The Two Principles between *On Principles and Matter* and Porphyry's Other Works

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1. Introduction

The seventh-century CE Syriac translation of Porphyry's third-century text, titled *On Principles and Matter*,[2] discusses the principles responsible for the structure of the physical world in the form of both a self-standing argument and doxographical quotations from Atticus, Severus, and Boethus. As Yury Arzhanov and others have persuasively shown, we can ascribe Porphyry as the author of the text with certainty, thanks to a number of features in the text, such as the text's citation of Longinus as the author's teacher[3] and certain, very notable parallels between parts of the text with Calcidius' commentary on the *Timaeus*.[4] This background should both interest and concern us when putting this text together with the other extant texts discussing the primary cause, or causes, of the natural world. In the Syriac text's first half, the author, Porphyry (to whom I will now refer from here onward), argues that there must be three first principles: (1) the active cause, distinguished between God and (2) the Forms, and (3) the passive cause, i.e. Matter, which Porphyry shortens to the (1) active and (2) passive principles, as co-equal and relatively opposed to each other.

Yet if we consider the witness of Porphyry's critique against Atticus from Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*, we see the opposite thesis argued: there cannot, in fact, be two co-equal principles of God and matter, but rather one principle above the opposites. Furthermore, the Syriac text goes on to quote and discuss Atticus' similar views of the co-equality of God and matter, but only critiques Atticus on his ascription of evil to matter and passes over any problem of the co-equality of the principles. Finally, where Porphyry would posit the One as the ultimate first cause in other texts, as in Proclus' fragment, the Syriac text is silent on the One; instead the active cause, which would be the closest parallel to the One, is presented as intellect (νοῦς) by nature, possessing the Forms as its thoughts (and hence why the Forms (2) are collapsed with God (1)). Thus, while the text may indeed be Porphyry's, one may be mystified by the way in which the "Porphyry" of this Syriac text speaks

[2] At least provisionally titled this, although the manuscript itself contains no title; on the titling, as well as dating of the manuscript and original Syriac text, see Arzhanov (2021), 3–10 and (esp.) 26–37.

[3] Porphyry, *PM* §95.

[4] On the evidence of Porphyry's authorship behind the *PM*, see Arzhanov (2021), 66–78. On the parallels of the *PM* to Calcidius' *Timaeus Commentary*, in regards to Porphyry's authorship, see Arzhanov's chapter in this volume (pp. [[xxx]]) and Michalewski (2022); see Reydams-Schills (forthcoming) (esp. [[12 and 27–28]]), who, in light of the *PM*, maintains the skepticism from her initial study in seeing Porphyry's presence in Calcidius (cf. Reydams-Schils (2020), 184–189, and esp. 217: "[the] hypothesis that Porphyry is one of the main source-authors behind Calcidius' work is not tenable"); and in support of the *PM* as evidence of Porphyry's presence in Calcidius (*contra* Reydams-Schils), see Michael Chase's contribution in this vol. (pp. [[xxx]]). For the purpose of this chapter I take no strong position, except only with regard to the textual parallels to this text, where Calcidius' commentary illuminates aspects of the *PM* (following Arzhanov's chapter in this volume).

in a Middle Platonist way—and in this sense, very close to Atticus—in contrast to the "Porphyry" of the extant Greek texts who speaks in a Neoplatonist and (moreover) anti-dualist way.

Various questions arise here. In the part of the text where it seems to be the author's voice, such as in §§17–28, do we have Porphyry's own view? Or is this perhaps a dialectical argument adapted from Atticus' and Severus' positions (among other possible candidates), which is not, in fact, Porphyry's own view? Or something between these two?

In this paper, I wish to look more closely at the parallels and contrasts between these two sets of texts on the first principle(s) of the natural world. Though more research will certainly be needed, my initial suggestion is that the Syriac text preserves part of a longer treatise that presents a tentative hypothesis for the two, co-equal principles of God and matter, before, however, it is contextualized within Porphyry's predominant view of one principle (i.e. the One) above the active and passive principles. What we then have is part of a text developing a dualist framework of principles, which is necessary, and—in the specific scope of the sublunar, enmattered world—sufficient. The other part of this theoretical text (whether it may have been in the same work or in another), which we only see in Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*, refines the framework within the ultimate scope of metaphysical principles: it shows that a dualist framework, at this level, cannot be sustained without a principle (i.e. the One) bringing together the subordinate active and passive principles. Although the Syriac text itself explicitly signposts little of this broader context, there are indications in the text, as we will see, that hint at what we ultimately find elaborated in Proclus' fragment and elsewhere.

2. The Syriac Text on the Active and Passive Causes (§§17–39)

Porphyry's argument for the active cause in *On Principles and Matter* builds on his initial employment of two kinds of demonstration or "demonstrative proof" (corresponding to ἀποδεικτικός in the Syriac):[5] one (a) "demonstrates what is posterior on the ground of what is prior", which is conducted in syllogisms and characterized as "synthesis";[6] and the other (b) "by means of posterior things [which demonstrate] the prior", which is characterized as "analysis".[7] Porphyry uses the latter method (b) in §§18–24 to establish Matter as the passive principle for natural things, and the former (a) in §§25–28 to establish Intellect and its thoughts (i.e. the Forms) as the active principle responsible for the rational order and structure imposed on matter. The idea in the text seems to be that establishing the two principles of Matter and Intellect depends on these two, connected methods: first, by grasping sensible composites, and then working backward to the underlying substrate as the first "part" or element in the sensible composite (corresponding to (a)—as it were, from conclusion to premise); then second, reversing direction and proceeding from that element (i.e. matter) to the conclusion, i.e. Intellect, which brings together the different qualities, forms, and properties with matter.[8]

At the outset, one can see the first proof, as well as the second, as an application of Aristotle's principle in *Physics* I.1 of demonstrating from what is more known and clear to us to what is more known and clear by nature (ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων ἡμῖν καὶ σαφεστέρων ἐπὶ τὰ σαφέστερα τῇ φύσει

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[5] Porphyry, *PM* §17. See also Arzhanov's ch. in this vol., p. [[4]]. Here and throughout, I rely on the English translation for *On Principles and Matter* from Arzhanov (2021) and the revised translations of certain passages in Arzhanov's chapter in this volume (see pp. [[xxx–xxx]]).

[6] Porphyry, *PM* §§25, 28. See also Arzhanov's. ch., pp. [[7–8]]. In Calcidius scholarship there is an open question whether "synthesis" for Calcidius means syllogism or another, third kind of argument besides syllogism and analysis—namely, as Hoenig (2021) 186 puts it, "a chain of reasoning that, just as *resolutio* itself, aims at facilitating our comprehension of a metaphysical principle". On this see Hoenig (2021) and Reydams-Schils (2020), 135–137. The same question *a fortiori* may also apply here with the *PM*.

[7] Porphyry, *PM* §§25, 28.

[8] On the method of analysis and synthesis between the *PM* and Calcidius, see Arzhanov's chapter in pp. [[4–8]].

καὶ γνωριμώτερα).[9] At the same time, as Michael Chase has argued, Porphyry's two-fold method is not simply derived from an Aristotelian principle, but rather goes back to mathematical texts that develop the method of analysis and synthesis, seen initially in a scholium to Book XIII of Euclid's *Elements* (likely from Heron of Alexandria),[10] and then becoming adapted in Middle Platonist authors, from Galen into Celsus, Origen, and Alcinous, and ultimately into Alexander of Aphrodisias and Porphyry himself.[11] In Calcidius' *Timaeus Commentary*, we find the distinction between *resolutio* (corresponding to ἀνάλυσις, i.e. "analysis")[12] and *compositio* (corresponding to σύνθεσις, i.e. "synthesis"),[13] both of which are used respectively to establish the existence of matter (through the former, "analysis") and Intellect, or God (through the latter, "synthesis"), as principles in almost precisely the same way as in *On Principles and Matter*—once more, one of the main pieces of evidence showing the Porphyrian source in the background.[14]

We should look more in detail at *PM*'s argument from "synthesis" for the active principle, inasmuch as it gives us clues for Porphyry's own, settled view on the first cause in the background. We see the first mention of the active cause after Porphyry concludes that matter cannot explain the appearance of order and harmony of sensible properties as the author resumes in *On Principles and Matter* §25. This leads to his conclusion that intellect, apart from matter, is responsible for that order and harmony in §§26–27:

> But pleasant order and beauty do not exist without harmony. And also harmony does not exist without proportion. And proportion does not exist without reason. And such reason does not exist without foresight and foreknowledge, while the latter two do not exist without intellect. Thus, when intellect sets in motion through its activity,[15] it imprints, adjusts, arranges, and sets in order forms, qualities, and shapes.[16]

One can recognize the cosmological scaffolding of Plato's *Timaeus* 30a–c in the background, where Timaeus asserts that the Demiurge, in wishing all things to be good as itself, imposed order on the disorderly motion initially characterizing the visible world and, furthermore, put intelligence (νοῦς) in the visible world by placing it in soul which, in turn, the Demiurge placed in body.[17] Though Plato does not explicitly refer to matter, Porphyry interprets the "discordant and disorderly motion" (πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως) characterizing the visible world[18] as connected to matter, before the Demiurge brings about the ordered shapes and forms in matter.[19] The Demiurge's ordering becomes interpreted in light of intellect's activity of thinking, which, as Porphyry specifies, is constituted by

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[9] Aristotle, *Physics* I.1, 184a10–21.
[10] Chase (2015), 111–116 (esp. 111–113).
[11] Chase (2015), 117–131.
[12] Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* 302.
[13] Cf. Calcidius, *In Tim.* 304.
[14] On this, see again Arzhanov's ch., pp. [[4–8]].
[15] In light of Arzhanov's translation adjustment to *PM* §27 (see n. 20, below), I substitute the original translation for "actions" with "activity".
[16] Porphyry, *PM* §26.
[17] See esp. Plato, *Tim.* 30a2–b5. Reydams-Schils (forthcoming), esp. pp. [[18–19]], [[22–26]], points out the curious omission of any mention of "Demiurge" or "craftsman" in the *PM*, in contrast to Calcidius who explicitly references it together with the "mind (*mens*) of God", as it were bypassing where or how the *Timaeus'* Demiurge fits in. On the other hand, neither does Plotinus in *Enn.* IV.1–2 explicitly mention the Demiurge, though he almost certainly has it in mind in his exegesis of *Timaeus* 30a–c with the four-fold distinction of principles: on this see below, pp. [[12–13]].
[18] Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 30a4–5.
[19] Cf. Porphyry, *PM* §25: "But since the method of analysis is followed by the one of synthesis, […] we ought to know that, while we exclude particular things from Matter in our intellect, we then further attach them—i.e. forms, shapes, and qualities—to it and include them into it. And further, while we attach them, we say that they exist not in a discordant and disorderly state in Matter, but with some beauty and pleasant order." Cf. Arzhanov's ch., p. [[7]].

the "prior definitions of things", or the Forms.[20] We can see here the language of previous Platonists, from Alcinous to (especially) Plotinus, who identify the paradigmatic Forms with the thoughts of the principle of intellect (νοῦς), whether as the first cause (as for Middle Platonists like Alcinous)[21] or as the subordinate principle below the One (as for Numenius and, ultimately, Plotinus and Porphyry).[22]

With the latter in mind, we should look more closely at the last few lines of §§26–27, where the text argues for intellect on the basis of "foresight" and "foreknowledge", or also "forethought" (πρόγνωσις and πρόνοια, respectively, in the correlate Greek). This might give us pause from what we know of Porphyry, given that he normally characterizes Intellect in terms of νοῆσις (i.e. thinking) rather than πρόνοια.[23] If one has later Neoplatonist texts in mind, such as Proclus (for instance), πρόνοια would strictly refer to the henads, or gods, above the level of Intellect.[24] The link from πρόνοια and πρόγνωσις to νοῦς, in this respect, is striking: if one strongly equates the activity of thinking (νοῆσις) to νοῦς itself, as Neoplatonists like Porphyry and Plotinus would, it would be puzzling why one would attribute *fore*-thinking.

However, from the text's implicit focus on *Timaeus* 30a–c, one can see that Porphyry is following the attribution that Plato himself gives to the Demiurge, which he also qualifies as "the god" (θεὸς): "In this way, then, in keeping with our likely account, we should say that the providence (πρόνοιαν) of the god brought the world into being as a living thing by truth, endowed with soul and intelligence (ἔμψυχον ἔννουν)".[25] What seems clear in this passage is that Plato posits πρόνοια as the result of νοῦς (intelligence) which is found in the world, while πρόνοια, in turn, is implicitly identified with the Demiurge. In the *On Principles and Matter* passage, Porphyry seems to be attuned to this line of argument from Plato, while additionally inserting in the argument the necessity that the Demiurge itself is, in fact, νοῦς itself—and indeed the cause of the intelligence (νοῦς) also found in the visible world. In this respect, we see a kind of exegesis of *Timaeus* 30b–c in this part of the argument by Porphyry.

Porphyry's linking of πρόνοια with Intellect (νοῦς) begins to make more sense when we look at Plotinus' interpretation of πρόνοια and its connection to Intellect as the Demiurge in *Ennead* VI.7.1—part of a larger treatise on the Forms and the Good, which the Syriac text may have in mind in the dialectical argument for the active and passive principles in §§17–28. At the beginning of *Enn.*

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[20] Porphyry, *PM* §27: "Thus, by means of the method of synthesis, (i.e.) adding and attaching, we have also found the active principle, which is Intellect. And since it is Intellect that arranges, orders, and sets these things through its activity, its activity is thoughts. These thoughts we call Forms, Ideas, and prior definitions of things, for through them, i.e. through their image and likeness, things are formed and set in order." Cf. Arzhanov's ch., p. [[8]].

[21] See e.g. Alcinous, *Didaskalikos* 9, §§2–3, esp. §3, 1–7: "They justify the existence of forms in the following way also. Whether God is an intellect or is possessed of intellect, he has thoughts, and these are eternal and unchanging; and if this is the case, forms exist. For if matter is unmeasured in its own right, it needs to receive measures from something else superior to it and immaterial. But the former is true; therefore so is the latter; and if this is the case, then forms exist as a type of immaterial measure" (transl. Dillon). (Ὅτι δέ εἰσιν αἱ ἰδέαι, καὶ οὕτω παραμυθοῦνται· εἴτε γὰρ νοῦς ὁ θεὸς ὑπάρχει εἴτε νοερόν, ἔστιν αὐτῷ νοήματα, καὶ ταῦτα αἰώνιά τε καὶ ἄτρεπτα· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, εἰσὶν αἱ ἰδέαι· καὶ γὰρ εἰ ἄμετρος ὑπάρχει ἡ ὕλη κατὰ τὸν ἑαυτῆς λόγον, παρ' ἑτέρου τινὸς κρείττονος, καὶ ἀΰλου, τῶν μέτρων ὀφείλει τυγχάνειν· τὸ δὲ ἡγούμενον, τὸ ἄρα λῆγον· εἰ δὲ τοῦτο, εἰσὶν αἱ ἰδέαι μέτρα τινὰ ἄϋλα ὑπάρχουσαι.) See Boys-Stones (2018), 135–136, 150–152, for general discussion and background on Alcinous and other Platonists equating Forms with the thoughts of God.

[22] See Boys-Stones (2018), 156–157, 166–167. See also next footnote.

[23] See e.g. Porphyry, *Sentences* 25, where Intellect (νοῦς) is defined in juxtaposition to that which is beyond Intellect (ἐπέκεινα τοῦ νοῦ), i.e. the One, in terms of intellection (νόησις), while anything beyond intellection, by implication, belongs to the One's domain.

[24] See e.g. Proclus, *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 120.10–12 (106.5–7 [Dodds]): "Providence then is primarily in the gods. For indeed, where can an activity which is before intellect be found, except in principles which are above being? Providence, as its very name reveals (*scil.* πρό-νοια), is an activity before Intellect (*scil.* πρὸ νοῦ)". (ἐν θεοῖς οὖν ἡ πρόνοια πρώτως. καὶ ποῦ γὰρ ἡ πρὸ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ἢ ἐν τοῖς ὑπερουσίοις; ἡ δὲ πρόνοια, ὡς τοὔνομα ἐμφαίνει, ἐνέργειά ἐστι πρὸ νοῦ.) See also *ET*, Prop. 124.

[25] Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 30b6–c1: οὕτως οὖν δὴ κατὰ λόγον τὸν εἰκότα δεῖ λέγειν τόνδε τὸν κόσμον ζῷον ἔμψυχον ἔννουν τε τῇ ἀληθείᾳ διὰ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ γενέσθαι πρόνοιαν.

VI.7.1, Plotinus addresses the problem of how "God, or some god" (ὁ θεὸς ἢ θεός τις), i.e. implicitly the Demiurge and the young gods of *Timaeus* 42d–e, can be said to have "reasons and [providential] plans" (τε αἰτίας καὶ προνοίας)[26] or "calculations" (λογισμοί).[27] Plotinus' question arises in the context of *Timaeus*' exposition of the young gods who fit eyes to the face and head of animals, as well as the other sensible organs to other parts of the body[28]—and, more broadly, the Demiurge's general formation of the parts of the universe. As we find out from line 23 onward in VI.7.1, Plotinus' concern is that these "calculations" and (more relevant for us) "plans" or "foreknowledge" cannot be taken literally in the context of the intelligible world: for one thing, they imply an end to the planning, leading to a distinct principle (ἀρχή) behind the plan; and for another, forethought normally implies knowing something before its actual existence, for instance, as a sense-perceptible object (e.g. one could have foreknowledge that an eclipse will take place, while there is yet to be an eclipse).[29] Yet as Plotinus shows, at the level of Intellect the "plans" and principle of the plans are one and the same, and already exist all at once:

> Therefore neither forethought for a living thing nor forethought for this universe in general derived from a plan; since there is no planning there [*scil.* in the intelligible world] at all, but it is called planning to show that all things there are as they would be as a result of planning at a later stage, and foresight because it is as a wise man would foresee it.[30]

Plotinus then refines the *Timaeus*' attribution of πρόνοια to the Demiurge, considered as divine Intellect: one can ascribe a *kind of* "forethought" from our perspective in time, but the term, in the strict sense, does not apply to Intellect since its "plans" exist already in actuality, while they are developed in time at the sensible level.[31]

Already we can see here the connection to Porphyry's more abbreviated version of this in *On Principles and Matter* §27, when the argument from "synthesis" concludes with Intellect as the active principle:

> And since it is Intellect that arranges, orders, and sets these things through its activity, its activity is thoughts. These thoughts we call Forms, Ideas, and prior definitions of

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[26] Plato, *Tim.* 44c7; for the whole context, see 44c4–d2.

[27] Plato, *Tim.* 34a8–b1.

[28] Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.7.1, 1–8.

[29] Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.7.1, 23–28: "But what are the principles of plans [or 'calculations']? For even if they derive from other plans, they must be directed to an end or ends prior to planning. What then are the principles? They are either sense-perception or intellect. But if the premises are intellect the conclusion is knowledge: not, then, about any sense-object. For how can that of which the beginning is from the intelligible, being a disposition of this kind, come to the understanding of a sense-object?" (transl. Armstrong). (Τίνες οὖν ἀρχαί; Ἢ γὰρ αἴσθησις ἢ νοῦς. Ἀλλὰ αἴσθησις μὲν οὔπω· νοῦς ἄρα. Ἀλλ' εἰ νοῦς αἱ προτάσεις, τὸ συμπέρασμα ἐπιστήμη· περὶ αἰσθητοῦ οὐδενὸς ἄρα. Οὗ γὰρ ἀρχὴ μὲν ἐκ τοῦ νοητοῦ, τελευτὴ δὲ εἰς νοητὸν ἀφικνεῖται, πῶς ἔνι ταύτην τὴν ἕξιν πρὸς αἰσθητοῦ διανόησιν ἀφικνεῖσθαι;)

[30] Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.7.1, 28–32 (transl. Armstrong): Οὔτ' οὖν ζῴου πρόνοια οὔθ' ὅλως τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς ἐκ λογισμοῦ ἐγένετο· ἐπεὶ οὐδὲ ὅλως λογισμὸς ἐκεῖ, ἀλλὰ λέγεται λογισμὸς εἰς ἔνδειξιν τοῦ πάντα οὕτως, ὡς ἐκ λογισμοῦ ἐν τοῖς ὕστερον, καὶ προόρασις, ὅτι οὕτως, ὡς ἄν τις σοφὸς προΐδοιτο. Plotinus' clarification that the "forethought" and "plans" in the Demiurge are simply metaphorical—and rather that they are present altogether—might hint towards Porphyry's position that matter comes about simultaneously with the formation of bodies and bodily (or the world's) order, and not at separate stages. On this, see Karamanolis' contribution in this volume (pp. [xxx]), and n. 53 below.

[31] See also the end of Plotinus' *Enn.* VI.7.1, lines 51–58, esp.: "If then the future is already present, it must necessarily be present as if it had been thought out beforehand with a view to what comes later; but this means so that there will be no need of anything then, and this means that there will be no deficiency. All things, then, existed already and existed for ever […]" (transl. Armstrong). (Εἰ οὖν ἤδη πάρεστι τὸ μέλλον, ἀνάγκη οὕτω παρεῖναι, ὡς προνενοημένον εἰς τὸ ὕστερον· τοῦτο δέ ἐστιν, ὡς μηδὲν δεῖσθαι μηδενὸς τότε, τοῦτο δέ ἐστι μηδὲν ἐλλείφοντος. Πάντα ἄρα ἤδη ἦν καὶ ἀεὶ ἦν καὶ οὕτως ἦν ….) That said, cf. Proclus' claim on πρόνοια in n. 24, above, arguing that the notion obtains in a literal sense above the intelligible level, not just below the intelligible, as for Plotinus.

things, for through them, i.e. through their image and likeness, things are formed and set in order.[32]

Though the explanation for why this "activity" should be thoughts is not mentioned, the implication from the Plotinian background is clear: Intellect pre-contains the "plans" or, rather, principles (ἀρχαί) which are elaborated in their enmattered instantiations, each of which is an "image and likeness". The text's use of "prior definitions of things" should make this idea seen in Plotinus even clearer: though definitions imply distinct terms and parts, they are held altogether, and thus "prior", in Intellect. Ultimately, the link in §26's argument from πρόνοια to νοῦς—the latter standing in place for the Demiurge—should be fairly intuitive now.

We should also note how Porphyry, above, identifies the activity of Intellect with the Forms and Ideas—what he will go on to qualify as the "third principle" in §28, in addition to Intellect itself as the second principle.[33] In this respect, Porphyry distinguishes the Forms as the paradigmatic cause of enmattered beings, while Intellect is the efficient cause behind the generation of order and structure in beings.[34] One can see the former as a nod to the *Timaeus'* Living Being (τὸ ζῷον) as the model by which the Demiurge—standing in for Intellect, in the latter case—produces order in the sensible world.[35] At the same time, by identifying the model as an activity of Intellect, Porphyry implicitly refutes the idea that the Forms can be numerically distinct from Intellect: from the argument in §27, Intellect's "activity" of ordering the sensible world originate in itself, which suggests the identification of its "thoughts" with the Forms—an argument, as we saw above, elucidated and elaborated in Plotinus.[36] Though we do not see an explicit critique in this text, the fact that Porphyry discusses Atticus later in §§73–86 (and critiques an aspect of his exegesis of *Timaeus* 30a–c)[37] may suggest the critique he makes elsewhere against Atticus and other Platonists who separate the Forms from Intellect.[38] Be that as it may, the fact that we do not have this critique in the text suggests that

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[32] Porphyry, *PM* §27. Cf. Arzhanov's ch. in this vol., p. [[8]].

[33] Porphyry, *PM* §28: "So, we have further found also the third principle, in whose image things come to be. Hence, by means of the analytical method, we have found Matter, and by means of the synthetic one, the active cause, and from the activity of the latter we have found Idea and Form, according to whose image natures are formed." Cf. Arzhanov's ch., p. [[8]].

[34] See also Porphyry, *PM* §39: "God [*scil.* as Intellect, or the Demiurge] is the principle by which originally something was enacted [*scil.* produced]. The First Idea is the principle after the likeness of which something which was enacted was enacted. And Matter is the principle out of which originally some activity [was] enacted" (transl. slightly adjusted).

[35] Cf. Plato, *Tim.* 30c2–31a1.

[36] In turn, Plotinus' own view to equate the Forms with Intellect's thoughts—such that the thinker and the object(s) of thought is(/are) one and the same (see e.g. *Enn.* V.5.1–3; V.3.1 and 3–5)—partially results from his anti-skeptical motivations, where a separation of the Forms from Intellect would imply the possibility of uncertainty in Intellect's knowledge. On this see Emilsson (2007), 124–175 (esp. 138, 169–173). It would appear that this is in the background for the alternative exegetical interpretation upheld by Porphyry.

[37] About which, see below, p. [[10]].

[38] See e.g. Porphyry *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 274.16–275.4 Van Riel (I 393.31–394.8 Diehl): "Thirdly, a person of this sort thus goes on to deny that any of principles they assume is in Plato: for the Forms do not exist on their own in separation from Intellect, but Intellect sees all the Forms when it is turned towards itself. It is for this reason that the Athenian Stranger [cf. *Laws* 898b2] likened the activity of Intellect to the revolution of a 'sphere turned on the lathe'. But they [*scil.* Atticus and his followers] represent the Forms as inert, like waxworks, existing on their own and situated outside Intellect" (transl. adapted from Runia-Share, using Van Riel's ed. instead of Diehl's). (Τρίτον τοίνυν ὅτι οὐδὲ ὁποία τις οὖν ὧν παραλαμβάνουσιν ἀρχῶν προσήκει τι τῷ Πλάτωνι· οὔτε γὰρ αἱ ἰδέαι κεχωρισμέναι τοῦ νοῦ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὰς ὑφεστήκασιν, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ νοῦς εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἐπεστραμμένος ὁρᾷ τὰ εἴδη πάντα, διὸ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος Ξένος σφαίρας ἐντόρνου περιφορᾷ τοῦ νοῦ τὴν ἐνέργειαν ἀπείκασεν, οἱ δὲ ἀδρανεῖς τὰς ἰδέας τύποις κοροπλαθικοῖς ἐοικυίας ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτῶν οὔσας καὶ ἔξω τοῦ νοῦ κειμένας εἰσάγουσιν ….) On the Forms and Intellect in Atticus, see Boys-Stones (2018), 150–154. In *PM* §74, this critique is not present, but we see an implicit reference to Atticus' above view: "It is also permitted, [Atticus] says, to divide the principles into two, the active cause and the passive one. Each of them may be further divided into two: (the first one) into the active cause and the Form; […]" Substantively the formulation is not different from Porphyry's own argument for Intellect and the Forms in §§27–28, however Porphyry's emphasis on the Forms as Intellect's thoughts may signal this eventual critique that we see in the fragment from Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*. Why we do not find

Porphyry, at this point in the exegesis of *Timaeus* 30a–c, is concerned to get the exegesis of *Timaeus* 30a–c correct, albeit *up to this point*: namely that we have the three principles of Intellect, the Forms, and Matter, which can be reduced to the opposed pair of the active cause (i.e. Intellect and the Forms together) and passive cause (i.e. Matter).

After the end of Porphyry's two arguments by analysis and synthesis at §28, it will help to see how he considers the active and passive causes as "principles". We see this made explicit in §29:

> A principle is a primary limit of those things which are posterior to it and which from it initially come to be. And because all principles exist as something that is prior to everything, it is also characteristic of the principle that it is simple, unqualified, and also eternal.[39]

One can see the source of Porphyry's definition of principle as a limit in Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Δ 17, where Aristotle, in defining the different senses of "limit" (πέρας), concludes that a principle is a certain kind of limit (πέρας τι), although not every limit, in turn, is a principle.[40] One can also see aspects of *Metaphysics* Δ 1's definition of principle, especially the fourth definition of principle as that from which motion and change comes to be and as not immanent in the thing (μὴ ἐνυπάρχοντος).[41] Yet Porphyry's additional qualification that a principle is "simple, unqualified, and also eternal" goes well beyond Aristotle's own definition from *Metaphysics* Δ 1,[42] reflecting a more narrow, metaphysical definition, as we find elaborated in the text. Porphyry in §30 goes on to define what is "simple" (ἁπλός) in juxtaposition to compound beings, where compound beings must come from non-complex parts which are either prior "in time or in intellect and thinking".[43] The text does not specify these cases, but one example of priority in time could be, for instance, a stone which possesses the quality of heat from fire which is prior in time (i.e. before the stone had heat, it was cold). An example of priority in thought, in turn, could be in the sense of being defined in parts, where heat as an accident in the stone must be defined in reference back to the Form of Fire-itself, where heat is a concomitant part of the essence of fire.[44]

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this critique in *On Principles and Matter* may reflect the fact that Porphyry, at this point in the text, is only interested to give a scholastic-style analysis of *Timaeus* 30a–c, reflecting the dialectical nature of the argument in the earlier part of *PM*—just as with the lack of a critique of a dual-principles-only view, as we will see.

[39] Porphyry, *PM* §29.

[40] Aristotle, *Metaph.* Δ 17, 1022a12–13: ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἀρχὴ πέρας τι, τὸ δὲ πέρας οὐ πᾶν ἀρχή.

[41] Aristotle, *Metaph.* Δ 1, 1013a7–10: ἡ δὲ ὅθεν γίγνεται πρῶτον μὴ ἐνυπάρχοντος καὶ ὅθεν πρῶτον ἡ κίνησις πέφυκεν ἄρχεσθαι καὶ ἡ μεταβολή, οἷον τὸ τέκνον ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τῆς μητρὸς καὶ ἡ μάχη ἐκ τῆς λοιδορίας ….

[42] Lest, that is, one read into Aristotle's definition of "principle" the metaphysical implications of "the good and the noble" (τἀγαθὸν καὶ τὸ καλόν) as the ἀρχή of movement and knowledge at the end of the treatise, in 1013a21–23. See e.g. *Metaph.* Λ 6, 1071b17–22, where Aristotle stipulates that the principle (ἀρχή) of motion and change must be eternal (1071b21–22), and hence entirely in act (ἐνέργεια) (1071b22); see also *Metaph.* Λ 9, 1075a5–10, where Aristotle further stipulates that the unmoved mover must not be composite (σύνθετον). In addition, see Aristotle's definition of that which is the cause of necessity in other things in *Metaph.* Δ 5, 1015b10–15, which is then defined as simple (ἁπλοῦν)—implicitly referencing his definition of eternal, unmoved substance in *Metaph.* Λ 6–10. It is clear that Porphyry here reverts to a stock definition of "principle" in this more strict, metaphysical sense, ultimately going back to a combination of Aristotelian principles.

[43] Porphyry, *PM* §30: "For if it is not simple, then it is compound. Consequently, there are also parts of which it is compound, whether we assume its composition to have occurred in time or in intellect and thinking. If this is so, then it is evident that the parts of which it is compound may be considered prior to it, either preceding it in time or in thinking. In this case, we cannot call it principle in the proper sense, but rather the parts of which it is compound. Therefore, something that is truly a principle must necessarily be simple."

[44] For an example of this in Plotinus, see *Enn.* VI.9.2, 19–21, where definitions like "man" imply a plurality of parts: "At any rate 'man' and 'living being' and 'rational' are many parts and these many are bound together by the one. 'Man' and 'one' are therefore different, and one has parts and the other is partless" (transl. Armstrong). (Ἄνθρωπος γοῦν καὶ ζῷον καὶ λογικὸν καὶ πολλὰ μέρη καὶ συνδεῖται ἑνὶ τὰ πολλὰ ταῦτα· ἄλλο ἄρα ἄνθρωπος καὶ ἕν, εἰ τὸ μὲν μεριστόν, τὸ δὲ ἀμερές.)

Here, one might wonder whether Intellect, itself, implies parts or composition—a question concerning which the Syriac text is conspicuously silent. Indeed, Porphyry's predecessor, Plotinus, asserts so much in *Ennead* VI.9.2, when he shows the necessity for a principle before Intellect, *viz.* the One, based on the need for the principle's partlessness and simplicity in juxtaposition to the Forms, Being, and (ultimately) Intellect:

> But altogether the one is primary and the Forms and being are not primary. For each Form is of many parts and composite and posterior; for those elements from which an individual thing is composed are prior to it.
>
> And it is clear also from the following that intellect cannot be the first: it is necessary that intellect exists in its thinking, and that the best intellect, the one which does not look outside itself, thinks what is before it; for in turning to itself it turns to its principle.[45]

The first paragraph should look familiar to us if we have in mind the stipulation from *PM* §30 that a principle, if it is composite, cannot be so-called in the strict sense, but must be such in virtue of the respective parts which are not, in turn, further composed. Indeed, it is possible Porphyry may have this passage in mind in §30, although, unlike Plotinus, he does not discuss the need for the One or a principle before Intellect—if anything, the text puzzlingly seems to argue against this. However, as we will see, this may reflect both the dialectical nature of the argument for the two principles at this point in the text, and the criterion may indeed be used in the lost portion of the text to argue eventually for the One.

The second and third cases of being "unqualified" and "eternal" in *PM* §31–32, are phrased in similar terms to being "simple". In the former case, quality implies the joining of subject and accident, which implies that there must be something before the two, i.e. the subject by itself, or principle.[46] And in the latter case, being eternal is framed in the counterfactual case that, if something comes to be in time, it must eventually go back to a principle which does not have anything temporally prior to itself.[47]

Porphyry's discussion of the criteria for being a principle eventually leads to his subsequent argument in §37 that there must be an opposed pair of principles behind all things, which meets the criteria laid out above—namely, the active and passive principles:

> However, it also seems good to us that, when the First Principles are reduced to two and are thus opposed to each other, one of them is like an active one and the other is like one that is affected by it. But it is necessary that these principles not originate from something else or from each other. And two of them that are characterised as being in primary opposition, because they are primary, cannot originate from something else, and because they are opposed, they cannot originate from each other. Those opposites in each of them exist in them by accident, in that they are generated things. And consequently, they originate from each other, while the primary ones do

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[45] Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.9.2, 29–36 (transl. Armstrong): Ὅλως δὲ τὸ μὲν ἓν τὸ πρῶτον, ὁ δὲ νοῦς καὶ τὰ εἴδη καὶ τὸ ὂν οὐ πρῶτα. Εἶδός τε γὰρ ἕκαστον ἐκ πολλῶν καὶ σύνθετον καὶ ὕστερον· ἐξ ὧν γὰρ ἕκαστόν ἐστι, πρότερα ἐκεῖνα. Ὅτι δὲ οὐχ οἷόν τε τὸν νοῦν τὸ πρῶτον εἶναι καὶ ἐκ τῶνδε δῆλον ἔσται· τὸν νοῦν ἀνάγκη ἐν τῷ νοεῖν εἶναι καὶ τόν γε ἄριστον καὶ τὸν οὐ πρὸς τὸ ἔξω βλέποντα νοεῖν τὸ πρὸ αὐτοῦ· εἰς αὑτὸν γὰρ ἐπιστρέφων εἰς ἀρχὴν ἐπιστρέφει. See also Porphyry's shorter version of this principle in *Sent.* 43, where Porphyry defends both (1) the position that the object of thought and Intellect are numerically identical, and thus Intellect thinks itself in thinking the intelligibles (or Forms) (cf. lines 38–47); and (2) the position that Intellect is many, and thus requires the One before it (cf. lines 47–50).

[46] Porphyry, *PM* §31: "For if it is qualified and has quality, it is likewise compound of a subject and an accident. For it is in this way that something becomes something qualified. Consequently, a principle is unqualified."

[47] Porphyry, *PM* §32: "For if it is not eternal, it will have started in time and existed for a particular time. If it is like that, it is necessary that it also had a cause from which it came to be. That (cause) would precede it and be considered prior to it, and would truly be a principle."

not. For if they had come to be or are coming to be, they would no longer be primary in the proper sense.[48]

Porphyry's argument here for opposition rests on the irreducibility of the active and passive principles: if matter always pre-exists as the necessary subject in which composition happens—and, in turn, if there is an active cause always responsible for imposing properties on matter—then this duality must exist on the level of first principles: one principle cannot come from the other, lest it no longer be a principle.[49] The end of §35 is an essential factor for the argument at this point: initially Porphyry considers the early Presocratic positions that posit one of the four elements as the first principle; yet as Porphyry concludes, such a person "errs by setting as a principle that which comes to be. Instead, I say that coming-to-be has a principle from which it comes to be, but a principle is not a coming-to-be". [50] This is important to understand in what respect Porphyry posits two principles—and not, rather, one—insofar as he considers the principles of coming-to-be. One can see how Porphyry concludes in §§38–39 that there are three principles: "God, Matter, and [the] First Ideas of existing things", which he reduces to the active (i.e. Intellect and the Ideas/Forms) and passive principle (i.e. Matter), as relatively opposed to each other.

3. Porphyry's Extant Texts: Squaring the Two-Principle View with the Critique of Atticus

If we look at the argument we get positively from Porphyry, much of it seems to approximate the view of Atticus that he quotes and discusses later in §§73–86: in particular, Atticus similarly distinguishes between the active and passive principles, each of which he sub-divides into the couple of Intellect (i.e. the Demiurge) and the Forms, for the active, and Soul and Matter, for the passive.[51] It is notable that the sole critique we find of Atticus by Porphyry in the text is in §§85–86, where Atticus fails to distinguish between the "constitution of bodies" from primary bodies (i.e. the elements) and the "constitution of the world" from the bodies which are, in turn, formed from the elements[52]—a distinction we also find attested in Philoponus' report on Porphyry's commentary on the *Timaeus*.[53] This should tell us that, at the least, we do not merely have a summarized version of

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[48] Porphyry, *PM* §37.

[49] For a distant echo of this principle, see the later Neoplatonist Proclus' *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 90, esp. lines 6–10 (82.12–16 Dodds), where in the case of the Limit and Unlimited (adapted from Plato's *Philebus*), Proclus makes a similar case that the first instance of limitedness and unlimitedness cannot originate from each other, but only by themselves alone.

[50] Porphyry, *PM* §35.

[51] Cf. Porphyry, *PM* §73. On Atticus' metaphysical framework, esp. in juxtaposition with other Middle Platonist positions on the Forms in relation to the Demiurge, see Michalewski (2014), 69–96; Boys-Stones (2018), 15–21 and (more specific to Atticus) 150–154, and (on Atticus more generally) Dillon (1977), 247–258.

[52] Porphyry, *PM* §86. It is after this point that Porphyry, in support of his position, quotes Severus in §§87–93, who attributes the disorderly motion to the four "bodies" (or elements), rather than to Soul in its relation to matter as for Atticus.

[53] Cf. Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 14.3 (esp. 546.3–15 Rabe) (special thanks to Gretchen Reydams-Schils for reminding me of the reference). On this see Reydams-Schils (forthcoming) [[10–11]] and Michael Chase's contribution in this vol., p. [[6]], n. 19. See also earlier *Contra Proclum* 6.14 (164.12–165.16 Rabe), esp. 164.18–165.6 (= Porphyry, *In Tim.* II, Fr. 47 Sodano): "The making of the world and the creation of body are not the same thing, nor are the beginnings of body and of the world the same. For the world to come to be, both bodies and God must exist; for bodies to come to be, there must be matter, God, and supervening [form] (one lot so that the matter may become body, and another to give order to the things that have become body). All of these always come into existence at once and not separately over time, but instruction necessarily separates them so as to be able to explain that which comes to be accurately. The beginnings of body are God, who is the begetter, matter, and the shapes that [Plato] will tell us about later, the things from which bodies are composed being begotten of God; those of the world are bodies, which already exist through the agency of God, and God, who gives them order" (transl. Share, slightly modified). (οὐκ ἔστιν ταὐτὸν κόσμου ποίησις καὶ σώματος ὑπόστασις οὐδὲ αἱ αὐταὶ ἀρχαὶ σώματός τε καὶ κόσμου, ἀλλ᾽ ἵνα μὲν κόσμος γένηται, δεῖ σώματα εἶναι καὶ θεὸν εἶναι, ἵνα δὲ σώματα,

Atticus' framework of principles (nor, for that matter, Severus') in §§17–28 (and again in §§37–39). On the other hand, it appears to be an adapted version of Atticus' framework that Porphyry seems to advocate in the text.

It is here that we should put Porphyry's argument in *On Principles and Matter* in juxtaposition with his overarching position on first principles. This comes out most directly in the collection of Porphyry's critiques of Atticus that Proclus summarizes in his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* 30a1–3, particularly in Porphyry's first critique of two opposed first principles: for here we see, to initial appearances, Porphyry refuting his own position of two principles in *PM* §17–28:

> Let it be assumed then that both matter and God are, as they claim, both ungenerated from [any] cause. In that case [being] ungenerated is common to [both of] them. But they differ from one another nevertheless. So [it must be] by something else, and not by [being] ungenerated. So this thing by which they differ from one another could not be [something] ungenerated. Therefore it is [something] generated. But it is impossible for ungenerated [things] to differ by [something that is] generated.[54]

In the first argument against Atticus, Porphyry concedes the point that "God" (i.e. the Demiurge, or Intellect) and matter are both ungenerated (ἀγένητα): however, they are still distinguished in another way than by being merely ungenerated, and that distinction cannot come from their effects (i.e. what they both generate). The next step in Porphyry's argument is to acknowledge that one principle (i.e. the Demiurge) is preservative, while the other (i.e. Matter) is destructive: one cannot reduce one side to the other, and *vice versa*, or equate either (or both) with being ungenerated, if indeed there is a real distinction of principles. Porphyry's conclusion then is that, without positing a cause (αἰτία) of the distinction, "the coming together of principles such as these will be without rhyme or reason".[55] Later on, Porphyry points to other Platonic dialogues, like the Good of *Republic* VI, the first king of the *Second Letter*, the Cause of the *Philebus*' pair of principles, Limit and Unlimited, and the implication of the One behind Being in the *Sophist*.[56] It is clear from this context that Porphyry effectively follows Plotinus' position of the One as the first principle above Intellect, standing in for the Demiurge, as well as Matter.

Still, however, we should ask: why is this battery of arguments against Atticus lacking in *On Principles and Matter*? If it is indeed the same author, why does Porphyry restrict himself to one

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δεῖ ὕλην εἶναι καὶ θεὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιγινόμενον ἄλλο μέν, ἵνα σωματωθῇ ὕλη, ἄλλο δέ, ἵνα τὰ σωματωθέντα ταχθῇ. ταῦτα δὲ ἀεὶ ἅμα γίνεται πάντα καὶ οὐ χρόνῳ διῃρτημένα, ἀλλ᾽ ἥ γε διδασκαλία ἀναγκαίως διαιρεῖ, ἵνα διδάσκη ἀκριβῶς τὸ γιγνόμενον· σώματος μὲν γὰρ ἀρχαὶ θεὸς μὲν γεννῶν, ὕλη δὲ καὶ τὰ σχήματα, ἃ προϊὼν ἡμᾶς διδάξει, ὡς ἐξ ὧν συνέστηκεν τὰ σώματα γεννηθέντων ἀπὸ θεοῦ, κόσμου δὲ τὰ ἤδη ὑποστάντα σώματα ὑπὸ θεοῦ καὶ θεὸς ὁ ταῦτα τάσσων […].) Similarly to what we have seen in the *PM*, we see here a threefold distinction between God, matter, and that which "supervenes": as Michael Share notes in his translation (p. 137, n. 178), this latter could stand for either form/*eidos* or shape/*schêma*, but it could also refer to the qualitative aspect of the primary elements, which would again conform with *PM* §§85–86. Noteworthily in this text we see Porphyry accepting the chronological "narrative" of the *Timaeus* (esp. in the context of 47e–48e, with Timaeus "retracing" his steps), yet qualifying the ontological status of the narrative "steps" when he claims "all of these [i.e. the 'bodies' and the 'world'] always (ἀεὶ) come into existence at once (ἅμα)". (Special thanks to Jeff Johns for pointing out this additional, crucial passage and making these observations explicit.) One can also see Plotinus' influence here, where he qualifies that the Demiurge's "forethought" and "plans" are strictly metaphorical: cf. n. 30, above.

[54] Porphyry *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 271.6–11 (I 391.13–18 Diehl) (transl. Runia-Share, slightly modified): ἔστω δὴ οὖν, ὥς φασιν, ὕλη καὶ θεὸς ἀγένητα ἄμφω ἀπ᾽ αἰτίας. οὐκοῦν τὸ μὲν ἀγένητον αὐτοῖς κοινόν· διαφέρει δὲ ὅμως ἀλλήλων· ἄλλῳ ἄρα τινὶ καὶ οὐ τῷ ἀγενήτῳ· ἐκεῖνο οὖν ᾧ διαφέρει ἀλλήλων οὐκ ἂν εἴη ἀγένητον· γενητὸν ἄρα· ἀλλὰ ἀδύνατον τὰ ἀγένητα τῷ γενητῷ διαφέρειν.

[55] Porphyry *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 272.2–4 (I, 392.1–2 Diehl) (transl. Runia/Share): αἰτίας γὰρ ἀνῃρημένης ἡ συνδρομὴ τῶν τοιῶνδε ἀρχῶν ἄλογος ἔσται καὶ ἀναίτιος.

[56] Cf. Porphyry *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 273.21–274.15 (I, 393.14–31 Diehl).

correction with the distinction between the constitutions of bodies and the world in the Syriac text?[57] And more relevant for us, why does he not posit the One or Good above the Demiurge but rather endorse a dualist set of principles?

Given our analysis of the argument in *On Principles and Matter*, there is enough to suggest that the scope of *PM* §17–39, is not *yet* engaged with the full hierarchy of metaphysical principles, but rather with the immediate principles of the world's coming to be—i.e. the central context of *Timaeus* 30a–c—where there are no further principles to go back to, except the active and passive principles. In this respect, Porphyry is not contradicting himself. One key behind this is §35, above, where Porphyry limits the notion of "principle" to what causes coming-to-be without, itself, being that which comes to be. Tellingly, Porphyry's definition leaves open the question—or rather possibility—that there may be principles of a thing's existence, which encompasses more than the principles of a thing's coming to be.

We see such a distinction addressed in *Sentences* 14, where Porphyry distinguishes between principles of things that come to be and pass away and things (i.e. principles) that are ungenerated, yet still require a cause for their existence:

> All that is generated has the cause of [its] generation from another, if indeed nothing is generated without a cause. But, it should be specified, among things that are generated, (1) all those things which have obtained being by means of composition may be subject to dissolution and, through this, destruction; on the other hand (2), all those things which, being simple and non-composite, have obtained being in the simplicity of their [kind of] existence are indestructible, since they are indissoluble, but are called "generated", not since they are composed, but because they depend on a certain cause. On the one hand, bodies, then, are "generated" in two ways: as depending on the cause which produces them, and as being composed. Soul and Intellect, on the other hand, are "generated" only as depending on a cause, certainly not as being composed. Hence, one kind (1) is "generated" as dissolvable and corruptible, and the other kind (2) is ungenerated, as non-composed (and by this, both non-dissolvable and incorruptible), but "generated" as depending on a cause.[58]

The distinction that Porphyry draws here becomes utilized later on in *Sentences* 31 (among other passages) when he elucidates the full causal hierarchy: bodies (as composed) come to be from Soul, with matter as the lowest limit, while Soul (despite being non-composed) comes to be from Intellect, and Intellect in turn from "God", or the One.[59] In this case, the sense of "generation" that Porphyry

[57] One can also detect an echo of this critique in Proclus' extract of Porphyry's argument at *In Tim.* II, 275.22–276.3 (I, 394.26–30 Diehl): "So why, then, has [Plato] hypothesized disorder? Because, so that we would be able to see that the generation of bodies is one thing, their arrangement once they have come into being another, they had to be hypothesized as [already] existing but moving in a disorderly manner. After all, bodies cannot bring order to themselves" (transl. Runia-Share, modified). (τί δή ποτε οὖν ὑπέθετο τὴν ἀταξίαν; ἢ ἵνα θεωρήσωμεν ὅπως ἄλλη μὲν ἡ τῶν σωμάτων γένεσις, ἄλλη δὲ ἡ γενομένων αὐτῶν τάξις, ὑποθετέον ὄντα μὲν αὐτά, κινούμενα δὲ ἀτάκτως· αὐτὰ γὰρ τάττειν τὰ σώματα ἀδύνατον.)

[58] Porphyry, *Sent.* 14: Πᾶν γενητὸν ἀπ᾽ ἄλλου τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς γενέσεως ἔχει, εἴ γε μηδὲν ἀναιτίως γίνεται. ἀλλὰ τῶν γε γενητῶν ὅσα μὲν διὰ συνθέσεως κέκτηται τὸ εἶναι, λυτὰ ἂν εἴη καὶ διὰ τοῦτο φθαρτά· ὅσα δὲ ἁπλᾶ καὶ ἀσύνθετα ὄντα ἐν τῷ ἁπλῷ τῆς ὑποστάσεως κέκτηται τὸ εἶναι, ἄλυτα ὄντα ἐστὶ μὲν ἄφθαρτα, γενητὰ δὲ λέγεται οὐ τῷ σύνθετα εἶναι, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἀπ᾽ αἰτίου τινὸς ἀνηρτῆσθαι. τὰ μὲν οὖν σώματα διχῶς γενητὰ καὶ ὡς ἀπ᾽ αἰτίας ἠρτημένα τῆς παραγούσης καὶ ὡς σύνθετα, ψυχὴ δὲ καὶ νοῦς γενητὰ ὡς ἀπ᾽ αἰτίας ἠρτημένα μόνον, οὐ μὴν καὶ ὡς σύνθετα· τὰ μὲν ἄρα γενητὰ καὶ λυτὰ καὶ φθαρτά, τὰ δὲ ἀγένητα μὲν ὡς ἀσύνθετα καὶ ταύτῃ καὶ ἄλυτα καὶ ἄφθαρτα, γενητὰ δὲ ὡς <ἀπ᾽> αἰτίου ἠρτημένα.

[59] Porphyry, *Sent.* 31: "And just as all beings and non-beings are from God and in God, and he is not himself the beings and non-beings, nor is he in them [...] even so Intellect too, in virtue of being everywhere and nowhere, is cause of souls and of those things which are subsequent to it, and at the same time is not itself a soul nor those things which follow upon soul, nor is it in them, because it was not only everywhere with respect to what follows it, but also nowhere. And Soul, too, is not a body nor in a body, but the cause of body, because while being everywhere in respect of body, it is [also] nowhere. And the procession of the All comes, perforce, to a halt at that which is unable to be at once everywhere or

is concerned with in *On Principles and Matter* is that of composition: he is not concerned with this second sense of "generation" from above, i.e. with the preservation of the being or existence (εἶναι) of non-composed beings. On this point Porphyry does not differ from Atticus in the *PM*. However, this second, broader sense of "generation" is the key premise behind Porphyry's critique of Atticus recorded in Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*, especially in the first argument, above.[60]

Still, as noted in the last section, there are clues in *On Principles and Matter* that point to this full-throated critique of Atticus with Porphyry's developed framework of principles. In particular, Porphyry's elucidation of the criterion of simplicity in §30 is telling, when he says, in the case of something composite, that "there are also parts of which it is compound, whether we assume its composition to have occurred in time or in intellect and thinking", while those parts must be prior "in time or in thinking".[61] It is noteworthy that the text does not make use of this latter sense of priority "in thinking", or composition "in intellect and thinking" later on, yet this seems to be exactly the sense of composition, or at least plurality, that Porphyry implies for Intellect in other texts, such as *Sentences* 43.[62] This also comes out in a fragment of Porphyry's *On Principles* (Περὶ ἀρχῶν), recorded by Proclus in the *Platonic Theology*, when Porphyry claims that, though eternal in its nature, Intellect has a "pre-eternal aspect" (προαιώνιόν τι) in itself, insofar as it is joined to the One and thus has its existence guaranteed.[63] Just as Porphyry explains one aspect of the causal relation between Intellect and the world of generation in terms of being eternal (for Intellect) in contrast to being temporal, i.e. in generation and corruption (for bodies), the same kind of causal relation is explained between Intellect and the One in terms of the former being "eternal" and the latter being "pre-eternal". The same idea can be seen in a fragment from Porphyry's *Philosophical History* (Φιλόσοφος ἱστορία), where, in addressing how the One is a cause of Intellect, while Intellect is self-generated, Porphyry posits the One as the "pre-eternal" (προαιώνιος) source for Intellect, while Intellect is "always timeless and solely eternal" (ἄχρονος ἀεί καὶ μόνος αἰώνιος), and constitutes itself in this

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nowhere, but partakes alternately of either state" (transl. Dillon, modified). (καὶ ὡς πάντα τὰ ὄντα καὶ μὴ ὄντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἐν θεῷ καὶ οὐκ αὐτὸς τὰ ὄντα καὶ μὴ ὄντα καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς ... οὕτω καὶ νοῦς πανταχοῦ ὢν καὶ οὐδαμοῦ αἴτιος ψυχῶν καὶ τῶν μετ᾽ αὐτὰς καὶ οὐκ αὐτὸς ψυχὴ οὔτε τὰ μετὰ ψυχὴν οὐδὲ ἐν τούτοις, ὅτι οὐκ ἦν μόνον πανταχοῦ τῶν μετ᾽ αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐδαμοῦ· καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ οὐ σῶμα οὔτε ἐν σώματι, ἀλλ᾽ αἰτία σώματος, ὅτι πανταχοῦ οὖσα τοῦ σώματός ἐστιν οὐδαμοῦ. καὶ ἔστη γε ἡ πρόοδος τοῦ παντὸς εἰς τὸ μήτε πανταχοῦ ἅμα μήτε μηδαμοῦ εἶναι δυνάμενον, ἀλλ᾽ ἀνὰ μέρος ἑκατέρων μετέχον.) One thing to note here is Porphyry's claim that Intellect is the cause of Soul "and of those things subsequent to them" (καὶ τῶν μετ᾽ αὐτὰς)—which may suggest e.g. the enmattered forms and/or order found in bodies: an aspect we will also see in Plotinus, below. Another aspect is Porphyry's reference to "that which is unable to be at once everywhere or nowhere, but partakes alternately of either state", which likely refers to matter, insofar as matter can imply either "being somewhere" (i.e. body inhabiting matter with extension) or "being nowhere" (i.e. lack of body with extension), exclusively speaking (among others, cf. *Sent.* 20, esp. lines 14–18, and *Sent.* 42, lines 1–6). For the implicit equation of God with the One here, see *Sent.* 43, lines 47–50, where Porphyry concludes that the One must be before Intellect.
[60] Cf. Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 271.6–11 in p. [[10]], above.
[61] Cf. Porphyry, *PM* §30, and p. [[8]], above.
[62] Cf. n. 45, above.
[63] See Porphyry, Fr. 232 Smith *apud* Proclus, *Platonic Theology* I.11, 51.4–11: "Porphyry, once more, after [Plotinus], in the treatise, *On First Principles*, demonstrates in many and sublime arguments that Intellect is eternal, while in the same way it has in itself a certain pre-eternal aspect: and [he demonstrates that] the pre-eternal aspect of Intellect is joined together by the One (since the latter was beyond every eternity), while the eternal possesses the second, or rather third, order in Intellect: for I think it is necessary to place eternity in the middle of the pre-eternal [aspect] and that which is eternal." (Πορφύριος δὲ αὖ μετὰ τοῦτον ἐν τῇ Περὶ ἀρχῶν πραγματείᾳ τὸν νοῦν εἶναι μὲν αἰώνιον ἐν πολλοῖς καὶ καλοῖς ἀποδείκνυσι λόγοις, ἔχειν δὲ ὅμως ἐν ἑαυτῷ καὶ προαιώνιόν <τι· καὶ τὸ μὲν προαιώνιον> τοῦ νοῦ τῷ ἑνὶ συνάπτειν (ἐκεῖνο γὰρ ἦν ἐπέκεινα παντὸς αἰῶνος) τὸ δὲ αἰώνιον δευτέραν ἔχειν, μᾶλλον δὲ τρίτην ἐν ἐκείνῳ τάξιν· δεῖ γάρ, οἶμαι, τοῦ προαιωνίου καὶ τοῦ αἰωνίου τὸν αἰῶνα μέσον ἱδρῦσθαι.) Given the possible title of the Syriac text as "On Principles and Matter", it is indeed an interesting, open question whether this fragment belonged to a separate work, "On Principles" (Περὶ ἀρχῶν), or whether it could have been part of the last part of the Syriac text, which would indeed support giving the title of *"On Principles and Matter"* to the Syriac text.

respect.[64] Connecting these two fragments, the One is "pre-eternal" as the principle of Intellect, while Intellect contains within itself the "pre-eternal" aspect, belonging to the One. Once more, the criterion spelled out in §30 in *On Principles and Matter* certainly well connects with this backdrop.

Despite this link, we may still wonder whether there is precedent for this kind of distinction in scope between *On Principles and Matter*, which advocates a dual-principle framework (albeit within the implicit context of the *Timaeus*), and the rest of Porphyry's extant work, which advocates a mono-principle framework. As it turns out, we find this in Plotinus' treatises on the soul's essence in *Ennead* IV.1–2,[65] where Plotinus employs a set of arguments similar to those found in Porphyry's *PM* as well as Atticus and Severus (among others)—namely where all these figures engage in a scholastic-style exegesis of *Timaeus* 30a–c in enumerating the principles.[66] In IV.1, after referencing his discussion in *Enn.* IV.7 of previous positions on the soul in Aristotle and other previous philosophers, Plotinus proposes to follow "another route" (κατ᾽ ἄλλην ὁδὸν) by placing the soul in relation to the "perceptible" and "intelligible" classes:[67] the former (1) he defines as "primarily divisible and by their own nature prone to dispersion" (πρώτως εἶναι μεριστὰ καὶ τῇ αὐτῶν φύσει σκεδαστά), and the latter (2) as what "in no way admits division, is without parts and cannot be divided into parts" (οὐδαμῇ μερισμὸν δεχομένη, ἀμερής τε καὶ ἀμέριστος).[68] Eventually Plotinus elucidates this structure in the following way: between,

- (2) "true being [which is] always in the same state" (ἀεὶ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ ἔχουσα οὐσία), correlating with Intellect (νοῦς);[69]

- (2a) Soul, which is indivisible in its essence, yet is present as a whole to bodies which have divisible parts[70] (and in this sense is "indivisibly divided", ἀμερίστως μερίζεται);[71]

- (1a) enmattered forms, which are present in bodies, and thus divided in the parts of the bodies, but present as a whole in each part; and,[72]

- (1) body, which is "primarily divisible" (μεριστὴ πρώτως), "no part of which is the same as either another part or the whole".[73]

In this breakdown one can see the general parallel to Porphyry's (and, by proxy, Atticus') framework, especially between (2) and (1) correlating with the level of simple, indivisible being (2) and divisible being (1). Unlike Plotinus, Porphyry (apparently following Atticus and Severus) takes (1) to stand for matter, rather than body, while Porphyry characterizes (1) in terms of passivity rather than divisibility. In turn, Porphyry does not include Soul (2a) as a principle in his own exposition in *PM* §17–28, while enmattered forms (1a) are not considered (at least explicitly), although he considers the paradigmatic Forms as thought in Intellect.

Nevertheless, the greater point here is that we see Plotinus engaged in a scholastic discussion of the soul's essence amidst a similar framework of principles, as in Porphyry's *On Principles and*

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[64] Porphyry, Fr. 223 Smith. On the relation between Intellect and the One in terms of προαιώνιος in Fr's. 223 and 232, see Strange (2007), 31–32, where he suggests that Porphyry builds on Plotinus' attempt to explain Intellect's procession from the One in terms of "intelligible matter" in *Enn.* V.2.1. See also the discussion of these passages in Greig (2021), 46–47, esp. n. 78 (n.b., "Fr. 223" in n. 81 should be "Fr. 232").

[65] Treatises 4 and 21 in the chronological ordering of Plotinus' writings listed by Porphyry. I follow A.H. Armstrong in marking treatise 4 as IV.1.1 rather than IV.1.2, as in Henry–Schwyzer's editions: see vol. 4, p. 7, in Armstrong's translation.

[66] For a discussion of these exegeses of *Timaeus* 30a–c and 35a, see Opsomer (forthcoming).

[67] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.1 [treatise 4], 9–11.

[68] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.1 [tr. 4], 12–23.

[69] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.1 [tr. 4], 23–33.

[70] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.1 [tr. 4], 53–76.

[71] Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.2 [tr. 21], 18–22.

[72] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.1 [tr. 4], 31–41.

[73] *Ibid.*

Matter—however without Plotinus' full-blown view of principles.[74] This is evident at the end of Plotinus' exposition in IV.1.2, in his final summation of principles: "So the soul (2a) is one and many in this way; the forms in bodies (1a) are many and one; bodies (1) are many only; and the Supreme (2) is one only (τὸ ὑπέρτατον ἓν μόνον)".[75] What is striking is that Plotinus is referring to Being, implicitly Intellect, rather than *the One*, as what is "Supreme" (ὑπέρτατον): something that should give pause to a Plotinus reader, just as §§17–28 should do for us Porphyry readers. Despite certain scholarly suggestions that this may have marked an early stage in Plotinus' thought before he asserted the One above Being, it is rather enough to note the scope of Plotinus' discussion here: he begins IV.1.1 on the soul's essence by demarcating perceptible, divisible being from intelligible, indivisible being; from the dialectical structure of the argument based on this division, Being would then be "supreme" and "first" in this sense. It is only when we turn to other treatises, such as *Ennead* VI.9 or V.3, which raise the question of what is "first" absolutely speaking, that the criteria and conclusion then change: the One is what is truly "supreme" and "first", not Being.[76]

I propose that we should see Porphyry's arguments in *PM* §17–28, in the same way: Porphyry is ultimately borrowing this form of dialectical argumentation from Plotinus, which is common in his genre of writing. We already see this in *Sentences* 5, which is a summarized version of Plotinus' framework in *Ennead* IV.1 and IV.2:

> Soul is a certain intermediary between indivisible essence and divisible essence in the domain of bodies. Intellect is indivisible essence alone, while bodies are divisible alone, and qualities and enmattered forms are divisible in the domain of bodies.[77]

As with *Ennead* IV.1, above, Porphyry does not elucidate the full hierarchy of principles at this point in the *Sentences*: instead it is when we get to *Sentences* 10, which elucidates in what way "all things are in all" (πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν), that we get the full hierarchy: from what is beyond the intelligible and above being (i.e. the One) to Intellect, Soul, vegetative life, and finally bodies.[78] In the same way we should see *On Principles and Matter* in comparison with Porphyry's critiques of Atticus recorded in Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary*: what we have is a dialectical set of arguments in the former, which Porphyry will eventually use in his full-fledged elucidation of the metaphysical hierarchy, from the dualist set of principles that characterize the natural, corruptible world, to the one-principle framework by which all principles and beings are sustained.

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[74] A point emphasized in Opsomer (forthcoming), especially in response to scholars who raise the question of developmentalism over Plotinus not mentioning the One in *Enn.* IV.1–2.

[75] Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.1.2, 52–55: Ἔστιν οὖν ψυχὴ ἓν καὶ πολλὰ οὕτως· τὰ δὲ ἐν τοῖς σώμασιν εἴδη πολλὰ καὶ ἕν· τὰ δὲ σώματα πολλὰ μόνον· τὸ δ' ὑπέρτατον ἓν μόνον.

[76] A similar consideration could be made about Porphyry's attribution of divinity, or Godhood, to the active principle (i.e. Intellect), in juxtaposition to the passive principle (i.e. Matter), in *PM* §38. This position is, to all appearances, overturned in Porphyry's critique of Atticus from Proclus' *Timaeus Commentary* (see II, 272.19–273.2 = I, 392.20–25 Diehl), where "God" implies being the cause of all things, not only of some (i.e. everything other than matter)—again, implying that the term, "God", properly applies to the One rather than Intellect. In reply, we can again consider the question of scope distinction at play: insofar as Porphyry is considering principles of the natural world, in connection with the *Timaeus'* context, "God" would then apply to Intellect/the active principle; from the perspective of all things, simply speaking, "God" must apply to the One alone, above Intellect and Matter.

[77] Porphyry, *Sent.* 5: Ἡ μὲν ψυχὴ τῆς ἀμερίστου καὶ <τῆς> περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστῆς οὐσίας μέσον τι, ὁ δὲ νοῦς ἀμέριστος οὐσία μόνον, τὰ δὲ σώματα μεριστὰ μόνον, αἱ δὲ ποιότητες καὶ τὰ ἔνυλα εἴδη περὶ τὰ σώματα μεριστά.

[78] Porphyry, *Sent.* 10: "All things are in all, but by the being of each in its own, proper way: in Intellect, in an intellective way; in Soul in a dialectical way; in plants in a generative way; in bodies in the manner of images; and in that which is beyond in an inherently non-intelligible way and above being". (Πάντα μὲν ἐν πᾶσιν, ἀλλὰ οἰκείως τῇ ἑκάστου οὐσίᾳ· ἐν νῷ μὲν γὰρ νοερῶς, ἐν ψυχῇ δὲ λογικῶς, ἐν δὲ τοῖς φυτοῖς σπερματικῶς, ἐν δὲ σώμασιν εἰδωλικῶς, ἐν δὲ τῷ ἐπέκεινα ἀνεννοήτως τε καὶ ὑπερουσίως.)

4. Conclusion

More work is certainly needed to piece together the broader context of *On Principles and Matter,* especially in what sense the arguments Porphyry puts forward in his own voice are dialectical, and how they connect with his broader view of metaphysical and natural principles. For instance, we see no trace in the text of Porphyry's interpretation (recorded, again, by Proclus in the *Timaeus Commentary*) that the Demiurge is to be identified with "supercelestial soul" (ὑπερουράνιος ψυχή).[79] That Porphyry in *PM* leaves out Soul, or at least supercelestial soul, in his account of principles from the *Timaeus* context, is all the more striking when he discusses Atticus positing Soul as part of the pair of principles belonging to the passive cause in *PM* §74 and §§84–86, before he ends up critiquing it and leaves aside Soul from his list of principles in §39. Though there is lack of space to investigate this question here, it may, again, reflect the dialectical argument at play in the crucial section of *PM* §§17–39.

We may thus revisit a basic question when looking at *On Principles and Matter*, in §§17–39 (on the principles in general), and also §§40–72 (on matter): are these, in fact, the positive arguments and affirmations of the text's author (i.e. Porphyry), or are they the words of another figure—whether a dialectical position that the text's author does not, in fact, hold? As implied in other textual connections between Porphyry's other works and in Plotinus, it seems clear that the *PM* makes explicit that the positions it reports are either coming from other commentators or from "Plato"—the latter of which, presumably, represents the author's own interpretation. We know for certain that there was more to the text beyond what survives in the Syriac: whether Porphyry's critiques of Atticus, as reported by Proclus, were supposed to be within the same work or in a separate treatise remains uncertain.[80]

Still, what is certain is that the "Porphyry" of *On Principles and Matter* is not contradicting the "Porphyry" of the other, surviving texts. Given how often Porphyry employs dialectical argumentation within different scopes (and in this, follows Plotinus in texts like *Ennead* IV.1), we should be unsurprised by the difference in tone or the type of position that Porphyry positively describes. If anything, the freedom with which Porphyry can switch between a Middle Platonist "tone", as in the *PM*, and a Neoplatonist "tone", in other texts, should give us pause from attempting to read Porphyry as maintaining a scholastic "Plotinian" position in a reductive way.[81] In turn, it is worth noting that Plato himself in *Timaeus* 47e–48e, in the guise of his eponymous character, gives a second account of the cosmos' coming-to-be from the basis of Necessity that his first account, based on what was crafted by Intellect, could not convey.[82] In the confines of the *PM*, together with the

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[79] See Porphyry *apud* Proclus, *In Tim.* II, 329.12–15 (= I, 431.20–23 Diehl): "In contrast to [Atticus], Porphyry gives the Demiurge a lower rank than the Intelligible: having hypothesized supercelestial soul as the creative agent for the cosmos, he puts the paradigm for things that come to be in Intellect" (trans. Runia/Share, slightly modified). (Τούτῳ δὲ ἀπ' ἐναντίας ὁ Πορφύριος ὑφειμένην τῷ δημι- ουργῷ δίδωσι τάξιν παρὰ τὸ νοητόν· ψυχὴν γὰρ ὑπερουράνιον θέμενος τῷ κόσμῳ ποιητικὴν ἐν τῷ νῷ τὸ παράδειγμα τίθεται τῶν γιγνομένων.) It is noteworthy that Proclus raises Porphyry's position just after Atticus' (in *In Tim.* II, 329.5–11), who puts the paradigm of the Living Being (standing in for the Forms) below the Demiurge, as Intellect, whereas Porphyry moves in the opposite direction by placing the paradigm/Forms *above* the Demiurge—but this time the Demiurge is a super-celestial soul, rather than Intellect, as for Atticus. One might think from Porphyry in the *PM*, however, that the Demiurge simply *is* Intellect, identified together with the paradigm/Forms. On squaring Porphyry's view of the Demiurge with the Plotinian background, see Michalewski (2014), esp. 189–197.

[80] For instance, see n. 62 above.

[81] I have Harold Tarrant to thank for pushing me on this continuing engaging question.

[82] Parallel to this, one may also see an implicit two-fold distinction in presenting principles in Theophrastus: see Simplicius, *In Phys.* 26.5–15 (= Fr. 230 Fortenbraugh), esp.: "[Plato] occupied himself mostly with first philosophy, but also devoted himself to the phenomena [i.e. sensible things] and touched on the enquiry into nature, in which he means to make the principles two, one underlying as matter, which he calls the all-recipient, and one as cause and mover, which he attaches to the power of god and of the good" (trans. Menn). Many thanks to Gretchen Reydams-Schils for pointing out these pre-Porphyrian precedents.

extant texts, we see Porphyry adapt a similar, ultimately Platonic approach: Porphyry in the *PM* subscribes to Atticus' framework, telescoped through Severus' refinement—*only*, however, from the frame of the *Timaeus'* focus on principles of coming-to-be and perishing. It is when we step out of this frame to the question of absolute principles, namely of being, that we see Porphyry's refined position, following Plotinus, of the One placed over the two principles of Intellect and Matter.

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