

Praying and Contemplating

Edited by
ELENI PACHOUMI
and MARK EDWARDS

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Praying and Contemplating in Late Antiquity

Religious and Philosophical Interactions

Edited by

Eleni Pachoumi and Mark Edwards

Mohr Siebeck

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List of Abbreviations

- CIL *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum.*
- Corp. Herm. *Corpus Hermeticum.* In Arthur D. Nock and André-Jean Festugière (eds.). *Corpus Hermeticum.* 4 Vols. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1945–1954.
- DK Hermann Diels. *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.* Ed. Walther Kranz. 3 Vols. 6th ed. Berlin: Weidmann, 1951–1952.
- DT *Defixionum Tabellae.* In Auguste Audollent (ed.). *Defixionum Tabellae.* Paris: Minerva, 1904.
- DTA *Defixionum Tabellae Appendix.* In Richard Wünsch (ed.). *IG (Inscriptiones Graecae).* Vol. 3, Pars III: *Inscriptiones Atticae Aetatis Romanae: Appendix Defixionum Tabellae Consilio et Auctoritate Academiae Litterarum Regiae Borussiae.* Berlin: apud Georgium Reimerum, 1897.
- Eg. Pyr. T. *Egyptian Pyramid Texts.* In Raymond O. Faulkner. *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- IG Juliet Baillet (ed.). *Inscriptiones graecae et latinae des tombeaux ou syringes à Thèbes.* Cairo: Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1920–1926.
- ILS Dessau, Hermann (ed.). *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae.* 3 Vols. Dublin: Apud Weidmannos, 1974.
- LSJ Henry G. Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry S. Jones (eds.). *A Greek-English Lexicon with revised Supplement.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- NHC Nag Hammadi Codex
- OCD Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (eds.). *The Oxford Classical Dictionary.* 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- OF Bern. Alberto Bernabé. *Poetae Epici Graeci: Testimonia et Fragmenta.* Pars II Fasc. 2: *Orphicorum et Orphicis Similium Testimonia et Fragmenta.* Munich and Leipzig: K. G. Saur, 2005.
- OGI Wilhelm Dittenberger (ed.). *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae.* 2 Vols. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1903–1905.
- PDM *Papyri Demoticae Magicae.* In Hans D. Betz (ed.). *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- PG *Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graecae.* Accurante Jacques-Paul Migne. Paris: Migne, 1.1857–166.1866.

- PGM* *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. In Karl Preisendanz (ed.). *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. 2 Vols. 2nd revised ed. With additions by Karl Preisendanz. Looked over and edited by Albert Henrichs. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973–1974 (repr. Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001).
- PLRE* Arnold H. M. Jones, John R. Martindale, and John Morris (eds.). *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*. 3 Vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971–1992.
- P. Oxy.* *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*. London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1.1898 ff.
- Suda* Ada Adler (ed.). *Sudae Lexicon*. 5 Vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1928–1938.
- SM* *Supplementum Magicum*. In Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltoni (eds.). *Supplementum Magicum*. 2 Vols. Papyrologica Coloniensia 16.1–2. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–1992.

Introduction

ELENI PACHOUMI and MARK EDWARDS

In this volume the editors present twelve papers from the international interdisciplinary conference on *Praying and Contemplating: Religious and Philosophical Interactions in Late Antiquity*, conceived and organised by Eleni Pachoumi at North West University from 31 March to 1 April 2016. The volume explores the interactions and syncretistic tensions between religion and philosophy in texts dating from the 3rd to the 7th century A.D. A variety of papers investigates issues of personal religious attitudes, initiation to the mysteries, Orphism, notions of theurgy, magic and the philosopher's quest for intimacy or union with the divine, magic and Christianity, the role of prayer in philosophical texts, oracles, dream-visions and divination. The volume includes a wide range of specialisations, such as Neoplatonism, magical texts, Orphism, *Chaldaean Oracles*, Theurgy, Patristic literature, Christian religious texts and Manichaeism.

John Dillon in his paper considers the various modes and levels of prayer practiced by the Neoplatonic philosophers, from Plotinus on, through Iamblichus, to Proclus, and then to a selection of Sufi masters, indicating the various purposes which prayer may serve, but focusing on what is the overriding purpose of it for the later Platonists, the freeing of the soul from bodily concerns and its unification with the divinity. It is also argued that many aspects of Sufi practice and terminology can throw light on the practice of Plotinus in particular.

Eleni Pachoumi next turns to an examination of the the magico-religious and philosophical interactions reflected in the theurgic unions of the individuals with the divine, looking at Proclus' treatise *On the Hieratic Art*, as well as at other works of Proclus referring to theurgy. The author discusses philosophical and magico-religious issues that theurgy is engaged with, such as the notion of mixing based on the concept of one and many, the various aspects of the powers of nature, and the role of the natural sympathies. The role of passwords, symbols and statues in theurgy is also examined. These issues are illustrated by examples from philosophy and magic, particular attention being paid to the interactions between philosophy and magic.

Iamblichus' conception of divination and prayer is analysed in the next two papers. John Finamore discusses Iamblichus on divination through dreams. Iamblichus has often been criticized as being the philosopher of the irratio-

nal and the individual most responsible for the deterioration in Neoplatonism after the “rationalism” of Plotinus. Philosophers of the 20th and 21st centuries have misunderstood the philosophical milieu of ancient times. In his paper, Finamore explores one aspect of Iamblichus’ supposed “irrationality,” his discussion of divination and how and why it works in Book III of his *De Mysteriis*. It is also argued that Iamblichus is part of a long tradition of philosophers, starting with Plato himself and including Middle Platonists such as Philo and Plutarch, who have written intelligently and rationally about divination.

Following on this paper, Mark Wildish looks at Iamblichus on the language of prayer. The main sources for Iamblichus’ theoretical reflection on theurgical prayer are three sequences in the *De Mysteriis* and a passage in Proclus’ commentary on the *Timaeus* reporting Iamblichus’ criticism of Porphyry’s theory of prayer. There are also the parallel discussions of the grammatical form and rhetorical role of prayer in Aristotle’s association of the *forms of linguistic expression* with the arts of elocution and delivery that form the basis of Ammonius’ account with which Iamblichus is evidently familiar and from which he equally evidently departs. The main argument will be that in spite of its explanatory value in identifying the determinants of the Iamblichean account, the Neoaristotelian approach is explicitly and topically specific, and as such works against Iamblichus’ own efforts to position that topic within a hierarchical order. Any account of that hierarchical structure as independent of and parallel to the Neoaristotelian framework recapitulates the assumptions from which Iamblichus’ own account is attempting to free itself. Wildish argues that for the best understanding of theurgical prayer, we must also give an account of the liturgical context in which theurgy operates without reducing it to or justifying it in terms independent of that context.

The next two contributions examine the issue of prayer in the works of the Roman senator, consul and philosopher Boethius and the Roman emperor and philosopher Julian. Wayne Hankey analyses the prayer’s mediation in Boethius’ *Consolation*. At the very center of the *Consolation of Philosophy* in Book III, Lady Philosophy, having invoked the authority of Plato in the *Timaeus*, prays. Her poetic prayer is founded on the connection of motion and stability which is the creation described there as the dialogue was understood in Late Ancient philosophy. The prayer is required to dissolve a block in the progress of the *Consolation* – the incapacity of dividing *ratio* to reach the unity of its separated goods. Philosophy’s prayer effects the transition to the contemplation of the passage into one another of unity, goodness and divinity. Its *intellectus* is imaged in the identity of being and thinking of Parmenides’ sphere. However, there, where apparently all is fixed, prayer becomes impossible and the last two books require the movement back to *ratio* and working out the systematic connection of the divided and simple forms of knowing, so as to enable prayer, ascent, and the final meeting of human and divine *intuitus*. Using recent work on the structure

of the *Consolation* and its sources in Late Ancient philosophy, this paper works out these transitions.

Following on this, John Hilton discusses public and private prayer in the works of the emperor Julian. There are two reasons why the emperor Julian's use of and teaching about prayer are of interest for understanding late antiquity. The first has to do with the personal, even autobiographical, statements that Julian makes about how prayer guided his actions at critical moments in his life. Prayer in this sense is the personal contemplation of an individual or the consultation of conscience, rather than a civic religious act. The second concerns the unique insights he provides about his policy on prayer as an emperor and the need for him to establish good relations between the state and the gods for the well-being of the subjects of the Roman Empire. The paper analyses the evidence for these two modes of prayer in the works of Julian.

Mark Edwards examines the prayer in primitive Christianity and magic. The early church resented the imputation that its founder was only one of the many jugglers who owed their fame to the meretricious or delusive science of magic. It agreed with the Romans, against some modern scholars, in drawing a clear distinction between religion and magic, but only because it drew a clear distinction between its own miracles and the sorcery of its rivals. The works of Jesus were superficially comparable to those of the pagan thaumaturge, but because they came from a different source they exceeded them in benevolence and power. The exorcism of the very demons who made pagan magic possible was not only a prominent but a peculiar feature of the ministry of Jesus; the performance of the same feat by his disciples will be found to involve not merely the use of his name but an abjuration of personal authority. Such reverence, Edwards argues, is a characteristic note of Christian magic, if we are willing to use this term. The typical Christian spell is an act of prayer, and it is in such compositions that religion and magic might after all be said to coincide in the ancient world.

Following on this, the next two papers are focused on the views of early Christian theologians and philosophers on dream visions and contemplation. Bronwen Neil looks at the dream-visions, prophecy and contemplation in Origen's *Contra Celsum*. Dreams and visions played a significant role in the contemplative life of Hellenistic Jews and Christians of the third and fourth centuries, just as they had done in the pre-Christian Greco-Roman world. The author examines the ambivalent attitude to dream-visions and their mantic and admonitory functions in early Christian Alexandria, especially in the works of Origen, by looking at the vocabulary of 'seeing' or contemplation (*theoria*) that is applied in discussions of the process of receiving dream-visions and interpreting them. Comparing dream-visions with the Neoplatonic contemplation of intelligible realities in Plotinus' *Enneads*, she considers the differences between these two means of divinely inspired perception of the invisible realm. Both contemplation (*theoria*) and dream-visions (*fantasia*) can be considered modes

of contemplating the rational principles of created beings (*logoi*), the first using the *nous* and the second using the imagination.

Annemaré Kotzé next turns to an examination of Augustine's addresses to God and man in the *Confessions*. The paper focuses on a number of instances where Augustine employs a particularly emotional style of prayer to launch a strong appeal to a potential Manichaean reader to realize the error of Manichaeism and accept the superior truth represented by Catholicism (the prayer stance is maintained throughout the *Confessions* but not always equally intensely). The author uses the term 'marginal Manichaean' to refer to the kind of reader who is in a similar position to Augustine reading the books of the Neoplatonists: someone (from the young intellectual elite) already disillusioned with aspects of Manichaeism or under pressure of increased persecution and earnestly searching for an alternative. This audience would include readers converted to Manichaeism by Augustine himself, or those merely curious about Augustine's own conversion from Manichaeism to Catholicism. Particular attention is paid to two passages: Augustine's address of his soul in *Conf.* 4.11.16–4.12.18; and the meditation on Psalm 4 in *Conf.* 9.4.7–11. When these passages are read taking into account the specific context where they occur as well as the connotations accrued by specific words through their use in the *Confessions* as a whole, the non-explicit appeal to the Manichaeans becomes more clearly discernible.

The last three contributions involve mystery initiations, oracles and the process of transmission of Orphic texts in Late Antiquity. Matthew Dickie explores the meaning of initiation in Late Antiquity. Almost all that we know about initiation in Late Antiquity suggests that it was seen as a way of coming together with the divine, however that might be described. There is very little sign in the fourth century of men or women seeking initiation, so that they might enjoy a privileged position in the afterlife, freedom from ills and troubles in this life and, in the case of the Samothracian mysteries, safety at sea. Going back to the fourth century BC, and above all to the gold *lamellae* that adepts bore with them to the grave, the literature of initiation suggests that the mystery cult was expected at this time to secure happiness both in this world and in the next. The author attempts to explain what the origins are of an apparently radical change in the understanding of initiation, when it is first attested and in what circles it is found.

Following on this, Lech Trzcionkowski examines the transmission of the Orphic poems *Hieroi Logoi* in 24 *Rhapsodies* in a codex. The author discusses the role of the Orphic codex in the religious and philosophical life of Neoplatonic philosophers. One of the most important consequences of the transition from roll to codex was that many corpora underwent a process of selection in order to fit the average size of a codex. In the case of early Christian literature, the main criterion was the ideological one, in the case of pagan texts it was usually more practical (a canonical selection of best examples of the spe-

cific literary genre), but in philosophical schools the ideology was an important factor too. The Neoplatonic philosophers from Athenian school were firmly convinced that poems of Orpheus and *Chaldean Oracles* are the real source of theological knowledge as well as the scenarios for religious practices (purifications, prayers and theurgy). In this context the poems of Orpheus were labelled for the first time as “rhapsodies” (Marinus *Proclus or On Happiness* 27). The author argues that a label *Hieroi Logoi in 24 Rhapsodies* used by the pupil of Marinus, Damascius, was the title of the new created Orphic codex. It is tempting to assume that the change from rolls to codex would have a similar effect on the transmission of Orphic texts, as it had in the history of Christian corpus. In order to create a codex, a selection of poems to be enclosed in a single book had to be made. The author suggests that *Rhapsodies* of Orpheus were in a way the response to the challenge of Christian codices containing the Sacred Books. The selection of the texts included into the codex stimulated the change of the nature of *Hieroi Logoi* of Orpheus. The poems existed before, but their combination and perhaps accommodation to the new format would result in reformulation of Orphic myth.

Philip Bosman finally discusses the end of the ancient oracles in Late Antiquity. Around the turn of the fifth century AD, decrees by Theodosius I (391) and Theodosius II (435) led to widespread destruction of centers of pagan religion around the Mediterranean. By that time, the ancient oracles were mostly abandoned, in some cases already for centuries, but archaeological evidence suggests that remains such as at Dodona were nonetheless demolished with considerable effort and industry. This leaves the question for the reasons behind these attacks. The Christian state could, after all, simply have resorted to the range of arguments against the practice of divination raised by pagan intellectuals, as recorded in Cicero’s *De Divinatione*, and in the oracular criticisms of Epicureans and Cynics. Such arguments included accusations of charlatanry and, from the philosophical side, the logical consequences of the implied determinism. A number of reasons for the physical destruction of the oracles present themselves- for example, demonstrations of Christian power, decline of reverence for the old gods, and legal measures facilitating conversion to the state religion. The author considers a possible link between oracle destruction and Platonist demonology, looking specifically at Plutarch’s *De Defectu Oraculorum*, Porphyry’s *De regressu animae/Philosophy from Oracles* and Augustine’s response to the latter work in the *De Civitate Dei*, written incidentally in the years leading up to the decree of Theodosius II.

Although there has been no collaboration by the authors of this volume, apart from their attendance at the same conference, it is clear that they are at one against Geffcken, Dodds and Gilbert Murray in their estimate of late antique religion. Far from having suffered a failure of nerve, a lapse into barbarism or an irruption of foreign superstition, the Platonists of this epoch gave an intellec-

tual character to texts and rites which had hitherto been thought to lie outside the domain of reason. If we must set philosophy against magic, the theurgy of Iamblichus will fall on the side of philosophy; if the spell is the enemy of the prayer, there may have been no such thing as a Christian spell. Platonists and Christians alike affirmed the omnipresence of order in the universe, and could furnish both an epistemology and a theory of providence that explained their dealings with the supernatural. Because they did not hold the same epistemology, and indeed were adversarial institutions in late antiquity, each derided the practices and teachings of the other; from our remote point of vantage, however, we see how closely pagans could approach Christians in their teaching on the efficacy of prayer and how much Christians were prepared to learn from pagan interpreters of dreams. Julian the Apostate, who may for a time have straddled both worlds, is the subject of more than one paper, each of which reveals that, while he had every right to call himself a Greek, the Christians also had every reason to suspect him of setting up a demonic parody of the church.

Oxford, March 2018

Prayer and Contemplation in the Neoplatonic and Sufi Traditions

JOHN DILLON

Introduction

It is reported, by the pious biographer of Iamblichus, Eunapius of Sardis, that a rumour got started among his pupils, which he laughingly dismissed, that the philosopher, when deep in prayer, would rise full ten cubits into the air, while his clothing took on a golden hue (*Lives of the Sophists* 458). We do not have to believe in the substance of this rumour, relayed as it is by that very unreliable man – any more than we need to believe certain of the equally pious tales later told by the faithful Marinus about his master Proclus – to derive from it a message about how the power of at least a certain type of ecstatic prayer was viewed in philosophical circles in late antiquity. Such a manifestation would have been regarded as appropriate to the highest level of prayer, as set out by Iamblichus himself in Book V 26 of the *De Mysteriis*.

It is the purpose of this paper to present a conspectus of the later Platonist theory and practice of prayer and contemplation, from Plotinus on, through Iamblichus, to Proclus, covering all levels of prayer, from the lowest to the highest, and giving due consideration to both aspects of the topic, the practice of prayer by Platonists, and the theory of gods and of language that makes prayer and contemplation possible for them, and then to append to that a brief account, by way of comparison, of the theory of prayer and contemplation of the Islamic Sufis, since that tradition seems to me to cast some interesting light on the pre-suppositions behind Platonist practice.

One may best begin, perhaps, by endeavouring to provide a definition of prayer. In former days, one might have turned for such a definition, to an authority such as the Oxford English Dictionary. In the present instance, however, recognising that we are now thoroughly embedded in the electronic age, I have chosen to resort to that fine Internet resource, Wikipedia, where one may find the following most useful summary:

Prayer is an invocation or act that seeks to activate a rapport with a deity, an object of worship, or a spiritual entity through deliberate communication. Prayer can be a form of religious practice, may be either individual or communal, and take place in public or in private. It may involve the use of words or song. When language is used, prayer may

take the form of a hymn, incantation, formal creed, or a spontaneous utterance in the praying person.

There are different forms of prayer such as petitionary prayer, prayers of supplication, thanksgiving, and worship/praise. Prayer may be directed towards a deity, spirit, deceased person, or lofty idea, for the purpose of worshipping, requesting guidance, requesting assistance, confessing sins or to express one's thoughts and emotions. Thus, people pray for many reasons, such as personal benefit or for the sake of others.

While one can have little or no quarrel with the overall content of this, one thing that the Wikipedia entry does not specify is that prayer may be regarded as an aspect of philosophy as well as of religion. This is entirely to be expected, in view of the dominance for the best part of the last two thousand years, in the Western world, of one or another of the Abrahamic religions, whose tendency has been to separate philosophy rigorously from religion, and to assume that prayer is the exclusive concern of the latter. In the Greco-Roman world, however, there was no such firm separation of the two, and certainly no subordination of philosophy to religion – indeed philosophy felt it to be its right, and its duty, to criticize irrational or immoral aspects of popular religious practice, and this includes the improper employment of prayer and supplication, including sacrifice.

I. Prayer in Plotinus

If we turn now, initially, to Plotinus, we can find from his pen, or his lips, scathing condemnations of what one might characterize as the 'popular' attitude to prayer – an attitude fully shared, it must be said, by contemporary Christians, whom he probably has in mind. First, there is his notorious response to his senior disciple Amelius, as reported by Porphyry (*V. Plot.* 10), when Amelius invited him to accompany him on a sort of temple-crawl, at the festival of the New Moon: 'The gods ought to come to me, not I to them.' 'What he meant by this exalted utterance,' says Porphyry, 'we could not understand, and did not dare to ask.' A possible interpretation, surely, however, is that our relations with the gods should be based, not on our going out of our way to solicit them for favours which we have not made an effort to deserve, but rather on our making ourselves ready, by the practice of spiritual exercises, to receive their beneficial power. It is not the expression of an impious or arrogant attitude to the gods; merely a properly Platonist one¹.

From the treatises themselves, a nice passage occurs in the course of his essay *On Providence* (*Enn.* III.2.8.36 ff.) – following on the notably heartless dismissal of soft, fat boys who get their clothes and their lunch-money robbed from them

¹ See in this connection the excellent analysis of the incident by Berg (1999).

by lean and fit ones, as getting no more than they deserve. We cannot expect the gods to help us, maintains Plotinus, if we are not prepared to help ourselves:

Here it would not be right for a god to fight in person for the unwarlike. The law² says that those who fight bravely, not those who pray (ἀνδριζομένους, ἀλλ' οὐκ εὐχομένους), are to come safe out of wars; for, in just the same way, it is not those who pray but those who look after their land who are to get in a harvest, and those who do not look after their health are not to be healthy; and we are not to be vexed if the bad get larger harvests, or if their farming generally goes better. Then again, it is ridiculous for people to do everything else in life according to their own ideas, even if they are not doing it in the way which the gods like, and then be merely saved by the gods without even doing the things by means of which the gods command them to save themselves. (Translation by Armstrong).

This is not just a statement of the 'Protestant ethic' of robust self-reliance. It is rather one in support of the position that one should first of all strive to conform one's own will to that of the gods, and to accept the order of the universe; only then will correct forms of prayer ensue.

But if prayer in the 'vulgar' sense attracts Plotinus' contempt, is there any activity which could be described as 'prayer' that he would admit to practising? John Rist has a useful chapter on Prayer (chapter 15) in *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*,³ where he draws attention to several important passages. One of these is the latter part of *Enn.* IV.4 [28] chapters 26–45, where, in the process of discussing the type of consciousness enjoyed by the souls of the heavenly bodies (which he, of course, regarded as divine), Plotinus has occasion to make various remarks on prayer, indicating in the process that he sees a place for it in the philosophic life.

The first thing that he wishes to establish, however, is that the heavenly gods cannot be expected to deviate from their fixed purposes by reason of our prayers.⁴ Prayer, rather, works by establishing a linkage (through cosmic *sympatheia*) between us and them: "Their knowledge of prayers is the result of a sort of linking and a particular disposition of things fitted into the whole, and the same applies to their accomplishment of what we pray for."⁵ Plotinus subjoins to this the interesting remark that the spells of the magicians work in just the same way, by making use of *sympatheia*, indicating that the influences of the heavenly beings are value-free: if you press the right buttons, so to speak, they will respond, whatever your purposes.

² This would be something like the Law of Nature; Plotinus is not claiming this as the positive law of any state.

³ Rist (1967) 199–212. I am indebted also to the useful discussion of Laurent (1999).

⁴ Plot. *Enn.* IV.4.26.

⁵ Plot. *Enn.* IV.4.26.1–3: Γίνονται δὲ εὐχῶν γνώσεις κατὰ οἶον σύναψιν καὶ κατὰ τοιάνδε σχέσιν ἑναρμοζομένων, καὶ αἱ ποιήσεις οὕτως. I borrow the translation of Armstrong.

He returns to this topic in chapter 30, still concerned about the problem of the extent to which the heavenly gods ‘answer’ our prayers (1–17):

But now, since we established that memory in the heavenly beings was unnecessary⁶, but gave them perceptions, and hearing as well as sight, and said that they heard the prayers which we make to the sun⁷, and other men to the stars, and since it is believed that the heavenly beings accomplish many things for men, and do so in such a casual way that they are not only helpers in right actions, but in many wrong actions too, we must enquire into these questions, since they have come up – for there are very great difficulties about them in themselves, and these are much talked about by those who dislike the idea that gods should be culpable accomplices in improper behaviour, especially in love-affairs and immoral liaisons – for these reasons, and particularly about what we were discussing at the beginning, the question of their possessing memory. For it is obvious that, when we pray, they act, and do not do it at once, but afterwards, and very often after a long delay, they possess memory of the prayers which mortals offer to them.⁸ (Translation by Armstrong).

This, however, as Plotinus notes, would run counter to his previous argument. He does not want to dispute that consequences do follow upon prayer, even at some distance in time, but, as emerges over the next few chapters, he wants to explain such phenomena as the natural results of cosmic sympathy, of the universe being all one vast body – and these influences work for evil-minded magicians, if they are good at their art, just as well as for high-minded Platonist philosophers. We may check in again towards the end of chapter 40, where a rather disquieting connection is being made between the power of prayer and that of magical spells, and even with pitiful scenes on the dramatic stage:

There is a natural drawing power in spells, brought about by the tune and the particular intonation and posture of the magician – for these things have an attractive force, even as do pitiful postures and voices⁹; for it is the irrational soul – not the power of choice or reason – which is charmed by music, and this kind of magic occasions no surprise: people actually take pleasure in being enchanted, even if this is not actually what they demand from artists. And we must not imagine that prayers in general¹⁰ either are responded to by a faculty of conscious choice (προαίρεσις): for people charmed by spells do not act on the basis of choice, any more than, when a snake fascinates men, does

⁶ This is one of Plotinus’ main contentions in relation to the mode of consciousness of the heavenly gods, by reason of the fact that their world does not have any aspect of pastness. Cf. Plot. *Enn.* IV.4.4.6–8 above.

⁷ That is to say, ‘we Platonists’, useful incidental evidence that Plotinus did observe traditional Platonist practices, whatever sense he accorded them.

⁸ Plot. *Enn.* IV.4.30.1–17.

⁹ It is not quite clear to me what Plotinus has in mind here – probably dramatic performances, but possibly pitiful appeals from defendants in court. In either case, the comparison seems somewhat inappropriate. It is Plotinus’ contention, after all, that both the magician and the philosopher are not so much appealing to anyone’s irrational soul as tuning in to a natural force in the universe – which is admittedly not conscious, in the sense of being driven by *prohairesis* or *logos*, but not exactly *irrational* either.

¹⁰ Sc. other than magical spells.

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