

# The Demiurge in Ioane Petritsi's Commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*

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I 149

**Abstract:** Ioane Petritsi, the twelfth century Georgian Christian Neoplatonist, wrote a commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. In his work Petritsi goes far beyond the material contained in Proclus' *Elements*, discussing the issues which are the subject of other treatises of ancient Greek philosophers. The aim of this paper is to analyze Petritsi's point of view on the creator of the visible world, i.e. the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. In Petritsi's commentary, on the one hand, the features of the supreme One and the demiurge as producers of the universe are in certain cases quasi identical, although on the other hand, the demiurge represents a lower level of intellect than the true being and in some cases is absent in places where a reader, following the context of Petritsi's commentary, expects his presence.

**Key-words:** one, true being, intellect, soul, matter.

## ***El Demiurgo en el Comentario de Ioane Petritsi a los Elementos de teología de Proclo***

**Resumen:** Ioane Petritsi, neoplatonista georgiano y cristiano del siglo XII, compuso un comentario sobre los *Elementos de Teología* de Proclo, en el que va mucho más allá del material abarcado por los *Elementos* y llega a discutir cuestiones de las que se ocupan los tratados de otros filósofos griegos de la Antigüedad. Este trabajo se propone analizar el punto de vista de Petritsi sobre el creador del mundo visible, es decir, el demiurgo del *Timeo* de Platón. En el comentario de Petritsi, las características del Uno supremo y el demiurgo como productores del universo son, en ciertos casos, casi idénticas, aunque, por otro lado, el demiurgo representa un nivel de intelecto más bajo que el ser verdadero y está ausente en pasajes en los que el lector, a partir del contexto del comentario de Petritsi, esperaría su presencia.

**Palabras clave:** uno, ser verdadero, intelecto, alma, materia.

### **1. Introduction**

150 |

Ioane Petritsi, the twelfth century Georgian Christian Neoplatonist, translated Proclus' *Elements of Theology* into Georgian. He commented on all propositions of Proclus' *Elements*, and wrote a prologue and an epilogue to his commentary. In general, Petritsi follows Proclus' philosophy and, at least in the commentary and the prologue, he exposes and interprets it quite adequately, without looking for harmony or differences between Proclus' philosophy and the traditional Christian teaching. Instead, it is in the epilogue that Petritsi makes an attempt to prove the compatibility of Platonic philosophy and Proclus' theory of the supreme One with the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. From this point of view, i.e. regarding the problem of the harmonization of pagan Neoplatonic philosophy with Christian worldview, Petritsi's commentary, along with the prologue, is quite different from the epilogue. In this paper, I shall concentrate mainly on Petritsi's commentary, almost without taking into consideration his epilogue.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze Petritsi's point of view on the creator of the visible world i.e. Plato's demiurge in the *Timaeus*. But why does Petritsi write about the demiurge at all in his commentary on Proclus' *Elements*? This is a legitimate question, because this text of Proclus' does not contain any special discussions of the demiurge, unlike Proclus' other more detailed works, first of all, his commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus*. So, how should one explain why Petritsi is interested in the demiurge at all,

and how does he interpret the essence and the functions of the demiurge? It is not difficult to answer the first question: in his prologue and commentary, Petritsi goes far beyond the material contained in Proclus' *Elements*, discussing the issues which are the subject of other treatises by Proclus and other philosophers as well. This is why it is quite natural that we come across the figure of Plato's demiurge in Petritsi's commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*. The second question is more complicated to answer. On the one hand, the demiurge in Petritsi's commentary is similar to Plato's demiurge as well as to Proclus' interpretation of Plato's demiurge. But, on the other hand, the demiurge in Petritsi's commentary acquires (though quite vaguely) additional features which are not typical for the Proclean understanding of the craftsman. To the contrary, in certain cases, the demiurge seems to be almost absent in Petritsi's commentary when he discusses the mechanism of cosmological production. In what follows, I shall set forth Petritsi's characteristic of the demiurge and try to analyze what and why he changed in the more or less traditionally Proclean image of Plato's demiurge.

Before we discuss the problems related to the figure of Plato's demiurge, let us see what Petritsi says about Plato's *Timaeus* in his commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

## 2. Plato's *Timaeus* in Petritsi's commentary

I 151

Petritsi mentions *Timaeus* several times in his commentary, though in some cases we are not sure whether he means Plato's *Timaeus* or Proclus' commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*. (The same is true when Petritsi mentions Parmenides). In chapter 7, Petritsi explicitly mentions Plato's *Timaeus* together with his *Laws*. He says that the creative power has no lack of either potency or wish [to create]. According to Petritsi, in these books (*Timaeus* and *Laws*) it is said that the providence which rules over everything is derived from the One, and the God who makes everything good neither lacks potency while making all beings good, nor does he experience any kind of envy (cf. Plato, *Tim.* 29a-e, *Legg.* X, 899b-c, 900c-e. See also Petritsi 1937: 32, chapter 7). Obviously, in these cases we have a kind of contamination of the functions of the supreme One with the demiurge of the physical cosmos.

An interesting (but not an exact) quotation from Plato's *Timaeus* is given in chapter 8 of Petritsi's commentary. It concerns the demiurge, the paradigm of the cosmos, and the physical world. Strangely, Petritsi makes a quotation (Greek words in Georgian transliteration) from *Timaeus* but says that it is from *Phaedrus*. Why? This could be a simple mistake (caused, first,

by the fact that he speaks about love, which is one of the themes in *Phaedrus*, and, second, because thereafter he really makes a quotation from *Phaedrus* or else he does it deliberately. If this is not Petritsi's mistake, then we can suppose that he was alluding to some neoplatonic commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus* in which the passage from *Timaeus* was quoted and commented. But for now I cannot say anything more exact. Let us look at this fragment from Petritsi's commentary, where he discusses the first beauty, harmony and goodness:

Let us now say in Attic that what was said in *Phaedrus*: '*ti tōn ontōn ariston ē tōn nooumenōn kalliston?*' This thesis is expressed in the form of a question: 'what is the most excellent of the beings and the most beautiful of the intelligible [things]?' Thus, he is surprised as if he were excited because of the beauty of the results of the first cosmos, where the harmony and the first musical melody started by means of the excellent craftsman for rendering the intellectual forms visible, [forms] which have, as [the aim] of their return and [the subject of their] love the One which is higher than anything else and is the first goodness (Petritsi 1937: 34, chapter 8).

152 | As we already said, the fragment from *Phaedrus* is not really a fragment from Plato's *Phaedrus* but an inexact quotation from *Timaeus* 29a5-6: *ho men gar kallistos tōn gegonotōn, ho d'aristos tōn aitiōn* ("of all the things that have come to be, [our universe] is the most beautiful, and of causes [the craftsmen] is the most excellent" (Transl. of *Timaeus* here and further by D. J. Zeyl, slightly modified, in Plato 1977: 1235). In Plato's text, the first part of this passage concerns the physical world and the second one concerns the demiurge. It seems that Petritsi combined this passage from Plato's *Timaeus* with other passages from the same dialogue: *Tim.* 30d1-2: *tōi gar tōn nooumenōn kallistōi* ("like the most beautiful of the intelligible things") (transl. in Plato 1977: 1236) (this passage concerns the paradigm), and probably also *Tim.* 30a5-6: *themis d'out ēn out'estin tōi aristōi drān allo plēn to kalliston* ("it wasn't permitted (nor it is now) that one who is supremely good should do anything but what is the most beautiful" (transl. in Plato 1977: 1236. This passage is about the demiurge). The similar text is in Plato's *Tim.* 37a1-2: *tōn noētōn aei te ontōn hupo tou aristē genomenē tōn gennēthentōn* ("[the soul] came to be as the most excellent of all the things begotten by him who is himself most excellent of all that is intelligible and eternal" (transl. in Plato 1977: 1240. This passage concerns the cosmic soul and the demiurge). Proclus quotes the passage from Plato's *Tim.* 29a5-6 in his *Platonic Theology*:

*[ho] kai o Timaios hēmin endeiknumenos ariston tōn aitiōn ton prōton sunekhōs apokalei demiouorgon (ho men gar tōn aitiōn aristos, ho de tōn gegonotōn*

*kallistos*), *kaitoi pro tou dēmiourgou to paradeigma to noēton ēn kai to tōn nooumenōn hapantōn kalliston* (Procl. *Theol. Plat.* I, 19, p. 89, 10–11 Saffrey y Westerink) (“This is what Timaeus, too, is indicating to us when he constantly calls the first demiurge ‘best of causes’ (for one of them is the best of causes, the other the most beautiful of the things that have come into being), and prior to the demiurge there is also the intelligible paradigm that is ‘the most beautiful of all intelligible [things]’”). (Transl. by M. Chase)

The first part of this quotation in Proclus concerns the demiurge and the second one the cosmos, while in the last part of the passage Proclus means the paradigm. As for Petritsi, the “quotation” is about the paradigm, though, as we have seen, later on he speaks also about the craftsman – demiurge (Petritsi 2009: 110–111). If we try to summarize this rather strange mixture of characteristics of the paradigm and the demiurge in Petritsi’s text, we can say that Petritsi first applied the characteristic of the demiurge as it is set forth in Plato’s and also Proclus’ aforementioned texts in a modified form to the paradigm (Plato, *Tim.* 29a5–6: *aristos tōn aitiōn* and Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I, 19, p. 89, 10–11: *ariston tōn aitiōn, tōn aitiōn aristos*, all this is about the demiurge, while in Petritsi: *ti tōn ontōn ariston* is applied to the paradigm – the true being), though thereafter he speaks also about the demiurge.

Why did Petritsi apply the characteristic of the demiurge to the paradigm? Was it simply a mistake or he had some reasons for doing this? It seems impossible for us nowadays to answer this question. But whatever the reason might be, this transposition of the characteristic of the demiurge to the paradigm is one more sign that the paradigm – the true being – was a very important entity to Petritsi, much more frequently and thoroughly analyzed in his commentary than Plato’s demiurge.

Now let us discuss some other issues from Petritsi’s commentary, which are directly related to Plato’s *Timaeus* and the demiurge. We shall start with the cosmic soul and see what is the role of the demiurge in relation to it. In the context of Plato’s *Timaeus*, Petritsi mentions the cosmic soul in chapter 14 of his commentary. He says:

Even the cosmic body, according to its nature, simply like any kind of body, as [Plato] says in *Timaeus*, is lifeless and baseless; however, it gets its being and basis through its natural co-existence with the universal soul (Petritsi 1937: 47, chapter 14).

In this fragment, the demiurge is not present. However, in chapter 17 Petritsi mentions “god” and this must be the demiurge of Plato’s *Timaeus*. According to Petritsi,

As [Plato] says in *Timaeus*, god, the begetter of all, mixed in the crater, that is a vessel, the universal soul and gave to it as parts the rational hypostatic principles of the beings in order to let it [i.e. the soul] embrace in itself all beings (Petritsi 1937: 52, chapter 17).

Thus, in the passage from chapter 17 of Petritsi's commentary, the "god" who makes a mixture in the crater can be identified with the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus*. Nevertheless, this fragment still gives an impression that Petritsi transposes the characteristic of the maker of the visible cosmos to the supreme cause of everything, because he mentions "god, the begetter of all", without specifying that in this case "all" means the visible world and not the whole totality of everything.

We have the similar case in chapter 25. Petritsi comments on Proclus' thesis: "For that principle because of its own goodness is by a unitary act constitutive of all that is" (Procl. *El. Theol.* 28, 24, prop. 25, transl. by Dodds). The context of Petritsi's comment concerns the supreme One:

Here [Proclus] says that the cause of constituting [all kinds of] existence is the goodness of the god who is all-seer. Thus, the philosopher [i.e. Plato? Or Proclus in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*?] wrote in *Timaeus* about producing beings by the all-seer. He [i.e. Plato, but again, probably Petritsi means also Proclus] analyzes, what induced [him], who is, as he affirms, superior to all kinds of necessity and *ananke* [Petritsi uses the Greek word in Georgian transliteration] and is absolutely supreme in relation to everything, to produce beings. Therefore, he [i.e. Plato, but, once again, we can also mean Proclus] claims that the goodness is the cause and mediator of creating by the begetter [the things that are] begotten. For he [i.e. Plato, but again and again, it can be Proclus too] says that the absolutely complete [principle] flowed [down] for making others too participants in its goodness, since, as is said, the goodness is free from envy and it cannot be stopped by lack of power, because it is superior to powers (Petritsi 1937: 68, chapter 25. Cf. Gigineishvili 2007: 226-227).

In this fragment, again, we have a mixture of the characteristics of the supreme One/Goodness and the demiurge: the feature of the demiurge (he is free from envy, cf. Plato, *Tim.* 29e1-2: "And so, being free of jealousy (*phthonos*), he wanted everything to become as much like himself as possible", transl. in Plato 1977: 1236) is applied to the supreme One. We already had a similar case in chapter 7 of Petritsi's commentary which we discussed above. There too Petritsi wrote about the supreme One that it experiences no lack of power and is not jealous. The problem is not that Petritsi says about the

supreme One that it is not jealous; the problem rather is that he explicitly refers to *Timaeus*, where this characteristic is applied to the demiurge. As for the supreme One, it is characterized in a similar way by Plotinus, in *Ennead* 4, 1, 27-36: “*pōs oun to teleōtaton kai to prōton agathon en hautōi staiē hōsper phthonēsan heautou ē adunatēsan, hē pantōn dunamis*”; “How then could the most perfect, the first Good, remain in itself as if it grudged to give of itself or was impotent, when it is the productive power of all things?” (Transl. by A. H. Armstrong in Plotinus IV: 142-143). Moreover, according to Plato, gods are non-jealous, as he says in *Phaedrus*, 247a7: “*Phthonos gar exo theiou khorou histatai*” (“Since jealousy has no place in god’s chorus”, transl. by A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff in Plato 1977: 525).

Petritsi applies this feature of the demiurge to the supreme One also in chapter 34. In this case too, as in chapter 8 discussed above, he mentions not the *Timaeus* but the *Phaedrus*:

Socrates says in *Phaedrus*: don’t be surprised because of the beauty of the weave of the true being, whereas it was put in order and harmony by the One, *hōs aristos technēs theos* [Petritsi says it in Greek, in Georgian transliteration and then adds his own and a slightly free Georgian translation]: “as [by the] excellently acting god” (Petritsi 1937: 87, chapter 35).

I 155

Interestingly, in this fragment the supreme One is characterized as the demiurge (producer) of the true being.

In chapter 190 Petritsi discusses the physical cosmos. He says that it is not stable; it is fluid, divisible and changeable. The relationship between its different parts is provided by means of some intermediate entities which must be similar to the opposite sides in order to preserve order and harmony in the cosmos eternally, as if they had been organized, as Petritsi says, “by the excellent weaver, craftsman and god” (Petritsi 1937: 196, chapter 190).

In this fragment Petritsi means the demiurge, though we do not feel the real or personal presence of the craftsman. This fragment, I believe, reads more like a metaphor of the power that brings order to a world which is full of opposite elements, and which is bind together by means of intermediate entities.

A similar expression about the craftsman, though in a slightly different form, is used by Petritsi in chapter 106 of his commentary. He says that, according to Proclus, all kinds of structure of beings are put in order by means of similarity, “for all orders [made by] the excellent craftsman – god should be one” (Petritsi 1937: 151, chapter 106). In this case, Petritsi could mean either the demiurge or the true being, or both of them.

Thereafter, in the same chapter 106, Petritsi, I believe, has in mind the supreme One, because he discusses the substances and functions of the eternal, everlasting and temporal beings, starting with the true being, proceeding then to the world soul, and reaching, finally, the very last level of the universe. As Petritsi says,

The begetter of all produced a nice harmony, in order not to let the begotten [things] be alien to each other, and to let them participate in each other, and to let the providence of the all-seer descend through everything and reach even the last ones (Petritsi 1937: 152, chapter 106).

In chapter 40 of his commentary, Petritsi also calls the supreme One “the begetter of begetters” (Georgian *mbadi mbadtai*) (Petritsi 1937: 95, chapter 40).

For Petritsi, as for Proclus, the supreme One transcends any kind of potency (*dunamis*) and activity (*energeia*), including the creative function (Petritsi 1937: 18-19, chapter 1). This means that for Petritsi, as for Proclus, the supreme One cannot be identified with the demiurge, who is the creative cause of the physical world. Nevertheless, as we have seen, in certain cases Petritsi makes an attempt to identify them with each other or, more precisely, he elevates the figure of the demiurge up to the level of the supreme cause of everything, vaguely applying this feature of the demiurge to the supreme One (Alexidze 2017a: 79-86).

156 |

Let us investigate now some other passages from Petritsi’s commentary on Proclus’ *Elements*, where *Timaeus* is explicitly mentioned by Petritsi. In chapters 34 and 36 he says that according to *Timaeus*, order is in everything. Petritsi phrases this in such a form that order seems to be personified: “Order of all has determined everything, and who can contradict it, as *Timaeus* says” (Petritsi 1937: 86, chapter 34); “So said the order of all, as *Timaeus* says” (Petritsi 1937: 87, chapter 34); “So said the order of all, says *Timaeus*” (Petritsi 1937: 89, chapter 36).

In chapter 41 Petritsi claims that the subject of *Timaeus* is the nature of all. He characterizes the privileged status of the celestial matter which is seized by the highest forms, and then discusses the demiurgic activity:

The celestial matter was held and seized by the supreme forms, because, as it is said, the begetter (Georgian ‘*mbadman*’) of all looked at the paradigms of the true being. Thus, he fashioned and made beautiful the structure of the sky as an image of the first cosmos and being. (Petritsi 1937: 98, chapter 41. Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 28c-29b)

Petritsi mentions matter and the celestial matter in chapter 27 as well (Alexidze 2017b: 123–134). He does not mention *Timaeus* but paraphrases this dialogue. Petritsi says that according to Socrates,

“Matter is like a woman who is always with others”: when [matter] gets the *aporroia* [i.e. outflowing; Petritsi uses the Greek word in Georgian transliteration] of forms, it tries to run away and to push it [i.e. the *aporroia* of forms] away for embracing and meeting another one. Thus, it [matter] changes from one [form] to another without break, being unstable [in relationship] with its lovers. [cf. Plat. *Tim.* 49a, 50b–e, 52d]. As for the celestial matter, it is held by the highest power and Zeus that provides it with the destiny of immortals and fashions it as an image and *agalma* [i.e. sculpture, image; Petritsi uses the Greek word in Georgian transliteration] of the intellectual sky. The supreme being puts in it [i.e. celestial matter] the intellectual forms [...]. He [Timaeus] says in the name of the begetter of all to the order of stars: ‘you should imitate my power, create animals and let plants to grow up, and those which are defective, receive them back again’ [cf. Plato, *Tim.* 41a–d]. So says he [Timaeus] to the stars in name of the creator, making them immortal and unchangeable because of the character of their forms, and putting in them the essential logos of all mortals and of fluid nature (Petritsi 1937: 72–73, chapter 27).

I 157

This fragment seems to suggest that Zeus – “the highest power” – can be identified with Plato’s demiurge. The same demiurge is, probably, “the begetter of all”, in whose name the “order of stars” is told how should it produce further the nature of living beings. As for “the supreme being” which places “the intellectual forms in the celestial matter”, it may refer to the true being – the paradigm of the cosmos. Here again, it seems that Petritsi transposes the characteristic of the demiurge to the true being – the paradigm of the visible cosmos.

Another passage where Petritsi’s commentary directly refers to Plato’s *Timaeus* is chapter 39, which is to some extent similar to the passage in chapter 27 we discussed above. Analyzing the visible world, Petritsi claims that everlasting beings, such as the sun and other stars in the visible cosmos, exist as images [Georgian *khatovnebit*, corresponds to Greek *kat’ eikona*] of the supreme universe, while perishable beings exist as phantoms:

*Timaeus* says [to the stars] in the name of the begetter: ‘you should imitate my power, create animals and let plants to grow up, and those which are defective, receive them back again’ [cf. Plato, *Tim.* 41a–d, and Petritsi 1937: 72–73, chapter 27]. So said *Timaeus* in the name of the begetter to the stars.

As for ourselves, here [our] life is a phantom [Georgian *kerpi*, corresponds to Greek *eidōlon*] and like a shadow (Petritsi 1937: 93, chapter 39).

Furthermore, Petritsi explains why the visible world was created: first, because the image of the One might not remain inactive (meaning that production should continue); and second, in order to let the mortal nature to exist forever in spite of change, since the immortals exist in an everlasting and changeless manner. Thereafter, Petritsi says that rational perfection is superior to life because it makes all beauty, decorates everything which receives the power of the word (i.e. of the rational principle, *logos*), and, by means of art, fashions even undecorated matter; like a good (i.e. kind) god, it makes the mixture of four elements beautiful. That's why, as Petritsi claims,

A certain wise man said that the begetter [Georgian *mbadman*] of all sent down the essential word, which is the soul, in order to decorate and fashion the physical world (Petritsi 1937: 93, chapter 39).

I assume that in this last fragment Petritsi definitely means the demiurge. However, as we have already mentioned, the most important entity, which is very frequently discussed in Petritsi's commentary, and which has an outstanding importance in the ontological hierarchy, is the true being. In what follows then, we shall analyze some fragments from Petritsi's commentary where the characteristic of the true being might help understand its role in relation to that of the demiurge.

158 |

### **3. The true being**

The true being is, according to Petritsi, the summit of the intellects. As Petritsi says, the first intellect, which is the first cosmos and the first composed thing, is the true being. It is a kind of a monad of all intellects and all those substances with form and figure. Each realm of intellects is a part of this first intellect. The first intellect is like a god and seer of everything and it has produced everything. The first pure intellect is the image of the One and, at the same time, it is the monad of the intellects. As an entity which contains parts, the first intellect is not one, though as the monad of the intellects it is one and the image of the One (Petritsi 1937: 21, chapter 2).

In chapter 135, Petritsi discusses the activity of intellects. As he claims, all intellects act in a twofold manner: on the one hand, they see those entities

which precede them and, on the other, they take care (i.e. exercise their providential activity) of those that are inferior. (Petritsi 1937: 169, chapter 135). Here Petritsi most probably means all intellects, among which the demiurge is supposed to be included as well, but he makes no specifications in this respect.

Further, Petritsi characterizes the true being as the universal intellect, and says that it is “the sky of the intellects and [their] intelligible altar” (Petritsi 1937: 166, chapter 130). The true being is called “the sky of the intellects and souls” again in chapter 136 (Petritsi 1937: 169, chapter 136). Moreover, in chapter 140 Petritsi says that the true being is the principle of everything (here, in view of other parts of Petritsi’s commentary, we can add that by “everything” he does not mean prime matter, but everything that has form, cf. Petritsi 1937: 42-43, chapter 11), including the physical cosmos – “sky” (Petritsi 1937: 171, chapter 140). The role of the demiurge seems here to be neglected.

In chapter 181 Petritsi characterizes the true being as the principle of all intellects, as an unparticipated intellect and the ‘sky of intellects’. (The true being is called “the sky of the intellects” also in chapter 24, Petritsi 1937: 67). As Petritsi says, the true being is produced by the henads and is divine. All other intermediate intellects produced by the true being are also called “intellects”

I 159

up to the intellectual intellect, where the intellectual Apollo and Chronos and Rhea and Dia are visible, which look at the sky of intellects, which is the true being, and they too become gods by means of it (Petritsi 1937: 192, chapter 181).

According to Petritsi, the intelligible intellect is the true being, and all others thereafter are intellectuals. The last ones are filled with the light of the true being (ibid). Here again, it is hard to say what the place of the demiurge is. He should be the summit of “intellectual intellects” (*nous noeros*) but this issue is not mentioned at all.

In some cases, Petritsi even claims that the true being is superior to the intellect (Petritsi 1937: 165, chapter 128). He probably means that it is superior to other kinds of intellects. Thus, in chapter 101, too, Petritsi distinguishes between the first being and the intellect. As he says, the first being is the true being, it is the image (Georgian *khati*, corresponds to Greek *eikōn*) of the supreme One. Thereafter comes life and then intellect (Petritsi 1937: 148, chapter 101). Again, we are not able to say what the demiurge is for Petritsi: is it an intellectual intellect? As in chapter 181 mentioned above, nothing is said about the demiurge here.

As we see, the figure of the demiurge is in many cases absent in Petritsi's commentary in places where it was expected to be, while the true being is present almost everywhere. The same can be said also regarding the relationship between the sky (cosmos) and the true being. As Petritsi says,

The philosopher and absolutely wise sky, desiring the One, follows the true being and its father – the One, loves it and joins it by means of intellect and soul, and so it is above the fate of mortals (Petritsi 1937: 129, chapter 68).

Obviously, this passage concerns the relationship between the visible world, the true being and the supreme One. But where is the demiurge? Perhaps Petritsi has him in mind when he says that the cosmos strives toward the One with the mediation of intellect, and that intellect is the demiurge? Here again Petritsi seems not to be interested in the role of the demiurge. A similar remark may be found in chapter 40: Petritsi describes the hierarchical order of beings in detail, claiming that everything is produced by an immediate cause of a being and the supreme One. The demiurge is not mentioned here at all (Petritsi 1937: 94–95, chapter 40).

#### **4. Other problems concerning the demiurge**

In several other passages of Petritsi's commentary, it is unclear whether the author means demiurge or not. In chapter 165 Petritsi describes the universal hierarchy starting with henads or gods. He mentions “the intellect of the true being”, “other intellects”, “soul”, “the celestial beings”, “the sky”, and even “four elements”. The demiurge is not mentioned, though perhaps the intellect by means of which soul, as Petritsi says, participates in the gods, may be either the demiurge or the true being. Further, Petritsi says that the cosmic bodies participate in henads by means of the intellect and the soul, because the sky is moveable and alive by means of the soul, while it acquires its permanent order by means of the intellect (Petritsi 1937: 184, chapter 165). Again, we cannot be sure whether this intellect can be understood as the demiurge or not, but only can suppose that this is the case.

A similar context, with a threefold classification of intellects, is found in chapter 166. As Petritsi claims, there are three kinds of intellects. One is unparticipated and it is the true being, and the other two kinds are participated: one among them is participated by the universal soul and the souls which are superior to bodies, while another one is participated by bodies through the mediation of souls. The sky and all stars and spheres participate

in it because they are animated and intellectual. And while the cosmos participates in the first intellect, it participates in it through the mediation of the individual intellect (Petritsi 1937: 185, chapter 166). “The individual intellect” sounds quite strange here. I suppose that Petritsi means the intra-mundane intellect, as it is in Proclus’ prop. 166 and also Petritsi’s own translation of this proposition. Does Petritsi call the intellect of the cosmos “particular intellect” here? However, whatever this cosmic intellect might be, again, we do not know whether Petritsi identified it with the demiurge or not.

Petritsi mentions the threefold classification of the intellects again in chapter 184. As he says, intellect can be either divine, or [just] intellect, or an intellectual being (Petritsi 1937: 193, chapter 184). We already know that the true being is the divine intellect for Petritsi. And, again, we face the unsolved question: what kind of intellect is the demiurge?

In the so-called epilogue (which is, as we already mentioned, a quite atypical text if we consider it in the context of commentary and prologue), Petritsi says that God the begetter (Georgian *mbadi*) made harmony and order on all levels of begotten beings through the mediation of the primordial images which he holds in his intellect; and brought the forms down to matter, searching for [production of] diversity from one and the same [i.e. not differentiated] matter (Petritsi 1937: 217, epilogue). In this fragment Petritsi speaks about the supreme One – the principle of everything, God – and his characteristics are similar to that of the demiurge. As for the true being, we can suppose that the totality of “primordial images” can be identified with it. Thus, these images, in a way, are God’s thoughts. Here we have a quite Christianized version of the (neo)platononic theory of creation of the universe, which is typical of Petritsi’s so-called epilogue, where he tries to demonstrate the compatibility of the (neo)platononic One with Christian Trinity, though atypical of his prologue and commentary (Alexidze 2014: 235).

I 161

### **5. The importance of the “demiurgic cause” (demiourgikē aitia)**

We see that, compared with the true being, the demiurge is less present in Petritsi’s commentary. Yet Petritsi is sure that the demiurgic cause is a very important one (Georgian *shemoqmedebiti mizezi*, corresponds, according to the translation of prop. 157, to the Greek *demiourgikē aitia*, though the Georgian word *shemoqmedebiti* can also be translated as “effective” or “creative”, i.e. corresponding to Greek *poiētikē aitia*). Thus, in chapter 157 Petritsi, like Proclus, claims that the paternal cause

is superior to the demiurgic cause: the paternal reaches even the simple existence, it makes something out of non-existence, while the power of the demiurgic cause reaches the composite beings and those which have form. And, as Petritsi says, just like simple existence is superior to substance, so is the paternal cause superior to the demiurgic cause (Petritsi 1937: 179-180, chapter 157. Cf. Procl. *In Tim.* II, 299-300 Diehl; Gigineishvili 2007: 58). Here again, we face a question without having a possibility of reaching any definite answer: what is the demiurgic cause for Petritsi? Is it the demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* or is it the true being – the intelligible paradigm of the cosmos?

In chapter 11 of the Commentary, Petritsi, after having quoted Proclus (“All beings are produced from the one cause, the first one”, Procl. *El. Theol.* prop. 11, transl. Dodds), criticizes Aristotle. As Petritsi says, Aristotle does not think that the demiurgic cause belongs to the domain of beings. Thus, Petritsi does not seem to be happy with the fact that in Aristotle's philosophy there is no room for the demiurgic cause, unlike Plato's *Timaeus*. As he writes, Proclus

Refutes the opinion of those philosophers, who made *exoria* [i.e. expelled; Petritsi uses a Greek word in Georgian transliteration] the demiurgic cause from the domain of beings. Here I mean the Stagirite and the philosopher of Aphrodisias and his colleagues (Petritsi 1937: 38, chapter 11).

162 |

The idea that the *poiētikē aitia* was eliminated by Aristotle was discussed by Proclus in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*:

Plato thus made this observation and, in addition to admitting the efficient cause, he also posited a Paradigm for the universe, just as Aristotle, in addition to eliminating the Paradigm, also eliminated the productive agent (Procl. *in Tim.* II, 319-320 Diehl. Translation by D. T. Runia and M. Share in Proclus 2008: 175).

Thus, for Petritsi as for Proclus, the demiurgic and efficient causes were very important elements in Platonic philosophy. However, we cannot be sure what Petritsi exactly means with the Georgian word *shemoqme-debiti mizezi*, which, as we already mentioned, can correspond to Greek *demiourgikē aitia*, as well as to *poiētikē aitia*. Petritsi could have Plato's demiurge in mind, but he could also be referring to his own, Petritsi's, favorite ‘true being’; or, perhaps to a combination of both of them.

## 6. Conclusion

In the commentary on Proclus' *Elements of Theology* Petritsi mentions and discusses not only the issues which are the subject-matter of Proclus' *Elements*, but also those set forth in other Platonic and Neoplatonic treatises. Plato's *Timaeus*, along with his other dialogues, are important for Petritsi when it comes to commenting on Proclus' philosophy. The demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* has an ambiguous role in Petritsi's commentary. On the one hand, Petritsi does not analyze his figure as thoroughly as the true being, soul, intellect, henads, limit and infinity, or the most important one – the supreme One. The demiurge in Petritsi's commentary is a craftsman, god, who forms the visible world, although in some cases he is almost (i.e. quite vaguely and not clearly) identified with the supreme One. Or, to put it more precisely, it is the supreme One which receives in rare cases the features of a personal god and demiurge. However, on the other hand, in the ontological hierarchy exposed by Petritsi, the true being (i.e. the first being, the father of intellects, the totality of intellects) plays a crucial role as the prime principle of all kind of beings and forms, i.e. of everything except formless matter. Obviously, the true being is much more important to Petritsi than the demiurge, as he mentions the former regularly. The true being is for Petritsi the paradigm of Plato's *Timaeus* and the supreme intelligible intellect (*nous noētos*); instead, we can conclude that the demiurge plays the role of an intellectual intellect (*nous noeros*). Thus, in Petritsi's commentary, on the one hand, the features of the supreme One and the demiurge as producers of the whole universe are in certain cases virtually identical; though, on the other hand, the demiurge represents a lower level of intellect than the true being and in many cases, he is absent where, as readers of Petritsi's commentary and following the context, we would expect his presence.

I 163

How can we explain this ambiguity? I suppose that for Petritsi, interpreting Proclus' ontology, it was difficult, on the one hand, to find an adequate place for the more or less personal character of the begetter of the visible world. While, on the other hand, like other Platonists and against Aristotle, he wanted to preserve the role of the demiurgic/creative cause in the mechanism of the non-temporal formation of the universe. Last but not least, Petritsi was a Christian, and he wrote his commentary on Proclus for Christian readers. This is probably one reason why, in some cases, the supreme One and the demiurge received almost identical characteristics, although Petritsi expresses this very vaguely. However, in general, Petritsi was a faithful commentator of Proclus' philosophy: in Petritsi's opinion, as in Proclus, the demiurgic/creative cause occupies a lower level than the paternal cause in the hierarchical chain of causality. Therefore, if the supreme

One is to be identified with the paternal cause, and the demiurge with the demiurgic/creative cause, then the demiurge must be placed lower than the supreme One. Anyway, whatever might be the role and character of Plato's demiurge in Petritsi's philosophy, it cannot be compared with the immense importance and much more definite characteristic that the true being (i.e. the paradigm of cosmos in *Timaeus*) has in Petritsi's ontological system.

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