

***More geometrico in Proclus' Elements of Theology (ET): An offspring of Platonic Goodness?***

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**T1**

SPINOZAE ETHICA  
ORDINE GEOMETRICO DEMONSTRATA  
PARS PRIMA  
DE DEO  
DEFINITIONES

I. Per causam sui intelligo id cuius essentia involvit existentiam sive id cuius natura non potest concipi nisi existens. [...]

AXIOMATA

I. Omnia quæ sunt vel in se vel in alio sunt.

II. Id quod per aliud non potest concipi, per se concipi debet. [...]

PROPOSITIO I:

Substantia prior est natura suis affectionibus.

DEMONSTRATIO:

Patet ex definitione 3 et 5.

PROPOSITIO II:

Duæ substantiæ diversa attributa habentes nihil inter se commune habent.

**T2**

And after giving your solutions to these difficulties it would be worthwhile if you set out the entire argument in geometrical fashion, starting from a number of definitions, postulates and axioms. You are highly experienced in employing this method, and it would enable you to fill the mind of each reader so that he could see everything as it were at a single glance, and be permeated with awareness of the divine power.<sup>1</sup> (AT VII, 128).

**T3**

It was synthesis alone that the ancient geometers usually employed in their writings. But in my view this was not because they were utterly ignorant of analysis, but because they had such a high regard for it that they kept it to themselves like a sacred mystery. Now it is analysis which is the best and truest method of instruction, and it was this method alone which I employed in my *Meditations*. As for synthesis, which is undoubtedly what you are asking me to use here, it is a method which it may be very suitable to deploy in geometry as a follow-up to analysis, but it cannot so conveniently be applied to these metaphysical subjects. (AT VII, 156).

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<sup>1</sup> The translations of Descartes' passages are Cottingham's: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, trans. John Cottingham et al., 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984-1981).

#### T4

ET 1: Every manifold in some way participates **unity** (Πᾶν πλῆθος μετέχει πῃ τοῦ ἐνός).<sup>2</sup>

ET 2: All that participates unity is both one and not-one (Πᾶν τὸ μετέχον τοῦ ἐνός καὶ ἓν ἐστὶ καὶ οὐχ ἓν).

ET 3: All that becomes one does so by participation of unity (Πᾶν τὸ γινόμενον ἓν μεθέξει τοῦ ἐνός γίνεται ἓν).

ET 4: All that is unified is other than the **One itself** (Πᾶν τὸ ἡνωμένον ἕτερόν ἐστι τοῦ αὐτοενός).

ET 5: Every manifold is posterior to the One (Πᾶν πλῆθος δευτέρον ἐστὶ τοῦ ἐνός).

ET 6: Every manifold is composed either of unified groups or of henads (units) (Πᾶν πλῆθος ἢ ἐξ ἡνωμένων ἐστὶν ἢ ἐξ ἐνάδων).

ET 12: All that exists has the Good as its principium and first cause (Πάντων τῶν ὄντων ἀρχὴ καὶ αἰτία πρωτίστη τὸ ἀγαθόν ἐστὶν).

#### T5

ET 12, 14.1-23: For if all things proceed from a single cause (prop. 11), we must hold that this cause is either the Good or superior to the Good. But if it be superior to the Good, does it or does it not exercise some force upon things and upon the nature of things? [...] And what should this character be which is higher than goodness? Again, if all things which exist have desire towards the Good, how can there be a further cause beyond it? For if they desire that other also, how can their desire be pre-eminently towards the Good? [...] Again, if the Good is that from which all things depend, the Good must be the principium and first cause of all things.

ET 13: Every good tends to unify what participates it; and all unification is a good; and the **Good is identical with the One** (Πᾶν ἀγαθὸν ἐνωτικόν ἐστὶ τῶν μετεχόντων αὐτοῦ, καὶ πᾶσα ἔνωσις ἀγαθόν, καὶ **τἀγαθὸν τῷ ἐνὶ ταυτόν**).

#### T6

For inasmuch as it cannot be pure unity (since participation in unity implies a distinct participant), its 'participation' means that it has unity as an affect, and has undergone a process of becoming one. [...] It is in fact unity with something added, and is in virtue of the addition not-one, although one as affected by unity.

εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἔστιν αὐτοέν (μετέχει γὰρ τοῦ ἐνός ἄλλο τι ὄν παρὰ τὸ ἓν), **πέπονθε** τὸ ἓν κατὰ τὴν μέθεξιν καὶ **ὑπέμεινεν** ἓν γενέσθαι. [...] ὃ μὲν ἐπλεόνασεν, οὐχ ἓν· ὃ δὲ **πέπονθεν**, ἓν. ET 2, 2.16-18, 24

#### T7

All that becomes one does so by participation of unity. For what becomes one is itself not-one, but is one inasmuch as it is affected by participation of unity: since, if things which are not in

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<sup>2</sup> E. R. Dodds, ed., *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, trans. E. R. Dodds, 2nd ed. (Oxford-New York: Clarendon Press, 1992).

themselves one should become one, [...] and so are subjected to the presence of unity without being unity unqualified. In so far, then, as they undergo a process of becoming one, they participate unity.

Πάν τὸ γινόμενον ἐν μεθέξει τοῦ ἐνὸς γίνεται ἓν. αὐτὸ μὲν γὰρ οὐχ ἓν ἐστι, καθὸ δὲ **πέπονθε** τὴν μετοχὴν τοῦ ἐνός, ἓν ἐστιν. εἰ γὰρ γίνοιτο ἐν ᾧ μὴ ἔστιν ἓν καθ' αὐτά [...] καὶ **ὑπομένει** τὴν τοῦ ἐνός παρουσίαν οὐκ ὄντα ὅπερ ἓν. μετέχει ἄρα τοῦ ἐνός ταύτη, ἣ **πάσχει** τὸ ἐν γενέσθαι. *ET 3, 4.1-6.*

## T8

Every multitude that somehow participates in unity because of its participation in unity is both one and not-one.

Πάν πλῆθος μετέχον πῃ τοῦ ἐνός μεθέξει τοῦ ἐνός καὶ ἓν ἐστι καὶ οὐχ ἓν.

## T9

Now, <b>a god</b> is really good, isn't he, and must be described as such? What else? And surely nothing good is harmful, is it? I suppose not. And can what isn't harmful do harm? Never. <sup>3</sup>	Οὐκοῦν ἀγαθὸς ὁ γε θεὸς τῷ ὄντι τε καὶ λεκτέον οὕτω; Τί μὴν; Ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδέν γε τῶν ἀγαθῶν βλαβερόν· ἦ γάρ; Οὐ μοι δοκεῖ. Ἄρ' οὖν ὁ μὴ βλαβερόν βλάπτει; Οὐδαμῶς. ( <i>Republic</i> , 379b1-6)
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## T10

Plato takes it as axiomatic that every god is good, for whenever he says that 'the god is good', it is necessary to understand him to mean every god. After all, the addition of the definite article ['the'] shows either that the thing is unique in its pre-eminence (as when we say 'the poet says', allocating this person an exceptional status by virtue of the fact that he is the greatest) or else it shows that the plurality as a whole [...] Thus if he in fact expressed himself by saying that 'the god is good' then he would either mean that the first god is good or that every god is good. However, it is evident from the conclusion that is drawn subsequent to these [statements] that he did not intend to enforce these	ἀξίωμα προλαβόν, ὅτι πᾶς θεὸς ἀγαθός. ὅταν γὰρ λέγῃ τὸν θεὸν ἀγαθόν, δεῖ τοῦτο πρῶτον ἐννοεῖν, ὅτι πάντα λέγει θεόν· ἢ γὰρ τοῦ ἄρθρου πρόσθεσις ἢ τὸ καθ' ὑπεροχὴν δηλοῖ μόνον (ὡς ὅταν λέγωμεν· ὁ ποιητὴς εἶπεν, τῷ ἀκροτάτῳ τοῦτο ἐξαίρετον ἀπονέμοντες), ἢ τὸ ὅλον πλῆθος [...] οὐκοῦν ἐπεὶ οὕτω φησὶν· ὁ θεὸς ἀγαθός, ἢ τὸν πρῶτον λέγοι ἂν ἢ πάντα θεόν. ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐ περὶ μόνου τοῦ πρώτου βούλεται τοὺς τύπους τούτους κρατεῖν, δηλοῖ μετὰ ταῦτα συμπεραίνόμενος, ὅτι ἕκαστος τῶν θεῶν κάλλιστός ἐστιν καὶ ἄριστος εἰς δύναμιν [...] εἰ οὖν ὁρθῶς εἵπομεν, ἀξίωμα τοῦτο πρῶτον ληπτέον· πᾶς
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<sup>3</sup> Translation from: Plato, *Plato. Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

precepts solely on the subject of the first god, because [later] he says that each of the gods is the finest and best possible. Thus, if we are speaking correctly, then this is the first axiom to be assumed: that every god is good. <sup>4</sup>	θεὸς ἀγαθός. (Proclus, <i>in Remp.</i> 1.27.13-27, ed. Kroll)
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## T11

Further in every deduction one of the terms must be affirmative, and universality must be present (καὶ τὸ καθόλου ὑπάρχειν) [...] Suppose we have to prove that pleasure in music is good. If one should claim that pleasure is good without adding ‘every’, no deduction will be possible (κεῖσθω γὰρ τὴν μουσικὴν ἡδονὴν εἶναι σπουδαίαν. εἰ μὲν οὖν ἀξιόσειεν ἡδονὴν εἶναι σπουδαίαν μὴ προσθεὶς τὸ πᾶσαν, οὐκ ἔσται συλλογισμός). Aristotle, *Prior Analytics*, I.24, 41b6-11.<sup>5</sup>

## T12

Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces.	Πᾶν τὸ παρακτικὸν ἄλλου κρεῖττον ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ παραγομένου φύσεως.
Let us first suppose it equal [...]	ἔστω πρότερον ἴσον. [...]
Again, it is impossible the producer should ever be inferior. For as it gives the product existence, it must furnish also the power proper for that existence. But if it is itself productive of all the power which is in its consequent, it is able to create a like character in itself, that is, to increase its own power. The means to this cannot be lacking, since it has force sufficient to create; nor can the will be lacking, <b>since by nature all things have appetite of their good.</b> Therefore, were it able to fashion another thing more perfect than itself, it would make itself perfect before its consequent.	ἀλλὰ μὴν οὐδ' ἔλαττον ἔσται ποτὲ τὸ παράγον. εἰ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὴν οὐσίαν τῷ παραγομένῳ δίδωσιν, αὐτὸ καὶ τὴν δύναμιν αὐτῷ χορηγεῖ κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν. εἰ δὲ αὐτὸ παρακτικὸν ἐστὶ τῆς δυνάμεως τῷ μετ' αὐτὸ πάσης, κἂν ἑαυτὸ δύναιτο ποιεῖν τοιοῦτον, οἷον ἐκεῖνο. εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, καὶ ποιήσειεν ἂν ἑαυτὸ δυνατώτερον. οὔτε γὰρ τὸ μὴ δύνασθαι κωλύει, παρούσης τῆς ποιητικῆς δυνάμεως· οὔτε τὸ μὴ βούλεσθαι, <b>πάντα γὰρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ὀρέγεται κατὰ φύσιν</b> · ὥστε εἰ ἄλλο δύναται τελειότερον ἀπεργάσασθαι, κἂν ἑαυτὸ πρὸ τοῦ μετ' αὐτὸ τελειώσειεν.
<b>Since</b> , then, the product is neither equal to the producer nor superior to it, the producer is necessarily superior to the product.	οὔτε ἴσον <b>ἄρα</b> τῷ παράγοντι τὸ παραγόμενον ἐστὶν οὔτε κρεῖττον. πάντῃ ἄρα τὸ παράγον κρεῖττον τῆς τοῦ παραγομένου φύσεως. <i>ET</i> 7, 1-2, 4, 17-25.

<sup>4</sup> Dirk Baltzly, John F. Finamore, and Graeme Miles, *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Republic. Vol. I, Essays 1-6*, trans. Dirk Baltzly, John F. Finamore, and Graeme Miles (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Translation from: Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle. The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol. 1, Bollingen Series 71 (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984).

### T13

Yet it [justice] exists in a way, to the extent that it is impossible for the soul to abandon entirely the common conceptions and, in particular, by virtue of its aiming at the good. Therefore to the extent that it has an impetus towards the good, it participates in justice [...]

ἔστι γάρ πως, καθ' ὅσον ἀπολείπειν τὴν ψυχὴν πάντῃ τὰς κοινὰς ἐννοίας ἀδύνατον, καὶ μάλιστα τῇ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐφέσει. καθ' ὅσον οὖν ὡς πρὸς ἀγαθὸν ὁρμᾷ, δικαιοσύνης μετείληχεν· Proclus, *in Remp.* 1.23.13-16.

### T14

From this argument again it can clearly be seen how common conceptions, which say that all things exist for the sake of the Good and that all things desire the Good [...]<sup>6</sup>

ἐκ τούτου δῆλον, ὅπως αἱ κοινὰι ἐννοιαὶ τὸ οὗ ἕνεκα λέγουσαι πάντα τὸ ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸ οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται [...] Proclus, *in Remp.* 1.286.31-287.1.

### T15

He [Socrates] says that they have already heard this many times before, namely that this is the Good, which all things desire. And it is not possible to say where one should turn one's thinking (dianoia), if one should neglect this axiom.

πολλάκις μὲν αὐτοὺς ἤδη καὶ πρότερον ἀκηκοέναι φησὶν, ὡς ἄρα τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ ἀγαθόν, οὗ πάντα ἐφίεται. καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ ὅποι τις τρέψη τὴν ἑαυτοῦ διάνοιαν [ἔχει] τούτου τοῦ ἀξιώματος ἀμελήσας. Proclus, *in Remp.* 1.269.11-14.

### T16

**For if all things which exist desire their good,** it is evident that the primal Good is beyond (ἐπέκεινα) the things which exist.

εἰ γὰρ πάντα τὰ ὄντα τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἐφίεται, δῆλον ὅτι τὸ πρῶτως ἀγαθὸν ἐπέκεινά ἐστι τῶν ὄντων. *ET* 8, 8.31-32.

### T17

For if it belongs to the Good to conserve all that exists (and it is for no other reason that all things desire it)

εἰ γὰρ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἐστι σωστικὸν τῶν ὄντων ἀπάντων (διὸ καὶ ἐφετὸν ὑπάρχει πᾶσι) *ET* 13, 14.26-27.

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<sup>6</sup> Dirk Baltzly, John F. Finamore, and Graeme Miles, trans., *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022).

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