

Divination and Theurgy in Iamblichus' *De Mystериis*

Iamblichus' *De Mystериis* offers a typology of diverse types of divination, categorising them into 'inspired' and 'inductive' modes.¹ Using this typology, Iamblichus classifies oracles and dream divination (*oneiromancy*) as 'inspired' divination, exploring the nature and operation of the Oracles of Delphi, Didyma and Claros (introducing these well-known oracular sanctuaries as representative case studies), dream divination (*oneiromancy*) and various types of inductive divination. This chapter will explore Iamblichus' views on these varied types of divination, as well as the role of inspired divination (μαντική) within theurgy (which I will refer to as 'theurgic divination'). Given the central role of oracles and other forms of divination in traditional religious practices, this chapter will also consider the precise relationship between theurgy and traditional religion.

As discussed in Chapter 6, Iamblichus' views on divination are based on three key axioms.² This chapter will focus on the second axiom: Iamblichus' metaphysical framework of a hierarchical schema of causation which contributes towards the fundamental distinction drawn between inspired and inductive divination. I will argue that the centrality of divination within theurgy (and thus within later Neoplatonism more broadly) stems from Iamblichus' conception of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon, a state which represents the inclusion, culmination and transcendence of rationality rather than any lack thereof. Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination and ritual as supra-rational, envisaging rationality and revelation as complementary and interlinked, rather than as mutually exclusive categories. This forms the basis of Iamblichus' view of inspired divination (μαντική) as a stage on the way to (and a sign of) mystical union with the divine and a significant element of divinisation which forms the central purpose and goal of theurgy.

¹ Cf. Chapter 6, p. 215.

² Cf. Chapter 6, p. 216.

Iamblichus' Classification of Divination: Inspired and Inductive Divination

Iamblichus' account of divine possession influences his categorisation of divination into two types: inspired and inductive.³ He distinguishes these types by their proximity to the divine and by the respective modes of causation governing them. These two criteria are connected, for Iamblichus conceives of a framework of a hierarchical, multiple schema of causation, where multiple causes are perceived as operating *simultaneously*: thus, the ultimate or primary cause of inspired divination is the divine. This framework, which underlies Iamblichus' discussion of divination, is loosely based on the theory of causation established in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which sets out four kinds of causes, standardly called the Final, Formal, Material and Efficient causes.⁴ According to Aristotle, all of these causes operate simultaneously to produce any given effect and they function hierarchically, with the highest cause having the greatest effect. While Iamblichus does not specifically refer to Aristotle's four causes, his explanation of divination operates within a similar causal framework, for he repeatedly emphasises the necessity of distinguishing between the primary cause of divination and subordinate, auxiliary causes.⁵

Following the general methodology utilised within the Platonic tradition of locating the principle of a phenomenon before discussing its particular manifestations, Iamblichus opens Book 3 with an account of the principle of inspired divination (μαντική), countering the implication of Porphyry's question

³ Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 215–217.

⁴ Aristotle, *Met.* 983a24–b7. The Greek term commonly translated as 'cause', αἰτία, has a much wider range of meaning and connotation than the English word 'cause' which tends to connote activity and events: a cause is something which does something. This is reinforced by the modern tendency to treat causes as events. These modern connotations are misleading when we examine ancient Greek notions of causation, where to be αἴτιος for something is to be responsible for it: responsibility is a broader concept than modern notions of causation. An αἰτία covers a much wider picture of explanation of a particular phenomenon or object; it can be anything which is referred to as being in some way explanatory of something. Cf. Plato, *Cra.* 413a; Hankinson (1998), 85–86; Frede (1987), 125–127.

⁵ For a detailed study of the ways in which Iamblichus' account of divination utilises a theory of multiple causation ultimately derived from Aristotle's theory, cf. Addey (2007b), 73–87. In the intervening period between Aristotle and Iamblichus, many Platonists and Stoics developed similar theories of causation, many of which utilise the so-called 'metaphysic of prepositions', a phrase coined by Theiler to describe the common use of prepositional phrases to denote specific causes. This metaphysic of prepositions is apparent in: (1) Seneca's Stoic theory of causation which is contrasted with a synthesis of Platonic and Aristotelian theories of causation; and (2) Philo of Alexandria's discussion of causation which synthesises Stoic, Platonic and Aristotelian theories. Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 65.2–8; Philo, *De Opificio Mundi* 8–9; 16–19; *On the Cherubim* 125; Theiler (1964); Dillon (1977), 139–183; Hankinson (1998), 338; 340–345.

about the essential nature of divination, that it is a phenomenon that 'comes into being' and is 'among the things existing in nature': Iamblichus emphasises that the principle and power of inspired divination belongs to the gods – it is divine.⁶ Thus divine inspiration is directly linked with inspired divination, the mode of divination which has the closest proximity to the gods.⁷ Iamblichus claims that all other causes of inspired divination are subordinate and instrumental; the divine is the ultimate cause, as will be explored further below.

Iamblichus introduces inductive divination as entirely different from inspired divination: he considers it to be a largely 'human' endeavour (τέχνης ἀνθρωπίνης) and far less accurate than the inspired mode, because the predictions made are the result of 'guessing and supposition' (στοχασμοῦ καὶ οὐλήσεως).⁸ Iamblichus explains that this type of divination operates using signs which are implanted (or illuminated) by the gods through nature and also through the agency of *daimones* who are concerned with creation.⁹ This process is clearly based on the concept of sympathy (συμπάθεια) and, by implication, ultimately (but much more remotely) on the concept of divine love (θεία φιλία).¹⁰ These signs (σημεῖα, σύμβολα) are perfect since they are implanted by divinities or semi-divine beings; the inferiority of inductive divination stems rather from the central role of human interpretation in deciphering their meaning.¹¹ Thus Iamblichus' distinction between inspired and inductive divination is based on their proximity to divinity and on the consequent type of consciousness thought to be experienced by the ritual practitioner: inspired divination is caused by the supreme power of the gods and the practitioner is thought to access a type of divine consciousness, whereas inductive divination, although utilising signs implanted by the gods, depends upon human interpretation (purely human consciousness). Iamblichus' differentiation of modes of divination according to their respective proximity to divinity has significant implications for his views of the relationship between inspired divination and theurgy, as will be explored below.

The division of divination into these two types and the comparative value placed upon them had a long history in the Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition: the Platonists and Stoics always distinguished between these two types of divination,

⁶ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (100.6–9; 100.12–14; 101.2–3).

⁷ Cf. Chapter 6, p. 216 and n. 7.

⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.1–2).

⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.10–136.4); 3.16 (138.6–11).

¹⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (138.1–5).

¹¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (138.6–139.3). Cf. also 3.15 (135.7–10), recalling Porphyry's suggestion that divination using sense-perception must be inferior (*DM* 3.4 [109.6–9]). Here it is the use of human senses, rather than the signs themselves, that causes the inferiority of inductive divination.

which the latter referred to as 'natural' and 'artificial'.¹² The distinction is first recorded by Plato, who also comments explicitly on their comparative value as modes of prophetic knowledge:

ὅσῳ δὴ οὖν τελεώτερον καὶ ἐντιμότερον μαντική οἰωνιστικῆς, τό τε ὄνομα τοῦ ὀνόματος ἔργον τ' ἔργου, τόσῳ κάλλιον μαρτυροῦσιν οἱ παλαιοὶ μανίαν σωφροσύνης τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ τῆς παρ' ἀνθρώπων γιγνομένης.

The ancients, then testify that in proportion as prophecy is superior to augury, both in name and in fact, in the same proportion madness, which comes from god, is superior to sanity, which is of human origin.¹³

Plato maintains that *μαντική* (inspired divination) is superior to augury (representative of inductive divination) but significantly also comments that divine, prophetic madness is superior to sanity, which is of human origin. Iamblichus postulates a conceptual framework of inductive divination (ultimately caused by human skill) and inspired divination (ultimately caused by the divine) which accords with Plato's distinction between divine madness and human sanity.

Furthermore, Plato's *Ion* elaborates on the themes discussed in the *Phaedrus* within the context of a long speech by Socrates exploring the nature of divine inspiration, focusing especially on poetic and prophetic inspiration. The whole dialogue explores the distinction between human knowledge and skill (*τέχνη*) and divine inspiration, using the example of Ion's great talent as a rhapsode, with Socrates and Ion debating the origin of this talent.¹⁴ During his speech, Socrates constantly emphasises that poetry and prophecy are not products of human skill but of divine power. Indeed, this is the first point he makes when he attempts to explain to Ion the origin of his rhapsodic talent.¹⁵ Although Socrates specifically refers to rhapsodic talent here, within the speech he repeatedly equates the inspiration from which the talent of the rhapsode, poet and prophet derives.¹⁶ The distinction delineated between divine power (*θεία δύναμις*) and human skill or art (*τέχνη*) in Plato's *Ion* is reflected almost exactly in Iamblichus' account of divination, which claims that inspired divination obtains all of its power from

¹² Plato, *Phdr.* 244d2–6; Cicero, *Div.* 2.11.26–27; 1.6.11; 1.33.72. Cf. Luck (1985), 231; 271; Armstrong (1987), 179.

¹³ Plato, *Phdr.* 244d2–6.

¹⁴ Plato, *Ion* 530b–533b.

¹⁵ Plato, *Ion* 533d. Cf. also 534e, 535a, 536c–d, 542a.

¹⁶ Cf. Plato, *Ion* 534c–d, where the divine inspiration received by the poet is explicitly equated with that received by seers; 533e–534a, where Socrates compares poetic inspiration with the inspiration experienced by Corybantian and Bacchic worshippers.

divinity, while inductive divination is a human skill (τέχνης ἀνθρωπίνης), alluding to Plato's discussion with the use of the same term, τέχνη, to denote this inferior type of divination.¹⁷ Thus, as with his views of divine inspiration, Iamblichus does not invent new categories in his conceptions of divination; rather he follows Graeco-Roman philosophical tradition, especially Plato.

Inspired Divination and Models of Causation

As we have seen, Iamblichus counters Porphyry's challenge that divination is purely a human achievement, a case of humans using the right equipment, location and techniques, by emphasising in the strongest possible terms that the principle of inspired divination is divine and eternal.¹⁸ The philosopher stresses the difference between primary and secondary causes of divination:

Εἰ δὴ τις ἀφέμενος τῶν πρωτουργῶν αἰτίων ἐπὶ τὰς δευτερουργοὺς ὑπουργίας ἀποφέρει τὸ τῆς μαντικῆς, οἷον κινήσεις σωμάτων ἢ παθῶν μεταβολὰς ἢ γενέσεις τινὰς ἐτέρας ἢ ζωῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἐνεργείας ἢ λόγους ἐμψύχους ἢ φυσικοὺς τιθέμενος... ὑπολαμβάνοι τὴν ἀκρίβειαν ἀποδιδόναι περὶ αὐτῆς, τοῦ παντὸς διημάρτηκεν. Ὅλλ' εἰς ὅρος ὁρθὸς καὶ μία ἀρχὴ περὶ πάντων τοιούτων, μηδαμῶς ἀναίτιως παράγειν τὴν τοῦ μέλλοντος μαντείαν ἀπὸ τῶν μηδεμίαν ἐχόντων πρόγνωσιν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς, ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν θεῶν τῶν συνεχόντων ἐν αὐτοῖς τὰ πέρατα τῆς ὅλης εἰδήσεως τῶν ὄντων, ἀπὸ τούτων θεωρεῖν μεριζομένην τὴν μαντικὴν περὶ πάντα τὸν κόσμον... Ἡ γὰρ τοιάδε ἀρχηγικὴ τέ ἐστιν αἰτία καὶ διαφερόντως κοινοτάτη, ἔχουσα τε ἐν ἑαυτῇ πρώτως ἃ δίδωσι τοῖς μετέχουσιν ἑαυτῆς, καὶ μάλιστα ἀλήθειαν παρεχομένη ἣς δεῖ τῇ μαντικῇ ...

If someone, then, straying from the primary causes, downgrades the skill of divination to secondary operations – position, for example, bodily movements or changes of emotions, or other happenings, either activities of human life or other psychic or physical explanations ... he has wholly erred in supposing that he has given an accurate account of divination. There is one correct rule and one first principle concerning all these matters: that is, never to derive divination of the future from those things that have no foreknowledge as such, but to derive it from the gods who in themselves possess the limits of all knowledge of existing things, from which the mantic power is distributed throughout the whole cosmos ... For such a principal cause is not only primordial and eminently universal, but contains primarily within

¹⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (100.13–14); 3.15 (135.1–2); 3.16 (136.8–9).

¹⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (99.9–100.6; 100.8–101.3; 101.2–3). Cf. Shaw (1998), 235.

itself whatever it gives to those sharing in it, and especially furnishes the truth which divination needs ... [my emphasis]¹⁹

Iamblichus emphasises that the gods are the the ultimate causes of divination, contrasting these primary causes (τῶν πρωτοουργῶν αἰτίων) with the 'secondary operations' (τὰς δευτεροουργοὺς ὑπουργίας) involved in divination, such as physical and psychic human activities. The latter are lower, subordinate causes necessary for the divinatory process, yet Iamblichus stresses their comparative unimportance in relation to the more significant role of the gods; the divine is the principal cause of divination because the eternal and universal nature of the gods is such that they possess all truth and knowledge, which informs μαντική, the knowledge of truth and of the past, present and future.²⁰ This accords with the Neoplatonist principle that all things are contained in potentiality in the eternal principles and causes from which they are derived, clearly elucidated in Proclus' *Elements of Theology*:

Πᾶν τὸ τῷ εἶναι χορηγοῦν ἄλλοις αὐτὸ πρῶτως ἐστὶ τοῦτο, οὗ μεταδίδωσι τοῖς χορηγουμένοις.

Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively possesses that character which it communicates to the recipients.²¹

According to Iamblichus, the principle and essential nature of divination is contained in potentiality within the gods; this explains to some extent the marked emphasis on the divine as the most significant cause of divination.²² Throughout Book 3, Iamblichus repeatedly asserts the necessity of finding the cause, especially the primary cause, of different types of divination and divine inspiration.²³

Viewed from this perspective, Iamblichus' comments show an integrated framework of the causation of divination: the gods are the ultimate cause of divination, and Iamblichus repeatedly emphasises this point since without the gods, there would be no divination or inspiration. Iamblichus clearly envisages a hierarchical scheme of causation in his exposition of divination, since he accepts that human beings do play a part in inspired divination – as auxiliary, subordinate

¹⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (101.7–102.6).

²⁰ Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.15 (47.1–3); 3.3 (106.11–108.5); 3.19 (146.5–9); 3.26 (164.1–4).

²¹ Proclus, *ET* proposition 18; trs. Dodds (1933; repr. 1963).

²² Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (102.3–8).

²³ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.1 (101.7–8; 101.13; 102.3–4); 3.3 (107.11–12); 3.8 (117.1; 117.7–8); 3.9 (118.1–2); 3.10 (120.11–12; 122.9–10; 123.6–8); 3.19 (146.5); 3.20 (148.4–7); 3.24 (156.5); 3.31 (175.14).

causes. Intriguingly, one of Iamblichus' philosophical predecessors also applies the notion of multiple and simultaneous causes in order to elucidate the operation of oracles: within *The Decline of Oracles* (*De defectu oraculorum*), Plutarch (who, as we have seen, was a priest at Delphi) also relies on a synthetic and multi-tiered framework of causation to explain the operation of the Delphic Oracle.²⁴ This framework is embedded within the dialogue, with each character suggesting a cause of the oracle, or criticising the previous speaker's conception of causation.²⁵ By the end of the dialogue, a multi-tiered scheme of causation has been applied to the operation of the Delphic Oracle, and a complex picture of causation emerges. Ammonius begins by arguing that Apollo is entirely responsible for giving oracles: he created prophecy and is responsible for its production and cessation.²⁶ Therefore, Ammonius posits that Apollo is the *only* cause of the production of oracles. Lamprias then refines Ammonius' argument, asserting that although Apollo is the *ultimate* cause of the production of oracles, lower causes such as Nature and matter often bring about the dissolution within the physical world of the work of the gods. Thus he implies that Apollo does not directly give oracles but works through intermediaries which are lower causes.²⁷ Cleombrotus continues this line of argument and examines one of these intermediary causes: *daimones* who act as guardians of the shrine.²⁸ Philip, Heracleon and Cleombrotus then commence a long discussion about the nature of *daimones*, clarifying the role of this intermediary cause in the production of oracles.²⁹ Later, Lamprias discusses the exhalations (τὰς ἀναθυμιάσεις) which dispose the soul of the Pythia to the spirit of inspiration (τὸ δ' ἐνθουσιαστικόν).³⁰ The role of this level of causation is then refined by the speakers, as Ammonius objects to the exhalations being the sole cause of the oracles, since this detracts from the reputation of the god.³¹ As the final speaker, Lamprias clarifies the idea of multiple levels of causation operating simultaneously to produce oracles, attributing a simultaneous yet hierarchical role

²⁴ Plutarch, *De def. or.* trs. Babbitt (1936; repr. 2003). Plutarch as a Platonist: Jones (1916; repr. 1980), 7, n. 1; Lamberton (2001), 26. Plutarch as a priest at Delphi: see Chapter 1, p. 13 and n. 55; Plutarch, *Quaestiones convivales* 700e8–10, ed. Sandbach (1961); *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum*, ed. Boeckh (1828–38), 171; Parke and Wormell (1956b), ix; Lamberton (2001), 52–54; 155. Possible indications that Plutarch served as priest at Delphi for over twenty years: Plutarch, *An seni*. 785c9–d5; 792f6–14, trs. Fowler (1927; repr. 1949).

²⁵ A key character in the dialogue, Lamprias, discusses the notion of multiple levels of simultaneous causation in relation to earlier philosophical views of causation using the 'metaphysic of prepositions': *De def. or.* 435f1–436a5; 436d5–8; 436c12–d4; 436d12–e11.

²⁶ *De def. or.* 413e1–414c8.

²⁷ *De def. or.* 414d2–e9.

²⁸ *De def. or.* 414f1–418d5; Johnston (2008), 46.

²⁹ *De def. or.* 418d7–421f2; Johnston (2008), 46.

³⁰ *De def. or.* 433c2–434c10; Johnston (2008), 46–47.

³¹ *De def. or.* 435d10–e3.

to all of the possible causes discussed so far: Apollo, the *daimones*, the spirit of inspiration and exhalations and the soul of the Pythia.³² In Plutarch's dialogues, the character with the final word usually represents the most satisfactory solution to a difficulty.³³ Lamprias' final speech certainly seems to fulfill this criterion, presenting the most satisfactory solution to the issue at hand: it reconciles all the previous explanations by attributing the oracles given at Delphi to a multiple scheme of causation. Lamprias is portrayed as the character who represents Plutarch's views, and is presented as a Platonist within the dialogue, adding to the impression that Lamprias' solution was Plutarch's most significant view on the causation of the Delphic Oracle.³⁴ Thus, Iamblichus seems to implicitly engage with Plutarch's Delphic dialogues, as evidenced by his implicit use of a framework of multiple yet simultaneous causes which are applied to the operation of oracles and to inspired divination more broadly.

From 3.20–25, Iamblichus gives a detailed exposition on the causality of divination in answer to Porphyry's challenges concerning the sole possible causes of divination.³⁵ Iamblichus' central point is not to deny that these human faculties have a role in divination; rather he argues that they are not the ultimate cause, a role reserved for the gods. They are subordinate, lower causes which have less importance than the ultimate cause; one must view divination in terms of its ultimate causation in order to understand its complete nature. Iamblichus constantly reiterates this fundamental point with examples of lesser causes. For example, he states that divine inspiration does not come solely from the *daimones* but from the gods and that it does not belong to the soul, intellect or one of their faculties, or to the body.³⁶ Although the latter do have a role in divination, they are auxiliary, lower causes, which need to be in a receptive, purified state in order to receive the inspiration of the god, who works through them.³⁷ The soul and body of the prophet must not disturb, interrupt, control or pervert the divine harmony which pervades them; otherwise the divine transmission or oracle will be distorted, misleading or even false.³⁸ Iamblichus' comments regarding the appropriate receptivity of the prophet are almost identical to those

³² *De def. or.* 436e11–437a11; Johnston (2008), 47.

³³ Cf. Brenk (1977), 85.

³⁴ *De def. or.* 431a; Brenk (1977), 114–115.

³⁵ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.20 (147.12–149.3); 3.21 (150.3–14); 3.22 (152.10–153.1; 153.8–13); 3.24 (156.5–11); 3.25 (160.1–11). Cf. Shaw (1998), 236, n. 42.

³⁶ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (114.6–8; 114.13–115.2); 3.20 (148.5–149.10); 3.22 (152.9–153.13); 3.24 (156.5–157.4); 3.25 (158.3–159.4).

³⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.4–11). Cf. Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.5 (982a25–29); 1.3.1 (983a24–32); 2.1.7 (993b26–31); 2.2.8–9 (994b6–16).

³⁸ Cf. Chapter 3, pp. 103–104; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11); 3.31 (176.11–177.10); 4.7 (190.14–191.1) attributes false oracles to *daimones* rather than gods (the context implies evil *daimones*).

of Plutarch, who also emphasised the importance of the prophet's soul being adjusted correctly to the spirit of inspiration: both philosophers explicitly assert that if the prophet's soul is disturbed or agitated, the resulting oracular utterance will be false, misleading or confusing.³⁹

The comparative analysis of hierarchical levels of causation is particularly clear in Iamblichus' remark on the human race:

μία δ' ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτῷ τῆς ἐνυπαρχούσης πλάνης καὶ ταραχῆς καὶ τῆς ἀστάτου μεταβολῆς ἰατρεία, εἴ τινα μετουσίαν θείου φωτὸς κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν μεταλάβοι· ὁ δὲ ταύτην ἀποκλείων ταῦτόν ποιεῖ τοῖς ἐξ ἀψύχων ψυχὴν παράγουσιν ἢ τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνοήτων νοῦν ἀπογεννῶσι· καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀπὸ τῶν μὴ θείων τὰ θεῖα ἔργα ἀναιτίως ὑφίστησιν.

There is one remedy for its inherent straying, confusion and unstable changing, and that is, if it participate as far as possible in some portion of the divine light. But whoever excludes this, does the same thing as they who produce a soul from things without a soul, or who would generate a mind from things mindless; for such a person postulates divine works without a cause from things not divine.⁴⁰

This comment depends on the principle that the greater cannot be caused by that which is inferior to it, a vital principle which comprises a central foundation of Neoplatonic metaphysics.⁴¹ Aristotle applied such a principle to his theory of causation: the higher a cause is, the greater its effect.⁴² Iamblichus himself refers to this principle in his refutation of Porphyry's challenge that divine possession is the accomplishment of the human body or soul, 'nor is it the nature of the greater to be generated from the inferior' (... οὐδὲ πέφυκεν ἀπὸ τῶν χειρόνων τὰ κρείττονα ἀπογεννᾶσθαι).⁴³ Proclus also states this principle, specifically formulating it in terms of causation, 'Every productive cause is superior to that which it produces' (Πᾶν τὸ παρακτικὸν ἄλλου κρεῖττον ἐστὶ τῆς τοῦ παραγομένου φύσεως).⁴⁴ Iamblichus' comment is also based on the Neoplatonist principle that 'like produces like', since *μαντική* consists of divine foreknowledge and so must ultimately be caused by divinity; this concept is specifically discussed in relation to the causation of divination:

³⁹ Plutarch, *De Pyth. or.* 405a; *De def. or.* 414d2–9; 437d1–11; 438a3–c1; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.7 (115.8–11).

⁴⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.18 (144.11–145.2).

⁴¹ Cf. Dodds (1933; repr. 1963), 193.

⁴² Aristotle, *Met.* 1.2.5. (982a25–29); 1.3.1 (983a24–32); 2.1.7 (993b26–31); 2.2.8–9 (994b6–16).

⁴³ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.8 (116.13–14).

⁴⁴ Proclus, *ET* proposition 7.

πᾶν μὲν γὰρ τὸ γιγνόμενον ὑπ' αἰτίου τινὸς γίγνεται, καὶ τὸ συγγενές ὑπὸ τοῦ συγγενοῦς ἀποτελεῖται, τὸ δὲ θεῖον ἔργον οὔτε αὐτόματόν ἐστιν (ἀναίτιον γὰρ τὸ τοιοῦτον καὶ οὐ πάντως τεταγμένον), οὔτε ἀπ' ἀνθρωπίνης αἰτίας ἀπογεννᾶται· ἄλλότριον γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο καὶ ὑποδεέστερον, τὸ δὲ τελειότερον ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀτελοῦς οὐκ ἔχει δύναμιν παράγεσθαι. Πάντα ἄρα ἀπὸ θείας αἰτίας ἀποβλαστάνει τὰ προσόμοια αὐτῇ ἔργα φύμενα.

*For everything that happens arises from a specific cause, and what is kindred is produced by that which is kindred, but the divine work is neither accidental (for such is without a cause, and not at all ordered) nor is it produced by a human cause. For this is alien to it, and subordinate; and that which is more perfect has no ability to be produced by that which is imperfect. All things, then, that spring from a divine cause are works that are naturally akin to it [my emphasis].*⁴⁵

The principle that 'like produces like' also informs Iamblichus' idea that the gods can use the human as an instrument in divination because the latter has developed their receptivity through assimilation to the divine.

Inductive Divination and Models of Causation

As we have seen, Iamblichus' constant emphasis on the ultimate cause of divination informs his definition of the two categories of divination: inspired and inductive, with the latter consequently seen as inferior. Iamblichus' account implies that the signs implanted in the natural world, such as the entrails of the sacrificial animal in haruspicy, are the Material cause of inductive divination. The *daimones* who implant the signs could be viewed as the Efficient cause of inductive divination, since they are responsible for placing such signs in the natural world.⁴⁶ Iamblichus' distinction between the modes of divination is based on his conception of their primary causes: inspired divination is ultimately caused by the gods whereas inductive divination ultimately depends upon human skill (τέχνη). Thus, the inferiority of inductive divination stems from human interpretation of the signs rather than from the nature of the signs *per se*. This is significant, for it is not the use of signs or tools in themselves which makes inductive divination inferior to the 'inspired' mode: it is the use of human supposition.⁴⁷ Iamblichus constantly reiterates that inductive divination

⁴⁵ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.20 (148.4–9). Cf. 5.20 (227.13–228.2).

⁴⁶ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.10–136.4).

⁴⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.17 (141.11–142.13), speaks positively of the role of inanimate objects in divination and compares their use to the use of children and 'simple-minded' human beings in divination, for by making such people utter statements full of wisdom it becomes clear to everyone that the divination is not a human but a divine accomplishment.

is inferior to inspired divination on the grounds that the inductive mode is mingled with corporeality and matter, whereas the inspired mode is entirely immaterial, eternal and pure:

ἔστι μὲν οὖν ὁ τρόπος τῆς μαντείας οὗτος τοιοῦτος πάντῃ διεστηκώς τοῦ θείου καὶ ἀληθινοῦ τρόπου, περὶ σμικρῶν τε καὶ ἐφημέρων πραγμάτων δυνάμενος προλέγειν, περὶ τῶν ἐν τῇ διηρημένη φύσει κειμένων ὅσα ἤδη περὶ τὴν γένεσιν ἐμφέρεται, κινήσεις τε ἀφ' ἐαυτῶν παρέχει τοῖς δυνάμενοις αὐτὰς δέχεσθαι, καὶ πάθη πολυειδῶς ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς πεφυκόσιν ἐπιτηδείως εἰς τὸ συμπάσχειν· διὰ πάθους δὲ οὐκ ἂν παραγένοντο ποτε ἡ τελεία πρόγνωσις· αὐτὸ γὰρ μάλιστα τὸ ἄτρεπτόν τε καὶ ἄυλον καὶ πάντῃ καθαρὸν τῷ μέλλοντι ἐπιβάλλειν εἴωθε, τὸ δὲ συμμιγνύμενον πρὸς τὸ ἀλόγιστον καὶ σκοτεινὸν τοῦ σωματοειδοῦς καὶ ὕλικου πληροῦται πολλῆς ἀγνωσίας· ὅθεν οὐδέποτε τὴν τοιαύτην τεχνικὴν κατασκευὴν εἰς τὸ μαντεύεσθαι ἀποδέχεσθαι ἄξιον. Οὐδὲ χρῆσθαι αὐτῇ ἐπὶ μεγάλης σπουδῆς δεῖ, οὐδὲ ἄλλω χρωμένῳ πιστευτέον ὥς ἔχοντι παρ' ἐαυτῷ σαφές καὶ γνώριμόν τι τεκμήριον τῆς ἀληθείας.

Therefore since such a mode of divination [i.e. inductive] is entirely different from the mode which is divine and true, it has the power to predict only trifling and everyday events, things which lie in the sphere of divided nature and directly concern generation, and which impart motions from themselves to those who are able to receive them, and create multifarious passions in things naturally fit for impassionment. Perfect foreknowledge, by contrast, is never achieved through passion. For it is that which is entirely immutable and also immaterial and entirely pure that is accustomed to apprehending future events; but that which is mingled with the irrationality and shadowiness of corporeal forms and matter is filled with abundant ignorance. Thus an artificial contrivance of this sort should in no way be valued as a mantic procedure. Nor should one even pay much regard to it, nor have confidence in another who makes use of it as if it possesses any kind of clear and proven sign of truth in its own right.⁴⁸

Because of its inherent nature as a human endeavour, inductive divination can only predict everyday events, those directly concerned with the world of generation, in direct contrast with inspired divination which has the potential to bestow divine knowledge on those who utilise it. Iamblichus classifies haruspicy

The contribution of the human to the divinatory message in the use of inductive divination: *DM* 6.4 (244.6–10).

⁴⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 6.4 (244.10–245.7).

and augury as inductive divination, claiming that animals and birds are moved and transformed by the *daimon* which presides over them, as well as by the circulation of the air.⁴⁹ Given Iamblichus' approval of sacrifice in *De Mysteriis* 5, the philosopher's disparagement of haruspicy (a type of divination performed as part of the sacrificial ritual in Antiquity) as an example of the inferior type of divination seems strange and may indicate a tension in Iamblichus' account. However, it may be that Iamblichus sees haruspicy as a by-product or side effect of sacrifice, rather than as a central element of the ritual. Additionally, we have seen that Iamblichus' discussion of sacrifice is not limited to blood sacrifice but also includes intellectual and incorporeal modes of sacrifice, as well as non-blood material offerings.⁵⁰

Iamblichus also classifies certain types of astrology (those which he calls 'technical') as inductive divination.⁵¹ He also refers to the instinctive or inherent ability to predict future events as inductive divination and compares this to the way in which the foreknowledge of earthquakes occurs among animals; this instinctive ability arises from nature and contains nothing 'holy' (σεμνόν) (that is, divine) or 'above nature' (ὑπερφυές).⁵² Furthermore, inductive divination is comparable with the medical art and navigation at sea: all use deduction from signs, employing human reasoning or skilled observation, in order to form a diagnosis or prognosis.⁵³ This comparison clarifies Iamblichus' notion that inductive divination is inferior to the inspired mode because of the significant role of human supposition within it: inductive divination, like the medical art and navigation, may be able to use some degree of knowledge to grasp the future, but Iamblichus firmly distinguishes this from divine foreknowledge because it 'calculates the future from probabilities and estimates by certain signs, and these are not always trustworthy, nor, in like manner, do they have what is signified properly connected with that of which the signs are evidence' (...ἀναλογίζεται τὸ μέλλον καὶ σημείοις τισὶ τεκμηριοῦται καὶ τούτοις οὐκ αἰεὶ πιστοῖς οὐδ' ὥσαύτως συνηρτημένον ἔχουσι τὸ δηλούμενον, οὐπὲρ ἔστι τὰ σημεῖα δείγματα.).⁵⁴ Iamblichus contrasts this mode of prognostication with divine foreknowledge, which is directed from a firm knowledge and an unshakeable assurance deriving from the causes (by which he means the gods).⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Haruspicy: *DM* 3.16 (136.9–14). Augury: *DM* 3.16 (136.14–137.7); 6.3 (243.2–244.5).

⁵⁰ Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 151–152; Iamblichus, *DM* 5.15 (219.5–220.1); 5.17 (222.15–223.3); 5.18 (224.5–225.9); 5.19 (226.3–14).

⁵¹ Cf. Chapter 5, pp. 210–211; Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (137.8–138.1); 9.1 (273.2–9).

⁵² Iamblichus, *DM* 10.3 (287.15–288.5; 288.11–289.2); 3.26 (162.2–7; 162.11–163.4).

⁵³ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.3 (288.5–289.2).

⁵⁴ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.26 (163.12–164.1).

⁵⁵ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.26 (164.1–4).

Inspired and Inductive Divination in Practice

Anthropologists have noted that the theoretical distinction often drawn between inspired and inductive modes of divination is not so noticeable or observable in practice: diviners often seem to move between the two modes during the course of the same ritual or divinatory session.⁵⁶ Certain evidence also suggests that lot divination (kleromancy, a form of inductive divination) was used alongside inspired divination at the Oracles of Delphi and Dodona.⁵⁷ Although Iamblichus firmly differentiates these modes of divination in a theoretical sense, there are hints in his account that he recognised a permeability and fluidity between them in practice. For example, he states that the signs used in inductive divination, 'when clearly seen, have derived a certain trace from divine divination in a greater or lesser degree' (... ταῦτα ἐναργῶς ὁρώμενα τῆς θείας μαντικῆς ἶχνος τι τὰ μὲν μᾶλλον τὰ δὲ ἥττον παρεσπάσατο) and 'an image of divine divination appears in them' (τῆς θείας μαντικῆς εἶδωλον τι... ἐν αὐτοῖς καταφαίνεται).⁵⁸ The connections drawn by Iamblichus between divine/inspired and inductive modes of divination are hardly surprising, given his insistence on the line of unbroken continuity which extends throughout the cosmos, connecting all things. Furthermore, Iamblichus states that when birds rend and kill each other, it is not a natural occurrence but a supernatural deed, suggesting a divine basis for signs observed in augury.⁵⁹ Significantly, Iamblichus concludes his account of the operation of inductive divination as follows, 'perhaps they [i.e. the gods] even awaken our understanding, by the same impulse to a greater acuteness' (ἴσως δὲ καὶ τὴν ἡμετέραν σύνθεσιν ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς ἀφορμῆς εἰς ὀξύτητα πλείονα ἀνακινοῦσιν).⁶⁰ This suggests that certain inductive techniques or tools can help to engender a state of receptivity in the prophet which enables them to attain a state of divine inspiration and possession. In fact, Iamblichus' key criterion for distinguishing the modes of divination has little to do with the use (or lack thereof) of objects or tools in divination – it is rather the state of mind or consciousness experienced by the ritual practitioner:

⁵⁶ Cf. for example, Tedlock (2007), 319–321.

⁵⁷ An inscription which regulates the tariff for lot divination at Delphi for the people of Sciathus: Amandry (1939), 184; Plutarch, *De fraterno amore* 492b2–11, ed. Helmbold (1939); Callimachus, *Hymn* 2.45 with scholia; Amandry (1950), 29–36; 84–85; 232–233; Parke (1967a), 85–88; 110; (1967b), 109–110; Fontenrose (1978), 219–224; Johnston (2008), 52–56.

⁵⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.27 (164.8–9; 11–12), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), with emendations.

⁵⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.16 (137.4–7); *VP* 13.62, states that bird and sky omens are 'special messages from the gods to those human beings truly dear to them' (ὅτι παρὰ θεῶν εἰσὶν ἀγγελίαι τινὲς καὶ ἀετοὶ τοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς θεοφιλέσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων ...).

⁶⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (136.6–7); 3.26 (163.9–164.4).

if this is a divine state of consciousness sent directly by the gods, the divination is inspired, while if the ritual practitioner uses guesswork, deductive reasoning, skilled observation or discursive logic, the divination is inductive. Material objects often used in inductive divination, such as stones and barley meal, were also used by the theurgist as vessels for divine action: the difference is that the theurgist sought to connect these objects to higher causal principles and to use them to create a pure and integrated receptacle which is capable of receiving divine illumination.⁶¹

Divination by Statues (τελεστική)

Precisely this theurgic underpinning and rationale clarifies Iamblichus' attitude towards divination by statues (τελεστική), the central form of divination in Egyptian religious tradition.⁶² Iamblichus vehemently condemns 'generators of effective images' (γεννητικοὺς τῶν δραστικῶν εἰδώλων) and the 'image-making art' (ἡ εἰδωλοποιητικὴ τέχνη) to such an extent that it has led Polymnia Athanassiadi to claim that he did not approve of divination by statues nor did he see it as a valid theurgic ritual.⁶³ Athanassiadi claims that Iamblichus' successors – Proclus, the emperor Julian and Maximus of Ephesus (who exhibited a positive attitude towards divination by statues and its central role within theurgic ritual) – misunderstood Iamblichus' views on the subject.⁶⁴ Yet, firstly, it is not absolutely clear what Iamblichus means exactly by the 'image-making art': this 'image' may refer to a cloud from incense burned over charcoal rather than a cult-statue.⁶⁵ Even if Iamblichus does refer to cultic statues when discussing the 'image-making art', he consistently refers to the 'images' as εἰδῶλα and also frequently denigrates the practice as 'wonder-working' (θαυματουργία), a common designation for the practices of magicians and sorcerers in Antiquity.⁶⁶ But Iamblichus specifically condemns the practices of 'wonder-workers' rather than the consecration of statues *per se*, for in a passage which is generally taken to be the *locus classicus* of theurgic ritual, he states:

Ταῦτα τοίνυν κατιδοῦσα ἡ θεουργικὴ τέχνη, κοινῶς τε οὕτως
κατ' οἰκειότητα ἐκάστω τῶν θεῶν τὰς προσφόρους ὑποδοχὰς

⁶¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.17 (141.11–142.3; 142.8–13); 5.23 (233.2–13).

⁶² Cf. Chapter 1, p. 32–33, n. 171.

⁶³ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28–29 (especially 167.8–11 and 168.10); Athanassiadi (1993), 122–123.

⁶⁴ Athanassiadi (1993), 123.

⁶⁵ Cf. Des Places (1966), 141, n. 3; Finamore (1993), 59–60, supported by Iamblichus, *DM* 3.29 (172.2–7).

⁶⁶ εἰδῶλα: *DM* 3.28 (167.8–11; 168.10; 169.2; 170.5–6); 3.29 (171.4; 171.6; 172.2; 172.12); θαυματουργία: *DM* 3.29 (173.5–6); 3.30 (175.10). Cf. Finamore (1993), 59–60; Uzdavynys (2010), 169.

ἀνευρίσκουσα, συμπλέκει πολλάκις λίθους βοτάνας ζῶα ἀρώματα ἄλλα τοιαῦτα ἱερὰ καὶ τέλεια καὶ θεοειδῆ, κᾶπειτα ἀπὸ πάντων τούτων ὑποδοχὴν ὀλοτελῇ καὶ καθαρὰν ἀπεργάζεται. Οὐ γὰρ δὴ δεῖ δυσχεραίνειν πᾶσαν ὕλην, ἀλλὰ μόνην τὴν ἁλλοτρίαν τῶν θεῶν, τὴν δὲ οἰκείαν πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐκλέγεσθαι, ὡς συμφωνεῖν δυναμένην εἰς τε θεῶν οἰκοδομήσεις καὶ καθιδρύσεις ἀγαλμάτων καὶ δὴ καὶ εἰς τὰς τῶν θυσιῶν ἱερουργίας.

Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them, the theurgic art in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred, perfect and godlike, and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle. One must not, after all, reject all matter, but only that which is alien to the gods, while selecting for use that which is akin to them, as being capable of harmonising with the construction of dwellings for the gods, the consecration of statues and indeed for the performance of sacrificial rites in general.⁶⁷

The term used here for 'statue', ἀγαλμα, is the typical term applied to the cult statues of the gods in temples (particularly to cult statues within Egyptian temples used for divination), as well as the term typically used within theurgic contexts to delineate divination through statues.⁶⁸ This suggests that Iamblichus did indeed approve of divination through statues as a legitimate element of theurgic ritual. Iamblichus implies that the theurgists who consecrate statues know how to link the symbols (σύμβολα) together and to their divine causes in order to compose an integrated and pure receptacle which preserves the analogy with divine creation. Such a contrast between practitioners is explicitly drawn by Iamblichus in his criticism of the 'image-makers':

“Ὡσπερ οὖν ἔχει τὸ ἀληθές, οὕτω δεῖ καὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι, ὅτι δὴ αὐταῖς μὲν ταῖς περιφοραῖς ἢ ταῖς ἐνυπαρχούσαις ἐν αὐταῖς δυνάμεσιν ἢ ταῖς κατὰ φύσιν περὶ αὐτάς ἐνιδρυμέναις οὔτε χρῆται εἰδωλοποιός, οὐθ' ὅλως δυνατός ἐστιν αὐτῶν ἐφάπτεσθαι· ταῖς δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως αὐτῶν ἐσχάταις ἀπορρεούσαις ἐν τῷ φανερῷ

⁶⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 5.23 (233.9–234.4). See also Iamblichus' positive reference to 'sacred statues' (ἱερὰ ἀγάλματα) in the context of traditional Graeco-Roman religion at *DM* 1.9 (30.12).

⁶⁸ Animated statues in Neoplatonism and Egyptian religion: Chapter 1, pp. 32–33, n. 171; Uzdevinys (2010), 84–87; 143–203, defines *agalma* as follows: 'image, cult-statue, ornament, shrine, object of worship ... the word *agalma* contains no implication of likeness and is not a synonym of *eikon*' (279).

περὶ τὸ τελευταῖον μέρος τοῦ παντός τεχνικῶς προσφέρεται, ἀλλ' οὐ θεουργικῶς.

Then, in accordance with the truth, we must demonstrate that the image-maker does not use the astral revolutions or the powers inherent in them, or the powers found naturally around them, nor is he at all able to control them; rather he operates with these emanating last from nature in the visible (realm) about the extreme part of the universe, and does so purely by technical skill, and not by theurgic skill.⁶⁹

Iamblichus explicitly contrasts the 'technical' skill of the wonder-worker, which operates only within the realm of nature (on the horizontal level) with theurgic skill (operating on a vertical axis by connecting material objects with their divine causes). Because the image-maker uses the lowest effluences of nature artificially rather than theurgically, he or she deals only with appearances which are unstable and thereby worthless for divination.⁷⁰ Iamblichus' specific criticisms of those who generate 'images' (εἰδωλα) clarifies this contrast:

Ἀλλὰ τὸ ἀπλοῦν καὶ μονοειδὲς τῆς ἐνεργείας ἢ τῆς ὅλης συστάσεως ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐπικρατεῖ; παντὸς μὲν οὖν λείπει· κατὰ γὰρ τὴν φαινομένην σύνθεσιν ἐκ παντοδαπῶν καὶ ὑπεναντίων ποιότητων συμπεφόρηται. Ἀλλὰ δυνάμεις τις ἀκραιφνῆς καὶ τελεία διαφανῆς ἐστὶν ἐν αὐτοῖς; οὐδαμῶς. Ἐπεὶ πολλαχόθεν ἐπίκτητόν τι συγκεκρότηται τὸ τοιοῦτον πλῆθος τῶν ἀπορροϊῶν ἀσθενὲς καὶ ἐξίτηλον ἐπιδεικνύμενον.

Yet does the simplicity and the uniformity of the activity, or the composition of the whole (universe), dominate in them? They fail of it entirely: for, according to their apparent composition, they are a jumble of motley and incompatible qualities. But is no pure and perfect power manifest in them? Not at all! For such a multitude of emanations is heterogeneous and artificial, knocked together, showing itself to be feeble and fading.⁷¹

Unlike the theurgists, who preserve the analogy with divine creation and make a statue which is microcosmic (manifesting the whole universe) through symbols under the guidance of the gods, the wonder-workers are seen as hastily throwing together a jumble of incompatible materials, operating solely on the level of nature rather than seeking to contact, and consequently to manifest,

⁶⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28 (170.3–8).

⁷⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.28 (170.8–171.3); Finamore (1993), 59.

⁷¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.29 (171.10–172.1).

the gods. Indeed precisely this idea is confirmed by Iamblichus' claim regarding Pythagoras' consecration of statues of the gods:

...ἵσταμένους αὐτοὺς ἐν τοῖς ἀγάλμασι καὶ τῷ χαλκῷ, οὐ ταῖς ἡμετέραις συνεζευγμένους μορφαῖς, ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἰδρύμασι τοῖς θεοῖς, πάντα περιέχοντας καὶ πάντων προνοοῦντας καὶ τῷ παντὶ τὴν φύσιν καὶ τὴν μορφήν ὁμοίαν ἔχοντας.

... setting them up, indeed, in the bronze of statues, not bound down with our human appearances, but with those divine rites of gods who comprehend and take thought for all things, and who have a substance and form similar to the All.⁷²

Thus, Iamblichus clearly approves of the use of divination by statues (τελεστική) in theurgy: his successors Proclus, Julian and Maximus of Ephesus did not misunderstand his comments on the subject; rather, they faithfully follow Iamblichus in their enthusiastic endorsement of this method of divination in theurgy.⁷³ Yet one might still wonder why Iamblichus' *De Mystериis* contains so little discussion of the use of statue divination in theurgic ritual. The answer probably lies in Iamblichus' lost work, *On Cult Statues* (Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων), which presumably dealt with the use of statues for divination (τελεστική), as well as with their construction and prayers to be addressed to them.⁷⁴ It is likely that Iamblichus felt he had already dealt with the subject thoroughly (as, of course, had Porphyry in his work of the same title) and so avoids repetition. The dating of this work, as with *De Mystериis*, is uncertain, but the lack of explicit discussion about statue divination in the latter work suggests that *On Cult Statues* was composed at an earlier date than *De Mystериis*.⁷⁵

⁷² Iamblichus, *VP* 28.151; Dillon and Hershbelle (1991), 167, n. 33.

⁷³ Cf. for example, Proclus, *In. Parm.* 847, trs. Morrow and Dillon (1992), 228; Proclus, *In. Tim.* II.273.11. Maximus of Ephesus' animation of a statue of Hekate: Eunapius, *VS* 475. Damascius, *Philosophical History* F76e (describing late fifth-century Alexandria) reports as a sign of spiritual perfection that Heraiscus of Alexandria could tell the difference between a divine and a lifeless statue even at a distance.

⁷⁴ Cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, who cites Photius' description (*Bibl. Cod.* 215) of a refutation of this work by John Philoponus and asserts that it was no doubt written with reference to Porphyry's work of the same title (of which some extracts are preserved by Eusebius). Iamblichus may also have discussed the use of statue divination in his lost work *On the gods* (Περὶ θεῶν): cf. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, for details of this work. A possible reference to this work at *DM* 8.8 (271.9–13) would place this work before the latter.

⁷⁵ Iamblichus' *On Cult Statues* is tentatively dated by Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 23, to c. A.D. 305–325 and *De Mystериis* to an earlier period, c. A.D. 280. Yet Dillon admits that his dating is provisional: 'Any attempt to arrange the works of Iamblichus in definite chronological order at the present stage of research is rash in the extreme' (18). Others have

Inspired Divination: Oracles at Delphi, Didyma and Claros

Iamblichus' differentiation between levels of causation and firm emphasis on the primary cause of inspired divination are also apparent in his discussion of Oracles.⁷⁶ Following the order of Porphyry's list of examples of prominent oracular shrines, Iamblichus first discusses the operation of Apollo's Oracle at Claros, which prophesies by means of water. There is a spring in the subterranean chamber, from which the prophet drinks at appointed times. After performing many preliminary ceremonies and after drinking, he delivers his oracles.⁷⁷ Iamblichus concludes that it is obvious that the water has oracular power; his explanation of this concurs with his ideas about the causation of divination – the impassive and eternal activity of the god.⁷⁸ According to Iamblichus, the divine exercises its power by a process of illumination or emanation, giving prophetic power without any kind of detraction from itself, because of its eternal, unchanging and whole nature.⁷⁹ The illumination of the god needs a suitably prepared vehicle: all of the prophet's ritual preparations, such as fasting, meditation and seclusion, are required so that he will be receptive to the god's presence.⁸⁰ For example, Iamblichus states that the water from the spring bestows the purification and receptivity of the prophet's soul-vehicle so that it is able to receive the illumination from the god.⁸¹ Iamblichus' statements concerning the Oracle at Claros show that the prophet himself is a lower cause of the oracle, since he utters the words of the oracle and therefore the divine transmission manifests through him, using him as an instrument. The water from the spring at Claros is also considered by Iamblichus to be a lower cause of the oracle, because it bestows the purification and receptivity of the prophet. However, Iamblichus continues to emphasise the primacy of the role of the divine which ultimately causes the prophet's state of inspiration.

A similar pattern can be traced in Iamblichus' comments on the Pythia at Delphi:

proposed a later date (c. A.D. 300) for *De Mysteriis*: Saffrey (1971), 231–233; Athanassiadi (1993), 116, n. 13.

⁷⁶ Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 215–217; Sheppard (1993), 140.

⁷⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (124.7–11).

⁷⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (124.13–125.6).

⁷⁹ Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (129.1–4); 3.19 (146.7–10). Finamore (1993), 59, refers to this as 'an interpenetration of the immaterial with the material, with no contamination of the immaterial element'.

⁸⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.6–126.3).

⁸¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.3–6), referring to the soul-vehicle as the 'luminous spirit in us' (ἐν ἡμῖν ἀύγοειδοῦς πνεύματος). The role of the soul-vehicle in oracular ritual: cf. also Chapter 6, pp. 225–226.

Ἡ δ' ἐν Δελφοῖς προφῆτις, εἴτε ἀπὸ πνεύματος λεπτοῦ καὶ πυρῶδους ἀναφερομένου ποθὲν ἀπὸ στομίου θεμιστεύει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις, εἴτε ἐν τῷ ἀδύτῳ καθημένη ἐπὶ δίφρου χαλκοῦ τρεῖς πόδας ἔχοντος χρηματίζει, εἴτε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ τετράποδος δίφρου ὅς ἐστιν ἱερός τοῦ θεοῦ, πανταχῇ οὕτω δίδωσιν ἑαυτὴν τῷ θεῷ πνεύματι, ἀπὸ τε τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ πυρὸς ἀκτῖνος καταυγάζεται... ὅταν δ' εἰς ἔδραν ἐνιδρυθῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, τῇ σταθερᾷ τοῦ θεοῦ μαντικῇ δυνάμει συναρμόζεται· ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων δὲ τῶν τοιούτων παρασκευῶν ὅλη γίγνεται τοῦ θεοῦ. Καὶ τότε δὴ ἀρεστίην αὐτῇ χωριστῶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπιλάμπων, ἕτερος ὢν καὶ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τῆς ἰδίας ἔδρας καὶ πάσης τῆς περὶ τὸν τόπον φυσικῆς καὶ ἱερᾶς φαινομένης κατασκευῆς.

The prophetess at Delphi, however, whether she gives oracles to human beings from a subtle and fiery spirit brought up from an aperture, or prophesies in the innermost sanctuary while seated on a bronze stool with three legs, or on a seat with four legs that is sacred to the god, she thus gives herself absolutely to the divine spirit, and is illuminated by the ray of divine fire ... whenever she is found on the seat of the god, she is in harmony with the divine, unwavering oracular power. And as a result of both these preparations she becomes wholly the god's possession. Then, indeed, the god is present, shining on her separately, being himself other than the fire, the spirit, the particular abode, and all the physical and sacred trappings appearing in connection with the place.⁸²

Iamblichus' repeated use of the word εἴτε ('whether ... or') when discussing the ritual preparations undertaken by the Pythia serves to highlight their inferiority as a cause of oracles in comparison with the supreme power of the deity. As with the prophet at Claros, the divine causes the oracular inspiration itself; the preparations undertaken by the prophetess are simply instrumental in causal terms, preparing her soul to be receptive enough to receive the inspiration and illumination of the divinity. Like the prophet at Claros, the Pythia is implicitly viewed by Iamblichus as a secondary 'instrumental' cause of her oracular utterances, which are ultimately caused by the god using her as an instrument. Similarly, Iamblichus discusses the prophetess at the Oracle of Didyma, who gives oracles either by holding the staff first given by a certain god, or by sitting on the axle, or by dipping her feet in or inhaling water from the spring; these ritual preparations enhance the receptivity (ἐπιτηδεῖα) of the prophetess, preparing her to receive the god 'from without' (ἐξῴθεν).⁸³

⁸² Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (126.4–9; 126.11–127.3).

⁸³ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (127.4–9). The 'axle' at Didyma: Fontenrose (1988), 80–83; Parke (1985), 212.

Athanassiadi has argued that Iamblichus' *De Mystериis* played a decisive role in shifting the locus of the divine from oracles to inspired individuals, particularly a new type of holy man: the Pythagorean sage. She argues that 'this new axiom of hieratic Platonism' was that 'there are no holy places but only holy individuals'.⁸⁴ As she states, Athanassiadi is clearly influenced by the scholarship of Peter Brown, whose thesis that the rise of the holy man dominated the religious landscape of Late Antiquity has gained wide currency.⁸⁵ She maintains that oracles obtained in private ritual and *oneiromancy*, catalysed by theurgy, dominated Late Antiquity and superseded oracle-centres, claiming that Iamblichus espouses this view in *De Mystериis*: 'he [i.e. Iamblichus] tried hard to disassociate it [i.e. theurgy] both from fraudulent practices and from the compromised oracular mainstream'.⁸⁶ While Iamblichus does attempt to differentiate theurgy from fraudulent practices, Athanassiadi's comments on Iamblichus' valuation of oracles need to be qualified, at the very least.

As we have seen, Iamblichus discusses the traditional Oracles (Didyma, Delphi and Claros) with great respect, describing the way in which the inspiration of the god (Apollo) is received by the prophet(ess) at the specific oracular site. Iamblichus' discussion of oracular sanctuaries needs to be taken within the context of his exposition of the causation of divination: we have seen that Iamblichus' *apparent* disparagement of the physical cultic objects and paraphernalia associated with specific oracle sites actually represents his *emphasis* on their lower, subordinate role in his scheme of causation. The cultic paraphernalia are lower, auxiliary causes in the operation of oracles: it is the divine which is the ultimate cause. Thus, Iamblichus' exposition does not privilege person over place, as Athanassiadi claims, since the philosopher allows both a role in the causation of oracles, but a subordinate role in comparison with the gods. Rather, the divine is privileged over person *and* place. This is confirmed by Iamblichus' words immediately following his account of Oracles:

Φαίνεται δὴ οὖν καὶ ἡ τῶν χρηστηρίων μαντεία συνομολογοῦσα ταῖς ὅλαις ὑποθέσεσιν ἃς προειρήκαμεν περὶ τῆς μαντικῆς... Εἰ δὴ ταῦτα ὀρθῶς εἰρήκαμεν, ὑπ' οὐδενὸς οὔτε τόπου οὔτε μεριστοῦ σώματος ἀνθρωπίνου οὔτε ψυχῆς κατεχομένης ἐν ἐνὶ εἴδει μεριστῶν περιείληπται μεριστῶς ἡ μαντικὴ τῶν θεῶν δύναμις, χωριστὴ δ' οὔσα καὶ ἀδιαίρετος ὅλη πανταχοῦ πάρεστι τοῖς μεταλαμβάνειν αὐτῆς δυναμένοις, ἔξωθεν τε ἐπιλάμπει καὶ πληροῖ πάντα, δι' ὧν τε τῶν στοιχείων διαπεφοίτηκε, γῆν

⁸⁴ Athanassiadi (1992), 59–62; (1993), 123–124.

⁸⁵ Athanassiadi (1992), 58. Cf. Brown (1971a), 99–100.

⁸⁶ Athanassiadi (1993), 123; 115–117; 123–124; 127.

τε καὶ ἀέρα καὶ πῦρ καὶ ὕδωρ κατείληφεν, οὐδέν τε ἄμοιρον
ἑαυτῆς ...

It is clear, then, that the divination of oracles is consonant with all the suppositions that we expounded previously about prophetic inspiration ... If then, we have stated these things correctly, the divinatory power of the gods is bounded by nothing divisible, neither by place, nor by a divisible human body, nor by a soul contained in any single form of divisible entities, but being separate by itself and indivisible, it is wholly present everywhere to those able to share in it. And it both illuminates from without and fills all things, and permeates all the elements: it embraces both earth, air, fire and water, and leaves nothing deprived of itself ...⁸⁷

Iamblichus reiterates the main philosophical argument of his discussion of oracles: the divinatory power of the gods, which *ultimately* causes divination, is not contained within people or places; rather it illuminates and permeates both with no detracting from itself. It is vital to remember that in his exposition of the operation of oracle sites, Iamblichus was mainly concerned to answer the questions of Porphyry, who had stated 'Some are inspired while drinking water, like the priest of Clarian Apollo in Colophon; others while sitting near apertures like the women who prophesy at Delphi; others while inhaling vapours from waters, like the prophetesses of the Branchidai' (οἱ δὲ ὕδωρ πiónτες, καθάπερ ὁ ἐν Κολοφῶνι ἱερεὺς τοῦ Κλαρίου, οἱ δὲ στομίους παρακαθήμενοι, ὡς αἱ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεσπίζουσιν, οἱ δ' ἐξ ὑδάτων ἀτμιζόμενοι, καθάπερ αἱ ἐν Βραγχίδαις προφήτιδες).⁸⁸ Iamblichus' exposition on oracles demonstrates his concern that this question implies that these ritual and cultic accessories are the distinguishing feature and primary cause of oracles.⁸⁹ Thus, his account emphasises the fact that the primary cause of oracles is the divine inspiration of the gods; however, these cultic paraphernalia are still considered important as vital ritual preparations which purify and enhance the receptivity of the prophet(ess), thus allowing him or her to receive divine inspiration.⁹⁰

Are Oracular Sanctuaries 'Hotbeds' of Receptivity?

Although Iamblichus privileges the divine over person *and* place in his account of Oracles, it is interesting to consider whether there is anything intrinsically sacred about oracular sanctuaries or their relationship to their respective deity in

⁸⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.12 (128.4–5; 129.1–7).

⁸⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (123.11–124.1).

⁸⁹ Cf. the comments of Clarke (2001), 58.

⁹⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.11 (125.3–6; 125.11–126.3; 126.12–13; 127.10–15).

his philosophy. Athanassiadi claims that, for Iamblichus, oracular sanctuaries were sacred historically rather than theologically, because of their original association with the god.⁹¹ Yet Iamblichus had raised the problem as to how the gods are said to receive the allotment of certain places according to determinate times, in relation to Plato's *Timaeus* 23d which asserts that Athena received Athens first and Sais later. Iamblichus' solution is that the allotments of the gods stand eternal, but those things that partake of them sometimes enjoy the influence of their divine rulers and at other times are deprived of it, and these are the participations measured in time, which the sacred laws refer to as the birthdays of the gods.⁹² In other words, while specific places are always allotted to specific gods, human participation in the powers of these gods at these specific locations changes. This exposition neatly explains the historical changes in the patronage of specific sanctuaries from one deity to another, but also demonstrates that, for Iamblichus, specific locations are somehow always allotted to specific deities: this allotment is therefore not historical, but in some sense inherent to the respective deity.

Moreover, while Iamblichus primarily envisages receptivity (ἐπιτηδεύουσις) as operating through human beings rather than through place (since all places contain the immanent illuminations of the gods), his account may imply that he considers oracular sanctuaries to be 'hotbeds' (or powerful centres) of receptivity (ἐπιτηδεύουσις). Although this notion is somewhat speculative, it may well be that both the long-established traditions (spanning centuries of praxis) of ritual practices undertaken regularly at religious and especially oracular sanctuaries, as well as the large numbers of priests and priestesses closely involved with these sanctuaries (constantly striving to cultivate their receptivity), make them especially 'receptive' locations.⁹³ If the importance of developing receptivity as a lifelong endeavour is considered, as well as Iamblichus' emphasis on the importance of long-established tradition, endurance and continual striving in developing receptivity, then oracular sanctuaries would consequently seem to be envisaged as powerful centres of receptivity.⁹⁴ This view is also implied by Iamblichus'

⁹¹ Athanassiadi (1993), 124.

⁹² Iamblichus, *In Tim.* 1, F14, trs. Dillon (1973; repr. 2009). Cf. also *DM* 1.9 (33.5–8), which states that the participants (in divine influences) are in each case of such a nature that they participate in them through the medium of aether, air or water; it is by observing this that the art of divine works makes use of correspondences. Given the importance of the oracular spring in most oracular sanctuaries, Iamblichus clearly conceives of oracular sanctuaries and their priesthoods as engendering receptivity in the prophet(ess) by means of water.

⁹³ Cf. Iamblichus' defence of the 'unknowable names' used in religious invocations, which rests on the immutability of sacred cultic practices and the consequent need to preserve prayers and invocations intact with no alteration: *DM* 8.5 (258.12–259.4).

⁹⁴ Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 3.13 (131.4–9); 3.31 (176.11–13); Chapter 1, pp. 26–28; 37 and n. 196.

account of Pythagoras' teaching methods: after setting out Pythagoras' general manner of teaching, including testing and examination of would-be students and followers, Iamblichus notes that Pythagoras taught Abaris the Scythian in a different way.⁹⁵ Instead of a lengthy course of instruction, testing and the five-year silence required of most followers, Pythagoras judged him immediately fit to learn his doctrines because he was a priest of Apollo among the Hyperboreans, and because he was also an old and wise man.⁹⁶ Iamblichus' later comments make it clear that Abaris was a prophet of Apollo who practised divination.⁹⁷ This account suggests that Iamblichus considered prophets to have engendered and cultivated their receptivity, further suggesting the possibility that oracular sanctuaries were envisaged as powerful centres of receptivity.

Inspired and Inductive Divination: Dreams

Iamblichus' distinction between inspired and inductive divination, or divine and human divination, is also clearly evident in his discussion of dream divination (*oneiromancy*), which was well-known and common in Antiquity.⁹⁸ Iamblichus explores the nature of dream divination in response to Porphyry's inquiry about divination in sleep:

ὅτι δὴ καθεύδοντες δι' ὀνείρων τοῖς μέλλουσι πολλάκις ἐπιβάλλομεν οὐκ ἐν ἐκστάσει μὲν γιγνώμενοι πολυκινήτῳ (ἥσυχον γὰρ κεῖται τὸ σῶμα), αὐτοῖς μέντοι γε ὥς ὕπαρ οὐκέτι παρακολουθοῦντες.

When asleep, we often encounter, by means of dreams, things in the future; although we are no longer in an agitated ecstasy (for the body remains at rest), we certainly are no longer conscious of things as when in a wakeful state.⁹⁹

Porphyry's challenge questions dream divination on the basis that human consciousness in sleep is inferior to waking consciousness. Iamblichus responds that the characteristics of dreams which Porphyry mentions may be correct for 'human' dreams, those which arise from the soul, from *phantasia* or the imagination. Here Iamblichus makes a clear and strong differentiation between 'human' dreams and dreams that are 'god-sent' (θεόπεμπτοι), or, in other

⁹⁵ Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90.

⁹⁶ Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90–91. Cf. also *VP* 28.135; 32.215–217.

⁹⁷ Iamblichus, *VP* 19.93. Cf. also *VP* 28.19.135–136; 28.147.

⁹⁸ For a similar approach to the distinction between dreams in Iamblican writings cf. Finamore (1998), 155–164; Shaw (1995), 81–82; (1998), 225–267. Cf. also Chapter 6, pp. 215–216.

⁹⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (102.12–103.2).

words, divine. In doing so, he follows traditional Greek conceptions of dreams: such a differentiation can be traced back as far as Homer and is echoed by Virgil.¹⁰⁰ Iamblichus' account of their characteristics and nature makes it apparent that he considers these two types of dreams (divine and human) to fall neatly into the two modes of divination: inductive and inspired.

Iamblichus' describes 'human' dreams (ἀνθρωπίνων ὀνείρων) as 'things coming from the soul, either from thoughts or words stirred up in us, or in such things as arise from our fantasies, or from everyday concerns of some kind' (... τῶν ἀπὸ ψυχῆς, ἢ τῶν ἐν ἡμῖν ἐννοιῶν ἢ λόγων ἀνακινουμένων, ἢ ὅσα ἀπὸ φαντασιῶν ἐγείρεται ἢ τινων μεθήμερινῶν φροντίδων).¹⁰¹ The primary cause of 'human' dreams is considered to be purely human, linking them with inductive divination, of which the primary cause is human skill. Iamblichus' account of the nature of 'human' dreams combines Plato's statements about dreams in the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*: in the *Republic*, Plato discusses the possible effects which the rational soul can have on dreams. If the rational soul is asleep, dreams aroused by our lower natures, the appetitive part of the soul which contains desires, result. If the rational soul has control over lower parts, then even in sleep it carries on thinking unimpeded, grasps truth and is without unlawful visions.¹⁰² In the *Timaeus*, Plato states that dreams are images internal to the body.¹⁰³ Iamblichus indicates that 'human' dreams originate ultimately from human faculties: from the human soul (agreeing with the *Republic*), imagination or from everyday concerns, recalling Plato's differentiation between the rational soul and the irrational.¹⁰⁴ Plato maintains that when one sleeps with their rational soul in control, one is most likely to grasp truth.¹⁰⁵ Iamblichus recalls and follows this statement:

ἂ τότε μὲν ἐστὶν ἀληθῆς τότε δὲ ψευδῆς, καὶ ἐπὶ τινων μὲν τυγχάνει τοῦ ὄντος, ἐπὶ δὲ τῶν πολλῶν ἀποτυγχάνει.

Sometimes these things are true, sometimes false; and in some cases, they chance upon reality but, in many cases, they fail to attain reality.¹⁰⁶

The word τυγχάνει implies the notion that these kinds of dreams operate via some aspect of human guesswork or deduction which originates in the human

¹⁰⁰ Homer, *Odyssey* 19.560–567, ed. Murray (1919; repr. 2003), Vol. 2; Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.893–896, ed. Rushton Fairclough (1916; repr. 1978), Vol. 1. Cf. Clarke (2003), 121, n. 155.

¹⁰¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.2–5).

¹⁰² Plato, *Resp.* 571c–d. Cf. Finamore (1998), 155–156.

¹⁰³ Plato, *Ti.* 45d3–46a2.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Finamore (1998), 156.

¹⁰⁵ Plato, *Resp.* 572a7–b1; Finamore (1998), 156.

¹⁰⁶ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.5–6).

soul or imagination. Thus, Iamblichus' account of the operation of 'human' dreams matches his description of inductive divination, which arises as a result of human estimation.¹⁰⁷ Thus, according to Iamblichus' schema, 'human' dreams fall into the category of inductive divination, since both 'human' dreams and inductive divination are inferior to divine dreams and inspired divination respectively because the former ultimately originate from human faculties (which can only attain to a partial and limited knowledge) or skills, rather than being derived directly from divinity (as the latter are).

Iamblichus elucidates the nature of divine dreams, which he describes as θεόπεμπτοι (god-sent): they occur during transitional states of sleeping and waking and vice versa (as well as when one is wholly awake), when a sudden voice is heard offering guidance about the future.¹⁰⁸ Iamblichus' assertion that one can receive a god-sent dream while fully awake implies the experience of a trance state.¹⁰⁹ Sometimes a light shines brightly and peacefully (clearly a reference to divine illumination), while at other times an intangible and incorporeal spirit (πνεῦμα) encircles those lying down.¹¹⁰ In both cases, the dreamer is aware of the light or the 'spirit' (πνεῦμα) and receives a true, divinatory dream.¹¹¹ In the latter case, this 'spirit' is not visually perceptible, according to Iamblichus, but is otherwise perceptible with a different kind of consciousness and awareness.¹¹² Iamblichus explicitly comments about this 'spirit' that, 'When entering, it makes a whooshing sound' (... ῥοιζομένου τε ἐν τῷ εἰσιέναι ...).¹¹³ The use of ῥοῖζος here is intriguing, since this term is a Pythagorean and Chaldean term for the sound caused by the planetary revolutions.¹¹⁴ Fragment 37 of the *Chaldean Oracles* describes the Ideas as 'whirring forth' (ῥοιζέω) from the Paternal Intellect into the womb of Hekate.¹¹⁵ At least from the time of Plato's *Timaeus*, the music or harmony of the spheres was connected closely with the creation and function of the Cosmic Soul, which may possibly be identified with Hekate in the *Chaldean*

¹⁰⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.15 (135.1–2; 9–10).

¹⁰⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.6–11). Clarke (2003), 123, n. 157, notes that the semi-conscious state between sleeping and waking, during which hallucinations are common, has been identified by twentieth-century psychologists as the 'hypagogic state'. The 'sudden voice' may well be an allusion to Plato, *Phdr.* 242c1–2, where Socrates reports that he seemed 'suddenly to hear a certain voice' (τινὰ φωνὴν ἔδοξα αὐτόθεν ἀκοῦσαι). Cf. Clarke (2003), 123, n. 156; Finamore (1998), 158.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Finamore (1998), 158.

¹¹⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.11–12; 104.4–5). Cf. Shaw (1995), 89.

¹¹¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.5–8); Finamore (1998), 158.

¹¹² Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (103.11–104.1).

¹¹³ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.2 (104.1–2).

¹¹⁴ See *Chald. Or.* F37; F146; Proclus, *In. Remp.* 2.76.20–21; Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 19, n. 46. Cf. Clarke (2003), 141, n. 188.

¹¹⁵ *Chald. Or.* F37.

Oracles.¹¹⁶ It is also interesting that the term for a ritual tool used in Chaldean rites and associated with Hekate, Hekate's Top, or *στροφάλος*, was also used within astronomy: the word *στροφάλιγξ* can mean 'planetary orbit'.¹¹⁷ Iamblichus relates that Pythagoras purified the confused minds of his disciples, sending them into a prophetic sleep with his musical imitations of the celestial spheres.¹¹⁸ It is especially interesting that Iamblichus links this particular sound with the induction of a prophetic sleep, just as here it is linked with a prophetic spirit (*πνεῦμα*) encircling the individual while they are asleep as a mediatory force for the conveyance of divine dreams to humans. Clearly, by using the term *ῥοῦζος*, Iamblichus signifies a profound change of consciousness in the ritual practitioner, whereby through divine illumination they become aware of the 'sounds' of the whole cosmos; this notion matches his descriptions of divination as attaining a divine life and perspective, where all things are seen as 'present'.¹¹⁹ Iamblichus also uses the term *ῥοῦζος* in his discussion of divine possession among the devotees of Cybele, Sabazios and the Corybantes during the performance of musical rituals. In elucidating the operation of such rituals, Iamblichus asserts that the sounds and tunes are properly consecrated to each of the gods, and kinship is properly assigned to them in accordance with their proper orders and powers and the motions in the universe itself and 'the harmonious sounds rushing from its motions' (*τὰς ἀπὸ τῶν κινήσεων ῥοιζουμένας ἐναρμονίους φωνάς*).¹²⁰

Inspired Divination and Theurgy in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*

Inspired Divination and Theurgy

Iamblichus contrasts the scope, utility and accuracy of inspired and inductive modes of divination, with inspired divination clearly seen as the superior mode. Because of its closer proximity to divinity, inspired divination is the appropriate form of divination for the theurgist, as Iamblichus states near the culmination of his treatise, 'Only divine mantic prediction, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life ...' (*Μόνη τοίνυν ἡ θεία μαντική συναπτομένη τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν τῆς θείας ζωῆς μεταδίδωσι ...*).¹²¹ Iamblichus' utilisation of philosophical concepts of causation (particularly the concept of simultaneous and hierarchical causes) demonstrates the rational and philosophical basis of Iamblichus' explanation of divination and

¹¹⁶ Johnston (1990), 101, n. 31; 104; 108.

¹¹⁷ Johnston (1990), 101, n. 31.

¹¹⁸ Iamblichus, *VP* 15.65.3; trs. Clark (1989). Cf. Clarke (2003), 141, n. 188.

¹¹⁹ Cf. for example, Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (107.11–108.3).

¹²⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.9 (118.13–119.3).

¹²¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.3–4).

theurgy. Theurgy relies ultimately on the divine. Inspired divination forms a central part of theurgic ritual. Thus, by showing the ultimate divine cause of divination, Iamblichus explains the purpose of using inspired divination in theurgic ritual and also emphasises the similarity between inspired divination and theurgy: both are caused by and derived from the gods. Iamblichus concludes his account of divination as follows:

“Ὡς οὖν τοῦτο ἐστὶ τὸ ἄρχαντον καὶ ἱερατικὸν θεῖόν τε ὡς ἀληθῶς γένος τῆς μαντείας...ἀλλ’ αὐτὸ ἐξήρηται πάντων, ὑπερφυῖς ἀίδιον προϋπάρχον, οὐδὲ παράθεσιν τινα ἐπιδεχόμενον οὔτε ὑπεροχὴν τινος ἐν πολλοῖς προτεταγμένην· ἀλλ’ ἀπολέλυται καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ μονοειδὲς πάντων προηγεῖται...ἐκ γὰρ τοῦ τοιούτου τρόπου παραγίγνεται ἅμα τε καὶ ἐν ταῖς μαντείαις ἡ ἄπταιστος ἀλήθεια καὶ ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἡ τελεία ἀρετή. Μετὰ τούτων δὲ ἀμφοτέρων δίδοται τοῖς θεουργοῖς ἡ πρὸς τὸ νοητὸν πῦρ ἄνοδος, ὃ δὴ καὶ τέλος δεῖ πάσης μὲν προγνώσεως πάσης δὲ θεουργικῆςπραγματείας προτίθεσθαι.

This, then, is one kind of mantic, which is undefiled and sacerdotal, and truly divine...But it is itself entirely removed from all, supernatural, and eternally pre-existent, neither admitting any comparison nor pre-eminence among many; it is free from all this, and takes precedence over all according to its uniform self ... For in such a fashion arises, at the same time, both infallible truth in oracles, and perfect virtue in souls. With both of these, ascent to the intelligible fire is granted to theurgists, a process which indeed must be proposed as the goal of all foreknowledge and of every theurgic operation. [my emphasis].¹²²

The highest stage of inspired divination is intrinsically linked with theurgy, forming an essential element of theurgic ritual. Inspired divination is the level of vision and insight ideally attained by the theurgist when performing theurgic ritual: the theurgist becomes a prophet(ess) (μάντις) and utters oracles.¹²³ Iamblichus asserts that the two prerequisites for noetic ascent are the infallible truth of oracles and perfect virtue in the soul. His description of ascent is couched in Chaldean terminology: ‘intelligible fire’ is the typical description of the noetic realm within the *Chaldean Oracles*. This ascent of consciousness allows the theurgist to become divinised by enabling him or her to ascend to the noetic realm (and beyond) and to subsequently express their noetic vision by uttering oracles. Thus, the role of inspired divination within theurgy is

¹²² Iamblichus, *DM* 3.31 (178.13–14; 178.15–179.3; 179.4–8).

¹²³ Proclus’ definition of theurgy highlights the role of divination within it: *Plat. Theol.* 1.25 (Saffrey and Westerink); Chapter 1, pp. 25–26. Cf. Shaw (1995), 231–232; 236.

soteriological: it is 'a stage on the way to mystical union'.¹²⁴ Simultaneously, the inspired divination of the theurgist is a sign of mystical union and vision. The goal of inspired divination as used within theurgy was divinisation: the theurgist attempted to ascend to the noetic realm and beyond, in order to achieve union with the divine and to fully awaken to his or her own divinity.¹²⁵ The theurgist's goal is to become like god through assimilation: thus, a key 'sign' and expression of divine communion and union is to speak the words of a god. The theurgist utters his or her own oracles. In this sense, theurgic divination has much in common with Eastern practices of meditation: it is envisaged as a transformation of the soul and of consciousness. Thus, theurgic divination is intimately related to divinisation, making the soul divine, and knowledge of the future is merely a secondary or subordinate consequence of this type of divination.¹²⁶ In order to understand how Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination, it is crucial to examine his views on theurgy as the concurrent expression of the goodness of the gods and the means for liberation from fate.

Theurgy and Liberation from Fate

This idea of the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the divine underlies Iamblichus' claims that the gods are both liberators of fate and bringers of fate and that human beings can transcend the bonds of fate (ἡ εἰμαρμένη) through theurgic ascent:

Οὐκέτι δὴ οὖν, ὃ σὺ ἀπορεῖς, δεσμοῖς ἀλύτοις ἀνάγκης, ἣν εἰμαρμένην καλοῦμεν, ἐνδέδεται πάντα· ἔχει γὰρ ἀρχὴν οἰκείαν ἢ ψυχὴ τῆς εἰς τὸ νοητὸν περιαγωγῆς καὶ τῆς ἀποστάσεως μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν γιγνομένων ἐπὶ δὲ τὸ ὄν καὶ τὸ θεῖον συναφῆς. Οὐδ' αὖ τοῖς θεοῖς τὴν εἰμαρμένην ἀνῆψαμεν, οὐς ὡς λυτῆρας τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἐν τε ἱεροῖς καὶ ξοάνοις θεραπεύομεν. Ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν θεοὶ λύουσι τὴν εἰμαρμένην, αἱ δ' ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἔσχαται φύσεις καθήκουσαι καὶ συμπλεκόμεναι τῇ γενέσει τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῷ σώματι τὴν εἰμαρμένην ἐπιτελοῦσιν· εἰκότως ἄρα τοῖς θεοῖς ἀγίστειαν πᾶσαν προσάγομεν, ὅπως ἂν μόνοι διὰ πειθοῦς νοερᾶς τῆς ἀνάγκης ἄρχοντες τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς εἰμαρμένης ἀποκείμενα κακὰ ἀπολύωσιν.

¹²⁴ Athanassiadi (1993), 120.

¹²⁵ Divinisation in Greek philosophy: O'Meara (2003), 31–39; 123–131; Shaw (1995), 232; 234.

¹²⁶ Cf. Shaw (1995), 232–233; Uzdavinys (2010), 198–199.

It is not, then, after all, the case, as you suggest in your query, that 'all things are bound together by the indissoluble bonds of necessity,' which we call fate; for the soul contains its own principle of conversion to the intelligible, and of detachment from the realm of generation, and also of union with true being and the divine. Nor yet have we linked fate to the gods, whom indeed we worship by means of temples and statues as liberators from fate. But while the gods free us from fate, the lowest level of natures which descend from them and interweave themselves with the generative processes of the cosmos and with body do bring about fate. It is reasonable then, that we should bestow all worship upon the gods, in order that, being the only ones who can dominate necessity by means of rational persuasion, they may free us from the evils that lie in wait for us from fate.¹²⁷

Iamblichus maintains that since the gods are transcendent they are superior to necessity and, by implication, fate, which he defines as the workings of necessity in the cosmos. Yet the gods' immanence throughout the cosmos entails that the emanations from them do manifest on a lower ontological level as fate and necessity in the physical cosmos. In this metaphysical schema, necessity and fate are a manifestation of divine providence on a lower ontological level, as Iamblichus states elsewhere:

...πάντα οὕτω τὰ τῆς εἰμαρμένης συνῆπται πρὸς τὴν προηγουμένην πρόνοιαν. κατ' αὐτὴν τὴν οὐσίαν ἄρα ἐπιπλέκεται ἡ εἰμαρμένη τῇ προνοίᾳ καὶ τῷ εἶναι τὴν πρόνοιάν ἐστιν ἡ εἰμαρμένη καὶ ἀπ' αὐτῆς καὶ περὶ αὐτὴν ὑφέστηκε.

...the whole sum of things subject to Fate is thus connected to the dominance of Providence. In its very substance, then, Fate is enmeshed with Providence, and Fate exists by virtue of the existence of Providence, and it derives its existence from it and within its ambit.¹²⁸

Yet through theurgic divination and ritual, Iamblichus claims that the human being can be liberated from fate. What exactly does Iamblichus mean by 'liberation from fate'?

Here, it is important to note Iamblichus' related claim that the gods' ordinance laid down 'from the beginning' that every human soul should eventually ascend to the divine realm, meaning that the gods do not change their plans as a result of any subsequently performed theurgic ritual.¹²⁹ Iamblichus draws an analogy between the universal workings of the cosmos and the dispensations of individual

¹²⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 8.7 (269.10–270.5).

¹²⁸ Iamblichus, *Letter 8: To Macedonius, On Fate* F4, lines 5–8.

¹²⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 8.8 (271.13–272.11).

souls: in terms of the cosmos, the realm of generation and the physical cosmos are dependent upon intellectual reality; in the same way, liberation from the processes of generation is in harmony with the descent of souls and their introduction into generation.¹³⁰ In other words, the procession and reversion, the descent and ascent of the soul are in harmony with one another since there is no ontological gap or break between intelligible reality and the physical cosmos, a metaphysical conception described as ‘an unbroken line of continuity’.¹³¹ Thus Iamblichus’ claim that theurgy can allow liberation from the bonds of fate does not imply a physical or chronological liberation from the processes of generation, which would imply a break in the chain of being. Olympiodorus attributes precisely this view to Iamblichus:

“Οτι οὐκ ἔστιν αἰεί τινα μένειν, οὔτε ἐν τῷ νοητῷ, ὡς Ἰάμβλιχος· εἴπερ γὰρ κατῆλθεν, πέφυκεν κατιέναι ποτέ.

It is not possible to remain always in the noetic realm either, as Iamblichus maintains; for if one has descended in the past, it is natural that one should descend again at some time.¹³²

In his commentary on this fragment John Dillon states, ‘Even the soul of the adept must descend again, it seems, presumably as a *boddhisatva*, to lead his less fortunate fellow men to the truth. Iamblichus seems to hold that such an enlightened soul never loses its contact with [the intelligible realm] during its period of descent, but descend it must.’¹³³ Thus, liberation from fate must entail a transformation of consciousness for the theurgist, where fate is viewed within its full cosmological context, as a reflection of divine providence. Iamblichus’ views of fate and divine providence contribute towards the comparative value which he places on inductive and inspired modes of divination: inductive divination can only predict everyday events, those determined by necessity and fate, and, moreover, it cannot bring a divine perspective to such events. Iamblichus maintains that knowing events in the realm of fate or necessity without aligning them to their divine causes and purpose does not ultimately bring happiness; only the theurgic path to the gods brings complete happiness to humans.¹³⁴ Iamblichus’ valuation of inspired divination as superior relates not only to its closer proximity to the divine, but also to the theurgist’s alignment with divine

¹³⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 8.8 (272.7–11). Cf. also 8.6 (269.4–9); 8.7 (269.10–270.14).

¹³¹ Iamblichus, *DM* 5.26 (240.9–14); Olympiodorus, *In Alcibiadem* 110.12ff. = Iamblichus, *In Alcibiadem* F8; Shaw (1995), 133–134.

¹³² Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, p. 191, 26ff. = Iamblichus, *In Phaedonem* F5a.

¹³³ Dillon (1973; repr. 2009), 243.

¹³⁴ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.2–10); 10.3 (287.13–289.2); 10.4 (289.3–11); 10.5 (290.12–292.3).

providence, which enables him or her to attain a right relationship with fate through divine vision or perspective.

Ethics and Theurgic Divination

Iamblichus' assertion that the two prerequisites for noetic ascent are the infallible truth of oracles and the soul which has attained perfect virtue suggests a significant link between ethics and theurgic divination. In order to explore this connection, it is necessary to examine the convergence of epistemology, ethics and ontology in Iamblichus' philosophy.

Through divination, the theurgist embodies and expresses divine illumination, will and love, for the gods manifest through the soul of the theurgist. The task of the theurgist is to receive divine illumination and to manifest the work of the gods in the material cosmos, having aligned himself or herself to divine will through direct realisation of the Good. The final section of *De Mysteriis* 10 considers the 'way to happiness' which Iamblichus claims is the theurgic path – this includes the most complete use of divination:

Μόνη τοίνυν ἡ θεία μαντική συναπτομένη τοῖς θεοῖς ὡς ἀληθῶς ἡμῖν τῆς θείας ζωῆς μεταδίδωσι, τῆς τε προγνώσεως καὶ τῶν θείων νοήσεων μετέχουσα καὶ ἡμᾶς θείους ὡς ἀληθῶς ἀπεργάζεται· ἡ δὲ αὐτὴ καὶ τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἡμῖν γνησίως παρέχει, διότι πεπληρωται τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις·

Only divine divination, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life, partaking as it does in the foreknowledge and intellections of the gods, and renders us, in truth, divine. And this genuinely furnishes the good for us, because the most blessed intellection of the gods is filled with all goods.¹³⁵

The possibility of such an alignment between the theurgist and divine will is intimately linked with Iamblichus' notion that an innate knowledge of the gods is coexistent with our own nature. Iamblichus often refers to the presence of the divine in the human soul as the 'One of the soul', which marks the human's pre-ontological connection with the divine, but it is vital to note that this element is considered to be suspended from the gods as a gift from them.¹³⁶ Iamblichus

¹³⁵ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.3–7), trs. Clarke, Dillon and Hershbelle (2003), with emendations.

¹³⁶ *DM* 1.3 (8.2–9); 3.18 (144.10–13); 1.15 (46.9–12). Feichtinger (2003), 152, contrasts the concept of grace in Augustine (unique in Christ) and Iamblichus (present in all human souls, providing the theological basis for the redemption of the human soul).

states elsewhere that it is through this that the soul can attain ascent to the gods and liberation from fate:

τούτων δὴ οὕτως ἐχόντων ἢ μὲν ἀπὸ τῶν κόσμων εἰς ἡμᾶς καθήκουσα ψυχὴ ταῖς περιόδοις συνακολουθεῖ τῶν κόσμων, ἢ δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ νοητοῦ νοητῶς παροῦσα τῆς γενεσιουργοῦ κυκλήσεως ὑπερέχει, καὶ κατ' αὐτὴν ἢ τε λύσις γίγνεται τῆς εἰμαρμένης καὶ ἢ πρὸς τοὺς νοητοὺς θεοὺς ἀνοδος, θεωργία τε ὅση πρὸς τὸ ἀγέννητον ἀνάγεται κατὰ τὴν τοιαύτην ζωὴν ἀποτελεῖται.

This being the case, the soul which descends to us from the (celestial) realms accommodates itself to the circuits of these realms, but that which is present to us in an intelligible mode from the intelligible transcends the cycle of generation, and it is in virtue of it that we may attain to emancipation from fate and ascent to the intelligible gods. That part of theurgy that is involved with ascent to the ungenerated achieves its end through such a level of life as this.¹³⁷

Within Iamblichus' cosmological framework, the innate presence of the divine within the human soul is the anthropological equivalent of the innate presence of divine providence and will throughout the whole cosmos. Through a full realisation of this innate divine principle, Iamblichus claims that a spontaneous and concurrent realisation of divine providence will allow the theurgist to be liberated from the bonds of fate.¹³⁸ In other words, 'what is in our power', according to Iamblichus, is the possibility of alignment with the divine which brings liberation from the bonds of fate.

Iamblichus' views of divine providence, love and will are based on the Platonic notion that those who know the good will *always* act according to it.¹³⁹ This idea acts as a central foundation of Platonism and underlies Neoplatonist metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. In fact, this view represents a convergence of epistemological, ethical and ontological status which has profound consequences for the nature of theurgic divination. For Iamblichus, divine illumination and providence actively manifest and express the One and the Good to lower ontological levels of being. Iamblichus states that divine illumination is as far superior to human voluntary motion as the divine will of the Good is to the (human) life of ordinary deliberation and choice (προαιρετικῆς ζωῆς).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Iamblichus, *DM* 8.6 (269.4–9).

¹³⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 8.7 (270.6–14).

¹³⁹ This notion, commonly referred to as 'Socratic intellectualism', is evident in the following dialogues: Plato, *Meno* 78a–b, 88a–b, ed. W.R.M. Lamb (1967); *Protagoras* 358c–d, ed. W.R.M. Lamb (1967).

¹⁴⁰ Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (41.1–3); Feichtinger (2003), 134. Cf. Shaw (1995), 69, on Iamblichus' attitude towards *prohairesis*.

According to this viewpoint, human beings live a life subject to rational choices between alternatives: however, the appearance of alternatives arises as a result of human ignorance of, and thus alienation from, the true nature of the good.¹⁴¹ The gods have true will, however, since they know the good completely; therefore, they do not have to make choices between alternatives as mortals do.¹⁴² From this perspective, the task of the theurgist is to reveal the will of the gods, made possible through their assimilation to the divine, since the gods are the givers of all Good:

Σκοπεῖν δὴ δεῖ τίς αὐτοῦ γίνεται λύσις καὶ ἀπαλλαγὴ τῶν δεσμῶν. Ἔστι τοίνυν οὐκ ἄλλη τις ἢ τῶν θεῶν γινῶσις· ἰδέα γάρ ἐστιν εὐδαιμονίας τὸ ἐπίστασθαι τὸ ἀγαθόν, ὥσπερ τῶν κακῶν ἰδέα συμβαίνει ἢ λήθη τῶν ἀγαθῶν καὶ ἀπάτη περὶ τὸ κακόν... ἡ δ' ἱερατικὴ καὶ θεουργικὴ τῆς εὐδαιμονίας δόσις καλεῖται μὲν θύρα πρὸς θεὸν τὸν δημιουργόν τῶν ὅλων, ἡ τόπος ἢ αὐλὴ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ... κατάρτυσιν τῆς διανοίας εἰς μετουσίαν καὶ θέαν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ καὶ τῶν ἐναντίων πάντων ἀπαλλαγὴν, μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα πρὸς τοὺς τῶν ἀγαθῶν δοτῆρας θεοὺς ἔνωσιν.

Hence we must consider how one might be liberated and set free from these bonds. There is, indeed, no way other than the knowledge of the gods. For understanding the Good is the paradigm of well-being, just as obliviousness to the Good and deception concerning evil constitute the paradigm of evil things ... But the sacred and theurgic gift of well-being is called the gateway to the creator of all things, or the place or courtyard of the good ... it prepares the mind for the participation in and vision of the Good, and for a release from everything which opposes it; and, at the last, for a union with the gods who are the givers of all things good.¹⁴³

Iamblichus' claim that theurgy has the potential to liberate mortals from the bonds of fate arises as a direct consequence of his idea that the theurgist can align him or herself with divine will through realisation of the Good:

εἰ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς θεοῖς ἡ οὐσία τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων καὶ τελειότης περιέχεται καὶ ἡ πρώτη δύναμις αὐτῶν καὶ ἀρχή, παρὰ μόνους ἡμῖν καὶ τοῖς ὁμοίως ἐχομένοις τῶν κρείττωνων γνησίως τε τῆς πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐνώσεως ἀντιλαμβάνομενοις ἢ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὅλων ἀρχὴ καὶ τελευτὴ σπουδαίως ἐπιτηδεύεται· ἐνταῦθα δὴ οὖν καὶ

¹⁴¹ Iamblichus, *In Tim.* 4, F87, 11–14. Cf. Shaw (1995), 68–69; Clarke (2001), 48–49; Clarke, Dillon and Hershbell (2003), 51, n. 76; Feichtinger (2003), 133–134.

¹⁴² Iamblichus, *DM* 1.7 (21.1–22.5); 1.5 (16.12–17.5); 2.2 (69.6–9); 2.11 (97.12–13); 3.17 (139.13–140.4); 3.23 (155.14–156.2).

¹⁴³ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.5 (290.12–291.1; 291.10–12; 292.1–3). Cf. also 1.7 (21.2–9); Shaw (1995), 68–69; 187.

ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας πάρεστι θεά καὶ ἡ τῆς νοεράς ἐπιστήμης, καὶ μετὰ τῆς τῶν θεῶν γνώσεως ἡ πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς ἐπιστροφή καὶ ἡ γνῶσις ἑαυτῶν συνέπεται.

For if the essence and accomplishment of all good is encompassed by the gods and their primal power and authority, it is only with us and those who are similarly possessed by the greatest kinds and have genuinely gained union with them that the beginning and the end of all good is seriously practised. It is there, then, that there occurs the vision of truth and intellectual understanding, and with knowledge of the gods follows a turning towards ourselves and knowledge of ourselves.¹⁴⁴

The convergence of epistemological, ethical and ontological status which underlies Iamblichus' cosmology and metaphysics has profound and far-reaching consequences for our understanding of the *modus operandi* and purposes of theurgic divination, which from this perspective is not a neutral method of fortune-telling or prediction of the future, a typical characterisation of divination in the modern world.¹⁴⁵ Rather, theurgic divination is conceived as an all-encompassing epistemological and ethical tool which transforms the soul and consciousness; it has the potential of allowing the human being to 'manifest' the gods. As an epistemological practice, a *supra-rational* way of knowing, Iamblichus conceptualises theurgic divination as necessarily entailing an ethical discipline which has the potential to transform the soul in an ontological and ethical sense.¹⁴⁶ In Iamblichus' view, the theurgist's ethical character is paramount: the theurgist must seek to enlarge his receptivity through ethical means (as well as through ritual and intellectual means), primarily through the scale of virtues, which was established by Plotinus and Porphyry and possibly elaborated by Iamblichus to include further levels of virtue: this scale is cumulative and represents 'a method of progressive divinization'.¹⁴⁷ The ethical and ontological dimensions of theurgic divination explain Iamblichus' comment that the gods sometimes conceal the foreknowledge inherent in divination:

¹⁴⁴ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10).

¹⁴⁵ Shaw (1995), 232–234.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Shaw (1995), 235: 'Iamblichus' criterion for determining whether the ecstasy was divine or deranged was whether or not it had a beneficial and stabilizing effect on the soul.'

¹⁴⁷ Cf. O'Meara (2003), 40–49; Finamore (2012), 113–132, provides an excellent analysis of the scales of virtue in Iamblichus, who seems to have added three virtues to the four advanced by Plotinus and Porphyry (Political; Purificatory; Contemplative; Paradigmatic): at the lower end of the scale, the Natural (φυσικαί) and the Ethical (ἠθικαί) and, at the top of the scale, the 'Hieratic' (ἱερατικαί) or 'Theurgic' (θεουργικαί).

οἱ γὰρ θεοὶ καὶ δύνανται τοῦ φυλάσασθαι τὰ ἐπιόντα ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως δεινὰ παραδιδόασιν· καὶ ὅταν μὲν ἀσκεῖν δέῃ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ συμβάλληται πρὸς τοῦτο ἢ τοῦ μέλλοντος ἀδηλία, ἀποκρύπτουσι τὰ ἐσόμενα ἕνεκα τοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν βελτίονα ἀπεργάζεσθαι· ὅταν δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο μηδὲν διαφέρῃ, λυσιτελεῖ δὲ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τὸ προγιγνώσκειν, ἕνεκα τοῦ σῶζειν αὐτάς καὶ ἀνάγειν, τὴν ἐν ταῖς μαντείαις πρόγνωσιν ἐν μέσαις αὐτῶν ταῖς οὐσίαις ἐντιθέασιν.

For the gods grant the power of defence against the dangers which menace us from the natural order. And when it is necessary to exercise virtue and an uncertainty of future events contributes to this, then (the gods) conceal what will be for the improvement of the soul. But whenever this (uncertainty) does not matter for this purpose, and foreknowledge rather is advantageous to souls for saving and leading them upwards, then the gods implant in the midst of their essences the foreknowledge inherent in divination.¹⁴⁸

Divination is conceptualised as an ethical and soteriological tool for expressing and manifesting the goodness of the gods; it should always be used in service of discovering and attaining the good and for the purposes of the ascent of consciousness to the gods.¹⁴⁹ As a tool of self-knowledge and a way of accessing divine wisdom, it has characteristics which could be considered to be reminiscent of Eastern practices of meditation. Theurgic divination brings a divine perspective to human problems and embodied life, which enables the theurgist to see the divine causes of human matters.

Supra-rationality, Divination and Theurgy

It is quite clear that Iamblichus conceptualises many types of inspired divination as operating on a continuum which enables the enquirer to progressively access self-knowledge and knowledge of the cosmos and of the gods. This continuum assists the ascent of the soul at every stage of its journey. At the lower end of this continuum, Iamblichus discusses the Oracles of Apollo at Delphi and Didyma as leading the enquirer to dialectical enquiry in order to decode the true meaning of the oracular response:

αὐτὸς ὁ ἐν Δελφοῖς θεὸς οὔτε λέγων καθ' Ἡράκλειτον, οὔτε κρύπτων ἀλλὰ σημαίνων τὰς μαντείας, ἐγείρει πρὸς διαλεκτικὴν διερεῦνῃσιν τοὺς ἐπηκόους τῶν χρησμῶν, ἀφ' ἧς ἀμφιβολία τε καὶ

¹⁴⁸ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.12–290.3).

¹⁴⁹ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.5–7; 289.10–12; 290.1–3); Shaw (1995), 234.

ὁμωνυμία ἐκρίθησαν καὶ διττὸν πᾶν ἀνερυνθηθὲν φῶς ἐπιστήμης ἀνῆψεν...ἀδελφὰ δὲ τούτων καὶ ὁ ἐν Βραγχίδαῖς θεὸς ἐκφαίνει τῆς διαλεκτικῆς ἔργα, περιφανῇ τὴν ἐπαγωγὴν παραδηλῶν, ὅταν λέγῃ· “οὐτ’ ἂν ὠκυπέτης ἰὸς οὔτε λύρη οὔτε νηῦς οὔτε ἄλλο οὐδὲν ἄνευ ἐπιστημονικῆς χρήσιος γένοιτ’ ἂν κοτε ὠφέλιμον.”

...the God in Delphi himself, in Heraclitus’s words, ‘not speaking out, nor yet concealing, but signifying’ his prophecies, rouses up those who hearken to his utterances to dialectical enquiry, on the basis of which they discerned ambiguity and homonymy, and the ferreting out of every double meaning kindled in them the light of knowledge ... And akin to these also are the feats of dialectic of the God in Branchidae, revealing clearly the procedure of induction, when he says, ‘No swift-flying arrow, nor lyre, nor ship, nor anything else would ever attain a useful end without use based on knowledge.’¹⁵⁰

Through their ambiguity, oracles urge people to attain knowledge through a dialectical process; this knowledge is envisaged as practical, informing the subsequent actions of the enquirer and bringing beneficial results. Although Iamblichus clearly conceives of theurgic divination as operating at higher levels, with the theurgist moving progressively to the top of this continuum, and consequently operating on a supra-rational level rather than through a dialectical process, a similar methodology and set of potential consequences underlies his conception of theurgic divination. According to Iamblichus, theurgic divination brings about a profound change of consciousness in the theurgist, which produces the most beneficial results (primarily the purification, liberation and salvation of the soul but also useful foreknowledge, appropriate order and Beauty itself) while other types of inspired divination achieve practical, beneficial results.¹⁵¹ Iamblichus clearly endorses theurgic divination as the culmination and most complete use of divination, allowing access to divine wisdom which is conceived as subsequently affecting every action of the theurgist.

As discussed in Chapter 5, theurgic divination (divine *μαντική*) allows the theurgist to conjoin himself to the gods and to see all things within the cosmos from a divine perspective by participating in ‘the most blessed intellection of the gods’ (ἡ μακαριωτάτη τῶν θεῶν νόησις).¹⁵² It is conceived of as supra-rational because it enables the theurgist to participate in the intellection of the

¹⁵⁰ Iamblichus, *Letter 5: To Dexippus, On Dialectic*, lines 7–10, 12–15, in Dillon and Polleichtner (2009).

¹⁵¹ The beneficial results of theurgic divination: Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10); 10.4 (289.3–12); 10.5 (291.10–292.3); 10.7 (293.4–8). Cf. also *DM* 2.9 (87.11–14; 88.13–14) on the benefits to humans of epiphanies of the gods; 3.3 (108.6–109.1) on the beneficial results of dream divination in Asclepius’ sanctuaries.

¹⁵² Iamblichus, *DM* 10.4 (289.7; 289.3–5).

gods: this is possible because, according to Iamblichus, truth co-exists in its essence with the gods, because it is based in the intelligible realm.¹⁵³ As a supra-rational phenomenon, theurgic divination is envisaged as encompassing the summit and culmination of intellection while simultaneously transcending it. Thus, rationality and revelation are not envisaged by Iamblichus as mutually exclusive categories, but as inclusive and linked: rationality is seen in itself as a gift from the gods which, if used in the right conditions with the appropriate receptivity, can help to induce or trigger divinatory revelations from the gods, although divination is ultimately caused by the gods themselves.¹⁵⁴ Thus, Iamblichus claims that it is only with the theurgists and 'those who are similarly possessed by the greatest kinds and have genuinely gained union with them' (...τοῖς ὁμοίως ἐχομένοις τῶν κρείττονων γνησίως τε τῆς πρὸς αὐτοὺς ἐνώσεως ἀντιλαμβανομένοις...) that the beginning and end of all good is seriously practised and that this is where visions of truth (ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας θεά) and intellectual understanding (ἡ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐπιστήμης) occur: with knowledge of the gods follows a turning towards and knowledge of ourselves.¹⁵⁵ We have already seen that Iamblichus' account of dream divination (*oneiromancy*) reveals different types of divinatory dreams which chart a progressive continuum of contact with the gods, whereby the ritual practitioner's engagement with intellect assists in producing more perfect forms of divination. Firstly, the intellect contemplates real beings (ὁ νοῦς τὰ ὄντα θεωρεῖ); in the subsequent type, the soul unites its apportioned lots of life and intellectual activity to the universals (τοῖς ὅλοις...συνάπτῃ τὰς μοίρας τῆς ζωῆς καὶ τῆς νοερᾶς ἐνεργείας); in the next stage, the soul weaves together its intellectual and its divine part with higher powers (...τὸ νοερὸν ἑαυτῆς ἡ ψυχὴ καὶ τὸ θεῖον συνυφαίνει τοῖς κρείττοσι...), while in the final stage, the soul refers accounts of things happening to their causes, the gods (...τοὺς λόγους τῶν γιγνομένων ἀνάγῃ πρὸς τοὺς αἰτίους αὐτῶν θεοὺς...).¹⁵⁶ Thus, in Iamblichus' schema, divination is supra-rational rather than irrational.

¹⁵³ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.2 (287.3–4). Cf. also *DM* 3.27 (165.7–8): 'But if, then, divination is truly such a divine work, who would not be ashamed to attribute to it a nature without intellect...?' (Εἰ δὲ τοιοῦτόν ἐστι τὸ ὄντως μαντικὸν θεῖον ἔργον, τίς οὐκ ἂν αἰσχυρθεῖν τὴν ἄνευ διανοίας...).

¹⁵⁴ Iamblichus stringently denies (*DM* 3.20 (149.4–150.2)) that it is because of the soul's own excellence and wisdom that it can share in divine works: this is because he is speaking in a causal sense of the primary causation of the gods in theurgic operations. This implies an *instrumental agency* on the part of the soul in theurgy, as discussed in Chapter 6. In relation to this, Iamblichus claims (*DM* 3.25 [159.10–11]): 'divine possession is a perfection and deliverance of the soul' (ἡ θεοφορία τελειότης καὶ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς.).

¹⁵⁵ Iamblichus, *DM* 10.1 (286.3–10).

¹⁵⁶ Iamblichus, *DM* 3.3 (106.11–108.3). Cf. Chapter 6, pp. 231–236.

Divination by Numbers

We have seen that Iamblichus sets out several kinds of inspired divination which are suitable for the theurgist: oracles, dream divination (*oneiromancy*) and divination by statues. As well as becoming a prophet (*μάντις*) and uttering their own oracles, the theurgist also supports and endorses oracular sanctuaries and other forms of traditional religious cult. However, there are hints in Iamblichean works that the theurgist also used another form of divination: divination by numbers.¹⁵⁷ Although the nature of this form of divination remains obscure, there are allusions to it which suggest its theurgic significance. In *On the Pythagorean Way of Life*, a work commonly accepted to reflect Iamblichus' own theurgic programme and teaching methods, Iamblichus tells us that Pythagoras taught Abaris, the prophet of Apollo discussed above, a new form of divination to replace haruspicy: '... foreknowledge through numbers, believing this to be purer, more divine, and more suitable to the heavenly number of the gods' (...τὴν διὰ τῶν ἀριθμῶν πρόγνωσιν παρέδωκεν, ἡγούμενος ταύτην καθαρωτέραν εἶναι καὶ θειοτέραν καὶ τοῖς οὐρανίοις τῶν θεῶν ἀριθμῶν οἰκειοτέραν...); Iamblichus claims that Pythagoras created this system of divination and worship of the gods from numbers.¹⁵⁸ Pythagoras only taught this kind of divination to Abaris because he had already cultivated his receptivity to a high level and was a prophet of Apollo, suggesting that divination by numbers was a theurgic activity.¹⁵⁹ Furthermore, Pythagoras taught this type of divination to Abaris because '... not wishing to deprive him of his zeal for truth, but to provide him with a more trusty means to it, free of blood and butchery ... produced for him that which is called "all-true", organized by means of arithmetical science' (... βουλούμενος ὁ Πυθαγόρας μὴ ἀφαιρεῖν μὲν αὐτοῦ τὴν εἰς τᾶληθές σπουδὴν, παρασχεῖν δὲ διὰ τινος ἀσφαλεστέρου καὶ χωρὶς αἵματος καὶ σφαγῆς...τὸ λεγόμενον παναληθές ἀπετέλεσεν αὐτῷ, δι' ἀριθμητικῆς ἐπιστήμης συντεταγμένον...¹⁶⁰ Iamblichus claims that Pythagoras considered divination by numbers (clearly a form of inspired divination) to be purer, more divine and a more reliable way of attaining to truth than haruspicy (classified as inductive divination); this accords with Iamblichus' differentiation between inspired and inductive modes of divination. Furthermore, Iamblichus earlier claimed that the Pythagoreans took a serious interest in divination, because they saw this alone as the means of discerning the purpose of the gods.¹⁶¹ This shows that divination by numbers was not primarily a means of foretelling the future, but

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Shaw (1995), 197–198.

¹⁵⁸ Iamblichus, *VP* 19.93; 28.147. Abaris: see above p. 261.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. above p. 261; Iamblichus, *VP* 19.90–91. Cf. also *VP* 28.135; 32.215–217.

¹⁶⁰ Iamblichus, *VP* 28.147.

¹⁶¹ Iamblichus, *VP* 28.138.

a way of discerning the purpose of the gods and aligning oneself with it; this accords very closely with Iamblichus' account of the characteristics of theurgic divination. Although the method and operation of divination by numbers remains obscure, it may well be connected with the use of noetic symbols (σύμβολα) in theurgy: these noetic symbols may well have been mathematical images.¹⁶² Intriguingly, Iamblichus' account of Abaris, a prophet of Apollo, participating in what he would consider to be a high-level form of theurgic divination, raises the issue of the precise relationship between theurgy and religious tradition.

Some Reflections on the Relationship between Theurgy and Religious Tradition

Some scholars tend to bifurcate public and private forms of ritual in Antiquity: this bifurcation is particularly applied to divination rituals and consequently, a division between private ritual (theurgy) and public ritual (traditional religious practices) is often perceived in Iamblichus' theurgic programme.¹⁶³ Yet because theurgy is conceived as a way of life, as well as involving specific ritual practices, traditional religious practices are perfectly compatible with theurgy; in fact, Iamblichus and, later, Proclus bring all traditional cultic worship (Greek, Egyptian and Chaldean), when appropriately conducted, under the aegis of theurgy.¹⁶⁴ Like Porphyry, they saw polytheistic religious worship from all cultures as compatible and complementary ways to the gods and to truth. This is further supported by their use of the term *ιερατική* (roughly translated as 'the priestly art') to describe theurgy, which connotes any traditional cultic system which aims at direct communication with the divine, such as Egyptian religious tradition.¹⁶⁵ Yet, influenced by arguments of a shift in the locus of the divine from holy places to inspired individuals in Late Antiquity, some view this incorporation of traditional religious practices as little more than a superficial manoeuvre designed to legitimise theurgy.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² Cf. Shaw (1995), 189–215.

¹⁶³ Cf. especially Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; 127; Shaw (2012), 97. Others have challenged the bifurcation of private and public rituals in Late Antique religion, especially Frankfurter (2005), 233–251.

¹⁶⁴ As noted by Smith (1974), 122; Fowden (1986), 132; Van Liefferinge (1999), 91, 208–209; O'Meara (2003), 126; Digeser (2009), 85 *contra* Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; Shaw (2012), 97.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Iamblichus, *DM* 1.11 (37.4–6); 1.15 (46.5–6; 48.4); 1.21 (65.2); 3.31 (176.3–6; 178.13.); 4.1 (181.8); 4.2 (184.10); 4.3 (185.1); 4.18 (225.3); 5.20 (228.6); 5.21 (230.2); 5.22 (230.12); 7.5 (258.8); 8.4 (267.7); 8.5 (268.7); 8.8 (271.12); 9.6 (281.1); 10.5 (291.3; 291.10); 10.6 (292.13–14); Proclus, *In Remp.* I.37.11ff. (Kroll); Lewy (1956; repr. 1978), 464–465; Chlup (2012), 168.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. especially Athanassiadi (1993), 115–130.

On the contrary, Iamblichus exhibits tremendous respect for oracular sanctuaries and other forms of traditional religious practice.¹⁶⁷ The idea that the theurgist ultimately has to become a prophet (μάντις) and utter their own oracles neither negates nor compromises his esteem and endorsement of traditional religious practices, including those of oracular sanctuaries. This respect for traditional religion is not superficial but integral to the central nature and purposes of theurgy. Firstly, it is related to the perceived origins of theurgy: Iamblichus (and later Proclus) envisaged theurgy as directly derived from Egyptian and Chaldean religious traditions; for them, theurgy represented a restoration of the old ways, a way of following the ancestors both philosophical (such as Pythagoras) and religious (such as Egyptian priests).¹⁶⁸ Whatever we make of this claim, it is vital to recognise that for Neoplatonic theurgists, this entailed the inherent inclusion of traditional religious practices within the ambit of theurgy. Secondly, the centrality of unbroken continuity and community within the cosmology of theurgy necessarily entails a model of piety and respect for traditional religious practices.¹⁶⁹ As well as envisaging an unbroken continuum of worship, Iamblichus conceptualises the cosmos as an inextricably connected community of gods and humans bound together by divine love.¹⁷⁰ The anthropological equivalent and human manifestation of this divine love, ideally attained by the theurgist, is an all-encompassing friendship (φιλία) and care for humanity (φίλανθρωπία): this includes the provision of effective cultic worship for all humanity.¹⁷¹ Thus, the 'unbroken line of continuity' which forms the foundation of theurgy underlies, exemplifies and provides the rationale for the theurgist's attitude towards religious

¹⁶⁷ *Contra* Athanassiadi (1993), 115–117; 123–124; 127; Shaw (2012), 97.

¹⁶⁸ Cf. Marinus, *Proc.* 18–19; 29–30; 32–33; 36. It is vital to note that while Iamblichus thinks that theurgy derives from Egyptian and Chaldean religious traditions, he claims that theurgy ultimately derives from the gods themselves: cf. *DM* 1.21 (65.3–5). In relation to this, Iamblichus asserts that the Egyptians were the first to be granted participation in the gods: *DM* 7.5 (258.3–5). Fowden (1986), 134–141, connects Iamblichus' theurgic programme with the theurgy of Hermetic circles and books in Egypt, noting that: 'In pointing to the Egyptian origins of Hermeticism, Iamblichus does not seem to have been making any very striking innovation. Since Porphyry had addressed his attack on theurgy to another (fictitious?) Egyptian priest, Anebo, the Egyptian connection was clearly common knowledge – *in fact, it looks as if Egyptian priests were regarded as the authorities par excellence on theurgy*' [my emphasis] (135).

¹⁶⁹ Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 142–143; Chapter 6, p. 236. Divine love: Iamblichus, *DM* 1.12 (42.5–11); 1.14 (44.11–45.3). Cf. Addey (2011b), 322; (2012), 148–167.

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Chapter 4, p. 143; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.8 (28.4–6); 1.9 (31.9–32.6); 3.20 (149.9–150.2); 5.10 (211.12–14); 5.14 (217.4–5; 217.14–218.4); 5.20 (227.1–10); 5.21 (228.11–229.6; 229.10–230.11); 5.24 (235.7–11); 5.26 (240.9–14); O'Meara (2003), 128.

¹⁷¹ Cf. Chapter 4, pp. 142–143; Iamblichus, *DM* 1.19 (59.11–60.6); 5.1 (199.5–10); 5.18 (223.8–225.9); 5.26 (240.9–14); Marinus, *Proc.* 15; 16.20–22; 17; Addey (2011b), 322; (2012), 148–167; O'Meara (2003), 123–128.

practices, as well as his or her political involvement. Indeed, Iamblichus and Proclus envisage the theurgist as the defender, protector and spokesperson for traditional religious practices and civic cult.¹⁷²

Indeed, this integration and attitude is obvious in the lives of Iamblichus and his successors. Eunapius describes the collective performance of sacrificial ritual by Iamblichus and his philosophical community followed by conversation about the gods in keeping with the ritual.¹⁷³ Iamblichus was considered by his followers to have had special access to the gods and to have been divinely inspired in his philosophical teaching and way of life. Olympiodorus' statement about Iamblichus typifies this attitude: 'For he makes these statements as inspired utterances, so to speak, from his watchtower, as is his wont' (ταῦτα γὰρ ἐνθουσιῶν ὡς κατὰ περιωπὴν φησιν, οἷος ἐκείνου θυμός).¹⁷⁴ Eunapius' portrayal of Iamblichus' followers contributes further evidence for the integration of theurgy with traditional religious practices: Aedesius once 'resorted with prayer to a form of oracle in which he placed most trust (it came in a dream), the god appeared in answer to his prayer and made in hexameter verse the response' (καταφυγὼν δὲ ἐπὶ τινα μαντείαν δι' εὐχῆς ἥπερ ἐπίστευε μάλιστα (αὕτη δὲ ἦν δι' ὀνειράτος), ὁ μὲν θεὸς ἐφίστατο πρὸς τὴν εὐχήν, καὶ ἔχρησεν ἐν ἑξαμέτρῳ τόνῳ τάδε·); when Aedesius awoke, he noticed that the back of his hand was covered in writing and followed this oracle scrupulously.¹⁷⁵ In Chapter 1, we met Sosipatra, whose words 'had the same force as an immutable oracle' (...τὰ λεχθέντα οὐδὲν διέφερε τῶν ἀκινήτων μαντειῶν...).¹⁷⁶ Sosipatra, who held a chair in and taught philosophy, neatly exemplifies Iamblichus' notion that the theurgist must become a prophet(ess) (μάντις). Eustathius' and Sosipatra's son, Antoninus, went to Alexandria and eventually settled in Canopus, where he 'wholly dedicated and applied himself to the worship of the gods and to their secret rites' (...τοῖς ἐκείνῃ θεοῖς τε καὶ ἄρρήτοις ἱεροῖς ἀναθεῖς καὶ προσαρμόσας ἑαυτόν) and even prophesied the destruction of the Temple of Sarapis, according to Eunapius, who links his presence to the continued survival and prosperity of the temple.¹⁷⁷ Marinus describes Proclus' piety as involving Chaldean and Orphic purifications and initiations, smoothly combined with stringent observance of ancestral rites and festivals of different peoples and polytheistic cultures.¹⁷⁸ When Marinus describes a theurgic cure of a friend's daughter as effected by Proclus, he maintains that the

¹⁷² Marinus, *Proc.* 18–19.

¹⁷³ Eunapius, *VS* 458–59.

¹⁷⁴ Olympiodorus, *In Phaedonem*, p. 57, 1ff. = Iamblichus, *In Phaedonum* F1. Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 16–17, for Eunapius' account of the religious practices of Iamblichus and his philosophical circle.

¹⁷⁵ Eunapius, *VS* 464–465.

¹⁷⁶ Eunapius, *VS* 469.

¹⁷⁷ Eunapius, *VS* 471–472.

¹⁷⁸ Eunapius, *VS* 458–459; Marinus, *Proc.* 18–19. Cf. Chlup (2012), 173.

philosopher went to the temple of Asclepius and prayed 'in the ancient manner'.¹⁷⁹ These examples demonstrate the integration of theurgy and traditional religious practices.

Traditionally, Neoplatonist claims of inextricable links between theurgy and religious practices have been viewed as a self-constructed claim with little or no historical basis; yet even here caution should be exercised. Chapter 2 examined important parallels between Neoplatonic religious attitudes and contemporary religious practices: Porphyry's claims for important connections between the reception of oracles and mystery cult initiation are paralleled in contemporary oracular practices, particularly in the mystery cult initiation undertaken at the Oracle of Claros prior to oracular consultation. Neoplatonic views of Homeric text as inspired utterance and the corollary that Homer is a divine seer or sage with special knowledge are paralleled in contemporary attitudes towards literature and religion, particularly exemplified by the *Homeromanteia* (Oracles of Homer). Recent scholarship has pointed to the importance of viewing philosophers within their political, social and cultural contexts, rather than envisaging them as separate from local religious contexts.¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Iamblichus himself was descended from a family of Syrian priests. Proclus was initiated into theurgy by Asclepigeneia, the daughter of Plutarch and the granddaughter (or great-granddaughter) of Nestorius, both of whom had handed on the theurgic tradition to her: Nestorius was an active theurgist (at least according to Marinus) and also the hierophant of Eleusis (from c. A.D. 355–380); fascinatingly, the hierophant apparently had a reputation for giving reliable prophecies and acted as a seer.¹⁸¹ The emperor Julian based his restoration of traditional Graeco-Roman religion during his brief reign (A.D. 361–363) on the works of Iamblichus. Thus, Neoplatonist philosophers were not divorced from their religious, cultural, social and political contexts and often played an active role in supporting and maintaining traditional cultic practices.

Conclusion

Iamblichus classifies all types of divination according to the traditional Greek typology which distinguishes between two modes of divination: inspired and inductive. In *De Mysteriis* 3, he categorises these modes of divination according to two criteria: firstly, through a valuation of their proximity to the divine and, secondly, by utilising a conceptual framework of a hierarchical schema

¹⁷⁹ Marinus, *Proc.* 29. Cf. also *Proc.* 18–19; 26; 30; 32–33.

¹⁸⁰ Cf. especially O'Meara (2003); Marx-Wolf (2010), 481–482; 488.

¹⁸¹ Marinus, *Proc.* 28; 12; Eunapius, *VS* 475–476, 493; Zosimus 4.18; Clinton (1974), 43; Burkert (1987), 50; 85; 113–114.

of causation, whereby the causes underlying divination are seen as multiple and operating simultaneously. He distinguishes these modes of divination in accordance with this framework of causation, particularly in relation to their respective primary or ultimate causes. In the case of inspired divination, the ultimate cause is the divine, while the primary cause of inductive divination is human skill. On this basis, Iamblichus maintains the superiority of inspired divination in relation to inductive divination. With regards to inspired divination, Iamblichus delineates the hierarchical schema of causes which operate simultaneously to produce oracles: the divine is the primary cause, while the human soul, intellect and body are lower, auxiliary causes. In doing so, Iamblichus does not deny that human faculties have a role in inspired divination; rather, he claims that they are not the primary cause. However, he implies the significance of these lower, subordinate and auxiliary causes through his emphasis on the importance of the receptivity of the prophet(ess) or theurgist: in his constant reiteration of the fact that these lower causes, the soul and body of the prophet (μάντις), must be in a purified and receptive state in order to fully receive the divine inspiration. Thus these lower causes are crucial for the receptivity of the human μάντις.

Iamblichus' categorisation of inspired divination according to such a schema of causation enables him to endorse the view of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon and as an essential component of theurgic ritual. Since the ultimate cause and principle of inspired divination is the divine, and Iamblichus claims elsewhere that the divine is the same as the intellectual, a view of inspired divination as a supra-rational phenomenon emerges from his account of divination. This type of divination is viewed as being supra-rational, in the sense of transcending rationality rather than lacking it. The role of inspired divination within theurgy is soteriological: it is 'a stage on the way to mystical union'.¹⁸² The goal of inspired divination and theurgy was divinisation: the theurgist attempted to ascend to the noetic realm, in order to achieve union with the divine and to fully awaken to his or her own divinity. Furthermore, inspired divination acts as a sign or manifestation of divine assimilation and divinisation: as the theurgist progressively becomes divinised, so this divinisation (and the theurgist's increasingly closer relationship with divine providence, will and love) is expressed through the utterance of oracles, the words of the gods.

Thus, the theurgist must become their own prophet(ess) (μάντις), but always with a consciousness of their own nothingness that entails and spontaneously elicits a humble and respectful approach towards the gods and all of the greater kinds (angels – heroes – *daimones*), the ancestors (especially philosophical ancestors) and the temples they built in honour of the gods, which of course especially includes oracular sanctuaries. The very essence of theurgy, conceived as operating according to an unbroken continuity which extends throughout the

¹⁸² Athanassiadi (1993), 120.

cosmos, entails an inclusive attitude towards all of humanity; Iamblichus stresses repeatedly the unitive power of theurgy and it is precisely this ethos which underlies the theurgist's manifestation of the Good. Iamblichus and Proclus constantly exhibit such enthusiasm for the significance of cultic worship for all of humanity.