
The Platonic Pair “Limit – Infinitude” according to the Neo-Platonist Damascius

C. Terezis
University of Patras, Greece

Abstract

Damascius maintains that according to the Platonic text the cause and principle of Intelligence is the Limit, whereas that of Pleasure is Infinitude. By using the logical principle of analogy, he points out that any relationship which exists between causes-principles also exists between their products. By arguing regarding the content of Limit and Infinitude Damascius introduces an ontological monism. Therefore his explanations are based on the favourite distinction of the Neoplatonic Philosophers between Unity and Dyad and, thereby, between Unity and Plurality.

Furthermore he develops a syllogism on the basis of analogies which exist among the causes in order to make a reliable presentation of the priorities. He pursues another syllogism dealing with the meaning of production which means that he excludes its mechanistic operation in a quest spread upon theories which support the absolute metaphysical foundation of the physical world.

Damascius proposes a common methodology and one theory as everything which exists is created or is going to be created. In his view ontology includes teleology as an inherent element. Despite his attempt to interpret the metaphysical world rationally, he remains attached to the principles of negativism.

The Platonic dialogue *Philebus* (*Philebos*) is one of the texts which has been particularly discussed by the philosophers of the Neoplatonic School of Athens. Two of the last masters of the School – and perhaps its most reliable representatives – Proclus and Damascius have devoted many pages to the analysis of the content of this dialogue. However, we should not overlook the fact that their analysis cannot agree exactly with what Plato, himself, had specified. It had already been more than eight centuries since the writing of the *Philebus* and it is natural that new trends should have been developed in philosophical thought during this period. A theological direction prevailed in the Neoplatonic School, which insisted on clarifying everything which exists and happens in the metaphysical world. According to the prevalent views of this School, the world of experience is not a reliable “tool” for the foundation of Ontology and Cosmology. This school put forward the widespread view

that the existence of this world is absolutely determined by metaphysical causes and principles, which provide it with constitution and structure and determine its functions. As a result, philosophical thought gets its meaning when it is directed towards the investigation of metaphysical archetypes. At the same time, such a direction satisfies also the religious feeling of that period, which, in most cases, maintains priority over genuine philosophical thought.

The Neoplatonic interpretation of Philebus is situated within the above philosophical-theological context. In this dialogue of his later years, Plato tried to explore, in a strictly systematic way, the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical world, between the archetypal forms (*eidē*) and the empirical phenomena. This attempt, at least in its general formulation, strongly stimulated Proclus and Damascius strongly. Despite the fact that their main directions in research were concerned with the interpretation of the dialogue Parmenides, they discover – or they think so – useful material for their purposes in Philebus. There are two main philosophical issues which they located in its content, that also agree with the framework of the clear definition of the empirical phenomena by the transcendental elements. First, the relationship “Unity-Plurality”, (*hen-plēthos*), namely, how the plurality of the physical world has proceeded from the unity of the metaphysical world. Second, the relationship “Limit-Infinitude-Mixture” (*peras – apeiron – mikton*), which is the subject of the present brief study. In this last relationship Proclus and Damascius seek and find through their interpretative approach a plan for the development of particular productive specifications which have already been set as providences by the supreme Principle of All. The actual text on which this study will be based is Damascius’ (458-529) annotations to Philebus 235b-27d, where Plato examines the relationships between the terms “Limit”, “Infinitude”, and “Mixture” in the light of the principle of causality.

I. First principle – secondary principles

Damascius, from the very beginning of his analysis, proceeds to distinctions and definitions at the level of causes and principles. According to the Platonic text, he claims that the cause and principle of Intelligence is the Limit, whereas that of Pleasure is Infinitude. By using the logical principle of analogy, he points out that any relationship which exists between causes-principles also exists between their products. This means that through the pair Limit – Intelligence limitation and order are secured, while through the pair Infinitude – Pleasure, the perpetual development and evolution manifest themselves. This distinction defines that the immobility, which the first pair provides, is contrasted with the constant mobility of the second pair. In this

way a dynamic "procession" (*próodos*) towards new forms of production and a stability which prevents chaos are made possible. And vice versa: potentiality and change intervene in the static condition and immobility. (Therefore, the ontologically permanent conditions are not immovable.)

After that, the Neoplatonic philosopher wonders about the content of Limit and Infinity which are secondary principles. He also wonders about the content of the only **and prime Principle** which precedes their manifestation, on which they depend and from which they derive. By raising this question, he makes clear that he introduces an ontological monism. But it is not a case of a simple form of monism that he is referring to, since he takes the function of the two inferior specific principles for granted. For this reason, the explanations which Damascius proceeds to give afterwards are based on the favourite distinction of the Neoplatonic Philosophers between Unity and Dyad and, thereby, between Unity and Plurality. He observes that the cause which exists in a simple way, namely the one which is superior and defies mixings, is the cause of that entity which has a unique attribute and exists in itself in a simple way. By contrast, all causes of those entities that present differences between themselves are located exactly in the region where these differences are developed. He then specifically refers to the differences between multitude and unity. This second case of causality indicates that from the one attribute which the first principle describes we are transferred to Many, and to their unity, or, from the unqualified situation of the immutability to its first particular developments. The philosopher's thought, however, is incoherent. Within the previous context it is implied that the superior Principle produces Limit and Infinity in a simple manner. These are at first sight vague and simple in their initial condition, whereas every production which takes place henceforth is composite since both of them should participate in its composition. There is a unique entity different from the previous which arises each time out of their composition. Therefore every entity derives from the same ontological principles, whereas each of the former is produced in a unique manner.

Here we should note, however, that Damascius, in his previous remarks, refers to the relationships between "cause" and "what is a result of", which occur exclusively in the supreme metaphysical region. For this reason he maintains that there are no adequate names nor adequate concepts to objectively describe the causes not only of the situation which expresses the metaphysical unity, but also of that which expresses the metaphysical plurality. Therefore every name or concept which is attributed to them mainly depends, either on the theoretical approach or on each thinker's epistemological background. It could be argued that this is all about particular approaches none of which is absolutely true. This happens, because in the ontological case, which we analyse here, everything is

covered by negation and cannot be described, since everything moves in a region which is transcendental and inaccessible to human consciousness. Therefore, all the terms used for the description of this mystic region express only mere attempts and, if they are examined as absolute criteria, eventually they do not have any legitimacy of categorical application; namely, the words as signifiers do not correspond to the things as signified, but only by convention.

Damascius goes on to say that Limit and Infinitude appear in two ways: first, they appear as principles which originate from a Principle superior to them, namely they are its products. However both of them in a subsequent level are immanent in every particular level of existence, which means that they function as causes. Moreover, he points out that from Limit and Infinitude derive not only the entities which are subject to the human intelligence, but also the entirety of metaphysical entities. However, during the activation and the co-existence of these two universal principles, Limit dominates. This happens for two reasons: on the one hand, the dyad cannot dominate as a manifestation of Infinitude, because it presupposes the unity and also, if it is activated independently, it leads to a productive development, which, in its total evolution, would have no limits. It needs, therefore, the cause that provides the relationships between the distinct entities. On the other hand, all would end up in chaos, since the entities would have neither internal coherence nor would they be connected in any way. Thus the element which must be ensured in the metaphysical as well as in the physical world is the unity, which according to the Neoplatonic tradition is the main characteristic provided by the Superior Cause, namely the "One" (*hen*) or the "Good" (*agathon*). It should be stressed, however, that the superior entity is called the "One" when it is examined in its absolute existence and "one" when the stress lies on its productive manifestation or on its provisions.

Subsequently, and by seeking a strictly precise hierarchy for the productive developments, Damascius points out that duality and not plurality has proceeded from the "one". The criterion for this hierarchical classification is the degree of their closeness to the "one". According to the unanimous Neoplatonic principles, this production is essential in order to follow a gradual process of evolution and to be in accordance with whatever the immediate succession defines and in order to make sense and avoid ontological chaos. Furthermore, the philosopher clarifies that on the uppermost metaphysical level the process of generation – or, to be more precise in this case, the procession – is twofold: during its first manifestation, the "one" appears as "one", namely it sets itself as the ontological reality, able to promote movements for united productive procedures. During the second manifestation, the "one" presents itself as a particular cause, which

embraces duality as a single whole, namely the first specific and analytical expression of the generation. This is why the "one" is expressed in the sense of "one" as well as in the sense of "everything". It is obvious that here, there is no contrast between the superior cause and the plurality of products, or in another aspect, between the substance and the attributes. The plurality simply expresses the entirety of the internal features of the "one", which like seeds, were originally in the state of potentiality of existence. This means that they are not completely new, ontological realities. Also here, the concept of ontological monism, supports the idea that the "one" has absolute authority over evolution.

Despite the above differences or distinctions, Damascius points out that we have to be cautious, when we refer to the term "distinction". The reason for this is that this is a term which expresses a situation occurring mainly at inferior ontological levels. He maintains that the distinction between the two principles, Limit and Infinity, is not real, but is determined by human consciousness and as a result it is of intellectual or symbolic nature. The philosopher emphasizes that, at the level of the first manifestation, that of the "Intelligible" or "Being" – namely the one which is the "One's" first development, as the first mixture of Limit with Infinity – there is no distinction between the non-participated and the participated or between the participant and what it participates in. Here the unity is still dominant, and so are the results in the non-evolution of hierarchies, which manifest themselves through the element of participation. According to the philosophers of the Neoplatonic School, when we refer to participation, we basically introduce or presuppose the distinction between the superior entity which gives, and the inferior one which receives. This sort of distinction appears when the developments start, namely when the other two superior metaphysical archetypes, "Life" and "Intelligence", manifest themselves after Being. "Life" and "Intelligence" participate in "Being", while "Intelligence" participates only in "Life". These participations define classifications as well as what one could designate as divisions. All the above cannot happen in the area of the "one" which is unreachable in human consciousness. By guiding his negativism to extreme limits, Damascius points out that the supreme metaphysical levels which exist before the "Intelligible" world, namely before "Being", are three and all of them are unknown to human consciousness. This happens, although the third in order – namely that of the Infinity – is the cause of plurality and it would perhaps be expected to be intellectually accessible to man.

Then Damascius develops a syllogism on the basis of analogies which exist among the causes in order to make a reliable presentation of the priorities. First of all, he puts forward two hypotheses which he accepts as valid for the purposes of his argumentation. More specifically, he points out

that we can accept the two principles – namely the Finite and the Infinitude – as causes of the elements of Mixture, and the “Being”, or the “Intelligible”, as cause of the Mixture itself. Following these relationships between causes – what is result – he wonders why the elements cannot be superior to the mixture itself, since its two principles are superior to “Being”. To this question he gives two answers, each one depending on the way we approach the mixture. So, supposing that the mixture derives from the two elements, then it is inferior, because they are simple in comparison to its constitution. But if we suppose that it is originally one and it derives from the “one” – which produces the “Being” – then it is superior. In the latter case these two do not constitute the mixture, but they are its internal features which presuppose it as substratum. Furthermore, there arises the fact that in this case, the first mixture is the cause of “Being”. Since it includes the Finite and the Infinitude, it will be superior to the product made by the composition. By using terms of Logic, the qualities are the natural attributes of a subject. The above thought includes the prospect of determining whether there is movement from the superior to the inferior ones during the production or the procession and vice versa. It is an issue to which the philosopher will return.

By extending his argument, Damascius concludes that, in the determination of the relationships mentioned above, it is more correct to say that the two principles are originally formed and completed realities as well as simpler than the mixture. At this point however, he makes a distinction between principles and elements. He points out that in the first mixture, or in a different interpretation, in the cause of the mixture, the elements, or according to a second interpretation, the causes of its elements, acquire their existence in common. On the basis of this development, the elements do not only exist on a second level after the principles, but are also inherent as inferior in the mixture itself. It happens so, because, in any case the, elements are inferior to what is composed, namely inferior to the entity that contains them. Concluding his arguments, the philosopher points out that the above mentioned relationship of classification and priority exists also among the causes. From what has been mentioned here, it is obvious that a classification of ontological formations and productive interventions is developed. More specifically, Limit and Infinitude, when originally combined, produce the mixture. Afterwards, within the mixture, they constitute the causes from which inferior Limit and inferior Infinitude derive as elements. These elements are the ways of manifestation – and not of constitution – of the mixture. Limit and Infinitude, therefore, have two different ways of manifestation and function, which are always determined by their relationship to the mixture.

Damascius, however, insists that even in the second ontological constitution, namely that of “Life”, which similarly arises by the productive combinations of the two principles, we cannot accept that there is a complete

distinction or division. As an argument for this exclusion, he mentions that the provision of the archetypical species (*eidē*) with specific ontological outlines – but without sections – is the responsibility of the first “Intelligence”, which similarly arises by a special type of affinity of the Limit with the Infinitude. He points out that the first “Intelligence” is free of any posterior mixing. He adduces as an argument Lamblichus’ view, according to which, the monads of species are constituted in the region of this Intelligence. Moreover, he clarifies that he regards as monads the condition of each species which is not subject to distinctions or divisions and because of this, the first “Intelligence”, (as far as its way of appearance is concerned) appears through unified qualities. Thus the fact that it is not subject to a complete distinction implies that this cannot be the case with “Life”. Therefore, in the region of intellectual entities, it functions as “Intelligible” namely a quality superior to it. It operates through three productive ways. More specifically, the first “Intelligence” is the cause of the substance which possesses and, in a simple way, provides the species. As the second Intelligence, it is the cause of that life, which also provides the species which have already received a new feature. Finally, as the third Intelligence, it completes the procedure of providing the species when they appear with all their characteristics. In order for the metaphysical world to be led to the condition called differentiation, or division, it has to go through the whole evolution of the Neo-Platonic triad: “Being – Life – Intelligence”, with all its particular specializations. In the framework of this triad, the archetypical species receive gradually all those qualities which will enable them to help the generation of the world of experience. Once the prefiguration of this production has started, the differentiation or the division begins to appear in a concrete and evident way. Basically, in the metaphysical region, qualities which already exist in a state of unification – mystic at first and then obvious – manifest themselves.

Subsequently, Damascius notes that the “Mind”, namely everything which mainly originates from the supplies of Limit as third entity, is God. Thus the “Being”, (to the production of which as the first mixture, there contributes the Infinitude) must be considered as God or “one”, and not as united or substance. It expresses an initial condition and not a subsequent constitution. For this reason it endows Gods and not tangible entities with order. Its interior includes (or condenses) in a unified and secret manner the plurality of the internal qualities of the metaphysical world and not those of the tangible in the area of which everything is distinguishable. The former mixture, therefore, represents the metaphysical world in its entirety in the sense that it is placed at that point from which the gradual transition from unification to plurality starts.

The next syllogism of the Neo-Platonic philosopher deals with the issue of the meaning of production, which means that he excludes its mechanistic

operation. It is a quest spread upon theories which support the absolute metaphysical foundation of the physical world. Damascius mentions that the first Principle is the entity which provides the entities with hypostasis and is their final cause, namely it defines the way of their constitution and the goal of their existence. He observes that the final cause is significantly superior to the efficient cause. It could be argued here that the hypostasis is provided so that the already defined aim can be accomplished; In other words, hypostasis has got a meaning because there is a goal to be implemented through and upon it. Despite the classification mentioned above Damascius points out that the first Principle grants both elements which comprise production – that is the hypostasis and the aim – according to the “one”, namely the Unity. The next two principles undertake to fulfil the distinction between these two elements. At this point, the classification above is developed within a specific level of carriers. The principle which functions in accordance with the Limit intervenes as a final cause and is superior. On the contrary, the principle which functions in accordance with the Infinitude provides the hypostasis and is inferior. It is obvious that in Damascius’ ontological system the production of an entity is not sufficient but it is necessary to specify the way of its articulation and development. It is only in this way that it obtains its real meaning, its significance and meets its teleological structure.

The Neo-Platonic philosopher then reminds us that it was not sufficient enough for Socrates to specify only the cause of the unification of the Mixture, but also to locate the cause of distinction. As such he regarded the otherness, the ontological condition which develops after the intelligible world. It is an opinion which has been also put forward in the dialogue of “Parmenides” (143 α-β) the “Gospel” of the Neoplatonic School. Under the Neo-platonic perspective, it is only the otherness that highlights the idea of distinction because the Intelligible is absolutely in the condition of Unification. By attempting once again a precise specialization of the causes, Damascius concludes that it is scientifically correct to maintain that the “one” is the cause of all things, the Limit is the cause of unification, the Infinitude of differentiation and the Mixture of everything that participates in both. Thus, it can be mentioned that the Mixture appears as the condition in which both the supplies and the way through which these supplies are provided, are summarized. The Mixture, therefore, is the archetype of all the inferior entities concerning the way they will participate in the supreme metaphysical principles.

II. The Dynamics of Infinitude

In his following syllogism, Damascius becomes more specific through a brief presentation of the relevant philosophical tradition. Thus, he points out that

the Infinitude is accessible through intellect in various ways. These ways are presented with a relevant comment as follows:

- 1) According to the potentiality of Matter there is a reference to its incomplete condition which has not obtained its archetypical species yet.
- 2) According to the initiative provision of species, owing to the fact that every group of entities receives a special form which it is familiar with on a permanent basis. It is a potential condition of supplying with ontological features which is manifested indefinitely.
- 3) According to the infinite divisibility of the continuous Quantity, which is related to the eternal addition of Multitude.
- 4) This is the process of "Progress" according to which there are some rigid ontological nucleuses constantly manifesting themselves and multiplying productively.
- 5) According to the everlasting genetic activity of species which as a dynamic development expresses the inexhaustibility of a rational production with certain formations.
- 6) According to the everlasting motion of activities, a condition which by itself constitutes an ontological system gradually presenting "the Wealth" of its infinite main elements.
- 7) According to the fact that productive potencies do not exhaust or cease their action so that the perpetual provisioning of the world of experience is ensured.
- 8) According to a metaphysical reality that is continuously -and therefore not in limited formulations- at the same condition without variations, which by itself assures the irremovability and the invariability of the productive archetypes. Or, in other terms, the strictly defined substance which arises at any instance.
- 9) According to the situation which functions on the basis of "more and less". The philosopher here clarifies that Socrates had undertaken to explain these elements of increase and decrease or of superior and inferior claiming also that the Limit is irrelevant to anything originating from their co-existence.

Damascius commenting on the last case points out that the "more and less" which express an ontological balance, are immanent everywhere since Infinitude is also immanent everywhere. Of course, each time its immanence manifests itself in a different way, according to the level of entity in which it exists. Thus in the heavenly, physical bodies, there are the more and the less as increase and decrease, namely quantitatively, while in the intelligible order they exist as an exemplary cause, meaning without differentiations but as a sort of invariable archetypes, namely in quality order. Thus, it could be maintained that the specific way in which it is presented, at any given time therefore, follows the difference which exists between the physical and metaphysical world. Yet, the philosopher asserts that in every single entity, both "Limit" and "Infinitude" are present, regardless of the fact that this existence may belong either to the metaphysical or the physical world. This means that the "More and Less" in its specialised application is not unlimited but has some certain bounds. This is also the case in the remaining situations. What, however, determines their specific way of occurrence, is that the "Limit" dominates in certain conditions while the "Infinitude" in

others, sometimes the tendency to Identity governs and some other times the tendency to Otherness.

At the end of the above argumentation – in an attempt to briefly summarize what he has examined – Damascius maintains that Socrates defines the “Limit” and “Infinite” now as two different, specific examples and then as two universal examples of Mixture. In any case, these examples present the contrast that exists between them. The “Infinite” represents the measureless, while the “Limit” represents the domination of proportion and harmony. The Mixture originates from the combination of these two contradictions as an entirety which retains a couple of its characteristics invariable, while at the same time these very characteristics are set into action. Subsequently, a potential state of developments is created, in which order, logical constitution and specific function is ensured. To our belief, within the wider context of the field which is being examined, arises that Damascius regards the “Limit” as a universal example and the “Infinite” as a universal principle, which define mixture as a concrete ontological reality. On the contrary, Damascius regards these two terms as being specific only when they, in a strictly specialised way, define the combinations so that a specific partial entity can arise and thus the Mixture can be manifested productively.

III. The Universal Validity of Reasoned Causality

The next issue the Neo-platonic philosopher is concerned with is the Cause which brings about the mixing of the “Limit” and the “Infinite” so that the Mixture could be thus generated. Initially, he makes a general comment and points out that everything which comes into being must have come into being through a cause. Upon the light of the principle of causality, he excludes any factor of spontaneous production from his ontological system. Simultaneously, he points out that everything that is created, since it is divisible and not cardinal, cannot be an independent cause of itself. At the same time, it exists as a concrete entity but does not exist due to the fact that it is subject to development. It exists as long as it creates itself, but when it is created it does not exist. Subsequently, Damascius points out that the “What Makes” and the “Cause” are identical, and for every physical entity which is created, the cause is the species and the matter. The last presupposition of his interpretations is that the entity which has the ability to make cannot coincide with its product. All his previous references intend to show that the mixing between the “Cause” and the “Effect” is not possible and that in order to succeed in interpreting the latter we have to become aware of the way it intervenes or even of the substance of the former. It means that the “Effect” can neither be ontologically independent nor interpreted by itself. A

further examination of the topic would suggest that the philosopher aims to exclude the discernible specific of the metaphysical with the physical through specific terms of causality. Lastly the "hylomorphic" theory concerning production which accounts for the level of presence of the metaphysical in the physical is quite challenging.

Damascius then wonders how the "What Makes" can be the same with the "Cause". In other words, he notes that he ponders on the relationship which may exist between the efficient, the exemplary and the final Cause. He raises this question because the potential for creation does not fully cover the meaning of the cause. In order to strengthen his argumentation he reminds us that according to Proclus, when the Creator makes the world, he manifests himself in all these three types of Causes. He even presents himself as the final Cause in order to equate all the entities – regarding their final form – with him. As a result, all three Causes are included in the region of the Creator and are his particular manifestations, which cannot be separated during the process of creation, because a separation would strongly suggest that then the production of the physical world would be incomplete.

The Neo-platonic philosopher points out that the Creator manifests himself both as a complete Unity and as a Triad in order to prevent the introduction of divisions in the metaphysical region. In the case we examine, the Triad means that the plurality of the metaphysical activities is expressed through the direct communication they have with each other. This is due to the fact that every Cause is active, and by being a common source for a multitude of products, it puts itself into productive motion in three ways, which are closely interwoven. At this point Damascius reverts to the superior deductions. He states that this connection mainly occurs in the intelligible order, in which no division between its particular active motions can exist. Moreover, this ultimately happens in the first Cause, which continuously provides homogeneity on all things and that is only in accordance with its complete Unity. Therefore, it is even here maintained that the main factor which determines developments is the Unity which continuously provides homogeneity as the prime element.

Subsequently, Damascius is in line with Plato's view that the "Cause" precedes the "Product" ("what comes to be"), which is not apathetic but participates in the fulfilment of creation. He bases this view on the fact that the "Mover" is prior to the "Moved", since the first already exists while the second is still in the process of becoming. Thus, the Product ("what comes to be") is always both ontologically and in rank inferior to the Cause. It can neither be identical with the Cause nor can it pre-exist. This last remark is self-evident. He puts it forward, however, in order to criticize Epicurus, the Stoics and other philosophers, who followed an opposite guide-line and

produced the superior from the inferior. It should be noted that for Damascius – and the entire Neo-platonic tradition – the production depends mainly on the evolution of superior entities and does not arise from the formulation of some primary bodies. The productive evolution has a diminishing nature since, from the perfect and the unqualified; it goes to the imperfect and the relative.

The next thought of the Neo-platonic philosopher is directed once again towards the concept of the "self-constituted". According to his view, every self-constituted entity will and will not exist at the same time. More specifically due to the fact that it is a qua producer it will originally exist, but as a qua product it will not. On the basis of this distinction, the self-constituted will be different from itself, since it possesses two ways not only of manifestation but also of definition. In fact, it is a double hypostasis, not in the sense of an internal differentiation or contradiction but on the basis of its identity – an identity that means exactly what it is – arises necessarily from the possession of the two features above. It should, however, be specified that during the whole process of development of a self-constituted the mover is superior to the moved and as a result the indivisible is superior to the divided. The views that Damascius puts forward here refer to the metaphysical entities and not to the physical ones, which do not have the potential of being self-constituted. Every metaphysical entity receives elements from its superior and articulates these elements in its own way. Therefore, it is responsible for its constitution and not apathetic. It is impossible for a metaphysical entity not to have an energetic disposition. By contrast, every physical entity is completely deprived of this responsibility. Both the form and the matter which is comprised of are granted overhead. This is an issue which has been studied thoroughly by Proclus, who uses it in order to support the view that the metaphysical world is superior to the physical. The reason, however, that Damascius uses here the concept of the Self-constituted is because he certainly wishes to confirm the absolute presence of the Mixture after the Supreme Principles and then to show the degree of its current function into the Metaphysical world in complete contrast with the physical one.

At the end of his argumentation Damascius claims that every mixed entity consists of many dissimilar elements which, since they are many, are also distinguished from each other. In case they are combined, they need the cause which will create this combination. Consequently, every Mixture needs the cause which will make it a Mixture. However, the philosopher points out – by putting forward some of his previous denotations in a certain way – that the Mixture in the metaphysical region is different from the one in the physical region. In the former, it originates simply from a cause which provides also the unification in a simple way as a spread of pre-existing

potentialities. Under no circumstances could it be considered as a compound considering the precise meaning of the term. In the second region it is about a Mixture which is subject to the process of genesis that is the process of the apperception, which in turn means that it is compound and absolutely dependent. In addition, the gathering of the dissimilar elements, literally interpreted, strictly belongs in the area of the perceptible beings' world. Despite the previous differences, however, it is obvious that the principle of causality is the main prerequisite in order to comprehend how Damascius' ontological system functions. One superior Cause and Principle constitutes in a strictly structural and functional way a world of various manifestations. The entities of this world are specific manifestations of the relationship between Limit and Infinitude, which has immense potentialities, has plenty of exemplary archetypes and is inexhaustible considering its interventions. It, therefore, functions as a source of utmost ontological regularities, permanently emitted.

Conclusions

According to what we have examined so far, we conclude with the following thoughts:

1) By analysing the pair: Limit – Infinitude, Damascius attempts to incorporate the metaphysical as well as the physical world in a strictly structured system. As a whole, this system is submitted to the same principles which yet deposit particular applications according to the ontological region in which they intervene. He, therefore, seeing it from a different perspective suggests a common methodology and one theory for everything which exists, is created or is going to be created. If, however, one wishes to quest the deeper cause of the Neoplatonic philosopher's unified or holistic system, he or she should resort to his insistence on building an inviolable monism.

2) Damascius insists on establishing with accuracy the relationship between the archetype – ectype in the sense of a teleological plan which tends towards its fulfilment. He excludes, therefore, the case of an automatic production and the case of an accidental or disorderly development. On this basis, in order to become completely aware of the products, one has to scientifically approach their causes or principles, as far as their substance or actuality is concerned. In order to comprehend both the partial and final purpose of the world, one must have searched the content of the causes from which it has been derived. Thus, Ontology actually includes teleology as an inherent element.

3) Despite his attempt to articulate or interpret rationally the metaphysical world, he remains attached, to the principles of negativism. The supreme metaphysical regions are inaccessible to human

consciousness. Here, Philosophy gives way to the mystic Theology, and the sound Reason is replaced by the awareness of human ignorance. A systematic researcher, therefore, becomes also an initiate of this religious experience. However, what should be noted at this point, is that the theological denial is connected with the human's sense of his or her circumstantial scientific possibility and of their limits. Theological and scientific realism is shown forth through the thinking subject's moderate self-restriction which co-exists with a productive view of itself based on relativism.

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