

## HOW SOULS COMMUNICATE IN HADES (PROCLUS, *IN REP.* II.163.18-168.26)

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**ABSTRACT.** In the Myth of Er in the *Republic* Plato describes various aspects of the soul's afterlife. At 614e3-615a4 he writes that souls who have gathered on the plain of judgment are then divided into those who lived morally good lives and so rise into a place of reward and those who have not who descend into the realm of punishment. On the souls' return to the plain after their time above or below, they greet one another and tell each other of their experiences. Some 700 years later, Proclus in his commentary on the *Republic* tries to answer some issues that this short passage must have raised for some philosophers in antiquity. The problem is simple enough: how can souls who do not have bodies or organs of sense communicate in this way? Proclus lays out his response in several stages. He agrees, of course, that souls in the underworld do not have corporeal bodies. However, they do have ethereal vehicles, and these vehicles, he says, are more closely adapted to the souls and therefore less likely to introduce errors in the souls. Thus, the seeing and hearing in Hades is actually clearer and more directly known than those that occur when we are imprisoned in our bodies. These vehicles retain the images received when we were embodied, and thus we can recognize other souls and communicate with them. As for hearing and speaking, the vehicles are actually better at these tasks than the organs in our bodies. How Proclus reaches these conclusions is not immediately clear from the *Republic* commentary, but with the aid of other works, especially the *Timaeus* commentary, we will be able to see how Proclus attempts to make the case for disembodied souls speaking and hearing in the underworld.

**KEYWORDS:** soul, vehicle, Proclus, Plato, *Republic*, underworld, communication.

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In the Myth of Er in the *Republic* Plato describes various aspects of the soul's afterlife. At 614e3-615a4 he writes that the souls that have gathered on the plain of judgment are then divided into those who lived morally good lives and so will rise into a place of reward and those who have not led such lives and will descend into the realm of punishment. On the souls' return to the plain after their time above or below, they greet one another and tell each other of their experiences. Some 700 years later, Proclus in his commentary on the *Republic* tries to answer some issues

that this short passage must have raised for philosophers in antiquity. The problem is simple enough: how can souls who do not have bodies or organs of sense communicate in this way? The solution to the problem, as we shall see, is a little more complex.

The myth tells the story of Er, who is granted the privilege of following along with fellow-souls on their underworld journey. The souls come to “a certain daemonic place” (εἰς τόπον τινὰ δαιμόνιον, *Rep.* X.614c1), where judges sit between two openings to the heavens above and two openings to the underworld below and where they send just souls into one of the openings above and unjust souls into one of the openings below (614b8-d1). Meanwhile, as these souls were traveling up or down, other souls were traveling down from the second opening above and up from the second opening below; these returning souls all meet in the meadow where the judges sit, greet each other, and tell of their experiences above in the heavens and below in the underworld (614d3-615a2).

In his commentary on this passage Proclus raises several concerns about what is being depicted. Proclus writes (*In Rep.* II.163.28-30):

It follows that we consider how they recognize one another, how they greet one another, how they speak with one another, and how some hear others who are speaking and describing things in detail. (ἔπεται θεωρεῖν, πῶς μὲν γνωρίζουσι τινες ἀλλήλας, πῶς δὲ ἀσπάζονται, πῶς δὲ διαλέγονται, καὶ πῶς διαλεγομένων ἀκούουσι καὶ διηγούμενων ἄλλαι ἄλλων).<sup>1</sup>

Proclus answers these questions making use of the soul's vehicle (*In Rep.* 164.7-167.23). We'll look at these passages first, and then see how they fit in with what Proclus says about the soul's vehicle elsewhere and about its role in recognizing and communicating with other souls.

### The *Republic* Commentary

Proclus divides the question of the soul's ability to recognize other souls into two parts. He first argues that souls can have knowledge (or “acquaintance,” γνῶσις) of others (164.7-165.21), and then he considers recognition as an aspect of this knowledge (165.22-166.10).<sup>2</sup>

Proclus' argument is based upon his belief that the body obscures the sense data it receives whereas the soul's vehicle allows a clearer perception. He begins his

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<sup>1</sup> All translations from the Greek are my own.

<sup>2</sup> On this division, see A. J. Festugière (1970) 108 note 2.

argument with an assumption that sense perception of one soul for another is possible, for souls are capable of knowing one another. He then writes (164.9-11 and 14-16):

Indeed it would be absurd that the senses, which are sources of knowledge,<sup>3</sup> apprehend sensations cognate to them with their coarse sense organs . . . while souls, which have knowledge [of others] and are like a kind of eye, do not see the souls that are cognate to them even by themselves without organs. (καὶ γὰρ ἄτοπον τὰς μὲν αἰσθήσεις γνώσεις οὐσας μετὰ παχέων ὀργάνων ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι τῶν συγγενῶν αἰσθημάτων . . . τὰς δὲ ψυχὰς γνωστικὰς οὐσας καὶ οἷον ὄψεις τινὰς μὴ ὁρᾶν τὰς συγγενεῖς αὐταῖς ψυχὰς καὶ χωρὶς ὀργάνων αὐτὰς δι' ἑαυτῶν.)

Proclus is comparing two kinds of knowledge: we gain knowledge on earth through our sense organs, but we must have another means of gaining knowledge in our discarnate state. Proclus next argues that corporeal sense organs do not do a particularly good job of grasping knowledge because sense organs “add affections to knowledge” (τὰ δὲ ὄργανα πάθη ταῖς γνώσεσιν προστίθουσιν, 164.19). Since discarnate souls do not have this liability, Proclus can begin to make his case for how such souls can perceive each other. He writes (164.21-25):

Moreover it is possible to say that the souls' knowledge of one another occurs through the vehicles [of the soul], just as occurs here through our oyster-like bodies,<sup>4</sup> and [the knowledge] is clearer through the former than through the latter. This is the case since vehicles are more receptive of the images (*emphaseis*) from the souls than bodies are. (καίτοι καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀχημάτων δυνατὸν φάναι γίγνεσθαι ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὴν ἀλλήλων γνώσιν, ὥσπερ ἐνταῦθα διὰ τῶν ὀστρεῖων σωμάτων, καὶ ἐναργέστερον δι' ἐκείνων ἢ τούτων· μάλλον γὰρ ἐκεῖνα τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχῶν ἐμφάσεις ὑποδέχεται τούτων.)

Proclus wants to show that if perception occurs through the vehicle, the resulting images are necessarily clearer for the soul. He thinks it is an unarguable fact that

<sup>3</sup> τὰς μὲν αἰσθήσεις γνώσεις οὐσας, 164.10. For the use of γνώσις “source of knowledge,” see Aristotle, *Metaph.* I.1, 981b10-11: ἔτι δὲ τῶν αἰσθήσεων οὐδεμίαν ἡγούμεθα εἶναι σοφίαν: καίτοι κυριώτατα γ' εἰσὶν αὐταὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστα γνώσεις· ἀλλ' οὐ λέγουσι τὸ διὰ τί περὶ οὐδενός, οἷον διὰ τί θερμὸν τὸ πῦρ, ἀλλὰ μόνον ὅτι θερμόν. (“Nonetheless, we do not believe that any of the senses are wisdom; however they are the supreme sources of knowledge of individual objects; they do not explain the why of anything, for example, why fire is hot, but only that it is hot.”). Proclus may have this very passage in mind here as he explains the difference between why (which the Intelligibles explain) and that (which the senses perceive).

<sup>4</sup> For the term ὀστρεώδης, see *Phdr.* 250c6: ὀστρέου τρόπον δεδεσμευμένοι (“bound [in our body] like an oyster”). The reference is to the corporeal body.

images in the vehicle are clearer than those in the body, which according to Neoplatonic doctrine is true. Our powers of imagination, which are simply images in the vehicle, are clear to us, as are images placed there (in our vehicles) by the gods in theurgic rites.<sup>5</sup> The body interferes with this reception of images.

Proclus picks up the argument again a little later (165.12-16):

Moreover, since these souls [i.e., those in the underworld] see each other clearly and recognize one another through these vehicles, they very much have more accurate visual impressions (*opseis*) than those here do, since they act through bodies that are more immaterial, since what is immaterial is more capable of judging and a sense organ that is more unaffected [i.e., by matter] is more effective. (καὶ ἔτι διορῶσαι καὶ ἐπιγιγνώσκουσαι διὰ τούτων ἀλλήλας πάμπολυ τῶν ἐνταῦθα τὰς ὄψεις ἀκριβεστέρας ἔχουσι, διὰ ἀυλοτέρων ἐνεργεῖν σωμάτων· κριτικώτερον γὰρ τὸ ἀυλότερον, καὶ τὸ ἀπαθέστερον αἰσθητήριον ἐνεργητικώτερον.)

Proclus takes Plato's text as proof that the souls in the underworld do know one another and that their resultant perception is clearer than ours on earth because images in the vehicle are clearer since they are uncontaminated by matter.

Now that Proclus has argued that discarnate souls have knowledge through the vehicle, he can explain how they recognize one another (165.22-166.1)

Now, if they know one another, it is no longer at all surprising that they recognize one another since they possess in their imaginative faculties a stored, latent image (*tupos*) of one another, and through<sup>6</sup> the new visual impression (*opsis*) they reawaken the memory of the soul that it had seen before. Recognition is like a bringing forth of an object of memory or a revival of a memory, which the soul possessed but did not have ready to hand so that the soul undergoing the recognition has come to know in itself that this is the soul that has such a character and that lives in a better or worse way. (Εἰ δὲ δὴ γινώσκουσιν ἀλλήλας, καὶ ἀναγνωρίζειν ἀλλήλας οὐκέτι δήπου θαυμαστόν, ἐχούσας ἐν ταῖς φαντασίαις ἀποκείμενον τὸν ἀλλήλων τύπον καὶ ἡσυχάζοντα δὲ διὰ τῆς νέας ὄψεως ἀνακινεῖν τὴν τῆς ὁρωμένης ψυχῆς μνήμην. τοιοῦτος γὰρ ὁ ἀναγνωρισμός, τοῦ μνημονευτοῦ προβολὴ καὶ μνήμης ἀνανέωσις, ἣν εἶχεν μὲν οὐ πρόχειρον δὲ εἶχεν, ὥστε καὶ διανοηθῆναι πρὸς ἑαυτὴν τὴν ἀναγνωρίζουσιν, ὅτι ἄρα αὕτη ἐκείνη ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ τοιόνδε ἦθος ἔχουσα καὶ ζῶσα χεῖρον ἢ βέλτιον.)

<sup>5</sup> For the use of images in sacred rites, see below.

<sup>6</sup> [δὲ] διὰ τῆς νέας ὄψεως ἀνακινεῖν, 165.24-25. Schoell and Usener would delete δὲ, but A. J. Festugière (1970) 110 note 2 suggests inverting δὲ and διὰ, an elegant solution, which I adopt here.

Memories are stored as images in the soul's vehicle, waiting to be recalled.<sup>7</sup> When we see and recognize others, it is because that image of the person seen summons up the image stored in the vehicle. Proclus goes on to give examples from the *nekuia* in Homer's *Odyssey* book 11, where Odysseus sees and recognizes Achilles and Ajax, whom he had known before (166.1-10).<sup>8</sup>

Thus, perceiving via the vehicle works in a manner similar to perceiving through bodily sense organs, but the results of that former perception are clearer because the vehicle has less materiality than the body (and materiality interferes with the perception) and because the images required are already stored in the vehicle before the souls arrived in Hades.

### The *Timaeus* Commentary III.236.18-239.26

We will gain more insight into Proclus' doctrine if we consider some passages from his commentary on the *Timaeus*. Proclus accepted Syrianus' doctrine of two separate vehicles, a higher ethereal immortal one created by the Demiurge and a lower one woven together from the elements by the visible gods (*In Tim.* III.236.18-239.26). It is the lower vehicle that remains attached to the soul in Hades and that interacts with the irrational directly (236.27-31):<sup>9</sup>

How then are there punishments, how purifications, how choices of lives—some of which occur in accordance with the faculty of imagination, others in accordance with the spirited part, others in accordance with desire? And how are souls introduced into the irrational sorts of living things? For the [soul's] connection to what is irrational occurs through the irrational faculty, just as [its connection] to the Intellect is through intellect. (καὶ πῶς αἱ κολάσεις, πῶς δὲ αἱ καθάρσεις, πῶς δὲ αἱ τῶν βίων αἱρέσεις, αἱ μὲν κατὰ φαντασίαν, αἱ δὲ κατὰ θυμόν, αἱ δὲ κατ' ἐπιθυμίαν; αἱ τε εἰς τὰ ἄλογα τῶν ζώων εἰσδύσεις πῶς; δι' ἀλογίας γὰρ ἢ συναφῇ πρὸς τὸ ἄλογον, ὥσπερ διὰ νοῦ πρὸς τὸν νοῦν.)

<sup>7</sup> The "imaginative faculty" is located in the vehicle. It is the vehicle, then, that houses the stored images from past perceptions that the soul uses, for example, in memories. See J. F. Finamore (1985) 2 and 167-168.

<sup>8</sup> Proclus is also concerned about how Odysseus recognized souls that he had not encountered in life, such as Minos, Tantalus, Tityos, and Sisyphus. He speculates that perhaps Odysseus had heard about them in oracles and so could recognize them by what they were doing in Hades (e.g., Minos was judging souls and the others were being punished in certain ways).

<sup>9</sup> On this passage, see S. Klitenic-Wear (2011) 197-199.

In the context of the underworld the soul's punishments and bad choices occur through its irrational nature.<sup>10</sup> Thus, it cannot be that the rational soul or the higher vehicle is responsible. It is the lower vehicle, which houses the irrational aspects, that is responsible.

Proclus continues by explaining how the lower vehicle is connected to the higher and to the rational soul. He says that it is better to accept Syrianus' explanation (236.32-237.6):

... the [higher] ethereal vehicle<sup>11</sup> embraces the summits of the irrational life and these [summits] along with the [higher] vehicle are imperishable because they have been created by the Demiurge, but since they are extended and broken into parts, they produce this [intermediate] life, which the young gods weave within it. And this [intermediate] life is mortal because it is necessary that sometime the soul lay aside this dividedness whenever it returns after attaining purification,<sup>12</sup> but it is of longer duration than the life of this [corporeal] body. (... τὰς μὲν ἀκρότητας τῆς ἀλόγου ζωῆς τὸ πνεῦμα περιέχειν καὶ εἶναι ταύτας μετὰ τοῦ ὀχήματος αἰδίου ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ παρηγμένας, ταύτας δὲ ἐκτεινομένας καὶ μεριζομένας ποιεῖν τὴν ζωὴν ταύτην, ἣν προσυφαίνουσιν οἱ νέοι θεοί, θνητὴν μὲν οὖσαν διότι τὸν μερισμὸν τοῦτον ἀποτίθουσθαι ποτε τὴν ψυχὴν ἀναγκαῖον, ὅταν ἀποκαταστή τυχούσα καθάρσεως, πολυχρονιωτέραν δὲ τῆς τοῦ σώματος τούτου ζωῆς.)

<sup>10</sup> See also *In Tim.* III.235.11-21 and S. Klitenic-Wear (2011) 199.

<sup>11</sup> There are two possibilities here. See H. Tarrant (2017) 120 note 299. A. J. Festugière (1968) 102 and note 2 argues that τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the lower vehicle but calls the passage "très confus." If we accept this reading, then Proclus must have meant that the lower vehicle "embraces the summits of the irrational life" just as and because it also embraces the higher vehicle. The other possibility is to say that τὸ πνεῦμα refers to the ethereal ("pneuma" in the sense of the fifth substance) vehicle, as S. Klitenic-Wear (2011) 199 understands it to be the higher vehicle, which embraces within itself the summits. I prefer the latter interpretation, but both come to the same conclusion that there are two vehicles and the higher one is immortal, and the lower not. For the use of τὸ πνεῦμα to mean "ethereal," see *In Tim.* 297.23-24, where Proclus states that souls in the ethereal vehicle accumulate elemental bodies ("of air, water, and earth," ἀερίους ἐνυδρίους χθονίους), since the soul cannot pass immediately from immaterial ethereal bodies into this [corporeal] body (ἀμέσως ἀπὸ τῶν ἀύλων πνευμάτων εἰς τόδε τὸ σῶμα χωρεῖν, 297.4-5).

<sup>12</sup> On this use of the verb "return" (ἀποκαθίστημι), see A. J. Festugière (1968) 102-103 note 3, where he cites E. R. Dodds (1963) 302. The soul's return does not occur after a single earthly life but rather after its return to its starting point in heaven, after its several reincarnations here. Proclus probably has in mind the 10,000-year cycle of the *Phaedrus* 248e5-249a5 (where the philosophical soul may return after only 3,000 years). See also H. Tarrant (2017) 121 note 300.

There are thus three “bodies” for Proclus. There is the higher immortal ethereal vehicle, that makes the soul encosmic and has the “summits” or seeds, as it were, of the irrational aspects of the human soul. There is the lower pneumatic vehicle that encompasses the rational soul and ethereal vehicle, and which contains in a greater degree the irrational nature. Finally there is the soul in the corporeal body, where the irrational aspects of the lower vehicle are broken into parts (that is, into the various sense organs) and spread throughout the body. The irrational soul can therefore be understood as an outgrowth of the higher vehicle that becomes more divided in its descent into the human body. After death (that is, after the separation of the soul from the corporeal body), the rational soul in the lower vehicle travels to Hades for judgment and its reward or punishment.<sup>13</sup>

Proclus further clarifies the relationship among these three bodies at 237.24-31:

Thus, the single, impassive perception in that [higher vehicle]<sup>14</sup> generates the single passive perception in the pneumatic vehicle, and this [perception in the lower vehicle generates] many passive ones in the oyster-like body. The single desiderative power in that [higher vehicle] created many desiderative powers in the pneumatic vehicle, which (powers) are in some way separate from the oyster-like body and capable of being trained, and these [create] the final, enhylic powers in this [corporeal] body. (ἡ δ' οὖν ἐν ἐκείνῳ μία αἰσθησις καὶ ἀπαθὴς ἐν τῷ πνευματικῷ ὀχήματι μίαν αἰσθησιν ἀπογεννᾷ παθητικὴν, αὕτη δὲ τὰς ἐν τῷ ὀστρεώδει σώματι πολλὰς καὶ παθητικὰς, καὶ ἡ ἐν ἐκείνῳ μία δύναμις ὀρεκτικὴ τὰς ἐν τῷ πνεύματι παρήγαγε πλείους ὀρεκτικὰς δυνάμεις ἐχούσας τι χωριστὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὀστρεώδους σώματος καὶ παιδεύεσθαι δυνάμενας, αὗται δὲ τὰς ἐν τῷδε τῷ σώματι τελευταίας καὶ ἐνύλους.)

Thus, there is a diminishment from single/impassive “summits” of perceptions in the higher vehicle to the single-but-passive perception and its multiple powers in the lower vehicle, to the multiple, passive individuated enmattered powers of perception in the corporeal body.

### The *Timaeus* Commentary II.83.16-84.5<sup>15</sup>

To see how Proclus works these various levels of body into his doctrine of the soul, we must turn to another passage in the *Timaeus* commentary, where Proclus lays

<sup>13</sup> On this tripartition, see *In Tim.* III.298.27-299.4 and S. Klitenic-Wear (2017) 199.

<sup>14</sup> For ἐν ἐκείνῳ referring to the higher vehicle, see A. J. Festugière (1968) 103 note 4 and H. Tarrant (2017) 121 note 302.

<sup>15</sup> In what follows, I am indebted to H. Blumenthal (1982), D. Baltzly (2009), and P. Lautner (2006). I am, however, looking at the matter from a different viewpoint. As the

out four levels of perception (II.83.16-84.5), the fourth of which does not concern us here since it is about perception in plants.<sup>16</sup> Proclus describes the first of the three phases in this way (83.16-23):

Therefore I say that the very first and most proper sort of perception imitates Intellect, for in every case the first things [in a series] imitate the things before them, on which account those <that are next in line><sup>17</sup> are connected to the first. It has encompassed in itself the perception of itself, neither passing from one [set of perceptibles] to another, for this would belong to a divided sort of perception, nor going outside of itself, for this would be an imperfect sort of perception. Rather it holds the whole perceptible object in itself and rather is like a *synaisthêsis*. (φημί τοίνυν, ὅτι τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἡ μὲν πρωτίστη καὶ κυριωτάτη νοῦν μιμουμένη-πανταχοῦ γὰρ τὰ πρῶτα μίμησιν ἔχει τῶν πρὸ αὐτῶν, διὸ καὶ συναφή τοῖς πρώτοις <πρὸς τὰ προσεχῆ> ἐστί-τὸ ἐαυτῆς αἰσθητὸν ἐν ἐαυτῇ περιείληφεν, οὔτε μεταβαίνουσα ἀπ' ἄλλων ἐπ' ἄλλα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἤδη μεριζομένης ἐστίν· οὔτε εἰς τὸ ἔξω προϊούσα· τοῦτο γὰρ ἀτελές· ἀλλὰ ἡ τὸ ὅλον αἰσθητὸν ἔχουσα ἐν ἐαυτῇ καὶ οἶον συναίσθησις οὔσα μάλλον.)

This highest form of perception imitates Intellect itself. Intellect, of course, exists outside of the realm of time and thinks conceptually. As such, as Proclus stresses here, this sort of perception is not partial, moving from one object to another. The soul's highest form of perception takes in the whole of the perceptible object (the Intelligible cosmos) at once. Blumenthal<sup>18</sup> thinks that Proclus is referring to "nonsensible existence" and that the term "perception" (αἴσθησις) "is used in a special sense and is applied to forms of cognition appropriate to the two higher sections of Plato's Line" in the *Republic*. Lautner argues against this position, as we shall see, but Baltzly, who is willing to extend this sort of perception to the World Soul, nonetheless doubts that the passage can refer to human souls.<sup>19</sup> From our perspective (i.e., starting from the Hades passage in the *Republic* commentary), we see that a connection to human souls is possible, since they do have a higher sort

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*Republic* commentary makes clear, Proclus is concerned to show that the disembodied human soul makes use of the vehicle for certain psychic activities, and these activities are related to what the embodied soul does with its vehicle and bodily organs.

<sup>16</sup> Proclus refers to Plato's statement at *Tim.* 77b.1-3: "indeed, all things whatever that have a share of living, it would be in justice most correct to call 'animal.'" (πάν γὰρ οὖν ὅτιπερ ἂν μετάσχη τοῦ ζῆν, ζῶν μὲν ἂν ἐν δίχῃ λέγοιτο ὀρθότατα.). And so, Plato concludes that while plants do not have a share of reason or intellect, they do share in perception (b5-6). This level does not concern human perception.

<sup>17</sup> Thus Kroll fills the lacuna in this line.

<sup>18</sup> H. Blumenthal (1982) 3.

<sup>19</sup> P. Lautner (2006) 117-119 and D. Baltzly (2009) 267-269 and note 15.



of perception that comes from their attachment to the ethereal vehicle. Proclus makes use of a nuanced strategy involving a hierarchy of soul powers within the human soul.

How is the human soul like Intellect? The Intellect, Proclus says, is the leader in a chain of different kinds of perception. Intellect's "perception" (to use Proclus' term) is characterized as perception of itself (that is, of the whole Intelligible realm). It intelligizes Intelligible objects not separately but all at once as a whole. This is the very goal of the human soul's ascent: to rise to the level of Intellect and while joined to Intellect to enjoy its kind of intellection to the extent possible. Now, the ascent involves purifications of different sorts. First and foremost, of course, we must purify our psychic pneumatic vehicles, but ultimately we must also shed that lower vehicle, purify the higher ethereal vehicle, unite with the cosmic gods and then, once all of that is accomplished, perceive as the Intellect perceives—with our incorporeal rational soul in union with the Intellect.<sup>20</sup>

Just as the Intellect holds the whole Intelligible realm in itself, the human soul that has risen to the level of the Intellect holds its whole object, and Proclus says that this sort of perception is like *synaisthêsis*. Lautner argues that Blumenthal and others have mistranslated the term as "self-consciousness," which leads to thinking that the term *synaisthêsis* is used only homonymously and is really code for a higher intellectual function.<sup>21</sup> Lautner prefers to translate the word as "joint perception,"<sup>22</sup> but this translation may not capture what Proclus intends. Proclus has laid out certain features involved in perceiving as Intellect does: it perceives the object in a unified (not part-by-part) manner and holds the object of its perception in itself. What Proclus calls *synaisthêsis* must be a kind of intellection in that the soul in its totality takes in its object. It is not like the various senses in the body perceiving individual sense objects (the eye perceiving color, touch perceiving temperature, etc.). The prefix *syn* points to the soul perceiving all-together in itself in a partless manner. We saw earlier (*In Tim* II.236.32-237.6) that Proclus described the higher vehicle as encompassing "the summits of the irrational life." These summits are the source from which our corporeal organs devolve, and they are not irrational, merely the precursors of what at a lower level will be irrational. Just as the sense organs take in (in a divided fashion) the sense objects down here, the summits take in the objects in the Intelligible in a non-divided fashion. Nothing

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<sup>20</sup> For the convergence of thinker/thinking/thought, see—with P. Lautner (2006) 123 note 12—*In Parm.* 899.17-23 and L. Siorvanes (1996) 155-156.

<sup>21</sup> P. Lautner (2006) 119-122.

<sup>22</sup> P. Lautner (2006) 123.

comes from nothing, and in Neoplatonic philosophy what is lower exists in a more divided way at a lower level than its source does at a higher.

The two activities are parallel, and so they are both perceptions of a sort. There is a kind of related *synaisthêsis* in both realms. Down here when we determine that the object we are seeing is, say, Socrates moving towards us, we make that determination by processing data from several sense organs. Up there (in the Intelligible) when we determine that the object in our souls is, say, the Form of Human Being, it is the summits in the soul that help the rational soul make this determination. Hence both are perceptions but different kinds of perceptions.<sup>23</sup> One can easily understand why Blumenthal thought that they were not perceptions at all. In Proclus' mind, however, they are perceptions because they are causally connected to and are precursors of the corporeal perceptions.

However, the passages in the *Republic* commentary, with which we began, are not about this kind of perception. Let us move on to the next two sorts of perception (*In Tim.* II.83.23-29):

Second after this is the sort of perception that proceeds [outside of itself]. In accordance with its perfect activity and since it is the same always everywhere, it grasps the whole perceptible object. It is free from every passion and every incapacity that belongs to partial natures and to enhylic organs. Third, [is the sort of perception] that is affected by what is external and is a co-mixture of persuasion and recognition (γνώσεως). It begins from passion and ends in recognition. (γνώσιν). (δευτέρα δὲ μετὰ ταύτην ἢ προϊούσα μὲν, κατ' ἐνέργειαν δὲ τελείαν καὶ αἰὶ ὡσαύτως πανταχόθεν ὅλον αἰρούσα τὸ γνωστὸν παντός τε καθαρεύουσα πάθους καὶ πάσης ἀδυναμίας τῆς οἰκείας τοῖς μεριστοῖς καὶ ἐνύλοις ὀργάνοις. τρίτη δὲ ἢ καὶ πάσχουσα ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκτὸς καὶ συμμιγῆς ἀπὸ τε πείσεως καὶ γνώσεως, ἀρχομένη μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ πάθους, τελευτῶσα δὲ εἰς τὴν γνώσιν.)<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> I must therefore disagree with the conclusion of D. Baltzly (2009) 269 that "What makes all of Proclus' four forms of perception count as perception is not their coincidence in percipients such as us. It is the fact that all forms of perception share a common object, things that have been generated." What disembodied souls at the level of Intellect perceive is not anything generated but the Intelligible objects themselves. This is a perception (or more properly, a pre-perception) which is the source of corporeal perceptions that occur when the soul is embodied.

<sup>24</sup> Before examining these passages, we should confront the problem of translating the Greek word that Proclus uses for recognizing or receiving these perceptions τὸ γνωστὸν and γνώσις. The usual translation is "knowable/knowledge," but it would be odd to say that the sense organs know the perceptible object. However, A. J. Festugière (1967) 118-119 translates the two terms as *connu/connaissance*, just as Baltzly (2007) 143-144 and (2009) 266 uses "knowable/knowledge," while H. Blumenthal (1982) 2 prefers "cognition." Proclus

Saving discussion of the second sort of perception for a moment, let us turn to the third. This sort of perception is the opposite of the sort we saw in the higher vehicle. That perception was internal or common (that is, it held the perceptible object within itself), unaffected, and undivided, while this third sort is external, affected, and divided. This is perception by material organs that take in the various sense data individually from objects external to them, and the sense data may be received tainted by the passions of the body.

Since we are dealing with a devolution of perceptive ability, we would expect that the intermediate second sort would bridge the gap between the higher and lower sorts by partaking of some aspects of them and not of others. And this is what we find:

First sort: unaffected, undivided, internal objects

Second sort: unaffected, undivided, external objects

Third sort: affected, divided, external objects

Since the second sort of perception is poised between the two extremes and since the first is located in the higher vehicle and the last in the corporeal body, we fully expect that the second would be placed in the intermediate body: the pneumatic vehicle.

### The *Timaeus* Commentary III.286.2-287.10

Proclus confirms this expectation in his commentary to the *Timaeus* III.286.2-287.10, where he also adds another subdivision within this intermediate category. In this passage, Proclus begins by describing the third sort of perception that we encountered in book II of the *Republic* commentary (*In Tim.* III.286.3-7):

We will say that it is a corporeal and enhylic life, capable of recognizing (γνωστικήν) what strikes against it from the outside, making this recognition (γνώσιν) through the sense organs. This sort of perception does not belong to the life itself but to what it makes use of. It is commingled with enhylic bodies, recognizing what it recognizes (ἀ γιγνώσκει γιγνώσκουσιν) in an affected manner. (σωματοειδῆ ζώην καὶ ἔνυλον ἐροῦμεν, γνωστικήν τῶν προσπιπτόντων ἔξωθεν καὶ δι' ὀργάνων τὴν γνώσιν ποιουμένην αὐτήν καὶ

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seems to be using the terms in a special sense here. The adjective γνωστόν is clearly equivalent to “perceptible object,” and I have translated it so here. The soul’s capacity to understand or recognize the perceptible object might best be described by “recognition,” and I have translated γνώσις with that word.

οὐχ ἑαυτῆς οὖσαν, ἀλλὰ τῶν χρωμένων, καὶ συμμεμιγμένην τοῖς ἐνύλοις ὄγκοις καὶ μετὰ πάθους ἃ γινώσκει γινώσκουσιν.)

The soul perceives its object through the bodily organs, but the perceptions belong to the organs, and so they are indirect and subject to misinterpretation because of the irrational nature of the body and its organs.<sup>25</sup>

Proclus next describes the second sort of perception, but he makes a further distinction within it (*In Tim.* III.286.20-287.4). He associates this sort of perception with the pneumatic vehicle (ἐν τῷ ὀχήματι τῆς ψυχῆς, 286.20-21), and adds that compared to the third sort of perception it is “immaterial, pure, and in itself an unaffected recognition” (ἄυλος καὶ καθαρὰ καὶ γνῶσις ἀπαθῆς αὐτῇ καθ' ἑαυτήν, 286.21-22). Proclus then adds the new distinction (286.26-29):

But when it goes outside (itself) it is called perception, and when it remains in the pneumatic vehicle, seeing shapes and forms, it is called imagination, and<sup>26</sup> . . . but inasmuch as it is divided around the pneumatic vehicle, it is called perception. (ἀλλ' ἔξω μὲν προϊούσα καλεῖται αἴσθησις, ἔνδον δὲ μένουσα καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι θεωρούσα τὰς μορφὰς καὶ τὰ σχήματα φαντασία \*\*\* καθ' ὅσον δὲ μερίζεται περὶ τὸ πνεῦμα, αἴσθησις)

In spite of the lacuna, we can see that what is called “imagination” here differs from “perception” in two ways: imagination comes from outside and is undivided, while perception comes from what is inside the vehicle and divided. Proclus states that the lowest aspect of the first sort of perception (the one in the highest vehicle) is opinion, but that the highest aspect of the second and middle sort of perception is imagination. This being the case, imagination and opinion are linked (being next to each other in the hierarchy). Thus, the vehicle is receptive of images from outside (τῶν δὲ ἔξωθεν δεκτικῇ, 287.2), but it also receives images from the sense organs. The first kinds of images would include those placed by higher entities (like the gods) into the vehicle. This kind of implantation of images would probably include cases of godsent dreams and instances of divination in divine oracles, as discussed by Iamblichus in book III of his *De Mysteriis*. There is no trace of matter or corporeal body. The sort of images that arise not from outside but from the bodily organs bring with them material affections. Thus, in one way the vehicle's images are unaffected (when they come from outside) and in another affected (when they come from sensations, as in memory). In sum we have four divisions, since the middle division (that of the pneumatic vehicle) is now bifurcated:

<sup>25</sup> Cp. *In Tim.* III.286.18-21 and 287.4-7.

<sup>26</sup> There is a lacuna here. Diehl suggested adding καθ' ὅσον μὲν \*\*\* φαντασία, “inasmuch as it is . . . it is called imagination.”

Higher vehicle: unaffected, undivided, internal activity

Pneumatic vehicle, higher aspect: unaffected, divided,<sup>27</sup> higher external activity

Pneumatic vehicle, lower aspect: affected, divided, lower external activity

Corporeal body: affected, divided, external activity

### The *Republic* Commentary II. 241.19-243.27

Let us now return to the *Republic* commentary and the role of the pneumatic vehicle there. How precisely do the souls in the afterlife perceive what they see and hear there? We have seen that they do so through the images in the pneumatic vehicle. Proclus uses the example of priests in theurgic rituals to explain how such perception is possible. The priests perceive the incorporeal gods through the images in their vehicles (241.22-27):

Long ago the theurgists taught us that it is necessary that the formless and shapeless self-revelations of gods occur through forms and shapes. The soul receives the stable and simple apparitions (*phasmata*) of the gods in accordance with its own nature in a partial manner and introduces shape and form with its faculty of imagination to the sacred visions (*theamata*). (πάλαι καὶ τῶν θεουργῶν ἡμᾶς διδασκάντων, ὅτι τὰς αὐτοφανείας τῶν θεῶν μεμορφωμένους τῶν ἀμορφῶτων καὶ ἐσχηματισμένους τῶν ἀσχηματίστων ἀνάγκη γίνεσθαι, τῆς ψυχῆς καὶ τὰ ἀτρεμῆ καὶ τὰ ἀπλὰ φάσματα τῶν θεῶν κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτῆς φύσιν ὑποδεχομένης μεριστῶς καὶ μετὰ φαντασίας σχῆμα καὶ μορφήν συναγούσης τοῖς θεάμασιν.)

The gods' intelligible thoughts are pure and devoid of images. However, the soul's vehicle must receive the god's messages via images. Proclus explains this phenomenon by comparing it to the way participation works (241.28-242.2):

Indeed, every act of participation preserves the character (*idea*) both of what is participated and of what participates since it is somehow in the middle of both of these. (πᾶσα γὰρ μέθεξις τὴν τε τοῦ μετεχομένου καὶ τὴν τοῦ μετέχοντος ἰδέαν διασώζει, μέση πως οὖσα τούτων ἀμφοτέρων.)

As Proclus goes on to explain, participation can preserve neither the character of the participated alone (for then there would be no participated thing) nor that of the participating object alone (for then it would not be dependent on the Form). Theurgic rites operate on the same principle. There are the divine messages, and

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<sup>27</sup> That is to say that although the thoughts of the gods are unified and whole, the vehicle receives them as separate images.

there are our pneumatic vehicles. Just as the participating object (say, a box) receives the Form (of squareness) according to its own lower nature, i.e., with shape and extension in space,<sup>28</sup> so too the soul's vehicle receives the imageless divine message as an image. As proof that this is what occurs in theurgic rites, Proclus cites (242.8-10) the *Chaldaean Oracles*:<sup>29</sup>

The gods spoke these words to the theurgists, for, they [i.e., the gods] say, “although we are incorporeal, bodies have been added to the self-revelatory apparitions (*autoptaphasmata*) for your sake.” (ταῦτα καὶ τῶν θεῶν εἰπόντων πρὸς τοὺς θεουργοὺς· ἄσωμάτων γὰρ ὄντων, φασίν, ἡμῶν σώματα τοῖς αὐτόπτοις φάσμασιν ὑμῶν εἵνεκεν ἐνδέδεται.)

Thus, the incorporeal gods appear in these rites as if they were material because the participants in the rites require it. In the same way, the gods present their incorporeal natures corporeally to Er (242.14-19):

Thus, if theurgists witness the divine in this way, let no one be amazed if the messenger of these sights<sup>30</sup> also—as is probable for a partial soul that makes use of its imaginative faculty and still possesses the notion of the corporeal (*sômatos ennoia*)—grasped incorporeals in this way and saw in his ethereal body the underlying natures (*hyparxeis*) of incorporeals corporeally. (εἰ οὖν τοῖς θεουργοῖς τοῦτον αὐτοπτεῖται τὸν τρόπον τὰ θεῖα, θαυμάζετω μηδεὶς, εἰ καὶ ὁ τῶν θεαμάτων τούτων ἄγγελος, ὡς ψυχὴν εἰκὸς ἦν μερικὴν φαντασίᾳ χρωμένῃ καὶ ἔτι σώματος ἔννοιαν ἔχουσιν, οὕτω τῶν ἄσωμάτων ἐφήπτετο καὶ ἑώρα ἐν τῷ αἰθερίῳ σώματι τὰς τῶν ἄσωμάτων ὑπάρξεις σωματικῶς.)

Thus, just as priests in theurgic rites perceive the gods via images, so too the souls in Hades retain the memory of deceased friends via the stored images in their vehicles.

### Conclusion

Proclus' explanation of how precisely souls communicate in Hades involves several factors. Let us review what Proclus has told us about this communication and also what he has not told us.

<sup>28</sup> See 242.7-8: τῶν δὲ μετεχόντων τὸ διαστατὸν τὸ μεμορφωμένον τὸ ἐσχηματισμένον.

<sup>29</sup> *Chald. Or. Fr.* 142. For the meaning of τοῖς αὐτόπτοις φάσμασιν, see E. Des Places' (1971) note 2 to Fr. 142 on page 144, H. Lewy (1978) 246-247, and R. Majercik (1989) 195.

<sup>30</sup> The messenger is Er, who is perceiving incorporeal souls as if they were corporeal entities.

In keeping with his metaphysical structure of the universe, there is a hierarchy of three different kinds of bodies with which the soul engages, and as the soul descends from highest level to the lowest, the soul takes on greater multiplicity and its functions become more divided. At the level of the highest vehicle, the soul has the summits of the perceptive faculties, but they are not divided but instead form a unity (a *synaisthêsis*) that allows the rational soul to imitate the Intellect and intelligize the Intelligible objects. At the lowest level, in the corporeal body, there are multiple sense organs, and the soul gathers data from the world around it in multiply divided sets of perceptions. The area of concern for us is in between, at the level of the pneumatic vehicle, for in Hades the soul has left its corporeal body behind but retains this pneumatic vehicle. The soul in the pneumatic vehicle is neither fully unified nor completely divided. Indeed, as the receptacle for images, it has two aspects: it can embrace external Intelligible information via images, and it can embrace internal material data from the various sense organs. These three bodies present us with a hierarchy of powers within the soul itself.

Proclus sets out to answer two questions about the souls in Hades: how do they recognize one another when they meet in the meadow after the punishments or rewards, and how do they communicate with each other? Let's take each in turn.

In the *Republic* commentary we saw that the soul in the pneumatic vehicle perceives, not via the sense organs in the body, but via the images in the vehicle. The soul recognizes another soul because it retains in its vehicle an image of the other. However, when a soul in a corporeal body remembers someone, it makes use of corporeal sense data. We recognize Socrates by physical cues: his face, beard, the sound of his voice, the scent of his body, etc. None of these are available to the souls in Hades, who have no corporeal bodies with physical features. Indeed, their friends have no physical features either, and so an image based solely on physical features would not help us recognize them. Proclus' explanation of how theurgists perceive the gods helps to some extent (*In Rep.* II. 241.19-242.26). There is an Intelligible reality, and there is our image of it. Proclus explains the connection between the two by demonstrating how the Fates are presented physically in the Myth of Er and what those physical descriptions symbolize (*In Rep.* II. 242.20-24):

And so in place of the form of life that is divine and immaterial [Er saw] white garments and the Fates dressed in white, and in place of a stable, permanent condition [Er saw] seated Muses, and in place of a specific characteristic separate from the other gods [Er saw] the Muses as individuals located separately in space. (καὶ ἀντὶ μὲν τῆς ζωῆς τῆς θείας καὶ αὔλου χιτῶνας λευκοὺς καὶ λευχείμονας τὰς Μοίρας· ἀντὶ δὲ τῆς σταθερᾶς καὶ μονίμου καταστάσεως καθημένας· ἀντὶ δὲ τῆς διωρισμένης ἀπὸ τῶν ἄλλων θεῶν ιδιότητος μεριστὰς καὶ τοπικὰς περιγραφάς.)

So too, the memory of our friends may include physical features of them, but those features (like the features of the images of gods) nonetheless carry within them a more accurate representation of the gods or friends. Just as we must interpret the image of the gods by stripping away shape and form and arriving at a pure understanding of the god, so too we must strip away the physical features of our friends and arrive at a pure conception of them based not on their bodies but on their souls. For example, we might have images of Socrates engaging in philosophical discussions with various Athenians, and we would extrapolate from those images Socrates' theurgic role in the soul's ascent.

Proclus' claim that the souls in Hades communicate with each other presents new difficulties. Once the souls recognize their friends in Hades, they begin a dialogue about what befell them there. We already know that they did not speak words or hear replies as we do on earth, but how do souls communicate via images in their vehicles? This type of conversation presupposes that one soul "sees" the images in another soul's vehicle, and so can compare the two sets of images. Proclus never states explicitly that souls in the pneumatic vehicle perceive the images in another's vehicle, but there is reason to think that this is the case. In all three levels of perception, there must be an object that we are perceiving. In the highest vehicle, it is the Intelligible object and in the corporeal body it is the complex of sense data from the sense organs. The object that the pneumatic vehicle perceives is contained in images. In the upper part of the division within the second kind of perceiving, the vehicle contains the images from the gods and thus the soul in that vehicle perceives those images. It is possible that, in a parallel fashion, the pneumatic vehicle in its lower phase perceives images internal to it. These cannot be the corporeal sense data (because in Hades there is nothing corporeal present), and so the likely alternative is the images in another's vehicle, which the soul is comparing to the images in its own vehicle. In other words, when a soul in Hades "speaks" to another soul and when the other soul "hears," this is a matching of two sets of images. This could be true if my images and the other's images are apparent to each of us. You might say that our images coincide in some way with the images in our counterpart's vehicle. We talk the same pneumatic language, as it were. You could compare it to a kind of telepathy, except that it proceeds through images not thoughts.

Mine is a highly speculative conclusion. If we find the recognition and communication of souls in Hades difficult to interpret, Proclus would probably reply that this is the case because we are so bound by our bodies that we do not understand



the higher form of communication in the vehicle. We must ascend higher to comprehend the mystery fully.<sup>31</sup>

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