

Final report for the TE project
„Self-constitution and discursive mediation in Late Neoplatonism “
PN-II-RU-TE-2014-4-0569
Project director: Dr. Marilena Vlad
October 2015-November 2017

Between October 2015 and November 2017, our team has researched the theme of self-constitution in late Neoplatonism as well as the related theme of discursive mediation. These results of our research are:

- 13 specialized articles (of which 8 have already been published or are accepted for publication)
- 1 edited special journal
- 2 organized workshops (of which an international one and a national one)
- 14 presentations held at conferences (including 9 international and 6 national)
- 2 translations

13 SPECIALIZED ARTICLES (of which 8 have already been published or are accepted for publication)

Articles published or accepted for publication:

1. Marilena Vlad, „Stepping into the Void: Proclus and Damascius on Approaching the First Principle“, in: *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*, Volume 11 (2017), Issue 1, pp. 44–68, DOI: 10.1163/18725473-12341364 (**Web of Science / ISI Thomson**)
2. Marilena Vlad, „Defying words: Damascius and the Travail of the unsayable“, in *Chôra – Revue d’Études Anciennes et Médiévales, La médiation discursive dans le néoplatonisme*, vol. 14 / 2016, pp. 223-250 (**BDI**)
3. Andrei Timotin, „Langage discursif et non discursif chez Plotin. A propos d’Enn. IV, 3 [27], 18“, in: *Chôra – Revue d’Études Anciennes et Médiévales, La médiation discursive dans le néoplatonisme*, vol. 14 / 2016, pp. 127-137 (**BDI**)
4. Marilena Vlad, „Parler de Dieu et parler à Dieu: Damascius et Denys l’Aréopagite sur le rôle de la discursivité“, in *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 2017 (**BDI, accepted/ forthcoming**)
5. Marilena Vlad, „Denys l’Aréopagite et le principe donateur de bien“, in *Chôra – Revue d’Études Anciennes et Médiévales*, vol. 15 / 2017 (**BDI – accepted/ forthcoming**)

6. Marilena Vlad, „Self-constitution and constituting gifts in Dionysius’ perspective on angels“, in Luc Brisson, Seamus O’Neill, Andrei Timotin (ed.), *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels* (Leiden: Brill), 2018 (**peer-reviewed volume – accepted/ forthcoming**)
7. Andrei Timotin, „Hiérarchies théologiques, hiérarchies physiques. Lectures médio-platoniciennes du *Timée*“, in Chiara Tommasi Moreschini, Luciana G. Soares Santoprete and Helmut Seng (eds.), *Hierarchie und Ritual: Zur philosophischen Spiritualität der Spätantike*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter („Bibliotheca Chaldaica“ 7), 2017 (**accepted/ forthcoming**)
8. Daniela Tarba, „Plotinus: Self-awareness and The Ascension on The Ladder of Truth“, *Romanian Journal of Social Science*, vol. II, issue no. 4, 2018 (**accepted/ forthcoming**)

SPECIAL JOURNAL EDITED

Chora. Revue d’études anciennes et médiévales, nr. 14 / 2016 (BDI). Scientific dossier entitled „Médiation discursive dans le néoplatonisme“, directed by Marilena Vlad

CONFERENCES:

1. Marilena Vlad: „Parler de Dieu et parler à Dieu: Damascius et Denys l’Aréopagite sur le rôle de la discursivité“, Fribourg University, Switzerland, 21 March 2016
2. Marilena Vlad: „L’être premier chez Proclus et Denys l’Aréopagite“, at the conference: *Les Eléments de théologie et le Livre des causes du Ve au XVIIe siècle*, Paris, Sorbonne, France, 14-16 April 2016
3. Marilena Vlad, „Damascius și traviiliile gândirii“ (“Damascius and the Travails of Thinking”), at the workshop „Medierea discursivă în neoplatonism“ (“Discursive Mediation in Neoplatonism”), ICUB, Bucharest, 17 December, 2016
4. Marilena Vlad, „The self-constituted being. Proclus and Damascius“, at the 15th annual conference for the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), 14-17 June 2017, Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic
5. Andrei Timotin, „The Causality of the First Principle and the Theory of Two Acts in Plotinus, Enn. V 4 (7)“, 15th annual conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), 14th-17th of June, 2017, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic
6. Andrei Timotin, „Câteva remarci despre natura limbajului la Plotin“ („Some Remarks about the Nature of Language in Plotinus“), at the workshop „Medierea discursivă în

- neoplatonism“ (“Discursive Mediation in Neoplatonism”), ICUB, Bucharest, 17 December, 2016
7. Daniela Tarbă, „Self-constitution of the One in Plotinus’ view“, at the 15th annual conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), 14-17 June, 2017, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic
 8. Daniela Tarbă, „Plotinus: Looking towards The Beautiful. Self-awareness and the ascension on the ladder of truth through Eros“, *International Interdisciplinary Doctoral Conference*, Bucharest, 1 October 2016
 9. Daniela Tarbă: „Puterea de seducție a frumosului la Plotin“ („The Power of Seduction of the Beautiful in Plotinus“), at the conference *Visual Culture*, Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bucharest, 28 June 2016
 10. Daniela Tarbă, „Condiționarea discursivă a sensibilității în Timaios“ („Discursive Conditioning of the sensibility in the *Timaeus*“), at the workshop “Discursive Mediation in the Neoplatonism”, ICUB, Bucharest, 17 December, 2016
 11. Gheorghe Pașcalău, „Der Begriff der geistigen Zeit im antiken Platonismus“ („The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism“), at the doctoral colloquium directed by Prof. Dr. Jens Halfwassen, Heidelberg University, 27 April, 2017
 12. Gheorghe Pașcalău, „Time as a Self-Constituted Intellect in the Philosophy of Proclus“, at the 15th annual conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), 14-17 June 2017, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic
 13. Gheorghe Pașcalău, „Die Zeit als Leben der Seele in der Philosophie Plotins“ („Time as Life of the Soul in Plotin’s Philosophy“), at the workshop organized by Prof. Dr. Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler (University of Göttingen), Goslar, 6-8 September 2017
 14. Gheorghe Pașcalău, „Sensibilitate și intelect ca mediere a adevărului teologic în gândirea împăratului Iulian“ („Sensibility and Intellect as Mediation of the Theological Truth in Emperor Julian’s Thinking “), at the workshop „Discursive Mediation in Neoplatonism“, ICUB, Bucharest, 17 December, 2016

ORGANIZED WORKSHOPS

1. „Medierea discursivă în neoplatonism“ („Discursive Mediation in Neoplatonism“), ICUB, Bucharest, 17 December, 2016
2. Panel „Self-Constitution and Self-Knowledge in the Neoplatonic Tradition“, at the 15th annual conference of the International Society for Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS), 14-17 June 2017, Palacky University Olomouc, Czech Republic

TRANSLATIONS:

Simplicius, *Corolarului despre timp (Corollary on Time)*, translation by Gheorghe Pașcalău

Emperor Julian, *Discursul în cinstea zeului Soare (Oration to the Sun)*, translation by Gheorghe Pașcalău

Below, we will present the detailed work of each member of the team, concentrating on the papers that have already been published or accepted for publication.

MARILENA VLAD – PROJECT DIRECTOR

The activity of the project director resulted in 4 conferences (including 3 international and one national), 6 specialized articles, a panel organized at an international conference abroad, a national workshop, a dossier edited in an international journal.

1. A first conference entitled „Parler de Dieu et Parler à Dieu: Damascius et Denys l'Aéopagite sur le rôle de la discoursivité“ was given at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland, on 21 March 2016. This conference was later extended and transformed into an article, which was accepted in the *Revue philosophique et théologique de Fribourg* (BDI). In this article, M. Vlad discusses a problem that equally concerns Damascus and Dionysius the Areopagite, but which the two thinkers approach differently. The first principle is inaccessible in itself. We are, however, supposed to approach it in some way, even if we try to describe it as inaccessible. In this sense, the article shows that there is a common theme linking the perspectives of the two authors, namely the idea that the primordial principle (God) is „wonderful“ (*thaumastos*), precisely because he cannot accept any names and cannot be caught in any discursive description.

2. The second international conference held by M. Vlad was entitled “L’être premier chez Proclus et Denys l’Aréopagite”. This conference was held in the framework of the colloquium “*Les Eléments de théologie et le Livre des causes* du Ve au XVIIe siècle”, April 14-16, Paris, Sorbonne. In this context, M. Vlad exposed the difficulties inherent in the attempt to capture, through the discourse, the first being in Proclus’ thinking, and the way in which the Neoplatonic paradigm of thought changes in Dionysius the Areopagite. The communication focused on the issue of being, as it appears in Proclus's *Elements of Theology* and Dionysius’ *Divine Name*. The aim was to identify some common doctrinal points, but also the radical discontinuity between the two perspectives.

3. The third conference by M. Vlad, was entitled „Damascus and the Travails of Thinking“ and was held at the workshop „Discursive Mediation in Neoplatonism“, ICUB, Bucharest, December 17, 2016. This conference was the starting point for the article „Defying

words: Damascius and the Travail of the Unsayable“, published in *Chôra - Revue d'Études Anciennes et Médiévales*, vol 14/2016, pp. 223-250 (BDI). This article focuses on the first principle in Damascius' thinking. The problem is to know to what extent discursiveness - the fact of talking about this principle - affects the principle itself and our way of accessing it. The article analyzes the way in which Damascius understands his own discourse and how he uses the inappropriateness of the discourse in order to obtain the consciousness of the principle. The principle is not described, but rather manifested through a genuine „labor“ of thought. M. Vlad analyzed the manners of this labor, in order to show how precisely it manifests, without receiving a concrete expression that would risk turning it into an object of our thinking. The conclusion of the article is that labor is not the sign of impossibility to seize the principle. On the contrary, it is an indirect, non-descriptive, but technical and rigorous manner, in which we can capture the presence of the inaccessible principle of the discourse.

4. M. Vlad published an article entitled „Stepping into the Void: Proclus and Damascius on the Approach to the First Principle“ in the *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition*, Volume 11 (2017), Issue 1, pp. 44-68, DOI: 10.1163 / 18725473-12341364 (Web of Science / ISI Thomson). In this article, M. Vlad focuses on the issue of discursive mediation and analyzes the effect that the primal principle has on our discourse. It is a phenomenon that Proclus and Damascius call „the advancement into the void“, but which the two philosophers interpret differently. In order to prove this, M. Vlad analyzes the idea of „advancing into the void“, which can be traced to Plotinus. This idea radically differentiates Proclus' and Damascius' philosophical perspectives. Thus, Proclus warns that speaking of the first principle, taking it as the object of thought, is in fact a negative way of „advancing into the void“, which should be avoided. On the contrary, Damascius begins his approach from Proclus' warning and tries to show that the only appropriate means in which we can discover the absolute principle is precisely through this „advancement into the void“, but this time in a positive sense, namely as a constant attempt to understand that the principle overturns our discourse.

5. Another article authored by M. Vlad is entitled „Denys l'Aréopagite et le principe donateur de bien“ and was accepted for publication in *Chôra – Revue d'Études Anciennes et Médiévales*, vol. 15 / 2017. This article discusses the perspective of Dionysius the Areopagite regarding the problem of the absolute Good. It begins with a short outline of the main Neoplatonic ideas concerning the identity between the One and the Good. Then, it shows how, in Dionysius' thinking, the role of the Good changes. The Good appears as the source of all procession and it acquires more and more names, as the procession advances. It also shows the reverting manner in which these names (goodness, light, beauty and love) act.

6. The article „Self-constitution and constituting gifts in Dionysius’ perspective on angels“ was accepted for publication in the volume Luc Brisson, Seamus O’Neill, Andrei Timotin (eds.), *Neoplatonic Demons and Angels*, Brill, 2018. This paper discusses Dionysius’ views on how the Godhead constitutes the first intelligible beings, i.e. the angels, what it means for angels to receive the constitutive gift of their own being, and whether they can renounce it. For Proclus, intelligible beings are capable of self-constitution, which guarantees their self-sufficiency and allows them to determine their own manner of being. Though they do not have the capacity of self-constitution, angels in Dionysius’ perspective receive from God, together with the gift of their constitution, the ability to act freely. These gifts are not contingent, but constitutive – hence, they cannot be deposed –; nonetheless, they do not limit or constrain the receiver to be or to act in a determined manner.

7. M. Vlad did the editorial work for a specialized dossier entitled „Médiation discursive dans le néoplatonisme“, published in *Chora. Revue d’études anciennes et médiévales*, which includes the following papers: Dominic O’Meara, „Souls and Cities in Late Ancient Platonic Philosophy“; Pauliina Remes, „Plotinus on Starting Points of Reasoning“; Anca Vasiliu, „Penser l’Un ou la limite de la médiation selon Plotin“; David Ellis, „Living a Double Life: Intellect, Soul, and Language in Plotinus“; Francis Lacroix, „Logismos et dianoia chez Plotin“; Andrei Timotin, „Langage discursif et non-discursif chez Plotin. À propos de l’Ennéade IV, 3 [27], 18“; Alain Lernoùld, „La διάνοια chez Proclus: pensée et discursivité“; David Vachon, „Contemplation et théurgie: les facultés de l’âme au-delà de la pensée discursive chez Proclus“; Lela Alexidze, „Dianoia in Ioane Petritsi’s Commentary on Proclus’ Elements of Theology“; Carolle Metry-Tresson, „Comment l’âme peut saisir l’un: l’anagogie damascienne comme transgression de l’apophasis“; Marilena Vlad, „Defying Words: Damascius and the Travail of the Unsayable“.

8. M. Vlad organized a workshop at the Research Institute of the University of Bucharest (ICUB), 19 December 2016. Within this framework, each member of the team presented a paper related to the project theme. Also, at this workshop were invited several young researchers with related interests.

9. M. Vlad organized a panel entitled „Self-Constitution and Self-Knowledge in the Neoplatonic Tradition“, within the framework of the 15th Conference of the International Society of Neoplatonic Studies (ISNS) June 17, 2017, Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic.

ANDREI TIMOTIN – POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHER

Andrei Timotin’s work in the project materialized in two conferences and four articles.

1. A. Timotin published an article entitled „Langage discursif et non-discursif chez Plotin. À propos de *l'Ennéade* IV, 3 [27], 18“, in *Chôra. Revue d'études anciennes et médiévales*, 14/ 2016. In *Enn.* IV, 3 [27], 18, Plotinus analyzes two related problems – concerning the entrance of the soul into the body and the theory of the undescended soul –: the use of reasoning and the use of language in the intelligible world. He explains in this context that both λογισμός and discursive language are inappropriate for the intelligible universe; they characterize the part of the soul that does not abide in the intelligible and is oriented towards the sensible world. This study shows that Plotinus seems to consider, in the same context, a non-discursive type of λογισμός compatible with the condition of the undescended soul. It also shows that in *Enn.* V, 8 [31] and V, 1 [10] Plotinus considers a non-discursive form of language, which is related to the Egyptian symbolic writing and to prayer. This approach is anticipated by Plutarch in an exegetical context where he seeks to explain how Socrates could communicate with his daimon.

2. A. Timotin also wrote an article entitled „Hiérarchies théologiques, hiérarchies physiques. Lectures médio-platoniciennes du *Timée*“, which has been accepted for publication in the volume Chiara Tommasi Moreschini, Luciana G. Soares Santoprete and Helmut Seng (eds.), *Hierarchie und Ritual: Zur philosophischen Spiritualität der Spätantike*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter („Bibliotheca Chaldaica“, 7), 2017. The article recomposes an interpretative tradition that, starting with the Old Academy, has combined the ontological taxonomy of *Timaeus* (39e-40a) with the demonology in the *Symposium*, transforming a physical hierarchy into a more complex classification, which included a theological hierarchy. The author studies the evolution of this transformation in the Platonic tradition. In Calcidius' commentary on *Timaeus* (IV century), the physical hierarchy fades away, in favor of the theological hierarchy.

Other two articles are under review.

DANIELA TARBĂ – PhD STUDENT

Daniela Tarbă had 4 conferences (of which 2 international conferences), and wrote a specialized article.

1. At the ISNS Conference, D. Tarbă presented the paper „Self-constitution of the One in Plotinus' view“. In this paper, she attempts to solve what seems to be a contradiction regarding self-constitution. In *Enneads* VI 8, 10, 21, Plotinus claims that there can be no self-constitution of the One. He does so by highlighting the difficulty of talking about that which is not born (γίγνομαι – μὴ ἐγένετ), showing that in terms of necessity, the One is the cause of everything that came into being. However, it is not itself conditioned by necessity, hence it

cannot be said that the One gave itself substance or that it had caused itself to come into being (ὕφιστημι – οὐχ ὑποστήσας ἑαυτόν”, ἢ οὐδέ ὑπέστη, *Ennead* VI 8, 10. 23, 34-35). On the other hand, in *Ennead* VI 8,10. 54, Plotinus postulates the self-constitution of the One (οὕτως ὑποστήσας ἄν εἴη αὐτόν). He shows that if its will or purpose (βούλησις) comes from within, as its own act, then the One, by its own will and not by accident, must be self-constituted. The aim of the paper is to show that this is only an apparent contradiction, due to the difficulty of trying to comprehend the nature of the One within the limits of discursive thought and that, when actually referring to self-constitution, we can only ascribe it to the first principle in order to show that it can have no other cause than itself.

2. D. Tarbă wrote the article „Plotinus: Self-awareness and The Ascension on The Ladder of Truth“. In this article, she analyzed the role of the individual soul in the hierarchic Plotinian system with emphasis on the moment of the awakening of the soul and its ascension on the ladder of truth.

GHEORGHE PAȘCALĂU – PhD STUDENT

G. Pașcalău had 4 conferences (of which 3 international conferences), wrote a specialized article and made two translations.

1. G. Pașcalău held a conference in the framework of the doctoral colloquium led by Prof. Dr. Jens Halfwassen at the University of Heidelberg (27.04.2017), on the concept of spiritual time in late tardive neoplatonism („Der Begriff der geistigen Zeit im antiken Platonismus“). In this respect, he showed how this concept develops, starting from Plato's *Parmenides* and from his unwritten doctrine. The first explicit testimony of this concept is encountered, however, in a fragment of the *Philosophical History* written by Porphyry, who designates the intellect as „time of the ideas“. Starting with Iamblichus, the concept becomes canonical and forms at Proclus the center of a systematic time theory.

2. G. Pașcalău presented a communication at the ISNS conference on 16-19 June 2017 (Palacky University, Olomouc, Czech Republic), concerning the problem of time as a self-constituted intellect in Proclus's philosophy. A series of problems arise from the relationship between time and the „ordinary“ properties of the intellect in the neoplatonic philosophy. The conference raises the question of how time can be considered a self-constituted intellect. The conclusion of this conference is that the self-constitution of time refers to its privilege of being its own measure. This conference was extended in the form of an article, which was proposed for publication.

3. G. Pașcalău held a conference at the workshop on Plotinus organized by Prof. Dr. Ilinca Tanaseanu-Döbler (University of Göttingen) in Goslar (6-8 September 2017). The

conference - on the theme of the time as life of the soul („Die Zeit als Leben der Seele in der Philosophie Plotins“) - aims to study the Plotinian theory of time from the perspective of three writings preceding the treatise III (45) "About eternity and time". *Ennead* VI 1 (42) speaks of categories in general, while *Ennead* VI 2 (43) deals with the „supreme genres“ of being, and *Ennead* VI 3 (44) with those of the sensible world. The theme of time in Plotinus is part of a project aiming at describing the categories of reality. This project decisively determines the ontological vision that Plotinus develops regarding time.

4. G. Paşcalău accomplished the translation of Simplicius' *Corollary on Time*, as well as the translation of Emperor Julian's *Oration to the Sun*.