep-flowing time with the untiring feet¹⁷¹ who trail along the earthly offsprings, [65] nor the shameless Kers with deep waves of matter, but the ageless Aeon itself, born in a distant time, young and old at the same time, [70] who watches over the ever-flowing presence of gods.

¹⁶³ Λαοβόρος - Neologism

¹⁶⁴ Δημοβόρος - Neologism,

¹⁶⁵ Cf. to Demophilus in the eighth letter of Ps.-D., who wants to be the "guardian" (φύλαξ) of sacred objects.

¹⁶⁶ Christ participates in hymns as well. – NB ἐπιδημία, Vollenweider, pg.146

¹⁶⁷ Cf. this passage with Hymn. VI 17. 37-9

¹⁶⁸ ἑωσφόρος– Lucifer, Satan – Greg. Or. 36.5.1., Carm. 1.1.7.56. etc.

¹⁶⁹ This might denote to hell as well. In Macrobius' sense.

¹⁷⁰ Κυανάντυξ - Neologism

¹⁷¹ ἀκαμαντοπόδας - Neologism

Hymn IX

Arise, my sharp-sounding lyre, after Teian song and after Lesbian dance, sound with more majestic hymns¹⁷² [5] the Dorian ode, not for the amorous girls with the soft laughers, nor for the healthy youth in their much much-desired prime; [10] for the undefiled knowledge that is born from god¹⁷³ rushes with the holy travail to play with the threads of the lyre a song towards the God and commands to flee from the honeyed madness [15] of earthly love affairs. For what is strength and what is beauty, what is gold, what is fame or royal honors as compared to contemplations upon God?

[20] May one be skillful in riding the horses, other in stretching the bow and another in guarding his heap – the golden happiness; glory for another one is the flowing hair [25] that covers his neck; may someone be renowned for the splendor of the face among youth and maidens; [30] may I on my part live the life devoid of any sound leaving no trace at all, {unnoticed by men, but recognized by God}¹⁷⁴. May wisdom be with me - benefit in youth, [35] benefit when getting old, useful lady in wealth, wisdom that laughing will bear the poverty without toils, untrodden with the grievous cares of life, [40] may I possess as much as to keep off from the neighbours hut, in order that need wouldn't [44] bend me towards the dark thoughts. [45] Hear the whimsy song [46] that drinks the dew in the morning.

[47] Behold, my strings are playing without my intention and some voice flutters on both sides. [50] But what song will be begotten from the prodigious travail?

¹⁷² Greg. Naz. Carm. 1,1,29,8; 2,1,1, 634.

¹⁷³ Θεοκυμνος - Neologism

¹⁷⁴ Similar to Khasidic wisdom.

The principle that flows from itself, Guardian and Father of beings, Unbegotten, seated on a high seat¹⁷⁵ [55] above the summits of heaven, rejoicing in the insoluble glory, god sits sturdily, pure Henad of Henads¹⁷⁶, first Monad of Monads, [60] uniting¹⁷⁷ and begetting the most simple [entities]¹⁷⁸ from the highest edges¹⁷⁹ with the superessential births; having sprung from this place [65] through the first sown form the monad itself ineffably poured into the strength, that is endowed with three peaks. Superessential source is crowned by the beauty of children, rushing from the center and [70] flowing around the center.¹⁸⁰

Halt, my courageous lyre, halt and do not reveal to the uninitiated crowd¹⁸¹ mystical rites. Go and sing about those things that are below, [75] but may those things that are above remain unspoken.

From now on the mind is concerned only with the universe that is created by mind. For already becoming a good principle¹⁸² of human's mind [80] divided [although] being undivided, the immortal mind descended to the matter, offspring of the parents, who rule like God, small one, but still their offspring. [85] This whole is towards all, whole disseminated into whole beings around the hollow of the skies; and guarding this whole he is being present [90] with the forms that he divides, one is the charioteer of stars¹⁸³, another participates in the dances of angels and burdened by chains found earthly image; [95] being separated from the parents drew to itself the murky forgetfulness and with the blind cares the unpleasant earth amazed it, observing the mortals God [made this].

¹⁷⁵ Ψιθοωκος Greg. Carm. 1.1.3.6, al.

¹⁷⁶ Prokl. Tim. I 457, 23 and Theol. Plat. 2, 11 p. 65, 12. Also Syn. H. 4,2 enothtwn epekeina); Orig. princ. 1,1, 6.

¹⁷⁷ Prokl. Elem. Theol. Plat. 2,9 p.59,7ff.

¹⁷⁸ DN I. 4, 589 D, 112, 7-14:

¹⁷⁹ Ps. D., Coel. Hier. 124a.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. to De Insomniis 136B

¹⁸¹ D.N. 597C

¹⁸² Ps. D. I letter αγαθαρχια

¹⁸³ Numenius - "The Numenian image of the Good as Charioteer mounted on the universal Substance is the distant antecedent of Dionysius' similar expressions referring to Jesus' divinity, quoted above". Pg. 12

[100] There is still some light preserved in the enfolded eyes; there is still some might left in those who have fallen in here, who running from [105] life's waves they are standing on the holy paths without worries towards the dwelling palace of the parent.

Blessed is the one, who fleeing from the voracious howl of matter with an agile sprung [110] rises from the earth and stretches its footstep to God. Blessed is the one, who after the destinies, after toils, after the keen sorrows, that came forth with the affliction to earthly things¹⁸⁴ [115] went upon the path of mind and saw the abyss, that shines with divine rays¹⁸⁵. It is a labor to stretch the whole heart with the whole wings of the up-leading love. [120] Just confirm your strife by the songs that lead to the intellectual reality; and then, the Begetter will appear close to you and will stretch his hand (χειρας ὀρεγνύς); for a Ray will run to your encounter [125] and enlighten your paths, and will unfold to you the intelligible plane – the principle of beauty.

Arise, my soul, drink from [129] the source from which flows the good, [130] ascend praying to the Father, do not delay, leave earthly things to the earth; and may you swiftly unite with the Father, God in God – rejoice in the chorus.¹⁸⁶

Hymn to God

¹⁸⁷O, the One who is beyond all - for how otherwise should one sing thee –,
How can the word celebrate thee? For with no word can thou be uttered,

¹⁸⁴ χθονογενεῖς- Neologism

¹⁸⁵ Also in Greg. Carm. 2.2.7.118.

¹⁸⁶ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem* VI, 1071.20–1072

¹⁸⁷ In the manuscripts PVh, belonging to the α family, where the hymn is attributed to Gregory the Theologian, the title is Hymn to God, which coincides with the testimony of Olympiodorus: ἀμέλει λέγων τις ὕμνον εἰς τὸν θεόν... 'To the Divine Names' is the title that the hymn has in the manuscripts Vklr of the β family. Another title of the same family: 'Of Saint Dionysius, Divine Hymn in Heroic Verse': Pl.

thou, the sole Ineffable, since thou begettest all that voice can express.¹⁸⁸

How can the mind perceive thee? For with no mind can thou be understood¹⁸⁹.

Thou, the sole unknowable, since thou begettest all that mind can perceive.¹⁹⁰

All that can speak and cannot speak celebrate thee.

All that have the intellectual faculty and all that do not honour you.

All the common yearnings and all the common travails

are about thee; all pray to thee. All those

who know thy sign praise you with silent hymn.

All remain in thee, and all are sitting next to thee,¹⁹¹

Thou art the end¹⁹² of all, thou art one and all,¹⁹³

being neither one, nor all; Thou with many words, (πολύλλογε),¹⁹⁴ how should I call thee,

The only Uncallable? What heavenly mind can penetrate thy overshining (ὕπερφανεάς)¹⁹⁵ veils?

Be gracious to me,

O, the One who is beyond all, for how otherwise should one sing thee?

¹⁸⁸ The meaning and the structure is: 'you, the sole Ineffable, are not utterable by any word, given that you beget all things about which we speak. As this is the meaning, it is quite clear that the order of verses 3 and 4 is correct in the Dionysian manuscripts and incorrect in the Gregorian manuscripts.

¹⁸⁹ Brill's dictionary shows the reference to Rep. 529d Θεός ου ληπτός, εἰ δε ληπτός ου Θεός. Although there's no such a phrase in Rep.

¹⁹⁰ Again, the meaning and the structure is: 'you, the sole Unknowable, are not graspable to any mind, given that you beget all things that are being thought of. See above, note 2.

¹⁹¹ Θεοάζω = θαάσω 'to sit' ἄθρόα adverbially: 'together,' 'continuously,' but σοι δ' ἄθρόα seems to mean 'next to you'. However, the σεῦ (=σοῦ) δ' ἄθρόα version of Vh might be more correct. The meaning is the same: all beings are – originally – in a non-distanced state next to you: the original henadic creation.

¹⁹² Τέλος in all the witnesses, with the exception of Vh. 'End' or 'goal.'

¹⁹³ Καὶ εἰς καὶ πάντα ὑπάρχεις: PIVkLr of the β family. This is a better reading, as this is denied in the next line: οὐχ ἔν ἐόν, οὐ πάντα. εἰς/ οὐχ ἔν, πάντα/ οὐ πάντα, ὑπάρχεις/ ἐόν: perfect symmetry. The καὶ οὐδεὶς/οὐδέν variant of the α family is clearly secondary, as it destroys the symmetry and is redundant, οὐχ ἔν ἐόν, οὐ πάντα having the same meaning.

¹⁹⁴ Πολύλλογε is the version of PIVkLr (the β family), with P in margine. See Pseudo-Dionysius MT I.3. 143, 10-13: ὅτι καὶ

πολύλογός ἐστιν ἡ ἀγαθὴ πάντων αἰτία καὶ βραχύλεκτος ἅμα καὶ ἄλογος, ὥς οὔτε λόγον οὔτε νόησιν ἔχουσα, διὰ τὸ πάντων αὐτὴν ὑπερουσίως ὑπερκειμένην εἶναι (see Sicherl, 78-79). The version of the α family: πανώνυμε is impossible. We do not call God 'shit' or 'evil.' The πολύλλογε version quite obviously comes from the above MT text's πολύλογος. The reduplication of the λ is due to the meter. Sicherl's conjecture, ἀνώνυμε, is superfluous.

¹⁹⁵ This is the good reading. See Sicherl, 75-77. The ὑπερνεφεάς version does not make sense.

Philosophizing Through Hymns – The hymn Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα in the context of Synesius' and Proclus' writings

In this chapter I will discuss the transmission of Synesius' hymns in the hymn of Pseudo-Dionysius' on the one hand and Proclus' hymns and writings on the other. My suggestion will be that the latter two used Synesius' hymns to set forth their own

Weltanschauung. I will mainly focus on the interconnection between Synesius and the author of the Dionysian Corpus. There is strong evidence that both Proclus and Dionysius had read and used Synesius' hymns. However, their approach to Synesius' hymns, namely to their Christological nature, was conflicting in the works of the two philosophers. Thus, Proclus rejected Synesius' affiliation to Christian revelation, whereas Ps-Dionysius on the contrary accepted it. This is evident both in the narrower Dionysian Corpus (CDA_n), where there are clear references to Synesius and in the hymn that many attribute to Ps-Dionysius, Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα (O, the One who is beyond all).¹⁹⁶ Although, given the tenet of this hymn, it is not possible to demonstrate the conflicting points between Ps-Dionysius and Proclus as we observed in the previous chapter; on the contrary, this hymn might function as the common ground between three philosophers. It is still disputed whether it is really authored by Ps-Dionysius but the author of the Dionysian Corpus is the most fitting candidate compared to two others¹⁹⁷. The Neoplatonic character of the hymn makes it problematic to attribute it to Gregory of Nazianzus. All the more so, the lexical content of Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα doesn't echo the language of the Cappadocian father¹⁹⁸. Vassiliki Frangeskou's argument¹⁹⁹ that both in Gregory and in the mentioned hymn there is a tendency to produce the neologisms doesn't necessarily make Gregory the author of the hymn, since neologisms occur quite regularly in the works of Ps-Dionysius as well.

I will begin with the connections between Ps.Dionysius' hymn and the hymns of Synesius. I think the following passage from Synesius' first hymn is important to demonstrate

¹⁹⁶ On the concept of a narrower and a wider Dionysian Corpus, see I. Perczel, "The Pseudo-Didymian De trinitate and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite" and "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite" in the Wiley-Blackwell companion to Patristics"

¹⁹⁷ There are 15 manuscripts *in toto* of the mentioned text. In the list 11, the hymn is included and is under the name of Gregory of Nazianzus. 12-14 are transmitted under the authorship of Ps.-Dionysius, while the latter was attributed to Proclus by Cardinal Bessarion.

¹⁹⁸ Sicherl, M. "Ein Neuplatonischer Hymnus Unter Den Gedichten Gregors Von Nazianz" in „Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies: Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75“, Arethusa, 1988, pg. 69

¹⁹⁹ Frangeskou, V. "Observations on the Disputed Hymnus ad deum" pg. 12, in *Studia Patristica*, Vol. XVIII, 2, edited by Elizabeth A. Livingstone, Peeters Press Leuven, 1989.

the relations between the two texts, “[145]Self-Father, Pre-Father, Fatherless Father of all fathers, Son of thyself, One that precedes the one, [150] Seed of beings, Center of all things, Mind that precedes substancelessness, root of the first-born worlds, [155] Light shining all around, wise Certitude, source of wisdom, Mind hidden by its own splendors, [160] Eye of thyself, Master of the thunderbolt, Begetter of the Aeon/Eternity²⁰⁰, Eternal Life, beyond gods, [165] beyond minds, who directs each of them, begetter of the intelligence of the mind, Irrigator of the gods, the One who works through the Spirit, [170] and Nourisher of the soul. Source of sources, Origin of origins, Root of roots. You are the Monad of the monads, [175] you are the Number of the numbers, Monad and Number, Mind and Intellectual, the Intelligible and prior to the intelligible. [180] One and All, One through All, and One prior to all, the Seed of all things, Root and Sprout, [185] Nature in the intellectuals, Female and Male. The initiated mind says this and that²⁰¹, wandering around [190] in the ineffable abyss.”²⁰²

The character of Ps.-Dionysius’ hymn is mainly apophatic. It is a praise of the transcendent God in terms of negation. The negative nature of the hymn is noticeable from the very first words Ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα· τι γὰρ θέμις ἄλλο σέ μέλπειν; (O, the One who is beyond all - for how otherwise should one sing thee?). Now, almost the same attribution as Ὁ πάντων ἐπέκεινα is also observable in the mentioned passage of Synesius’ hymn, “beyond gods, [165] beyond intellects” (ἐπέκεινα θεῶν, ἐπέκεινα νοῶν)²⁰³. Thus, it is the transcendent God that is praised in the lines 145-190 of Synesius’ hymn.

²⁰⁰ Aeons might be comparable with gnostic sources: Three steles of Seth, hymn 3 starts with “Masculine, virgin, first aeon”. According to Brill it is neologism of Synesius, but he could take it from Three Steles of Seth “Aeon-giver”

²⁰¹ In a sense that it cannot express itself when it concerns the One.

²⁰² Parm. Hyp. 1 142a - Cf. Gruber & Strohm pp. 155-56

²⁰³ Cf. Also προανουσιε νοῦ 152 and the passage 266-369

The vocabulary of this hymn, as we will observe, distinctly echoes Synesius' hymns. Μέλπειν in the first line resembles μολπαῖν (μολπῇ)²⁰⁴ from Synesius' hymn III line 50, but further in line 55 the celebration of Father's might is expressed by the same verb as in the hymn's first line i.e. μέλων, "Provide your lyre-player with such an undefiled life [50] when, addressing to you a song, I am glorifying your Root, o, greatest Glory of the Father, and and the the Spirit that shares the throne between the Root and the Branch [55] and, by praising (μέλων) the Father's might through the hymns that I am singing to you I am laying to rest the glorious birth-pang (ᾠδῖνα) of my soul".²⁰⁵

Let us look at the next lines (2-5) of the Ps.-Dionysian hymn:

"How can the word celebrate thee? For with no word can thou be uttered,
thou, the sole Ineffable, since thou begetttest all that voice can express.
How can the mind perceive thee? For with no mind can thou be understood.
Thou, the sole unknowable, since thou begetttest all that mind can perceive."

Although the Transcendent God is ineffable and unknown, it is still God, who begets all that can be uttered and perceived. Similarly in Synesius' hymn we have the same context, God that is beyond being, beyond gods, and beyond minds begets and directs them, "immortal, beyond gods, [165] beyond minds, who directs each of them, Begetter of the intelligence of the mind, Irrigator of the gods, the One who works through the Spirit, [170] and Nourisher of the soul.", also, "You are the Monad of the monads, [175] you are the Number of the numbers, Monad and Number, Mind and Intellectual, the Intelligible and prior to intelligible".

Next, this is what we read in the hymn Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα, (lines 6-7)

"All that can speak and cannot speak celebrate Thee.

²⁰⁴ Μολπάζω has the same meaning as μέλω i.e. to celebrate, praise with song and dance.

²⁰⁵ Cf. also Hymn I, 271 Σε μὲν οἱ νοεροὶ μέλπουσιν ἄναξ; 278 Πάσα σε μέλπει γένεα μακάρων

All that have the intellectual faculty and all that do not honor you”.

The idea of cosmic chorus and that the whole universe raises the hymn to the transcendent God is also present in Synesius’ hymns in various passages. Lines 266-369 of the hymn one is the vivid example of this character of hymn-singing, i.e. “It is easy to praise thee, Father of the worlds, Father of the aeons, only-creator of the gods. [270] All intellectual beings are praising you, o, King, (Σε μὲν οἱ νοεροὶ μέλπουσιν ἄναξ) the governors of the universe, the starry intellects with their radiant glances [275] are singing the hymn to you, Blessed one, those around whom a glorious body is dancing. [280] The whole race of the blessed beings praise you (Πάσα σε μέλπει γένεα μακάρων): those who are around the universe, those who are in the universe, those wise guardians who on the celestial orbits, who outside the celestial orbits²⁰⁶, [285] are governing the parts of the world, those who are around the the glorious helmsmen who are poured forth [290] by the angelic chain.”²⁰⁷ And “All the things offer you the ageless praise: [345] dawn and night, lightnings, snowflakes, the shining edge of heaven²⁰⁸, and the roots of the earth, water, air, [350] all the bodies, all the spirits, seeds, fruits, plants and grasses, roots, plants, [355] beasts and birds and the shoals of the swimming creatures. Look at this soul [here] as well, [360] as it is exhausted and weary and as it sings [365] with the holy prayers in your Libya and in your blessed priesthood, who is surrounded by the cloud of matter. But your eye, O Father, cuts the matter”.

Moreover, in the fifth hymn we have the same vocabulary again, “Again light, again dawn, again day shines forth²⁰⁹ after the nocturnal darkness; Celebrate (λίγαινε), [5] with morning hymns, o, my heart, God, who gave to the dawn the light, who gave to the night the

²⁰⁶ Cf to Prokl. Tim. III 43, 12ff.

²⁰⁷ Here Synesius converts the hypercosmic, pericosmic and encosmic gods of the Neoplatonists into angelic powers, just like later Ps-Dionysius.

²⁰⁸ The source of this passage seems to be Psalm 148: αἰνεῖτε αὐτὸν οἱ οὐρανοὶ τῶν οὐρανῶν καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ τὸ ὑπεράνω τῶν οὐρανῶν [...] αἰνεῖτε τὸν Κύριον ἐκ τῆς γῆς, δράκοντες καὶ πᾶσαι ἄβυσσοι. I am indebted to Istvan Perczel, who pointed it to me.

²⁰⁹ 4, 13

stars, the choir dancing around the world”. Here again we have the praise of God, who created all the morning and nocturnal beings. Next, in the Platonic context, the verb γεραίρει is also connected with the hymn-singing and similarly with the line eight of Synesius’ hymn the context of the usage of this verb in Plato’s *Laws* is linked with the choric dance that accompanies the sacrifice, “After this it is necessary that each of the sacrifices of Gods to be intoned with the songs and to celebrate the sacrifice with dances”.²¹⁰ The sacrifices in Synesius’ case are the hymns themselves²¹¹ and the hymn-singing in this case always ends with the choric dance around the transcendent being.²¹² Thus, Synesius’ context is close at hand to the meaning of γεραίρει that is present in Ps-Dionysius’ hymn.

Moreover, λίγαινε and γεραίρει have the more evident echo in Synesius’ hymn IX, “Arise, my harmonious lyre, after Teian song and after Lesbian dance, sound with more honorific hymns [5] the Dorian ode, not for the amorous girls with the soft laughers, nor for the healthy youth in their much much-desired prime”²¹³

Now, let us look at the next two lines of the Dionysian hymn,

All the common yearnings and all the common birth-pangs

are about thee; all pray to thee.

The context that desires and labors are aspiring to God and are laying to rest their birth-pangs in God is also habitual in Synesius’ hymns, “by praising the Father’s might through the hymns that I am singing to you I am laying to rest the glorious birth-pang (ὠδῖνα) of my

²¹⁰ Plat. Leg. 799a

²¹¹ Cf. hymn I, 1-11

²¹² Although this imagery of dancing around the transcendent principle is already found in Plotinus, *Enneads* 6 9.8.44

²¹³ Ἄγε μοι λίγαινε φόρμιγξ, Μετὰ Τηϊαν αἰοιδάν, Μετὰ Λεσβίαν τε μολπάν, Γεραρωτέρους ἐφ’ ὕμνοις Κελάδει Δόριον ὠδάν, Ἀπαλαῖς οὐκ ἐπὶ νύμφαις, Ἀφροδίσιον γελώσαις, Θαλερῶν οὐδ’ ἐπὶ κούρων Πολυηράτοις ἤβαις. Cf. Πάντα σε καὶ λαλέοντα, καὶ οὐ λαλέοντα λιγαίνει. Πάντα σε καὶ νοέοντα καὶ οὐ νοέοντα γεραίρει. Here we have the clear evidence of Ps.-Dionysian rethinking and rephrasing that was habitual for the author of Dionysian corpus.

soul”.²¹⁴ ἀμφί σε (around you) also resembles Synesius’ ἀμφιχορεύων, *a fortiori* when the apophatic character of the hymn-singing is emphasized, “The initiated mind says this and that, wandering around [190] in the ineffable abyss.”²¹⁵

In the next lines we read, “All those who know thy sign (σύνθημα) praise you with silent hymn (σιγώμενον ὕμνον)”. The term σύνθημα occurs twice in Synesius’ hymns,²¹⁶ although, obviously it was a usual term in the various Greek religious traditions, such as the Eleusinian mysteries or the Chaldean Oracles. More attention should be paid to the idea of σιγώμενος ὕμνος in this passage. The idea of silent hymns is one of the main poetical innovations of Synesius, that he expresses several times with different metaphors in his hymns, “I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with sounds and I am singing a hymn to you, O Blessed one, with the silence as well, for just as much as you hear the sounds, [85] so also you hear the intellectual silences, O blessed One.”²¹⁷ I think in this case Synesius was influenced by the end of the first hypothesis of Plato’s *Parmenides*, where the conclusion is that if the One exists in the absolute sense i.e. if the One is One then nothing can be uttered concerning it, neither that it exists, nor that it doesn’t.

The next lines of Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα read as follows:

All remain in thee, and all are sitting next to thee,
Thou art the end of all, thou art one and all,
Being neither one, nor all; thou with many words (πολύλλογε), how should I call thee
The only Uncallable?

The characterization of God as one and many as well as one and nothing is also there in Synesius’ hymns and obviously the terms drive us back to Plato’s *Parmenides*, “One and many,

²¹⁴ Hymn I, 55-57

²¹⁵ Cf. also Hymn IV, 20; Hymn V, 19;

²¹⁶ Hymn I, 538; 628.

²¹⁷ Hymn II, 80-86. Cf. also Hymn I, 72-85; Hymn II, 34-59

one through many, one prior to many”²¹⁸ and “One and all things, [200] one in itself, and through all things”

In the next line of the Ps-Dionysian hymn we read the following, “What heavenly mind can penetrate thy overshadowing (ὑπερφανέας) veils”? Here I think two parallels can be drawn with Synesius’ hymns, a) the celestial mind that is unable to grasp the transcendent God is found in Synesius’ following lines, “What eyes are so wise, what eyes are so great [120] that they won’t be shut having intertwined with your lightnings?”²¹⁹ To look straight into your flames is not allowed even to the gods”.²²⁰ Here the intellect of the gods, i.e. the “heavenly minds,” falls short to grasp the transcendent God as it is the case in Ps-Dionysius’ hymn and b) the locus of God in the ὑπερφανέας²²¹ and surrounding it with the veils also echoes the notion of “the heaven of silence” (σιγώμενος οὐρανός) in Synesius’ eighth hymn, “[55] But you having sprung the wings reached the back of the blue-vaulted heaven²²², you stood in the undefiled spheres of the mind, [60] where there is the source of goods, the silent heaven”. Thus, in both texts the highest summit where God dwells is the place where no mind can penetrate and that no word can describe i.e. it is “the more-than-shining veils” in hymn and “the silent heaven” in Synesius.

I think these similarities should suffice to suggest for the textual and contextual proximity of the hymn attributed to Ps.-Dionysius and Synesius’ hymns. In the hymn Ὡ πάντων ἐπέκεινα there is no mention of Christ. Yet, in the manuscripts Vaticanus gr. 1525 and Laurentianus 5, 32, this hymn was included as an introduction to the *Divine Names* in the *Corpus Dionysiacum*. Thus, the fact that there is no mention of Christ *per se* doesn’t mean that the author is not Christian and that we should exclude Ps-Dionysius’ authorship in this case,

²¹⁸ Hymn I, 180-183; 199-201

²¹⁹ The One is inaccessible even to Gods i.e. it is imparticipable.

²²⁰ Hymn I

²²¹ For Sicherl’s linkage of huperfaneas to Synesius’ hymn I, 158ff, see, Sicherl, M. “Ein neuplatonischer Hymnus unter den Gedichten Gregors von Nazianz“ in „Gonimos: Neoplatonic and Byzantine Studies: Presented to Leendert G. Westerink at 75“, Arethusa, 1988, pg. 76.

²²² Κυανάντυξ - Neologism

rather we need to bear in mind the context and the place of the hymn that it might have had in the Corpus in general.

Given the Neoplatonic character it is reasonable to attribute the hymn to Proclus as well, but there are reasons that make Ps.-Dionysius more fitting candidate.²²³ The question of authorship is not the concern either of this chapter or of the thesis in general. From Proclus' works *the Commentary on the Parmenides* is most akin to the content of this hymn. According to Proclus the first hypothesis of the Parmenides is the hymn to the one. Already Werner Beierwaltes equated the ideas of the two texts²²⁴ based on the mentioned remark by Proclus, that the content of the first hypothesis is "setting forth the sole theological hymn to the One through the negations."²²⁵ But according to Proclus it is not the negations that are of the main importance in the first hypothesis, but the silence that follows the negations, "We are left in the position of having no linguistic instruments appropriate to this highest reality, and it is here that it becomes clear that this last part of Proclus' commentary, only recently made generally available through the Klibansky/Labowsky edition, is the most important of all. Neither negations nor affirmations can be used of the One, it is now claimed, and so the *via negativa* has come to its natural terminus, not at the One, but at the next lowest level. The negative way also falls short of its goal, and thus silence constitutes its completion. The negative is not a form of silence, but a speech-act. Proclus' conclusion is simple: "For by means of a negation Parmenides has removed all negations. With silence he concludes the contemplation of the One". (p.76)

²²³ See, Sicherl's article mentioned above

²²⁴ See W. Beierwaltes, *Proklos. Grundzuge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1979), 353. Quoting from the following article, Jugrin, D. „Knowing the Ineffable One: The Mystical Philosophy of Proclus“ in *Philobiblon*. Vol. XXII (2017) No. 2 pg. 23

²²⁵ Proclus, *In Platonis Parmenidem VII*, 1191.34–35, ed. V. Cousin, *Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita*, pt. 3 (Paris: Durand, 1864): ὕμνον διὰ τῶν ἀποφάσεων τούτων ἓνα θεολογικὸν ἀναπέμπων. – From the same article, pg. 23

That the contemplation of the One should be carried out in silence is confirmed by a passage of the Platonic Theology 11.9, where it is said that the One's unspeakability and causeless causality must be celebrated in silence”.²²⁶

This is how the idea behind Proclus' “ineffable initiations of the hymns” in his ὕμνος κοινὸς εἰς θεοὺς should be understood. This echoes Ps-Dionysius' σιγώμενος ὕμνος and both on their hand resonate Synesius' interpretation of this kind of hymn-singing, where the praise of the God concluded with the silence. All the more so, Synesius in general was the kind of a philosopher, who with his emphasis on ἀπόρρητα φιλοσοφία seemed to held the chief importance on Plato's seventh letter and this kind of interpretation of *Parmenides*' first hypothesis i.e. the ineffability of the first principles and their celebration in the positive and negative terms that would end with the silent hymn. This seems to be how first of all Proclus read Synesius' writings and how this character of Synesius' hymn-singing resulted in Ps-Dionysius' Cataphatic, apophatic, and mystical theologies that were discussed in the body of this thesis

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²²⁶ Mortley, R. “From Word to Silence, 2 The Way of Negation, Christian and Greek”, Bond University, 1986, pg.116

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