

Understanding Nature through Hymns and Math: Proclus' *De Sacrificio* and his Commentary on Euclid

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The hymns of Proclus have been neglected in scholarship due to their confusing narrative and seemingly lack of metaphysical content. Although Meunier (1935) and Beierwaltes (1965) have identified an anagogic [mystical] theme in each hymn and Van den Berg's illuminating commentary (2001) has provided their theurgic [divine magic] context, the narrative structure is still confounding. Even to the extent that there is no agreement about the addressees of some of the hymns, like whether the sixth hymn honors two or three gods, or which Aphrodite is celebrated in her two hymns. This problem becomes resolved, however, once we consider the epistemological role of mathematics in Proclus' theology and how his mathematized ontology is reflected in the language of the hymns.

I propose a new interpretation of the divine in Proclus' hymns based on the mathematical understanding of *seira* with the theurgic beliefs of later Neoplatonists. I argue using Proclus' *De Sacrificio* and his commentary on Euclid's *Elements* that the hymns are not addressed to a singular version of a deity but are addressed to their whole *seira*, hence why they seem to lack consistency and cohesion. The purpose of hymning then becomes an opportunity for the participant to reflect upon the universal *seirai* in a spiritually charged experience rather than to communicate or honor the divine. This paper concludes with considerations of how Proclus conceived the role of mathematics in theological knowledge and argues why his hymns should be considered a part of mathesis' genealogy.