

1. Overview

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5.1. A revised model	Syrianus (d. c. 437), Alexandria	Soul (ψυχή)
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	Aedesia (5 th century), Alexandria	
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	Damascius (c. 458-aft. 538), Damascus	
	Olympiodorus (c. 500-560), Alexandria	

2. The Neoplatonic Socrates: A Plurality

- (a) Embodied, social 'gadfly of the city' (*Apology*, *Alc. I*, *Gorgias*)
- (b) Ascetic withdrawal from embodied perceptions and appetites (*Phaedo*)
- (c) Contemplator of Forms, striving for likeness to the divine (*Symposium*, *Theaetetus*)
- (d) Inspired figure possessed by the divine, in music, ritual, prophecy, love (*Phaedrus*)

[T1] Socrates at Plato, *Apology* 30e-31b. [30e] I've literally been attached to the city, as if to a large thoroughbred horse that was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be awakened by some sort of gadfly (μύωπός τινος)... [31b] always minding *your* business (ὑμέτερον πράττειν αἰεί), visiting each of you in private, like a father or elder brother, to persuade you to care about virtue (ἀρετῆς). (Reeve)

[T2] Agathon at Plato, *Symposium* 175b-d. Leave [Socrates] alone; it's one of his habits (ἔθος ... ἔχει): every now and then he just goes off like that and stands motionless (ἀποστάς ὅποι ἂν τύχῃ ἕστηκεν), wherever he happens to be. [175c-d] Socrates, come lie down next to me. If I touch you, I might catch a bit of the wisdom that came to you under my neighbour's porch. Clearly you've found it, and you're holding onto it now; if you hadn't, you'd still be standing there. [Compare *Alc.* at 220c-e; and broadly 220a-221c]. (Nehamas-Woodruff).

[T3] Socrates at Plato, *Theaetetus* 173e. It is in reality only his body that lives and sleeps in the city. His mind, having come to the conclusions that all these things are of little or no account, spurns them and pursues its winged way, as Pindar says, throughout the universe... (Levet-Burnyeat)

[T4] Xen., *Mem.* 1.2.3. [Socrates] himself never neglected his body, and he reproved such neglect in others...

[T5] Socrates at Plato, *Phaedo* 67c-d. And does purification (κάθαρσις) not turn out to be what we mentioned in our argument some time ago... to separate (χωρίζειν) the soul as far as possible from the body and accustom (ἐθίσαι) it to gather itself and collect itself (συναγείρεσθαι τε καὶ ἀθροίζεσθαι) out of every part of the body and to dwell by itself (μόνην καθ' αὐτήν) as far as it can... freed... from the bonds of the body? (Reeve)

[T6] Socrates at Plato, *Phaedr.* 234d-256b. [234d] It's a miracle... I'm in ecstasy (ἐκπλήσσω)... [235cd] I followed your lead, and following you I shared your Bacchic frenzy [...] [241d] I was filled, like an empty jar, by the words of others streaming in through my ears... [241e] Don't you realize that the Nymphs to whom you so cleverly exposed me will take complete possession of me? [244a] The best things we have come from madness (μανία), when it is given as a gift of the god... [Socrates outlines prophetic, ritual, and musical forms of mania, and delivers his Palinode to *Erōs* as a positive mania] [256b] There is no greater good than this [mania of *erōs*] that either human self-control or divine madness can offer a person. (Nehamas-Woodruff)

3. The Scale of Virtues

[T7] Plato, *Tht.* 176a-b. The flight is to become like god, as far as possible: and likeness is becoming just and holy, with wisdom. (φυγῇ δὲ ὁμοίωσις θεῷ κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν: ὁμοίωσις δὲ δίκαιον καὶ ὅσιον μετὰ φρονήσεως γενέσθαι).

Sources: Damascius *On Phaedo* 1.138-44, augmented by Olympiodorus *On Phaedo* 8.2-4¹

No.	Sources	Level	Tier of <i>aretē</i>		Description		Reading	
7	Iamblichus	Beyond Philosophy	Hieratic (<i>hieratikē</i>)	Inspired (<i>enthousiastikē</i>)	Ritual praxis	Divine inspiration	<i>Orphica, Chald. Or.</i>	<div>↑ Increasing Unity</div>
6	Plotinus & Porphyry		Paradigmatic (<i>paradeigmatikē</i>)		<i>Nous</i> containing Forms (Plotinus) Union of soul with <i>nous</i> reaching Intelligibles (after Iamblichus)		Pl. <i>Tim.</i> , <i>Parm.</i>	
5		Philosophy	Contemplative (<i>theōrētikē</i>)		Soul's <i>logos</i> as <i>nous</i> witnessing Forms		Pl. <i>Symp, Tht.</i>	
4			Purificatory (<i>kathartikē</i>)		Soul's <i>logos</i> withdrawing from <i>alogos</i> faculties, cultivating single-pointed attention. → <i>Apatheia</i> .		Pl. <i>Phd.</i>	
3			Civic (<i>politikē</i>)		Soul's <i>logos</i> harmonizing faculties: <i>Logos, thumos, epithumia</i> → <i>Metriopatheia</i> .		Pl. <i>Alc., Grg., Rep.</i>	
2		Iamblichus	Before Philosophy	Habituated (<i>ēthikē</i>)		Tenuously virtuous dispositions caused by habit & upbringing.		
1		Natural (<i>phusikē</i>)		Virtuous dispositions from natural temperament (<i>krasis</i>)		Pl. <i>Legg.</i>		

4. Absorption and Action in Alternation: Earlier Neoplatonism

[T8] Porphyry, *De Abstinencia* 1.41. Why should we make the passions (πάθη) wither and ourselves die to them, why should we practise this every day, if it were possible (as some have argued) for us to be active in accordance with intellect while we are involved in mortal concerns that are unsupervised by the intellect? [...] **Where there is sensation and apprehension of sensation** (αἴσθησις καὶ ταύτης ἀντίληψις), there is detachment from the intelligible (τοῦ νοητοῦ ἢ ἀπόστασις); and inasmuch as non-rationality (ἄλογίας) is aroused, to that extent there is detachment from intellection. It is not possible, when being carried hither and thither, to be there despite being here. **We pay attention not with part of ourselves but with all of ourselves** (οὐ γὰρ μέρει ἡμῶν, ἀλλ' ὅλοι τὰς προσοχὰς ποιούμεθα). (Clark, adapted)

¹ **Background:** Plato, *Tht.* 176B & *Rep.* 500C–D (likeness to God); *Rep.* 441D–443B & *Phaedo* 82A–B ('civic' virtues); *Phaedo* 69C ('purificatory' virtues); Aristotle, *EN* 2.1, 1103a14–18 and 6.13, 1144b9 ('natural' & 'habituated' virtues, & distinction from practical wisdom); Aristotle, *EN* 10.7, 1177a12–24 ('contemplative' virtue). **Sources:** Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.2; Porphyry, *Sent.* 32; Iamblichus, *On Virtues* [lost]; Macrobius, *Somn. Scip.* 1.8,5; Hierocles, *carm. aur.* 422b5–9; Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 3; Ammonius, *in Int.* 135,19–32; Philoponus *in Cat.* 141.25–142.3; Damascius *On Phaedo* 1.138–44; Olymp. *On Phaedo* 8.2–4 and *On Alc.* 172,5–12; on curriculum, Ammonius, *in Cat.* 6.9–20; Philoponus, *in Cat.* 5.34–6.2; Olymp., *Prol.* 9.14–30; Simplicius, *in Cat.* 6.6–15 and *On Epict.* 2.30–3.2. **Studies:** Chiaradonna 2021 ('Ethics and the Hierarchy of Virtues'). See Finamore 2021, Baltzly 2004, Dillon 1996, O'Meara 2013 and 2012, Tarrant 2007. On curriculum, Hoffmann 1987, Griffin 2014 and 2016, Intro. Westerink 1976, 116–18 (n. ad. Olymp. *in Phaed.* 8.2), offers a summary of textual sources.

[T9] Porphyry, *Life of Plotinus* 8,7-24. [Plotinus] was wholly concerned with mind (νοῦς)... Even if he was talking to someone, engaged in continuous conversation, he kept his train of thought. He could take his necessary part in the conversation to the full, and at the same time keep his mind fixed (τηρεῖν τὴν διάνοιαν) without a break on what he was considering (σκέψαι). When the person he had been talking to was gone... he went straight on with what came next, keeping the connection... In this way he was present both to himself and to others, and never relaxed his self-turned attention (πρὸς ἑαυτὸν προσοχή) except in sleep.

[T10] Plato, *Rep.* 6, 500c-501b. Then the philosopher... becomes as divine and orderly as a human being can... and if he should come to be compelled to make a practice—in private and in public—of stamping what he sees there into the people's characters, instead of shaping (πλάττειν) only his own, do you think he will be a poor craftsman of moderation, justice, and the whole of popular virtue? —Not at all. — ... Will they be harsh with philosophers... when we say there is no way a city can ever find well-being (εὐδαιμονία) unless its plan is drawn by painters who use the divine model (θεῖος παράδειγμα)... they would take the city and people's habitual characters (πόλις τε καὶ ἥθη) as their sketching-slate... —as they work, they would look often in each direction (ἐκατέρωσ' ἀποβλέπειν): on the one hand, toward what is in its nature just, beautiful, temperate, and all the rest; and on the other, toward what they are trying to put into human beings... until they had made people's characters as dear to the gods as possible. (Tr. after Reeve)

5. Absorption and Action in Unison: Later Platonism

[T11] Damascius *On Phaedo* 1.144. [Lists (1) natural, (2) habitative, (3) civic, (4) purificatory, (5) contemplative, and (6) paradigmatic virtues] Lastly, there are (7) the hieratic virtues, which belong to the godlike (θεοειδές) part of the soul; they correspond to all the categories mentioned above, with the difference that while the others are existential, these are unitary (ἀντιπαρήκουσαι πάσαις ταῖς εἰρημέναις οὐσιώδεσιν οὐσαις ἐνιαίαι γε ὑπάρχουσαι). This kind, too, has been outlined by Iamblichus, and discussed more explicitly by the school of Proclus. [Ed. and tr. Westerink 1977, lightly adapted; repr. PT 2009]

[T12] Damascius *On Phaedo* 1.172. To some philosophy has primary value (προτιμῶσιν), as to Porphyry and Plotinus and a great many other philosophers; to others, hieratic practice, as to Iamblichus, Syrianus, Proclus, and the hieratic school generally. Plato, however, recognizing that strong arguments can be advanced from both sides, has united the two into one single truth by calling the philosopher a 'Bacchus' [...] (After Wk)

[T13] Olympiodorus, *On Phaedo* 8.2. ... Let us enumerate the degrees of virtues. They are five ... [(1) natural, (2) habitative, (3) civic, (4) purificatory, (5) contemplative]. Plotinus holds that there is (6) another degree... that of the paradigms. There are... our soul is at first illuminated by *nous*... then becomes in a way identical with the source of the illumination and acts unifically according to the paradigmatic virtues (ἐνοειδῶς ἐνεργεῖ κατὰ τὰς παραδειγματικές, 8.2.18-19; not 'in union with the One' with Wk]. The object of philosophy is to make us νοῦς, that of theurgy to unite us with the intelligible principles and conform our activity to the paradigms.

[T14] Marinus, *Life of Proclus* 3. First, let us divide the virtues into their kinds, [1] the natural, [2] the ethical and [3] the political, and again those which transcend these, [4] the purificatory, [5] the contemplative, and [6] those that are called theurgic, while as to [7] those that are higher even than these we shall keep silence, because they exceed the human condition. (After Edwards)

5.1. A revised proposal for the scale

[T15] Olympiodorus, *On Alcibiades* 172,5–12. '[S]elf-knowledge' is said in many ways (πολλαχῶς ἐστὶ γινῶναι ἑαυτὸν): it is possible (ο) to know oneself with respect to one's external [possessions]; and of course it is possible (1) to know oneself with respect to one's body; and it is possible (3) to know oneself as a civic or social person (πολιτικῶς), when one knows oneself in the tripartition of one's soul [as reason, spirited-emotion, and appetite in harmony]; and it is possible (4) to know oneself as a purificatory person (καθαρτικῶς), when one knows oneself in the act of liberation from the affections (πάθη); and (5) it is possible to know oneself as a

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contemplative person (θεωρητικῶς), when a person contemplates himself as liberated (ἀπολελυμένον ἑαυτόν); (6) it is possible to know oneself theologically (θεολογικῶς), when a person knows himself according to his paradigmatic Form (τὴν ἰδέαν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ); and (7) it is possible to know oneself in an inspired sense (ἐνθουσιαστικῶς), when a person knows oneself according to unity (κατὰ τὸ ἓν) and, thus bonded to his proper god, acts with inspiration (συναπτόμενος τῷ οἰκείῳ θεῷ ἐνθουσιᾷ). [Cp. *On Alc.* 20,4-13: choose the walk of life ‘according to essence’, ‘natural’, bonded with one’s god]. (Griffin 2014 & 2016)

[T16] Hermias *On Phaedrus* 88,17-31. And there is [yet] another [part of the soul] above this that is the highest and most unified [part] (ἀκρότατον... ἐνικώτατον) of the entire soul, that wants what is good for all things and always devotes itself to the gods and is ready to bring about whatever they wish. This is called One of the soul (ἓν... τῆς ψυχῆς) and bears the image (ἰδάλμα) of the One above being (ὑπερουσίου ἑνός), giving unity to the entire soul. (Baltzly-Share 2018 & forthcoming)

[T17] Proclus *On Cratylus* §113, 65,20-26. And proceeding even higher than this [region], they have been able to reveal the limit of the intelligible gods only by name and indicate the beings beyond, since they are ineffable and incomprehensible, by analogy alone. This is because even at the intelligible level itself of the gods only this God who encompasses the paternal order is said by wise men to be nameable, and **theurgy ascends all the way to this order**. (Duvick 2007)

[T18] Hermias *On Phaedrus* 89,14-19. So the inspiration that is primarily and properly speaking and truly from gods occurs in connection with this one of the soul that is above discursive thought and above the intellect in it [sc. in the soul]—a one that is at other times [sc. in the absence of inspiration] like someone who is exhausted and asleep [cf. Plotinus *Enn.* 1.4.9-10]. But when this one is illuminated, the whole of life—the intellect, discursive thought, the irrational [part of the soul] (ἄλογία)—is illuminated and a reflection (ἰδάλμα) of the inspiration is granted all the way [down] to the body itself. (Tr. Baltzly-Share, adapted)

[T19] Hermias’ Inspirations (summarizing *On Phaedrus* 88,15-96,24)

Scale of Inspirations	Inward activity	Outward activity	Scale of Virtues
Inspiration of Erōs	Fusing unity with a god’s	Love	Paradigmatic virtue
Inspiration of Apollo	Bringing psychē to unity	Prophetic activity	Contemplative virtue
Inspiration of Dionysus	Making a whole of psychē	Ritual activity	Purificatory virtue
Inspiration of the Muses	Harmonizing psychē	Music, rhythm	Civic virtue

[T20] Plotinus, *Enn.* 1.4.10. Why should not mind (νοῦς) itself be active [without sensation], and also its attendant soul (ψυχή), which comes before sensation and any sort of apprehension (ἀντίληψις)? There must be an activity prior to apprehension if ‘thinking (νοεῖν) and being are the same’ [Parmenides fr. B3]. It seems as if apprehension exists and is produced when the activity of mind bends back again (ἀνακάμπτειν) and when whatever in the life of the soul is active in thinking νοεῖν is in a way projected back, as happens with a mirror-reflection when there is a smooth, bright, untroubled surface. (After Armstrong)

5.2. Contemplation in Action by Inspiration

[T21] Hermias, *On Phaedrus* 77,20-78,7. [77,20-25] [T]he gods for their part conduct their own secondary and tertiary activities *while remaining in their own primary activities and not departing from them*. But *if* a person, while projecting (προβάλλων) a secondary or tertiary activity from within himself, abandons (ἀφίσταται) his primary [activity], or even forgets about it, then he errs (ἀμαρτάνει)... [78,4-7] **For Socrates, the ascent (ἀνοδος) to his own first principles, i.e. to contemplation, is very easy and smooth. In the first place, he didn’t abandon his primary activity when projecting the secondary one (πρώτον μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲ τὴν δευτέραν ἐνέργειαν προβάλλων ἀφίστατο τῆς πρώτης)....** (After Baltzly-Share, my emphasis)

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[T22] **Hermias *On Phaedrus* 93,19-30.** Originally and at first the soul was united with the gods and that 'one' of its was joined to (συνήπτο) the gods. Then, withdrawing from that divine union, it descended to intellect (νοῦς) and no longer possessed [all] there is (τὰ ὄντα) in a unified manner and in one but gazed upon it and saw it by means of simple apprehensions (ἀπλᾶς ἐπιβολαῖς) and, as it were, direct contacts [on the part] of its mind (θίξεσι τοῦ νοῦ). Then, withdrawing from intellect too and descending to reasoning and discursive thought (διάνοια), it no longer gazed upon it by means of simple apprehensions either, but by moving syllogistically and step by step and one thing after another from premisses to conclusions. Then, departing too from pure reasoning and the psychic mode (ιδιώματος), it descended into generation and was infected with great irrationality and confusion. It must, then, return once more to its own origins and go back once more to the place whence it descended. And in this ascent and restoration these four types of madness assist it.... (After Baltzly-Share)

[T23] **Hermias *On Phaedrus* 58,19-59,25.** [F]or ways of life of ours that are appropriate and of a particular kind, appropriate irradiations and inspirations are granted us from the gods, and we are familiarized (οἰκειούμεθα) to different gods at different times according to the nature of our life... **So, since the present life of Socrates is purificatory (καθαρτική) and elevating** (for he wishes to save the young man and remove him from [the spell of] the beauty in [the realm of] generation, or external beauty, and since the Nymphs and Dionysus are overseers of generation, **on that account he declares that he is inspired by the Nymphs, or Nymph-possessed (νυμφόληπτος)**... as if he had offered up his life to the gods that oversee generation and was receiving inspiration from that source... because... **he is susceptible to the reception of more complete and divine illuminations (εἰς τὴν τῶν τελειοτέρων καὶ θεῶν ἐλλάμψεων ὑποδοχὴν).** Perceptions and mental representations (φαντασίαι) **are suppressed when more perfect [forces] are working on them....** [Socrates said he is talking in dithyrambs because of Dionysus, and] Dionysus... creates the enmattered forms for a second time and prepares all generation to go forth. (After Baltzly-Share) [Purificatory virtue arises from his inspiration from Dionysus; note with Olymp. *On Phaedo* 4.3 that the purificatory sees sense-objects and Forms].

[T24] ***Chaldaean Oracles* fr. 1.** You must not perceive it intently, but keeping the pure eye of your soul turned away, you should extend an empty mind (κενὸν νόον) toward the intelligible (νοητόν) in order to comprehend it, since it exists outside of mind (νοῦς). (After Majercik)

[T25] **Olympiodorus *On Alcibiades* 63,11-64,1.** If learning is sometimes superior to discovery—for instance, when we learn from gods through dreams—we should recognize that in this situation, activity motivated by another is actually preferable to activity motivated by oneself; for it benefits us to be led by a god rather than by ourselves.

[T26] **Plotinus, *Enn.* 6.9.10,19–21.** ... the vision is hard to put into words. For how could one announce that as 'another' when he did not see, there when he had the vision, another, but one with himself? (διὸ καὶ δύσφραστος τὸ θέαμα· 20 πῶς γὰρ ἂν ἀπαγγεῖλαι τις ὥς ἕτερον οὐκ ἰδὼν ἐκεῖ ὅτε ἐθεᾶτο ἕτερον, ἀλλὰ ἐν πρὸς ἑαυτόν;) (Armstrong)