

The Relation of the ‘Forms’ with the ‘Parts’ and the ‘Elements’ in Damascius the Neoplatonist: Epistemological Foundations

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In this study, we investigate the way in which Damascius describes the relation of the ‘forms’ with the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ in his treatise *De Principiis* (II 174.1-176.7), in which he utilizes aspects of the Pre-Socratic natural philosophy as well as Aristotle’s *Physica*. We also shed light on the epistemological terms and conditions of his analysis. From a methodological point of view, we follow the categorical schemas found in the text, which reflect the philosopher’s general positions with respect to the formation of the natural world, through which a particularly advanced and mathematically expressed natural science for studying the structures of the universe is revealed. Considering that Damascius’ main research goal is to analytically describe the general archetypal categories of the sensible world, the greatest conclusion that we draw is that the formation of the natural world came from the activation-composition of the ‘elements’, that is, the material projections, in their separations, of the productive manifestations of the metaphysical archetypal Ideas.

Introduction

Whoever studies the historical-philosophical texts of the later Neoplatonists (Syrianus, Proclus, Damascius) realizes that the most important question throughout the course of the historical and dialectical development of Ancient Greek Ontology to its very end was whether and, by extension, in what way the primary and unchangeable – metaphysical or material – basis is connected with its multiple and eternally changing ontic forms in the sensible world. This is a quite important question – often theologically and metaphysically founded and explained – which involves how the metaphysical world is distinguished from the natural one and whether and how this relationship can be theoretically analyzed. That is to say, whether and to what extent this distinction reflects a true condition that needs to be investigated, so that the nature as well as the relationship

between the sensible beings to be also epistemologically explained. In Proclus' six-volume treatise entitled *Theologia Platonica* one can find a fascinating systematic elaboration of these subject-matters that takes into account the entire Ancient Greek tradition. This question means that this kind of distinction is not taken ipso facto for granted, so another question is raised: whether and to what extent this distinction relies on unquestionable evidence. In this context, a meticulous use of the logical tools of dialectics – and often a priority given to them over the theological metaphysical concepts and method – is quite obvious. The purpose of this use is to ensure the systematicity of the syllogisms, to avoid – although this is not at first obvious – a complete corruption of the philosophical reflection by theological stereotypes and religious faith, and to investigate in what extent the developing natural science, which involves questions that need rational proof and knowledge, is capable of studying that ontological field which exceeds experience. In this way, dialectics meets metaphysical questions, at the same time as it keeps research open in the sense of a reconstructing prospect. For instance, Aristotle's ontological treatises *Physica* and *Metaphysica* cannot be investigated independently of those included in the *Organon* (*Analytica Priora*, *Analytica Posteriora*, *De Interpretatione*, *Categoriae*). In addition, Proclus, in his *Theologia Platonica*, utilizes Porphyry's logical classifications quite extensively.

These questions were investigated by the Ancient Greek philosophers in many ways, the most famous of which is the theory of Ideas, which defined the development of the Platonic Academy, from its very foundation to the end. Using this theory, the members of the Academy introduced the concept of 'multitude' in the metaphysical world, which indicates the inner ontological richness of the supreme Principle or the One-Good, both in-itself and in its projections. Damascius deals with the metaphysical question about the relation between the 'one' and the 'multitude' and discusses the relevant topics quite systematically by making a thorough approach to the historical past.¹ The Neoplatonist philosopher avoids, as far as possible, following dogmatic or at least univocal anti-theological and anti-philosophical directions, at the same time as his main goal is to prove

¹ Although he cannot be compared with Proclus over the quantity of his encyclopedism, Damascius as well elaborates the topics mentioned before in a general way. Cf. for instance Damascius, *Pr.* II 1.4-30.24 [*Traité des premiers principes: De la triade et de l'unifié*, v.II, Westerink Leendert Gerrit – Combès, Joshua, Paris 1989]. It should be also mentioned that, just like Proclus, he does not only present the philosophical tradition but he also approaches it in a synthetic-critical way, and he often attempts to interpret it. In any case, both the Neoplatonist philosophers are great exponents of synthetic eclecticism.

in objective terms that there are actually relationships between the metaphysical and the sensible level, which, since in his view are both natural and essential, neither should be discussed nor may be questioned when it comes to their general ontological context. In his estimation, the only thing that should be explicitly investigated, in fact in detail, is the form of these relationships. Throughout his entire research, he insists on showing how particular normative procedures work, which ensure a well-ordered cosmic system, which reflects a logical and completely well-structured plan.

In this study, we shall investigate how Damascius describes the relation of the ‘forms’ with the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ in his treatise that bears the title *De Principiis*,² by utilizing broadly, although he appertains to the Platonic tradition, some aspects of the Pre-Socratic natural science as well as the first book of Aristotle’s *Physica*. In addition to his own views, we shall also discuss the way in which he uses the former philosophical tradition and how he includes it into a particular perspective that aims at a more precise scientific explanation of the production of the natural world. It should be mentioned that Damascius elaborates the relation of the ‘forms’ with the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ in other parts of his treatise as well, but we shall approach only those details which compose how he defines the epistemological requirements of his analysis. The interesting thing is that he sets the elaboration of this relation at the beginning of his general chapter that could be entitled “the intelligible and its multitude”. The term ‘intelligible’ has been connected since Proclus with the first metaphysical reality, which comes after the One-Good and the henads and includes the seeds of the metaphysical developments to be followed. It is worth noting that in the theory of ontotheology the term ‘intelligible’ is used as completely equivalent to Being.³ From a theoretical point of view, the most important thing is that he places the elaboration of the ‘elements’ – which in the context of the former tradition were considered to be basically natural – in the context of Metaphysics, for he thinks of them as being formed by the projections of the metaphysical world, that is, as being the first expressions of metaphysics of immanence.

What follows in this study can be traced in the second part of Damascius’ *De Principiis*, where the main topic is how the transition from ‘unity’ to ‘multitude’ is accomplished. In the first part of his work, Damascius elaborated his positions on the metaphysics of transcendence or Henology, namely the theologicalization of traditional

² Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 174.1-76.1.

³ Cf. the third book of the *Theol. Plat.*

Metaphysics. That is to say, he has already presented his views about the supreme reality in its absolute unprojected integrity. In the second part, he attempts to prove in different ways how the primary unity is internally transformed and develops this kind of multiplications which will result in the production of the sensible world. So, his exploratory intention arisen in this part is to show how the transition from immobility to causality will be accomplished, without however the first property to suffer any essential change. To found his theory as objectively as possible, Damascius turns to the ancient Greek tradition as well as some Eastern religious-philosophical currents of thought. It should be also mentioned that he elaborates these topics in a clearly scientific way at the same time as he avoids solutions that rely on dogmatism.

1. *Epistemological Prolegomena*

To be more specific, Damascius analyzes the relations of the ‘forms’ with the ‘elements’ and the ‘parts’ in his extensive chapter about the ontological content of the order of the universal intelligible beings – that is, those that correspond to the supreme category of Being or Essence – and the relations developed among them, as well as about the naturally same with them ‘multitude’ of the individual beings that develops in their level.⁴ According to the principles of ontological monism that he adopts, these are both universal and individual beings which have come from the One-Good, the supreme self-existent Principle-Cause, and reveal its infinite in quantity energy richness. In this way,

⁴ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 174.1-214.20. This chapter follows the systematic and exhausting analysis of the triadic schema ‘remaining-procession-reversion’, a textual succession which also indicates that Damascius here describes the One-Good as a Cause. Specifically, he investigates and describes the ‘procession’ of those primary seeds which come out from metaphysical ‘remaining’ and, since they constantly exist in the natural world, they make possible not only its production but also, after the end of its cosmic evolution, its ‘reversion’ to the very first source. The whole idea is based on the teleological model, which is dominant in the Neoplatonist tradition, regardless of the special way in which each philosopher presents it. On the schema ‘remaining-procession-reversion’ in Neoplatonism, cf. for instance, Gersh, Stephen, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena: An Investigation of the Prehistory and Evolution of the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition* (Leiden 1978), pp. 45-57. It should be mentioned that Proclus was the one who explained and utilized this schema in the most successful way. For instance, cf. Proclus, *Inst* props. 25-39, 28.21-42.7. Dodds, Eric Robertson, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology* (Oxford 1963), pp. 212-223. Trouillard, Jean, *L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus* (Paris 1972), pp. 78-106; Trouillard, Jean, *La mystagogie de Proclus* (Paris 1982), pp. 53-91. Beierwaltes, Werner, *Proklos, Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main 1979), pp. 118-163. In fact, the structure of the schema shows that the new beings that appear by emanation hold intentional or even personal tendencies to revert to the cause that they came from.

he attempts, among other things, to illuminate the hypostatic (qua in-itself) and the functional (qua relations) nature of the ‘forms’ and to explain the process by which the metaphysical world is completely (self-) structured in a particular level (namely, that which is found under a participated projection or under the projection of properties), in order to produce the sensible world as a totally new ontological level. Definitely, this formation does not indicate an original ontological imperfection of the metaphysical world, but signifies some sort of opening of its productive potentiality, which is not an accident of its essence, for it exists as a self-founding property of it. In fact, this is a potentiality independent from any sense of determinism that would force it to manifest.⁵ It should be mentioned that throughout the entire analysis, Damascius also attempts to give answers to critical questions of ancient Greek Metaphysics and Cosmology, in order to expand his research, in the context of building a holistic approach, a quite typical thing of his thought. The way in which he aspires to do this proves that he has assimilated critically and synthetically the entire question elaborated since the Pre-Socratic period to his era on the theory of ‘elements’, from both an ontological and gnoseological point of view.⁶ And this is an assimilation that in his work has been placed into consistent categorical schemata, structured in the form of a “rational tree”, which reveal his general positions about how the natural world is produced. From any point of view, Damascius is a great scientist.

Quite typical of his aspect as well as revealing of his contribution to the intellectual life of his era is that he deals with this topic by following the terms and conditions of an advanced natural science formulated in a mathematical way, which penetrates the structures of the universe and presents the conclusions through theorems. That being said, his most important epistemological criterion is the natural world itself, which permanently reveals the metaphysical processes and defines how a cosmological question should be approached. Therefore, Damascius follows a geometric method, in the broad sense of the term, when both expressing general scientific questions and deciding on which is the appropriate particular, and specialized in each case, methodological

⁵ Cf. for instance, Damascius, *Pr.* II 16.1-17.21 and 31.1-32.20.

⁶ On the theory about the *elements* in ancient Greek philosophy, cf. Kahn, Charles, *Anaximander and the Origins of Greek Cosmology* (New York 1960), pp. 119-166. Happ, Heinz, *Hyle: Studien zum Aristotelischen materie-begriff* (Berlin/New York 1971), pp. 524-547. Also, West, Martin Litchfield, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971); Popper, Karl, “Back to the Presocratics“, in: *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (1958-9), pp. 1-24.

procedure for studying the natural world.⁷ Regardless of the objective difficulties he encountered due to the small number of the scientific and technological breakthroughs of his era, the insufficiency of the experimental method and verification process, and the fact that direct observation was also not enough, he did not hesitate at all to face this theoretical challenge. Therefore, his comments mostly relied on whether the scientific questions that were raised could be rationally confirmed. Skepticism was inevitably a part of his thought.⁸ Either way, all those mentioned before can be included in what one could define as a strict epistemological model.

Under these circumstances, Damascius also attempts to explain, as far as possible, the ontological nature of the metaphysical world in its pre-productive condition. Specifically, in those parts of his work in which he discusses metaphysics of immanence, although he explicitly rejects the possibility of a conceptual definition of the Supreme Principle – namely, the One or Ineffable –, his research purpose is to analyze, as far as feasible, the general archetypal categories of the sensible world. Apparently his reasoning rests upon the fact that this world, by being observable and perceptible, can lead to how its source works by analogy or hypothesis. That is to say, the way in which the effect functions leads to investigate as well the way in which it has been produced by its cause. Subsequently, a relevant researcher, as a scientist of Metaphysics, will be able to ascend, as far as possible, to the non-observable cause of the natural world. In addition, occasioned by the fact that Metaphysics is ontologically structured in a completely rational manner, the last Neoplatonist scholar attempts to make it an organized *Scientia* as well, a consistent source of epistemological principles, which human being is challenged to detect and apply. So, by following systematic theoretical steps, he places it in an apodictic prospect and, by using the logical tools of dialectics, he composes a consistent system of principles, relations and procedures, with the anagogical process – which, however, reaches a specific point – holding a key role; his main research purpose

⁷ Cf. for instance, Damascius, *Pr.* I 77.16-112.2.

⁸ Cf. Rappe, Sarah, “Skepticism in the Sixth Century? Damascius’ doubts and solutions concerning first principles”, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 36 (1998), pp. 337-363. This is a particularly innovative article, which also stresses the skeptical questions of Neoplatonism, since its first period. The representatives of the skeptical tendency of the Platonic Academy and Pyrrho of Elis are presented as the source of the Neoplatonist philosophers who deal with questions about the integrity of the human cognitive references and their capability to ascend to the first Principle with validity. Rappe makes a great use of Sextus Empiricus’ texts, as well to Plato’s aporetic syllogisms. So, this study may be considered to be a text of the history of skepticism with regard to how Neoplatonism assimilated it.

insists on defining the appropriate predicates. Unquestionably, as a consistent skepticist – but not an agnostic –, he constantly sets limits on the capabilities of the human cognitive range, so, from a point onwards, he uses only assumptions. Therefore, his research plan could be described as follows: a) he axiomatically accepts the true existence of the metaphysical world, as both transcendent and a productive power. b) Since he considers that this world is ontologically integral he approaches it as possessing the ultimate principles of Theoretical Reason. c) A thinking subject needs to understand this Reason and to turn it into an instructional axis of its scientific course, in order to draw, insofar as it is possible, objective conclusions about the content of the metaphysical world. This course, from a point on, becomes intuitive, that is, it is released from the interventions of the representations that come from experience.

2. The Presence of ‘Multitude’ and ‘Many’ in the Metaphysical World

As a first consideration⁹, Damascius raises the question on whether it is possible to separate and classify into a first, middle and last ‘whole’ the level of the intelligible gods, whose, as the greater level after the One, main property is unity. We would argue that accepting this kind of descending development would obviously result in the growth of the first metaphysical ‘multitude’. He actually explains that this question can be raised by both philosophers and theologians. To be more specific, philosophers would ask whether there is a distinction between Being, Life and Intellect. Or, in other words, he asks whether the development of this supreme metaphysical triad takes place in the intelligible level – which corresponds to Being – at least in the form of seeds or in terms of an essential prefiguration. This question brings us back to Proclus’ relevant questions and conceptual schemata on the ontological hierarchy – which does not have the slighted impact on their unity – of the general metaphysical categories.¹⁰ On the other hand,

⁹ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 174.1-11. At this point, an application of a general idea of the principles that Damascius had formed in other parts of his work is also found.

¹⁰ On the metaphysical triad ‘Being-Life-Intellect’, cf. Beierwaltes, Werner, *Grundzüge seiner Metaphysik*, pp. 93-118; Hadot, Pierre, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I (Paris 1968), pp. 213-246 and pp. 260-272. Note that Being corresponds to the intelligible gods, Life to the intelligible-intellectual gods and Intellect to the intellectual gods. So, ontotheology reaches the highest possible point. Cf. Riel, Gerd Van, “Ontologie et théologie. Le Philèbe dans le troisième livre de la Théologie Platonicienne de Proclus”, in: Segonds, Alain Philippe / Steel, Carlos (eds.), *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne* (Paris 2000), pp. 399-413, where, on the occasion of Plato’s *Phlb.* and *Prm.*, how Ontology receives in the Neoplatonic School theological features is also

theologians would raise the question on the basis that the intelligible gods multiply themselves in various ways. Damascius here obviously means the innumerable theogonies presented in a number of Neoplatonic texts – and mainly Proclus’ –, which as unchangeable and originally single sources also explain the infinite variety of the sensible world. Note that the Chaldean Oracles, which describe the divine paternal triads, namely those which are originally responsible for the multiplication process, are also included in these theological treatises.¹¹

Damascius then contends that it is necessary first of all to deal systematically with the meaning of the terms ‘many’ and ‘multitude’, which for him are obviously two different words. In his view, this elaboration will provide the methodological and logical requirements for scientifically approaching the question on the ontological distinctions-hierarchies mentioned before. In fact, this is a necessary condition, since whether ‘many’ and ‘multitude’ are primary metaphysical states or developing modes of being either compatible or not – and in what sense – with the ontological nature of the intelligible world should be also defined. For the Platonic tradition, this was a difficult question to deal with, because of the well-structured – and definitely unquestionable – axiological priorities adopted by its exponents. Yet, regardless of the direction of his elaboration, Damascius, here as well, seeks for the terms and conditions of the epistemological validity, for he stresses that investigating two ontological conditions in-themselves comes before any theory about their functions and capability or incapability of developing relationships. Throughout his entire work, he determines this capability by the special identity of each ontological level, avoiding, at least in the first place, making generalizations. In addition, it is necessary to explain that according to the Neoplatonic model there is no relation, unless the intended purpose is clear, which is the responsibility of this relation or has been assigned to be accomplished by it. In this theoretical context, teleological perspective is from any point of view necessary, regardless of the range that it receives or the process by which it is considered that will be attained.

investigated. Riel mainly refers to Proclus’ treatises and completes his study with some references to Damascius.

¹¹ On how the Chaldean Oracles were used by the Neoplatonist philosophers, cf. for instance Saffrey, Henri Dominique, *Reserches sur le Néoplatonisme après Plotin* (Paris 1990), pp. 68-94. Brisson, Luc, “La place des Oracles Chaldaïques dans la Théologie Platonicienne”, in: *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 109-162. Hoffmann, Paul, “La triade chaldaïque ἔρως, ἀλήθεια, πίστις; de Proclus à Simplicius”, in: *Proclus et la Théologie Platonicienne*, pp. 459-489.

It is also important to point out that Damascius dealt with this question in other parts of his work as well, where he discussed whether there are the appropriate conditions for the development of the ‘multitude’ of the ‘forms’ in the intelligible level, namely Being. In those parts, he actually stressed that the intelligible level proceeds to its external multiplication – but not under the natural-empirical terms of time and space – which contributes to the appearance of the ‘multitude’ of the ‘forms’, which results in that they are not self-constituted, for he subjects them to a superior reality. This multiplication takes place so as ‘forms’ to take over the responsibility to complete the emanation or production plans.¹² Taking all these into account, we could contend that Damascius aims at a holistic view of the discussion on production, for accepting intermediary beings-powers, starting from Being, requires a discussion about all the levels, including the general and individual ones, in which they take action through the relations developed between them – which are defined according to the hierarchical model – in order an effect to be composed. Note also that a discussion like this will provide a better explanation of the adopted worldview. Having said that, another question that appears is how the adopted by the Neoplatonist philosophers, non-static, monism is approached, on which Proclus had insisted quite remarkably.¹³

At the beginning of his analysis¹⁴, Damascius points out that it is commonly accepted that those realities which separate one another, after being separated, remain in

¹² Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 74.23-5.16.

¹³ On the gradually developing monism, cf. for instance the third book of *Theol. Plat.*, where Proclus elaborates his views about the One, the henads in the sense of the powers-projections of the One, and Being or the intelligible gods. On this hierarchical structure, cf. Trouillard, Jean, *L’Un et l’âme selon Proclus*, pp. 91-109. For a detailed approach, cf. the long introduction of the third book of *Proclus. Théologie Platonicienne*, Saffrey, Henri Dominique / Westerink, Leendert G. (eds.) (Paris 1978), pp. IX-CXIV.

¹⁴ Cf. DAM. *Pr.* II 174.12-16: Πολλὰ ταῦτα ὁρᾶται ὄντα σαφῶς καὶ λέγεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ὅσα διέστη ἀπ’ ἀλλήλων καὶ καθ’ ἑαυτὸ γέγονεν ἕκαστον οἰκεία περιγραφῇ, τοῦτο μένειν βουλόμενον ὃ ἐστὶ καὶ λέγεται, οἷα τὰ εἶδη φαμέν εἶναι σπουδάζειν. [«Accordingly, ‘many’ is observed and said by all clearly to mean as many things as are separate from each other, where each thing has come to be by itself within its own delimitation, and consents to remain what it is and what it is called, as for example, we say that the forms are eager to be» [Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles* (Oxford 2010), p. 290). It should be mentioned here that the way in which Damascius presents his reasoning is typical of the scientific way in which he deals with his subjects. In most cases, he raises a question, he then presents the history of the topic discussed as well as the proposed solutions, and he finally presents his own argumentation, by composing and making the necessary extensions. It is remarkable that he is consistent with the principles that he adopts which are either denoted at the beginning or are formed later for educational reasons or as a result of a reconstruction. It is also necessary to mention that after the theory of *elements* appeared, ontological and epistemological issues are discussed not only in a theological way, but also in a philosophical one. Cf. for instance, *Pr.* For

themselves in their own terms. It may be argued that here he refers to the atomic theory of Leucippus, Democritus, and Epicurus in a reversed point of view, since for these ancient Greek philosophers every ‘atom’ has naturally its own identity, which is preserved regardless of the countless productive compositions with the rest of the ‘atoms’ to be followed. In fact, by describing anything appropriate to the ontological particularity of a reality, he eventually accepts its self-completeness, which, since it is specialized, it is also relevant, with regard to its inclusion and function in the whole system and with regard to the others that these conditions cause. So, we could contend that every individual or collective with extended capabilities metaphysical level aims at preserving its special nature, that is, the state by which it will become, as far as possible, widely known through its manifestation and by which it will receive particular predicates-names. According to Damascius, all these describe the state in which the ‘forms’ exist, which however also have the idiom of a ‘multitude’, since they come from the emanating multiplication of Being, and, consequently, are ‘many’.¹⁵ Therefore, ‘forms’ are in a way susceptible to receive different properties through their downward ontological course to the inferior levels of the metaphysical world. And on this topic Proclus is extremely systematic, mostly in his commentary on the Platonic *Parmenides*.

So, generalizing his view, we could argue that the metaphysical realities which are separated and distinct, despite any similarities between them and despite the unity, which either they hold in the first place as co-existent or is formed by each one of them a posteriori for themselves, have also acquired the property of ‘multitude’, since they come

a systematic elaboration of the above, cf. Metry-Tresson, Carolle, *L'aporie ou l'expérience des limites de la pensée dans le Péri Archôn de Damaskios* (Leiden / Boston 2012), who, by using extensively extracts from Damascius and classifying them in precision, shows the stages of epistemology. It could be said that this study shows how Damascius forms a holistic and coherent Scientia. Note, however, that the term βουλόμενον, apart from holding a narrative role in the philosopher's text, also reveals a kind of ontology that is not neutral; instead, it has an intentional feature, a somehow personal one.

¹⁵ Note that from Proclus onwards the inclusion of all things was associated even to the most exemplified level of the metaphysical world. Every metaphysical being includes in its own way the rest and that is why it possesses a priori the property of ‘multitude’, namely as an inherent property but not an accident one. So, it is not just a communication between metaphysical beings, but composition of them in the first place. Cf. Proclus, *Inst* prop.103, 92.13-29. Cf. also Dodds, Eric Robertson, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, p. 254, where Proclus' influence to the later philosophers is also mentioned. This is the regulative ontological-methodological principle which Trouillard characterizes as monadological, identifying in it the impact of Proclus on Leibniz (cf. *L'Un et l'âme selon Proclus*, pp. 75-77). It should be mentioned that this principle adds to ontological monism full structural coherence through the individualizations that come from the same source, each of which is a uniform ‘multitude’.

from the multiplicative separation process of a superior reality. In fact, they have this property, regardless of what is their nature or function. Or, in other words, the metaphysical world appears as ‘multitude’ the moment at which the separations of Being take place¹⁶ – either in a self-constituted mode¹⁷ or in a way completely determined by a superior reality, or, according to Proclus, even with a combination of these two – and are defined as individual natures, which will subsequently work in an emanative way, in the prospect of compositions to be made, in order new realities to be produced.

As it becomes clear, individualizations do not just refer to sensible beings, which can be conceptually defined in precision through scientific research and can be classified into categories according to the proved and processed in a subtractive way data. They can be also attributed to the divine archetypes or metaphysical seeds, that is to say, the special manifestations of the primary unity that comes after the One-Good. As in other Neoplatonic approaches, here as well, the ‘multitude’, as a general condition, is also placed in the transcendental level, by means of the gradual and analogical ascent to the ontological-axiological scale, under syllogistic procedures mainly based on what is considered to be the most logical theory in a particular case.¹⁸ In other words, it is based on the different approaches of the position that every being which appertains to the process of production is an effect and will be scientifically approached in a complete sense only after its cause is detected. Thus, the metaphysical ‘multitude’ appears to be the deterministic requirement to form the ways in which the sensible world will be subsequently structured and organized. We could actually contend that this metaphysical ‘multitude’ corresponds to the ‘indefinite dyad’ (ἀόριστη δυάς) of the first period of the Academy, which was the most critical factor for overcoming the inflexible primary union and its opening to ontological emanations.¹⁹ These emanations are ‘many’, since they

¹⁶ Cf. once again the third book of *Theol. Plat.*, which is devoted to the ontological predicate of Being or the intelligible gods.

¹⁷ About the self-constituted in Proclus, cf. *Inst* props. 40-51, 42.8-50.6. In addition, Dodds, Eric Robertson, *Proclus: The Elements of Theology*, pp. 223-227; Trouillard, Jean, *L’Un et l’âme*, p. 76f. It should be mentioned that the ‘self-constituted’ are divine beings which correspond to the predicates of the second hypothesis of *Prm.* and indicate that every divine being participates dynamically in its own production.

¹⁸ About the concept of metaphysical ‘multitude’, cf. Gersh, Stephen, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, p. 137f., who stresses that “Damascius’ approach to the problem of unity and plurality is by far the most philosophical within the Athenian School of Neoplatonism” (note 64, p. 138).

¹⁹ About the pair ‘one-indefinite dyad’, which was the most important topic of Plato’s unwritten doctrines and Speusippus’ and Xenocrates’ interests, cf. for instance, Dillon, John, *The Middle Platonists* (London 1977), where the theory is mainly presented according to Speusippus’ and

individualize the general ontological condition of the ‘multitude’, which will acquire a particular ontological content exactly because the dyad has been proved to be an active function.

Subsequently,²⁰ Damascius points out that it is ontologically reasonable the ‘parts’ – which are definitely ‘many’ – to hold the properties of the ‘multitude’ as well. He also

Xenocrates’ approaches. But, we believe that for a complete understanding of the pair ‘one-indefinite dyad’, it is necessary to study the work of Robin, Léon, *La Théorie Platonicienne des Idées et des Nombres d’après Aristote* (Hildesheim 1963). Despite the fact that this work was written a long time ago, it is still the most thorough one for the last period of the Academy and the first period of the debate between the Academics and Aristotle’s newly-founded Lyceum. Robin also describes how Aristotle critically reconstructed the Platonic theory of Ideas as well as which are the theoretical and logical procedures that the leaders of the Academy followed to form their own ontological theory, which also included the theories about the numbers and the figures.

²⁰ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 174.17-5.3. Westerink and Combès refer to other extracts as well and mention the concepts ‘ὁμοιομερῆ’ and ‘ἀνομοιομερῆ’. It should be noted that they find Damascius’ terminology in Aristotle’s works as well (cf. *PA* II 1-2 646a11-647b28). They also mention that the concept of ‘part’ is also found in *Metaph.* IV 25 1023b12-25, the concept of ‘whole’, *ibidem.* IV 26 1023b26-4a10, and the concept of ‘element’, *ibidem.* IV 3 1014a26-b15, *Cael.* 302a10-13b23 and *GA* 328b31-38b29. These comments lead us to draw the conclusion that Damascius utilizes the tradition formed by Syrianus and Proclus on the encounter of Platonism with Aristotelianism, in a compositional eclectic system, namely a system that does not remain only in the presentation of the views. It should not escape our attention the fact that the only surviving text of Syrianus is his commentary on *Metaph.* of Aristotle (GAG VI 1-195), which proves the new direction of the last period of the Academy. Nevertheless, all three of them, and especially Syrianus and Proclus, remain consistent with their explicit position that Plato is the leading philosopher throughout the entire history of philosophy. However, in order to understand better what is here said, it is necessary to mention some of Aristotle’s positions on the causes of the change of the substance of beings, following his treatise *GA* and, more specifically, the above extract, which can be compared with Damascius’ views. In this extract, Aristotle considers generation and corruption as “changes”, at the same time as he considers the changes in respect to quantity, quality and place as “movements”. This is a crucial clarification, since it is based on two important views of his about matter and movement. Specifically, first and foremost all natural beings and conditions come from the primary condition of matter. So, matter is the substrate of all the changes and oppositions, which however do not exclude corporeal formations. Just the opposite in fact: Matter is not one of the *elements*, but the *elements* come from its activity. It could be argued that according to Aristotle it is indefinable just like Anaximander’s infinity, namely in the sense that it has endless possibilities for formations. Secondly, all qualities, by the assistance of which the natural conditions appear, would not have a true hypostasis, unless they exist with their subject, that is, matter. Taking into account these points of his on immanent realism – which clearly differentiate him from Plato, who is the systematic founder of metaphysical realism – he emphasizes the opposite process of change and movement of the matter and, by extension, his views on generation and corruption. Either way, he considers matter with its internal oppositions from which the ‘elements’ and the qualities, such as hot or cold, come. So, in his view, indefinable matter is directly related to a particular thing formed under specific circumstances and, because of this connection, it is considered to be a body, which, although may not be perceived by the senses, it is also potentially sensible, or, more correctly, it gradually becomes sensible by means of the individual bodies. Damascius follows these points of Aristotle but in a reversed way. Their difference lies on that Damascius is a monist while Aristotle accepts the primary presence of matter. Damascius combines Plato with Aristotle in his theory about the ‘elemental’, which is the source of the ways in which matter will express itself by forming bodies with particular qualities.

bases this position upon a simple conclusion on how beings exist in the level of which they are parts, intending to exclude the possibility of an inflexible identity between them. Insisting on the principle of individuality – and probably uniqueness – he stresses that every individual being has a different function and does not depend on the rest. Specifically, according to its ontological origin it is not possible a being which is one and unique in a particular system of multiple existential conditions to be a part of another being, which either way is by definition not possible to exist as inclusive and determining of the other ‘parts’. In addition, supposing that it came from a separation, it would be necessary someone to look for the rest of the ‘parts’ with the same ‘form’, which compose the primary ‘whole’ to which it belonged. Therefore, in order the ‘parts’ to appear and, if possible, to be detected, at least two of them have to exist. However, in order to avoid any conceptual confusion between the ‘parts’ and the ‘forms’, Damascius explains that the ‘parts’ are different from the ‘forms’, for they have the tendency to remain separated from the other ‘parts’ in a per se, autonomous and self-determined individual state; that is, they function in a particular way so that they do not belong exclusively to themselves. Thus, they do not appear in independent conditions under a possible non-subject to any kind of relation hypostasis. It should be also mentioned that the ‘forms’ actually communicate with each other and every one of them preserves a distinct ontological nature when compared to the others. So, a ‘form’ can be epistemologically approached and can be included in special conceptual schemata exactly as such, but under the limits set by the metaphysical level as non-sensible.

In addition, the difference mentioned before is extended if we consider the fact that the ‘parts’ are originally found in a mutual relationship – in the sense that they participate in the same ontological properties, which are due to the fact that they come

In the Neoplatonic model, ‘elements’, as the natural projections of Ideas, are the natural foundations for the manifestation of matter in countless ‘forms’. So, we would actually contend that Damascius transforms the Aristotelian theory and includes it in his own worldview. He uses the same terms, but he reverses the priorities. About the ‘elemental’ in Damascius, cf. *Pr.* II 180.20-1.1: Τὸ τοῦ παντὸς ὅλον σῶμα ἐκ τῶν τεττάρων μὲν στοιχείων, οὐκέτι μέντοι προϋποκειμένων· οὐδὲ ἡ πρώτη οὐσία ἐκ πρεσβυτέρων φύσει στοιχείων, πρὸ γὰρ αὐτῆς οὐδαμοῦ τὰ στοιχεῖα. Καὶ γὰρ αἰεὶ τὸ στοιχειωτὸν κρείττον εἶναι βούλεται τῶν οἰκείων στοιχείων, τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα καθ’ ἑαυτά, ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ ἐν τῷ στοιχειωτῷ καὶ μετὰ ἀλλήλων, ὥς τὰ μέρη μετὰ τὸ ὅλον καὶ σὺν ἀλλήλοις. [«But the complete body of the all is from the four elements, although these are no longer presubstisting. Nor again is the first substance [derived] from elements that are prior by nature, since there are no elements before it, and the elements want never to exist by themselves, but always to be in what is composed of elements and together with each other, as for example, the parts want to be after the whole and with each other» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 293).

from the same source – as well as that before they were separated, that is to say, at least primarily, they were ‘parts’ of the same ‘whole’ as developing a particular sequence in the context of a mutual relationship. This is a sequence organically and functionally connective that tends to develop various productive interferences, at the same time as it is defined by a particular way of functioning, which lasts to the complete separation of the first reality, without however causing any change in respect to quality in the deepest cores of the energy regularity due to which it is activated. In a general sense and provided that we accept the ontological priority of the ‘whole’, the ‘parts’ come in the first place into existence within their ‘whole’, without which it is clearly impossible for them to exist, even as seeds, and within which they begin their distinction by following the process of separation. According to Damascius, these successive separations are due to the inherent powers found in a ‘whole’ for developing itself by means of distinctions; that is, there is a sort of internal necessity to separate-exceed its primary solid and motionless state.

At this point there is a reference to the metaphysical intervention or consideration of the topic. In the first level of appearances, these conditions have not been yet totally separated, but they remain coherently within the area of their ‘whole’, according to the relation that they have with both each other and the ‘whole’ as its essential, namely under its ontological terms, predicates. So, since ontological actions remain within the limits of the metaphysical world, unity, regardless of what is about to follow, dominates. This situation appears to be an unchangeable regularity mostly in the case of ‘ὁμοιομερῆ’, namely those ‘parts’ which ontologically are quite similar to anything included in the ‘whole’ of which they are parts, which could be said to be hyper-individual, since they are many. They can be found in numberless corporeal formations. They compose a functionally organized *whole*, which is self-determined and strictly specific in respect to the projections that are about to appear in the ontological sense. Διαφέρει δὲ ὅτι οὐ καθ’ ἑαυτὰ βούλεται εἶναι, οὐδὲ ἑαυτῶν, ἀλλὰ πάντως ἀλλήλων τε καὶ τοῦ ὅλου κατὰ τὴν μίαν ἀλληλουχίαν ἔν τε τῷ ὅλῳ ὑφέστηκεν, ἀρξάμενα μὲν τῆς διακρίσεως κατὰ τὸν μερισμόν, οὐ διαστάντα δὲ ὅμως εἰς οἰκείας περιγραφάς, ἀλλ’ ἔτι τῇ πρὸς ἄλληλα καὶ τὸ ὅλον συννεύσει συνουσιωμένα, οἷα μάλιστα φαίνεται τὰ ὁμοιομερῆ λεγόμενα τῶν μερῶν.²¹

²¹ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 174.19-5.3. [«But the difference [from forms] is that parts do not wish to be by themselves nor to constitute themselves, but they belong entirely to each other and to the whole as one continuity, and they are constituted in the whole, since they began their differentiation in terms of division, and yet parts are not separated into distinct boundaries, since they continue to come into being through a coincidence with each other and with the whole, as is

especially evident in the case of things whose parts are said to be homoeomerous» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius' Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 290)]. Cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* IV 1023b12-25: Μέρος λέγεται ἓνα μὲν τρόπον εἰς ὃ διαιρεθεῖται ἂν τὸ ποσὸν ὅπως οὖν (ἀεὶ γὰρ τὸ ἀφαιρούμενον τοῦ ποσοῦ ἢ ποσὸν μέρος λέγεται ἐκείνου, οἷον τῶν τριῶν τὰ δύο μέρος λέγεταιί πως), ἄλλον δὲ τρόπον τὰ καταμετροῦντα τῶν τοιούτων μόνον· διὸ τὰ δύο τῶν τριῶν ἔστι μὲν ὡς λέγεται μέρος, ἔστι δ' ὡς οὐ. ἔτι εἰς ἃ τὸ εἶδος διαιρεθεῖται ἂν ἄνευ τοῦ ποσοῦ, καὶ ταῦτα μόρια λέγεται τούτου· διὸ τὰ εἶδη τοῦ γένους φασὶν εἶναι μόρια. ἔτι εἰς ἃ διαιρεῖται ἢ ἐξ ὧν σύγκειται τὸ ὅλον, ἢ τὸ εἶδος ἢ τὸ ἔχον τὸ εἶδος, οἷον τῆς σφαίρας τῆς χαλκῆς ἢ τοῦ κύβου τοῦ χαλκοῦ καὶ ὁ χαλκὸς μέρος (τοῦτο δ' ἐστὶν ἢ ὕλη ἐν ἣ τὸ εἶδος) καὶ ἡ γωνία μέρος. Ἔτι τὰ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τῷ δηλοῦντι ἕκαστον, καὶ ταῦτα μόρια τοῦ ὅλου· διὸ τὸ γένος τοῦ εἶδους καὶ μέρος λέγεται, ἄλλως δὲ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ γένους μέρος. [«We call a part that into which a quantity can in any way be divided; for that which is taken from a quantity qua quantity is always called a part of it, e. g. two is called in a sense a part of three. It means, of the parts in the first sense, only those which measure the whole; this is why two, though in one sense it is, in another is not, a part of three. The elements into which the kind might be divided apart from the quantity, are also called parts of it; for which reason we say the species are parts of the genus. The elements into which the whole is divided, or of which it consists – 'the whole' meaning either the form or that which has the form; e. g. of the bronze sphere or of the bronze cube both the bronze – that is, the matter in which the form is – and the characteristic angle are parts. The elements in the formula which explains a thing are parts of the whole; this is why the genus is called a part of the species, though in another sense the species is part of the genus» (Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, vol.2 (Princeton 1984), p.80)]. At this point, a difference between Aristotle and Damascius arises which reflects the difference between the empirical and the metaphysical foundation and view of things respectively, or, in other words, it shows how Damascius applies in the metaphysical level everything that holds true in the sensible world. In his view, Metaphysics meets Physics and that is why any axiological contradictions come to an end. We could argue that because of the complete integrity of the metaphysical world in Neoplatonic systems, the 'wholes' are by definition originally 'ὁμοιομερή', while those that have been structured as final cores for the formation and development of the natural world are 'ἀνομοιομερή'. It should be, however, investigated whether the distinctions that take place approached with respect to quantity or quality or even possibly both. Having said that, Aristotle's following explanation about the 'whole' as a unity – either as prior to the 'parts' or formed by them –, could be accepted by Damascius, provided that it would be adjusted to the Neoplatonic theories: Ὅλον λέγεται οὐ τε μὴθὲν ἄπεστι μέρος ἐξ ὧν λέγεται ὅλον φύσει, καὶ τὸ περιέχον τὰ περιεχόμενα ὥστε ἐν τι εἶναι ἐκεῖνα· τοῦτο δὲ διχῶς· ἢ γὰρ ὡς ἕκαστον ἐν ἣ ὡς ἐκ τούτων τὸ ἐν. τὸ μὲν γὰρ καθόλου, καὶ τὸ ὅλως λεγόμενον ὡς ὅλον τι ὄν, οὕτως ἐστὶ καθόλου ὡς πολλὰ περιέχον τῷ κατηγορεῖσθαι καθ' ἑκάστου καὶ ἐν ἅπαντα εἶναι ὡς ἕκαστον, οἷον ἄνθρωπον ἵππον θεόν, διότι ἅπαντα ζῶα· τὸ δὲ συνεχὲς καὶ πεπερασμένον, ὅταν ἐν τι ἐκ πλειόνων ἢ, ἐνυπαρχόντων μάλιστα μὲν δυνάμει, εἰ δὲ μή, ἐνεργείᾳ (cf. *Metaph.* 1023b26-34). [«We call a whole that from which is absent none of the parts of which it is said to be naturally a whole, and that which so contains the things it contains that they form a unity; and this in two senses – either as each and all one, or as making up the unity between them. For that which is true of a whole class and is said to hold good as a whole (which implies that it is a kind of whole) is true of a whole in the sense that it contains many things by being predicated of each, and that each and all of them, e. g. man, horse, god, are one, because all are living things. But the continuous and limited is a whole, when there is a unity consisting of several parts present in it, especially if they are present only potentially, but, failing this, even if they are present actually» (Barnes, Jonathan, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, p. 80)]. The reference to God is quite important, for it makes possible an approach of the metaphysical level in a Neoplatonic way. It should be mentioned that the book Δ of *Metaph.*, in which these extracts are included, is full of the new philosophical terminology introduced by Aristotle, composes a number of his ontological and logical theories and is quite interesting from a Neoplatonic point of view, since it raises questions for both metaphysics of transcendence and metaphysics of immanence.

According to Westerink's and Combès' reversed analogical comment that refers to the sensible world²², the organs that are different one another but participate to all the 'elements' of the organism of which they are parts are 'ἁνομοιομερῆ'. An ontological detail that needs to be clarified is that we cannot describe in precise terms the 'ἁνομοιομερῆ', unless the composite being of which they are 'parts', such as human being, is firstly investigated. A head, a hand and a leg are definitely 'parts' of a human being that relate to each other functionally, but they are not identical, at least with respect to their form. Beyond doubt, no special thought is needed according to the Neoplatonic theoretical schemata to understand that a general ontological category in the sense of a 'whole' or a combination of this kind of categories that compose a broader pre-cosmological and pre-productive 'whole' – obviously capable on their own of producing – is different from the already formed hypostases of the sensible world. In the second case, we are speaking about processes that have already taken place and have caused a composite at the same time as distinct with respect to the 'parts' result, which is also considered to be an organism.

Furthermore, in the level of the metaphysical archetypes, a 'whole' of an ontological category is clearly different from a 'whole' combined by more than one category. In addition to their ontological completeness they are different in respect to the priority, which, since it develops in the metaphysical level, is not subject to time nor does it radically change. The first 'whole', despite the fact that it is just one, comes after the supreme 'whole', for it results from the separating distinction of the superior category, that is, Being or Substance or Essence, which is the requirement for what follows. The second one can be formed either in the first place or later, depending on the case. When it is placed within the primary inseparable level of the universal 'wholes', which Being includes as internal powers, it is considered to be the most superior. This is the greatest state at which the inseparable – as well as ineffable – is found, regardless of what will follow. On the other hand, it will be later in origin, if already separated from their 'wholes' 'parts' meet, which have been formed, after a number of qualitative and increasing quantitatively individualizations have taken place, by the emanation of Being. This somehow dialectical meeting is developed in a downward course to the most inferior

On this, cf. for instance, Dumoulin, Bertrand, *Analyse génétique de la Métaphysique d'Aristote* (Paris 1986), pp. 174-190.

²² Cf. Damascius, *Traité des premiers principes*, II, p. 276f..

metaphysical levels and ends where the natural reasons are formed, which create and feed the sensible world directly.²³ That is to say, mostly Being defines in a paradigmatic mode how the ‘wholes’ will be formed and, by extension, what predicates would be attributed to them, the first of which is that of being, in the sense of existence.

At the same time, however, these levels have, with no doubt, one thing in common. In both cases, of combination and individual existence, we actually refer to a mixed, the ‘parts’ of which include in any sense, no matter how small they are, all of its ontological content. And speaking here of a ‘whole’, we mostly mean its quality not quantity, unless it is necessary to investigate theoretically the domination of a ‘part’ that a new hypostasis “requires” to be formed, which needs to follow a special constructive process. These positions brings us back to Anaxagoras’ theory, who intended to explain the structure and the natural composition of the primary material substrate, by suggesting that there is an infinite variety of small seeds, the combinations of which lead to the production of all beings.²⁴ So, in both cases a ‘part’, regardless of its size, is a smaller

²³ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 203.2-4.3: Φυσικοί τε οἱ λόγοι καὶ ψυχικοί, οὐ μὴν ἕκαστος λόγος ψυχὴ οὐδὲ φύσις, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος, οὐδὲ ἵππος, οἷον κεφαλὴ καὶ χεὶρ ἢ πόυς, τελούντα δὲ ὅμως εἰς τὸν ὅλον ἄνθρωπον καὶ τὸ ὅλον ἕκαστον. [«Reason principles, too, are either expressed physically or psychically, not that each reason principle is the soul or nature, nor is it the case that each part is the same as the human being, or the horse, for example, the head or the hand or foot, but that they complete the whole human being and each whole» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 307)]. This is because a ‘part’ is neither the same nor different from the *whole*, but only in a particular way, according to what is said in *Prm.* 146b2-c4.

²⁴ Cf. Anaxagoras, fr. B1: ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν, ἄπειρα καὶ πλῆθος καὶ σμικρότητα· καὶ γὰρ τὸ σμικρὸν ἄπειρον ἦν. καὶ πάντων ὁμοῦ ἐόντων οὐδὲν ἐνδηλον ἦν ὑπὸ σμικρότητος· πάντα γὰρ ἄηρ τε καὶ αἰθήρ κατεῖχεν, ἀμφοτέρω ἄπειρα ἐόντα· ταῦτα γὰρ μέγιστα ἐνεστὶν ἐν τοῖς σύμπασι καὶ πλήθει καὶ μεγέθει. [«All things were together, infinite both in number and in smallness; for the small too was infinite. And, when all things were together, none of them could be distinguished for their smallness. For air and aether prevailed over all things, being both of them infinite; for amongst all things these are the greatest both in quantity and size» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy* (London 1990), p. 190)]; Anaxagoras, fr. B4: τούτων δὲ οὕτως ἐχόντων χρὴ δοκεῖν ἐνεῖναι πολλὰ τε καὶ παντοῖα ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς συγκρινομένοις καὶ σπέρματα πάντων χρημάτων καὶ ιδέας παντοίας ἔχοντα καὶ χροιάς καὶ ἡδονάς. [«And since these things are so, we must suppose that there are contained many things and of all sorts in the things that are uniting, seeds of all things, with all sorts of shapes and colours and savours» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 190)]. Comparing Anaxagoras’ and Damascius’ texts, it appears that they were both opposed to a simplistic monism, which proves that the ancient thought could not suggest a solution to the problem of production by using just the concepts of unity and uniqueness, or, more correctly, it could not understand the sensible ‘multitude’ without accepting the pre-existence of a metaphysical or an primary natural unchangeable one. Focusing on Anaxagoras, the following should be mentioned: despite the fact that he follows the Ionian philosophers Thales-Anaximander-Anaximenes (and mainly Anaximenes), he does not adopt their simplistic monism. According to his theory, the ‘πᾶν’ is a material ‘whole’ with internal distinctions in its union, so the question of the primary ‘arche’ of cosmos is actually not raised by him. That is, according to

him, none of the natural *elements* is the primary substance of the natural world. According to the first extract, the world was originally a nebula which contained everything else, which were so infinitely small in size so as no separation could develop between them at any level. However, it is necessary to explain how the multi-potential natural world is constructed, so distinctiveness within a solid appears to be inevitable. First of all, it is obvious that Anaxagoras utilizes Heraclitus' theory, according to which the fire turns on and goes out following a natural law. Anaxagoras also says that air and fire are distinct from reality, which includes everything, in the sense that they receive a particular 'form'. How this very first separation of the smallest seeds takes place, which never actually become as small as possible, since there is always a smaller to which all the 'elements' of matter are included, is a detail which would be particularly interesting for comparisons with Neoplatonism. However, Anaxagoras did not identify such capabilities of conception and description in human thought. Regarding the term 'χρήματα', it refers to those material conditions which are infinitely separable, provided that the smallest seed contains as many parts as the larger one. In this sense, no matter how the separation progresses, we will never reach the smallest possible which would not be actually a mixture, which, *mutatis mutandis*, corresponds to Damascius' 'parts'. So, in Anaxagoras' system even the smallest particle owns an exclusive property. This exclusion means that within the primary condition of matter even opposing qualities are found in unity, so they mutually eliminate any tendencies to prevail one another, in order the unity of matter to be preserved. The inviolable unity of an individual excludes the unity of the universal. Anaxagoras attempts to prove this point. Finally, it should be mentioned that all the opposing found in a composite unity lie within the 'χρήματα' or the 'seeds' from which the natural bodies are composed. Whenever a new body is formed, different combinations of opposing things take place, which help universe to reveal the variety of its hypostatic differences even further. These also result from other passages of Anaxagoras, such as B2, B3, B5, B6, B7, B8. For an approach of them, cf. Aristotle, *Ph.* A4 187a25-6: τὸν μὲν Αναξαγόραν ἄπειρα ποιεῖν τὰ τε ὁμοιομερῆ καὶ τὰναντία ["and Anaxagoras posits an unlimited number both of homoeomerous elements and of opposites" (Charlton, William, *Aristotle Physics Books I and II* (Oxford 2006), p. 8)]. This is a special type of relationship, since the original separated 'whole' is divided into 'ὁμοιομερῆ parts', each of which includes all the primary opposing ones. From this point onwards the formation of beings begins. The extract B8 οὐ κεχώρισθαι ἀλλήλων τὰ ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ κόσμῳ [«the things that are in one world are not divided» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 191)] describes the natural reality which is internally continuous. The extract B9 however περιχωροῦντα καὶ ἀποκρινόμενα ὑπὸ βίας τε καὶ ταχύτητος [«as these things revolve and are separated off by the force and swiftness» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 191)] describes the discontinuity, since any formed body is individualized according to its identity. So, the relationship between continuous-discontinuous is the most important requirement for an ordered formation of the natural universe. These procedures relate to both the original 'elemental' (which is the source) and the individual 'elementals' (which come after it) presented by Damascius. At the end of our study, we will come back to Anaxagoras and the way in which he is presented by Aristotle and we will raise some more questions that will arise from what we will have elaborated. It should be also mentioned that Aristotle's references to Empedocles and Anaxagoras are quite interesting for the history of philosophy, and especially the theory about the 'opposites'. Couloubaritsis, Lambros, commenting on the general context of Aristotle's extract from *Ph.*, says the following: «Selon lui (Aristote), les physiologues ont pensé ces contraires dans le sens de l'opposition du dense et du subtil, dont la forme la plus générale est l'excès et le défaut, sous laquelle Platon subsumerait d'ailleurs sa dyade indéterminée (le Grand et le Petit). Encore que Platon, avoue Aristote, a conçu cette contrariété comme la "matière" dont l'un est l'εἶδος, tandis que pour les physiologues, en revanche, c'est l'un qui constitue la matière qui gît et les contraires des différences et des εἶδη. Chez Anaximandre les choses se passent encore différemment: les contrariétés (αἱ ἐναντιότητες) se dégagent par séparation à partir de l'un qui les contient, dit Aristote, dans leur unite. Quant à Empédocle et Anaxagore, ils précisaient ce point de vue, en faisant jaillir les contraires d'un "mélange", le premier en quatre étants, qui sont, dit-il, "ce qu'on appelle les éléments", le second, en revanche, en une infinité. En résumant de la sorte une partie de la philosophie des "physiciens", tout en y insérant Platon, le Stagirite

repetition of its ‘whole’; this actually reflects and specifies the dominant in Damascius’ system monistic principle. However, it is necessary to define in each case the primary condition to make clear which world is meant, the metaphysical or the natural one, so, one will be able to understand and categorize the ontological procedures and the effect that they will cause.

3. *The ‘Elements’ as ‘Multitude’ and ‘Many’*

Completing the former argument, Damascius mentions that the predicate ‘many’ can be also used for the ‘elements’, as well as the terms of their combination, in order beings or a particular ontic system to be formed. This is because an ‘element’ is not able by its very nature to complete on its own the ‘elemental’ – of which it is a part or, in other words, for which it is a constitutive ‘element’ – but it is necessary to co-exist at least with one more. This means that, if an ontological factor is named ‘element’, it automatically requires both ontologically and logically other ‘elements’ and, sometimes, regardless of whether they co-exist within another ‘elemental’ under different ontogenetic relations. The term ‘element’ generally means both a strict ontological limit in the production process and distinction, namely, exceedance –but not elimination– of the monad as the original integrity and development of the condition of ‘multitude’, which is individualized in ‘many’ products.²⁵ In addition, we could not suppose that under the sensibly conceived produced world there is – according to the principle of distinction in union – a primary

complète l’analyse qu’il a faite des principes: il y insère une problématique essentielle, celle de contraires, qui seule semble impliquer dès l’origine un devenir. Mais nous verrons que pensés ainsi par le biais du devenir, les contraires vont rendre la tâche dure à l’ontologie» [cf. *L’Avènement de la Science Physique*, (Bruxelles 1980), pp. 139-140]. On Anaxagoras’ theory, cf. also Malcolm, Schofield, *An Essay on Anaxagoras* (Cambridge 1980).

²⁵ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 175.4-6: Λέγεται δὲ πολλὰ κατὰ τρίτον λόγον τὰ στοιχεῖα· καὶ γὰρ οὐδὲ στοιχεῖον ἓν μόνον δύναται συμπληροῦν τὸ στοιχειωτόν, δύο δὲ τουλάχιστον. [«And in a third way, ‘many’ refers to elements. For one element alone is not able to complete what is composed of elements, but there must at least be two» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 290)]. Therefore, the following two possibilities are out of the question: a) a complete identity between the ‘elements’, since any of their movement would be pointless and without any result, a simple self-referentiality or a continuous self-production; b) a complete delimitation among each other, since an extreme hypostatic self-efficiency would automatically exclude any possibility to contribute to anything. By extension, the production of the natural world would be impossible. So, we could discuss the great variety of the energy individualities and how they are combined.

level in which every ‘element’ has an exclusive and self-sufficient presence separately from the rest.

If we also investigated the entire development of the group of ‘elements’, the progress towards the formation would be as follows: universal unity – individualized distinction – special ontogenetic union. And all of these under the power of specific deterministic separating and attracting forces, which each time operate in new complementary terms. However, it should be also clarified whether in each case we are speaking about a metaphysical or a natural-empirical ‘elemental’. Another question is whether there are many ‘elementals’ in the metaphysical world. When it comes to the natural world, the answer is positive, provided that a hypostasis that is formed by a special composition of different ‘elementals’ is considered to be an (individual) ‘elemental’. In addition, the primary inherence of the ‘elements’ in a quite expanded context of integrity, before to begin their creative projection, could be considered to be an ‘elemental’ as well. When it comes to the metaphysical world this is a difficult question to be answered. The only relation-determination we could discuss refers to the archetypes of the ‘elements’ and – from any point of view – non-sensible archetypes of the ‘elements’.

4. *The Differences between the ‘Parts’ and the ‘Elements’: Conceptual Clarifications*

Damascius’ next question is: what is the difference between the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’?²⁶ Before we examine the Neoplatonist thinker’s analysis, it is necessary to explain why this question needs to be raised as an extension to the former reasoning. For this very reason, this subchapter is a preparation for what follows and is apparently based on Damascius’ general positions, which constitute the requirements for the special analysis that is about to be elaborated next.²⁷ Through all these investigated to this point,

²⁶ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 175.7-6.7.

²⁷ Both this theoretical direction and the syllogism that follows in this subchapter rely on *Pr.* I, 99-129. In this extensive extract, the first topic that is elaborated is the ‘procession’ from the one to the multitude (cf. 99-112), with the following subtopics: a) the question about the first differentiation, b) the question about the origin of distinction and c) the proof that the One is neither in all things nor before them, where the explicit transcendence is stressed so that not to misinterpret immanence. Damascius next elaborates how the causality of the One works (cf. 112-129), where he raises some questions about the Cause of the metaphysical internal differentiation and the possibility that it might be connected in many ways with the One, referring to both the Chaldean Oracles and Iamblichus; he also elaborates the topic of the one as the source of all things and its relationship with them, as well as the topic of all things as including the one, to draw some

it has already been made clear that both the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ cover the research course of late Neoplatonism, which refers to how we go from the ‘one’ to ‘multitude’, provided that, when it comes to the metaphysical level, between these two – closely related and successive – terms there is no opposition at all, which would prove an a priori ontological – and, by extension, axiological – dualism. So, in order to confirm that there is only one Principle in an active state – which will then become the feeding source of a number of individual principles – it should be accepted that in every particular ‘procession’ there is an autonomous completely independent monad or a monad that somehow performs self-references, which will lead it in multiplicative projections. In this sense, this very Principle is nothing but a monad. On the other hand, in order to explain reasonably the fact – and the possibility – of the production, it is necessary to overcome the apparent – though at first valid to suggest it as dominant – opposition or even complete difference between the ‘one’ and the ‘multitude’ and, then, to identify the factor that as a coherent and analytical movement makes possible the transition, in terms of a self-evolution, from the former term to the latter one at the same time as it allows their – non-obvious at first – unity and their subsequent cooperation for accomplishing a specific purpose. That is to say, the ‘procession’ from the one to the multitude and then from the multitude to the many reveals a development the main characteristic of which is an unbreakable unity, a process that takes also place in sensible terms in the natural world.²⁸

The crucial theoretical solution to this question is closely associated with the perspective of monism, despite the fact that precise similarities between the two worlds are not accepted, since their structures are totally different. Damascius follows exactly this direction. In fact, his positions about the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ show that he does not adopt simplistic monism which would reveal a primary typically repetitive form. That is to say, he does not suggest that there is only one ‘element’ or one substance that would constitute the primary body from which the forms of the world would come; the question here would be which are the procedures and the factors for such a development, since originally nothing dualistic or multiplicative would exist in the sense of seeds. He describes a unity, within which all the properties and the qualities primarily co-exist, even

conclusions about the triadic schema ‘remaining-procession-reversion’ as an emanating and entelechical process.

²⁸ For a systematic approach of these and basically in the light of the exegesis of the hypotheses of the Platonic dialogue *Prm.* by Damascius, cf. Combès, Joseph, “Damascius lecteur du Parménide”, *Archives de Philosophie* 38 (1975), pp. 33-60.

though in some cases they are considered to be opposing one another. But, this opposition is actually meant by analogy to what takes place in the sensible world and it is not in accordance to the procedures of the metaphysical world, where the opposition is only meant theoretically by economy. The primary sources reveal special modes of being in complete unity and coherence, with no hierarchy or any sort of dependency. And one of them is ‘multitude’, the source of ‘many’; although the concepts have different meanings in the two worlds, which shows that we speak about dual meanings.

So, in this sense the principle that feeds the ontological growth is not just one in its presence, for it is a ‘multitude’ as well. From the opposite point of view, during the development of it multiple interventions it requires the primary unity. In this way, isotropy and homogeneity are not the dominant factors, at the same time as heterogeneity of the cosmic universe is confirmed and explained, which, when associated with the many ontic forms, should be considered not only with respect to quantity but also with respect to quality, namely, in the sense of a special in each case combination of properties. Nevertheless, extreme heterogeneity cannot be developed, for the – basically theoretical – need for a unified and monistic version of the universe would automatically become unrealistic.²⁹ From this point onwards, two questions arise, which are closely related to the procedures that originally take place. The answers to them can actually explain anything that follows.

First of all: under what conditions the inner separation of the intelligible unity takes place? In other words, which are the factors that contribute so that the primary, after the One, condition not to remain just an inflexible system, but to grow fast and multiply? As a parenthesis, it should be mentioned here that, if there were a particularly specific and epistemologically satisfying answer to this question, it would be necessary to accept that human beings would be epistemologically capable of representing the metaphysical world in concepts, as far as this would be possible. Therefore, Metaphysics could be actually considered as a rational knowledge – owing to the way in which the thinking subject perceives it – and due to this new perspective, it would turn to be inappropriate, or at least not enough, to describe the transcendental world, since this is inaccessible. However, human being’s epistemological capability is specific and has no access, not even in its highest performances, in the transcendental. Damascius is quite clear on this

²⁹ These are elaborated by Damascius in many parts of his work. For instance, cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 178.21-179.6 and 203.20-204.3, and, mainly, 183.15-192.3, where the discussion is connected with both the metaphysical and the natural worlds.

in all of his treatises, for he is one of the main – if not the greatest – exponents of radical apophatism.³⁰ Therefore, any epistemological conclusion drawn on metaphysical beings is only a possibility, at the same time as, in a consistent skepticist sense, could be even disproved. It should be, however, mentioned that since Proclus (cf. the third book of his treatise *Theologia Platonica*) the internal distinction of Being, which takes places due to the ontological nature of its power, is the most crucial term for the development of the metaphysical world and, subsequently, the production of the natural one. In addition, Damascius has devoted the introduction of the second book of his treatise to discuss these topics, by utilizing the relevant tradition and adopting as his main axis the pair ‘one-indefinite dyad’.

Secondly, in what way do ‘many’ relate one another, in the sense of them being individual expanded ‘wholes’, and how are these relationships accomplished? Damascius gives an answer to this question through his theories about the ‘elements’ and the ‘parts’, which are clearly not part of the radical apophatism. The remarkable ontological parameter is that he generally accepts a peculiar metaphysical becoming – under the term of ‘procession’ – which is revealed through the ‘elements’ and the ‘parts’. And regardless of whether this serves his purpose or whether this is appropriate for the positions discussed here, it proves and epistemologically validates his general realistic theory about how necessary the multiplying procedures that take place in the level of the archetypes are. The fact that he introduces a sort of movement in the metaphysical world – a position radically opposite to Parmenides’ immobility – proves that he conceives the immaterial beings in a dynamocratic sense, following the tradition formed on the basis of the Platonic dialogue *Sophista*. Nevertheless, it is not the same movement with that which is found in the natural world. So, he definitely accepts that there is inherent energy in the divine unity and substance, which is able to activate procedures for the formation of dissimilar – though not ontologically different – supersensible levels-conditions. To avoid any confusion, it is quite important to adopt at this point the Neoplatonic methodological term

³⁰ The first volume of his *Pr.* [Westerink / Combès (eds.), Paris 1986] is devoted to the unutterability of the supreme Principle, a term which is considered to be more appropriate than those of the One and Good for describing the transcendent substance. Note though that this extreme apophatism places theological realism to the highest possible point. Cf. Bréhier, Emile, “L’idée du néant et le problème de l’origine radicale dans le Néoplatonisme Grec”, *Études de philosophie antique* (Paris 1948), pp. 248-283. Combès, Josheph, “Négativité et procession des principes chez Damascius”, *Revue Études August.* 22 (1976), pp. 114-133 and “Damascius et les hypothèses négatives du Parménide”, *Revue Sciences Philosophiques et théologiques* 61 (1977), pp. 185-220.

‘procession’, which describes self-developments.³¹ It should be, however, mentioned that while Damascius forms his ontological system, he often makes a synthesis of Parmenides’ and Heraclitus’ views, in the sense that he combines what remains unchanged with what goes under development, an option that could be also approached under the prism of the ‘indefinite dyad’ of the unwritten doctrines of the first period of Academy.³²

5. Difference in the Formation of ‘Parts’ and ‘Elements’

The first difference mentioned by Damascius between the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ is of constitutional nature, which is determined by ontological priorities-dependencies. So, he mentions that the ‘parts’ consist of ‘elements’, each of which is in a ‘whole’ per se, or a particular unity. According to his view, this relationship is based on the fact that the ‘parts’ belong to their particular ‘elemental’, just like the four supreme ‘elements’ – namely, earth, air, water and fire – are the constructive and, subsequently, inherent ‘elements’ of both a nerve in general and a separated part of it, in a specific analogies, in this special combination of theirs.³³ This example obviously points to Empedocles’ cosmological views.³⁴ Either way, a ‘part’ is not originally ontologically

³¹ On the concept of ‘procession’ in Neoplatonism, cf. Gersh, Stephen, *From Iamblichus to Eriugena*, pp. 48-55, who, as he investigates Damascius’ positions, mentions that for this Neoplatonic thinker «each effect proceeds from its cause in the sense of being separated or distinguished from it and that this distinction is a result of the presence of otherness in the effect» (p. 48f.), in the sense obviously that it is meant in the metaphysical level. This position, with some differences, has been also elaborated by Proclus.

³² It should be mentioned that in the Neoplatonic texts the ‘indefinite dyad’ (ἄοριστος δυάς) is considered to be a way in which the metaphysical ‘multitude’ appears, in the context of special relations-dependencies-determinations-successions, under the light of unity as the endless richness of possibilities. For the three leaders of Late Neoplatonism, Syrianus, Proclus and Damascius, the ‘indefinite dyad’ corresponds to the unlimited, while the ‘one’ is associated to limit. In this sense, they connect Plato’s unwritten doctrines with his dialogue *Phlb.* Every metaphysical development comes from the manifestation of the indefinite, in the sense of unlimited in possibilities, dyad, which easily can be considered as the source of the metaphysical ‘procession’. On the ‘indefinite dyad’ in Damascius, cf. *Pr.* II 1-54. Cf. also Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, pp. xxi-xxii, 34, and 507.

³³ Cf. DAM. *Pr.* II 175.7-13.

³⁴ Cf. Empedocles, fr. B, 57-61, 96, 98, the most characteristic of which is the last one: ἡ δὲ χθὼν τοῦτοις ἴση συνέκυρσε μάλιστα, Ἡφαίστῳ τ’ ὄμβρῳ τε καὶ αἰθέρι παμφανόωντι, Κύπριδος ὀρμισθεῖσα τελείοις ἐν λιμένεσσιν, εἴτ’ ὀλίγον μείζων εἴτε πλεόνεσσιν ἐλάσσων· ἐκ τῶν αἱμά τε γέντο καὶ ἄλλης εἶδεα σαρκός. [«And the earth, anchoring in the perfect harbours of Aphrodite, meets with these in nearly equal proportions, with Hephaistos and Water and gleaming Air – either a little more of it, or less of them and more of it. From these did blood arise and the manifold forms of flesh» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 158)]. According to this passage, it is metaphorically said that within Aphrodite’s perfect harbours a set of circumstances made the earth

individual, in the sense of a one-dimensional ‘elemental’ separation, for it is composite and, taking into account its separated hypostatic individuality, includes the ‘elements’ of the ‘elemental’ from which it has come and within which they lie in a particular proportion. This proportion is to a point measurable and assumable by the modern scientific and technological capabilities. The conclusion is that a general composite condition that is separated is formed by a special combination of ‘elements’.

Considering their condition per se, all the ‘elements’ are not in number, composition or size, but ontologically simpler than any individual ‘part’. This difference means that the elemental conditions, for example of the fire and earth, are simpler than the smallest ‘part’ of a nerve, since, despite the fact that it is very small, it contains – apparently in a quantitative proportion – what the nerve as a ‘whole’ also contains. Therefore, the difference between the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’ lies in their quality and composition; it is not about their number or size. Every ‘element’, regardless of its quantity in different states or beings – and how would it be possible to measure it at a time in which no sufficient scientific or technological progress had been made – is quite simple. This property of it is due to the fact that its nature is one, unique, non-reducible and ontologically non-determined by other ‘elements’, even those that somehow are parts of its special nature. Its identity is that which has been since its production and nothing more. Therefore, it is not possible to be a complex archetypical or productive reality, without being an original metaphysical one as well.

to be united in almost equal analogies, with fire, air and water. This union presents a quantitative variation when it takes place, depending on what it will be produced. In this passage, Empedocles shows that he accepts that it is necessary similar things to be attracted, as well as that the union of the ‘elements’ in different proportions depending on what it will be produced is not random. However, we could argue that he does not intend to investigate the laws of the objective natural procedures, although the way in which he unfolds his thought shows that he is aware of it, at least to a point. So, Damascius, by re-approaching Empedocles, makes an impressive connection of the metaphysical level with the natural world. Cf. also, fr.6 of Empedocles: τέσσαρα γὰρ πάντων ριζώματα πρῶτον ἄκουε· Ζεὺς ἀργῆς Ἥρη τε φερέσβιος ἡδ' Αἰδωνεύς Νῆστις θ' ἢ δακρύοις τέγγει κρούνωμα βρότειον. [«hear first the four roots of all things: shining Zeus, life-bringing Hera, Aidoneus and Nestis whose tear-drops are a well-spring to mortals» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 150)], as well as Aristotle’s comment in *Metaph.* A4 985a31-b2. It should be also mentioned that in this passage Empedocles preserves the absoluteness of the divine, despite the fact that this is subject to natural changes. For human being, these changes represent either good or evil, depending on how the combinations take place; so he actually adds to his references an axiological content. Moreover, throughout his reasoning, he mentions the well-known powers of ‘love’ and ‘strife’, which, since they express good and evil, are successively the dominant law of all the cosmological developments.

All those mentioned before make clear that the ‘elements’, despite being involved in a number of combinations or despite the fact that they co-exist within primary ‘wholes’ of production or combinations related to the productive plan, preserve their nature intact. This is actually a requirement for their participation in the production process. When it comes to the ‘parts’, things are quite different; although they are just few in number, they are composite, which, *mutatis mutandis*, points to Anaxagoras.³⁵ In any kind of separation or even composition the ‘parts’ include the ‘elements’ that form the ‘whole’ from which they have been separated – although this is not essentially a separation but a transition to

³⁵ Cf. Anaxagoras, fr. 3: οὔτε γὰρ τοῦ μικροῦ ἔστι τό γε ἐλάχιστον, ἀλλ’ ἔλασσον αἰεὶ (τὸ γὰρ ἐὼν οὐκ τὸ μὴ οὐκ εἶναι) - ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῦ μεγάλου αἰεὶ ἔστι μείζον. Καὶ ἴσον ἔστι τῷ μικρῷ πλῆθος, πρὸς ἑαυτὸ δὲ ἕκαστόν ἐστι καὶ μέγα καὶ μικρόν. [«Nor is there a least of what is small, but there is always a smaller; for it cannot be that what is should cease to be by being cut. But there is also always something greater than what is great, and it is equal to the small in amount, and, compared with itself, each thing is both great and small» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, 190)]. Anaxagoras, fr. 6: ἐν πᾶσι δὲ πολλὰ ἔνεστι καὶ τῶν ἀποκρινόμενων ἴσα πλῆθος ἐν τοῖς μείζουσιν τε καὶ ἐλάσσουσιν. [«And in all things many things are contained, and an equal number both in the greater and in the smaller of the things that are separated off» (Burnet, John, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 190)]. Cf. also our note n.17, as well as Kirk, Geoffrey S. / Raven, John E. / Schofield, Malcolm, *The Presocratic Philosophers. A Critical History with a Selection of texts* (Cambridge 1983), pp. 367-374. In the following comments on Anaxagoras’ views one may find Damascius’ views to be presented later: «Unfortunately, the objection can be brought against such a theory – and indeed it has been brought by both ancient and modern critics – that in that case Anaxagoras’ cosmogony is based upon a vicious regress. It is not, as a matter of fact, by any means certain that Anaxagoras himself would have regarded such a regress as undesirable. The very notion of an infinite regress was a new one, dating only from the time of Zeno, and it seems in no way improbable that Anaxagoras should have seen in it a welcome escape from Parmenides’ denial of coming-into-being. But in any case Anaxagoras has an answer to his critics. As is evident from the fact that there is already an infinite number of ‘seeds’ in the original mixture, matter naturally tends, however infinitely divisible it may be, to coagulate into ‘seeds’, and there is therefore a natural unit of matter from which cosmogony can begin. So, it seems, Anaxagoras evaded the dilemma. On the one hand, certainly, the infinite regress must be retained: it is the only way in which there can be a ‘portion’ of everything in everything, and so both coming-into-being and change can be effectually eliminated. On the other hand, equally certainly, this same infinite regress must be somehow at least momentarily halted so that Anaxagoras can start moving in the opposite direction towards the building up of the sensible world. It is at this point that the ‘seeds’ (an appropriate word, since a seed is that from which larger things develop) have an essential part to play in the system» (378). The Neoplatonic philosopher starts from a primary metaphysical process, which forms a material mixture, from which the natural world will come, after a number of combinations, as a developing, through successive forms, reality. It should be also mentioned that in Anaxagoras Intellect holds a key role, for it intervenes in the primary mixture combinations and that is why it can be compared with the metaphysical interventions found in Damascius, though this has to be approached quite carefully so as to avoid any analogical simplifications. But, for Damascius all the procedures start from the metaphysical archetypes and no a posteriori tasks are assigned to them. About the relation of Anaxagoras with Empedocles in general and how the later tradition approached them, cf. O’Brien, Denis, “The relation of Anaxagoras and Empedocles”, *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 88 (1968), pp. 93-113. About the Intellect in Anaxagoras, cf. Vlastos, Gregory, “Der Nous Des Anaxagoras”, *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 9 (1964), pp. 87-102.

another level, in the sense that they appear in a new region – exactly as ‘parts’ of it with a special function to be performed. It goes without saying that this is not an investigation of how an ‘element’ is separated. Therein a ‘part’ would be as simple and united as the ‘element’ of which is a separation would be, at the same time as it would be also able to participate in compositions. In this sense, it could be also considered as an energy – or even attracting – field both in itself and in with respect to the relations that it develops.

This draws the following epistemological conclusion: it is quite possible that in Damascius’ texts – and it would be very interesting to investigate the texts of the entire Neoplatonic School as well, so as to get some satisfying answers to critical metaphysical and cosmological questions – there is nothing so small that cannot be further divided. The question is what procedures do they take place in order further separations to be made, which actually are imperceptible by senses? But, any conclusion drawn here should not lead us in that we exclude unquestioningly the possibility of an analogous consideration with the positions on the elementary participles suggested by modern physics.³⁶ We believe that it will become quite obvious from what we will investigate next that Damascius’ ‘elements’, despite being separated with respect to their hypostatic multiplications, are essentially endless feeding sources, which are approached in connection to their quality rather than their quantity. That is why we should not speculate that Damascius considers them just as infinitely small and compressed in number or size but as a sort of mass systems with endless energy capabilities – obviously not countable – which are constantly separated, depending on the productive needs, possibly within a space already existing with constantly changing lengths.

According to these clarifications, we believe that Damascius accepts that every ‘element’ will go under separations – which will not affect its original integrity – every single time it will contribute to the formation of the various composite sensible beings – a naturally perpetual process in the world of becoming. We need to admit that the quantitative proportion is also an ontological regularity – with respect to the degree of domination or complementarity of those qualities required for its formation. To be able, however, to describe a condition like this, it is necessary first of all to investigate how do the ‘elements’, as probably coming from the archetypal ‘forms’, show the way in which the transition from the divine level to the sensible one is accomplished and what kind of

³⁶ For a brief – and understandable to someone who is not an expert – overview on the elementary particles, cf. the fifth chapter of Hawking Stephen’s book *A Brief History of Time* (Toronto / New York 1988).

changes or alterations of their original nature do they take place. The most compatible, however, position, at least in the first place, with the modern theory on elementary particles is the theory on ‘parts’, which have a limit of separated presence, depending on their energy combinations and the relevant ontogenesis. However, regardless of the kind of separation they come from, they are constantly composite and that is why they are not completely individual. They are somehow all-inclusive and creative monads, under the specific terms of every field.

6. *Separation of the ‘Parts’ – Union of the ‘Elements’*

The second difference between the ‘parts’ and the ‘elements’³⁷ is that the ‘parts’ preserve their non-determined by them measures of their separation from which they came into existence as well as their hypostatic boundaries exactly as ‘parts’. It is clear that in the opposite case we would need different predicates to describe them, since they would not be ‘parts’. On the other hand, the ‘elements’ do not remain in the same space and time – although in their case, space cannot be conceived, according to the givens defined by the text, not even by a theoretical abstraction – but they are tend to combine and connect with each other. During this sort of movement, the ‘elements’ reveal both their true nature and how it works; that is to say, neither their number nor their quality changes after the intervention of the rest of the ‘elements’, let alone, they do not come out of their own ontological boundaries. So, expressing the concept ‘part’ means that an ontic condition preserves its separation or the structural terms that cause its separation from a ‘whole’, in the sense of a basis for the production-formation of its hypostasis in a particular form. This goes together with the fact that a – primary – unity no longer exists, since every ‘part’ is subsequently a unity on its own. The ‘part’, as a ‘part’, shows a sort of separation and a limit, which both, if not in the divine, at least in the sensible world,

³⁷ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 175.14-20: ...τὰ μὲν μέρη φυλάττει καὶ τὸν οἰκεῖον μερισμὸν καθ’ ὃν ὑπέστη, ἢ εἰ μὴ φυλάττοι, οὐδ’ ἂν εἶη μέρη· τὰ δὲ στοιχεῖα οὐχ ὑπομένει τὴν ὁπωσοῦν διάστασιν, ἀλλὰ συγγεῖται εἰς κρᾶσιν καὶ εἰς ἔνωσιν ἐπείγεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἔχει τὸ εἶναι τὰ στοιχεῖα, τῷ μὴ παραφαίνειν πού τὸν εἰκεῖον μερισμόν, καὶ πολλῶ μᾶλλον οὐδὲ τὴν περιγραφὴν. [«...the parts keep intact their own division, according to which they are constituted (as parts) or, if they did not preserve this division, they could not be parts. But elements do not accept any division, since they emerge together into a mixture and they are pressed into unity, and elements have their being in this, that is, in that they do not produce their own division, and a fortiori, neither do they bring about their own delimitation» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius’ Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 290)]. Particularly interesting here is the metaphorical way in which thoughts are presented.

can be epistemologically identified, at least to a point, since for the Neoplatonist philosophers this world can be neither epistemologically completely approached nor logically classified.

The ‘elements’, however, follow a different process. They do not remain in their original condition separated from anything else, but, by exceeding their ontological boundaries – which is questionable whether they originally existed –, they are activated in order to connect both structurally and functionally with other ‘elements’ and, because of this connection, to contribute to the production of the ontic levels or the individual hypostases that are about to come into existence. However, this sort of movement does not make conceivable or epistemologically detectable the number that results from their separation.³⁸ This somehow scientific lack confirms, first of all, that the proportions of the ‘elements’ in a particular thing cannot be measured, at least according to the measures of that time, and, secondly, that it is not possible to define the number of the ‘elements’ in total or in their original state, that is to say, in the sense of a mass full of energy, which is repetitively manifested and expressed in mathematical theorems. Having said that, Skepticism appears once again, the exponents of which (Arcesilaus, Carneades), who followed scientific realism, pointed out some doubts, at the same time as they were open to new research models.³⁹ At this point, it is important to mention Speusippus as well, the first successor of Plato in the Academy and one of the most important proponents of a continuous renewal of the scientific questions.

Extending all those discussed before, we could argue that Damascius’ texts do not explicitly provide the requirements to define with an epistemologically scientific precision the ‘elements’ as primary metaphysical causes. The only thing entrenched for sure, according to the scientific research, is that we find them as compositional factors, by means of which different natural beings and a number of combined general cosmic conditions come into existence in terms of becoming. So, to understand the way in which they function, we could apply a physical-mathematical scientific model, provided, however, that the parameter of potentiality with respect to the final conclusions is strong.

³⁸ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 182.9-183.15, where the general principles of the function of the ‘elements’ are presented in brief.

³⁹ About Skepticism, the worldview that remarkably renewed the directions of the Ancient Academy, mainly in the field of epistemology, cf. for instance Brochard, Victor, *Les Sceptiques Grecs* (Paris 1969); Dumont, Jean Paul, *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris 1948), pp. 329-467; Bonazzi, Mauro, *Academici e Platonici* (Milano 2003).

This actually difficult scientific proof is due to the fact that the ‘elements’ are not geometrical sizes in their external presence and it is not certain that they can be approached in a specialized mathematical way, tow parameters that require identifying two factors: expansion and shape, where the next question would be what is space? Is space or is it not something absolutely defined? In fact, these restrictions hold true if there is neither a direct nor an indirect experience of the ‘elements’ as such. Damascius is quite clear on this detail. However, if we followed the Platonic theory, we could contend that every ‘element’ corresponds to a figure and that it functions in a geometrical way.⁴⁰ But, in this case as well, the question is: to what extent is it possible to sensibly identify a structure like this to result in true scientific conclusions?

Another question here to be answered is whether Damascius accepts only four ‘elements’ (fire, air, earth, water) or more than them. The second aspect would bring him close to Democritus. In any case, the history of the ancient Greek philosophy is obvious in his elaboration. From the scientific point of view, it is clear that every sensible substance – or even a general cosmic mixture – that results from the combination of the ‘elements’ can be approached in a scientific sense, since it is conceived by direct observation in the space in which it is found, which here means clear boundaries, distinct from those of the others. This kind of knowledge, however, can be actually associated with the already formed phenomenon but not with the procedures that have caused it. Nevertheless, this should not leads is to believe that that there are no quantitative proportions-dominations between the ‘elements’ in the natural reality under formation. The composition of the individual material beings is not possible, unless there is first of all a composition of specific quantities. However, it is not possible to detect in a strictly scientific way the ‘elements’ in the form of ‘parts’-separations in every single being that comes into existence, neither during the process nor after it is completed. Even if we could actually study close the procedures that take place, this sort of an approach would make no sense, since this is not a mechanistic connection or union; this is a mixture-assimilation of ‘elements’ under the terms set by the laws of attraction, which reveal a particular plan to be followed in order a specific effect to be caused. In this case, teleology, which

⁴⁰ Cf. Plato, *Ti.* 31b-4a. Cf. Festugière, André-Jean, *La Révélation d’Hermès Trismégiste*, II (Paris 1990), pp. 102-117; Vlastos, Gregory, *Platonic Studies* (Princeton 1973), pp. 366-373; Heisenberg, Werner, *Physics and Philosophy: The Revolution in Modern Science* (New York 2007), pp. 59-75, where both the Pre-Socratic philosophers’ cosmology and the geometric structure of matter according to Plato are discussed in relation to the modern quantum theory.

gradually results from a number of exemplifications, holds a key-role. In any sense, these are definitely conditions that cause interesting scientific questions, even though it would be quite difficult to get satisfactory answers.⁴¹

7. Organic Transformations of the 'Elements'

The third difference between the 'parts' and the 'elements'⁴² is that the 'elements' are not ontologically the same with their whole 'elemental', unless they are its internal a posteriori, developing through its distinctions, properties-projections. That is to say, considering the highest level, we could think of an 'elemental' as a composite a priori universal condition that arises from the combination of the 'elements', which is originally capable to individualize through separations. However, every 'element' possesses, being in the highest possible condition as well, a unique, ontologically speaking, identity with respect to its hypostasis. For the natural level, Damascius uses as an example the human body, the 'elements' of which, in a strict sense, are not primarily naturally completely the same with the – arising – 'form' of their combination. This difference is due to the fact that the 'elements' are not bones or flesh connected in a random way; they are exclusively 'elements' of bones and flesh, a hypostatic conditions which is accomplished only after they become symmetrical to each other and familiar with the 'form' of the human mixture as an effect, from which they are originally and primarily with respect to their unmixed-simple state are ontologically different. Τὰ τοῦ ἡμετέρου σώματος στοιχεῖα οὐκ ἔστι κατὰ τὸ εἶδος τοῦ κράματος, ὅστέα εἰ τύχοι καὶ σάρκες, ἀλλ' ὁστέων μὲν καὶ σαρκῶν, ὅταν σύμμετρα γένηται καὶ οἰκειωθῇ πρὸς τοῦτο τὸ εἶδος, καθ' αὐτὰ δὲ ὁμῶς ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως.⁴³ According to the teleological example and provided that nothing takes

⁴¹ On the epistemological difficulties that would arise, cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 199.23-213. On their place in Damascius' general ontological system and the principles that he follows, cf. *ibidem.* 213.10-14.11. The question, however, is still how many are the 'elements' in Damascius' work. In a chapter in which he discusses the simplicity of the 'elements', he raises the question about their number. For the purposes of this study, it should be mentioned that Damascius speaks about the 'elements' of the first and simple substance and stresses that they are superior to all the others (cf. *ibidem.* 187.12-26). In general, this is a challenging question, since the Neoplatonic philosopher believes that in an ontological system with constant transformations – as is his own – we face new conditions, which may be characterized as 'elements' (cf. *ibidem.* 190.21-2.25).

⁴² Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 175.21-6.7.

⁴³ «The elements that constitute our body are not in accord with the form of the mixture, if there happen to be bones and flesh, but they are (elements of) bones and flesh, appropriately assimilated to this form, whereas by themselves they belong to another hypostasis» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius' Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 291). The last sentence καθ'

place by chance, automatically or mechanistically, we could actually contend here that there is a plan within the primary ‘elemental’ about how the ‘elements’ will be combined in order a natural phenomenon or body or natural ontic genus to be produced. Obviously, this ‘elemental’ must have been formed after a special combination of the archetypal ‘forms’.

In a similar but also reversed sense, if there are ‘elements’ that are constituents of a particular substance, we could not consider them as individual substances. This exclusion is due to the following: a) the formed substance is identical to the ‘elemental’, that is to say, in both cases it is confirmed that this is a composite condition, regardless of whether this is an primary or a produced one; b) an ‘element’ is never an ‘elemental’. Every effect expresses a particular hypostasis which, since it contains the transformed ‘elements’ that will be produced, can be also described as an individual ‘elemental’, which is determined by the factors that have composed it. It should be mentioned at this point that the term ‘substance’ used here – which is not identified with the first term of the triad Being-Life-Intellect, since it describes specific hypostases or ontological mixtures – is considered to be an a posteriori mixed.⁴⁴

It is necessary here to pay attention on the fact that, while attempting to explain his views, Damascius makes an important distinction between the ontological formation, which is the substance, and those factors which compose it a posteriori or, in other words, which constitute the a priori requirements of it.⁴⁵ Specifically, if we intend to scientifically

αὐτὰ δὲ ὁμῶς ἐτέρας ὑποστάσεως («whereas by themselves they belong to another hypostasis») can be associated with Empedocles’ and Anaxagoras’ views, where individualities reveal the discontinuation that is found within a universal continuum.

⁴⁴ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 175.27-6.3.

⁴⁵ It is possible that here we are facing a substance that works as a coherent organic system. Substance is the only given that is equal, depending on the case, with what is considered to be complete and, exactly as such, it is indivisible, but not static. It has a shape, it follows an order and it owns qualities-properties, at the same time as, ontologically, it is considered to be a hypostasis in the sense of an individual composite ‘whole’ with particular characteristics and functions. Damascius often refers to the concept of substance and presents it as being formed in all the levels of the particular formations. So, he hierarchizes it, which means that we need to know the content of the combinations, to understand its precise content. For the purposes of this study, we need to mention the first substance, which arises from the way in which the One-Good is manifested, is found at the top of all the substances. The interesting thing is that the first substance automatically comes into existence, as soon as the One manifests its energy. So, substance is the action itself, the way in which the metaphysical world comes into existence and becomes an energy field of formations and extensions. That is, whatever the first substances receives by its own ontological requirements, it assimilates them and, then, it manifests them in its own terms, which can be considered as both receiving and providing form, a process which

investigate a structured and clearly formed with respect to its hypostatic properties and functions substance, we cannot suggest – according to the explicit statements and the context – that its ‘elements’ are also separated substances per se. That is to say, the relation ‘one-multitude’, which could actually work in the case of the ‘parts’, is not found here. Having in mind this discussion, we could use, here as well, as an example the fact that neither the bones nor flesh are ‘elements’ of the human body – in the sense of substantial or qualitative characteristics, and of course they are neither autonomous with respect to their shape, functions, and quantitative proportional composition, nor do they appear independently from an body. It should be mentioned, however, that it is impossible this kind of forms to develop in the metaphysical world and that is why any ante res presence of them is totally excluded. The only thing that we could contend is that they are planned within the metaphysical level. The ontological factor that makes them being present – and functional – in a body is the – strictly determined in each case – contribution of the ‘elements’ as eternal natural sources. It would be also insane to suggest that a human body results from a simple cumulative connection of bones and flesh.

So, according to this rationale –and keeping in mind that they do not combine with each other a priori but a posteriori– the ‘elements’, as being the terms of the organic ‘parts’ of a particular body, can be theoretically and according to the principles of the ontological and epistemological interference of a body considered as its ‘elements’ of it. In this sense, every ‘element’, no matter where it is found, is not able to constitute on its own an individual corporeal substance. So, the conclusion is that in the case of the sensible beings, the ‘elements’ are the primary natural factors, which, in their manifestation and through their various combinations, bring into existence every kind of bodies as substances as well as their ‘parts’. In a way, we are facing a process in which the ‘elements’ are transformed from metaphysical or, more correctly, archetypical integral natural factors into material, which cause, due to their dynamic or energy nature, sensible formations. That is to say, they hold the property of constituents in as necessary formulating requirements. It should be also mentioned that Damascius does not elaborate how the ‘elements’ cause with their special combinations the production of a substance with specific organic conditions. According to the scientific progress of his time, this was not an easy question to answer. In fact, this is something that imposes research self-

takes place until the end of the individualizations of the metaphysical world. Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* III 71.16-3.2.

adjustments on Damascius, which makes him not exceeding the possible for him cognitive projections.

8. *From the First Separation to the Compositions of the 'Elements'*

It should be also mentioned that according to Damascius the ontological properties found in conditions which are considered as extreme and disconnected one another are described with respect to their original hypostatic properties at the same time as they are able to define in a unique way their per se unmixed nature. On the other hand, a hypostasis which, as the result of particular procedures, is the mixture clearly reflects a special union of the terms which contributed to its formation. That is to say, these are those 'elements' which gain an inherent presence, in the sense of their demiurgic expression through co-operations, in a particular natural being. In other words, they are the ontological realities that cause the gradually formed unified structure of the universe, which includes anything particular to be come into existence as a natural combination or as an individual body, in an obviously infinite quantitatively prospect. Attempting, however, to stress the distinctive qualities, Damascius introduces a middle state between these two extremely different and originally non-found in a mutual encounter for a productive composition ontological states, that is, a cosmological interval, which will include the 'parts' that will come from their separation, which somehow had already begun to separate from the 'whole' of which they are parts. Note, however, that they have not yet acquired, either in an autonomous or in a dependent sense, the requirements to be described in concepts that would be in accordance with the new conditions in which they are about to be established after they will have formed it.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 176.3-7: Ἄκρα μὲν τοίνυν τὸ περιγεγραμμένον εἰς οἰκείαν ὑπόστασιν, καὶ τὸ συγκεκραμένον εἰς μίαν τὴν κοινὴν ἀπάντων ἔνωσιν, μεσότης δὲ ἀμφοῖν τὰ μέρη καὶ ὁ τούτων μερισμός, ἥδη μὲν πῶς, δισταμένων, οὐπὼ δὲ περιγραφομένων. [«The extreme, therefore, are what has been divided off into a unique hypostasis versus what has been mixed into a single unity consisting of all things, and the intermediated between these two are the parts and the partition of these parts, when they are already somehow distinct, but they are not yet self-contained» (Rappe, Sarah, *Damascius' Problems and Solutions Concerning First Principles*, p. 291)]. In other words, Damascius echoes back to Anaxagoras' separations, which resulted in further separations and formations. Distinctions – or even the opposites – appear as the requirements of unities. Once again, it should be stressed that the Intellect of Anaxagoras interferes in a pre-existing reality and directs it cosmologically, with ontological dualism being a strong possibility. On the other hand, in Damascius' explicitly monistic system metaphysical beings form all these mentioned before from the beginning and that is why the question on the 'arche' of the natural world is raised by non-preexistent, in the sense of self-existent, material

All these need to be thoroughly approached, since they raise questions not easy to justify and understand. Definitely, the order in which Damascius presents the transition from the extremities to the mixture is artificial in that neither can it be described in terms nor could it be scientifically proved; it only reflects, according to a logical succession, a cosmic process. It expresses the dynamic-developmental tendency of their special nature to pass from simple to more complex conditions, which is due to a sort of movement or to the factor of energy or to attractive powers. In any case, these are inherent powers or powers coming from their supreme source, the One, which will contribute to the production of new ontological formations. Regardless, however, of how these procedures will be explained, it is obvious, at least indirectly, that Damascius attempts to investigate the concept of vacuum as well. He needs to explain and describe the middle space between immobility and the movement required for productive combinations. This is actually a remarkable case of a somehow metaphysics of space, with respect obviously to its integrity and duration, since any sort of length can be crossed and investigated in a measurable way. Another question that will be also raised here has to do with the self-existence or absoluteness of this space in the natural world with respect to the beings that are about to come into existence or, in other words, the possibility of a primary presence of them, defined by the One, before the process of production to begin through gradually appearing corporeal formations. Nevertheless, the information provided by the philosopher are not scientifically enough and, therefore, not sufficient for a systematic approach, since he is aware of the human cognitive and conceptual limits and makes, here as well, the appropriate self-adjustments with respect to what he is about to discuss or to speculate.

Further discussion

Taking into account everything that we have discussed, it becomes clear that according to Damascius the formation of the natural world came from the activation-composition of the ‘elements’, which, in fact particularly evidently in many other texts of his, appear as the material – though non-sensible per se – projections of the emanating-productive manifestations of the metaphysical archetypes. This kind of formation makes

‘elements’. In this passage of the Neoplatonic thinker the adverbs ‘πῶς’ and ‘οὕτω’ are quite interesting, which lead to procedures of development, which raise questions on the opposites and their differentiations and formations in time.

the scientific questions about the sensible beings quite approachable, especially in the sense that by means of successive observations an expert becomes able to conceive by assumption but quite objectively how natural space – which follows specific laws for the production process – and the natural vacuum – which makes possible movement as well as the qualitative and quantitative change – work. Taking into account the research capabilities of the sixth century AD, scientifically the interactions performed in a system which is considered to be simple but also able to develop and be formed can actually be described, at least up to a point. In the metaphysical level, what could be defined as space should be considered in an absolute sense, full of archetypes and powers in an active but not yet productively manifested state. If this absolute system actually exists objectively, then what could be considered as vacuum can reasonably be considered in a prospect, that is, as possible to develop in a next level, after the supreme ‘elemental’ conditions will have been distinguished so that to be able to proceed on their ontogenetic encounters.

So, metaphysical space, as one of the most important and most typical topics of Neoplatonism, covers the absolute level of the integral but in an active tendency for action conditions, which also confirms its own absoluteness. The somehow separating the productive conditions explosion that takes place in it, that is to say, exclusively on the part of its ‘procession’, contributes to the development of numerous vacuums – a new ontological condition that should be also investigated in the light of whether it is followed by an expansion of the natural space, which was not proved at that time, or in the light of how a particular length is developed within it. If that could be objectively proved, we could suppose that these vacuums are able to cover at great speed a wide range of theirs with the compositional interaction of the already separated ‘elements’, a process that would be actually perpetual.⁴⁷ Definitely, the possibility of a total cover of the vacuums

⁴⁷ At this point, we could identify some traces of Democritus’ theory on atoms and vacuum. On the other hand, it should be mentioned that Damascius’ views are opposed to the views of the Megarian philosophers, who – by following the positions of Parmenides of Elea – attempted to preserve as absolutely dominant the ontological state of unity, which would exclude the movement of ‘multitude’, with analogous implications on the gnoseological process. Cf. Aristotle, *GA* A8 325a2-6: ἐνίοις γὰρ τῶν ἀρχαίων ἔδοξε τὸ ὄν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἓν εἶναι καὶ ἀκίνητον· τὸ μὲν γὰρ κενὸν οὐκ ὄν, κινηθῆναι δ’ οὐκ ἂν δύνασθαι μὴ ὄντος κενοῦ κεχωρισμένου. Οὐδ’ αὖ πολλὰ εἶναι μὴ ὄντος τοῦ διείργοντος... [«for some of the earlier philosophers held that the existent is of necessity one and immovable; The vacuum, they would claim, is non-existent, and things would not be able to move if a separated vacuum did not exist; and furthermore there could not be many things if that which held them apart did not exist» (Williams, John Fardo, *Aristotle’s De generatione et corruption* (Oxford 2002), pp. 26-27.)]; Arist. *Metaph.* A4 985.4. Cf. Aubenque, Pierre, *Le problème de l’être chez Aristote* (Paris 1962), pp. 451-453. Considering the possible objection to whether the concept of continuity is refuted, we would answer that according

cannot be theoretically conceived, for the already formed hypostases would absorb one another. In this case, a space with no internal distinctions and with inflexible identities would appear. But this aspect is totally cannot be part of Damascius' theoretical system, who consistently follows the natural principles of the Atomic philosophers.

Approaching all these in the light of the historical development of ancient Greek philosophy, we would contend that Damascius has clearly in mind what Aristotle mentions in the first book of *Physica* (187a-b) about Anaxagoras. According to the philosopher from Stageira, the basis of Anaxagoras' position is that nothing comes out of nothing. By ontological and logical implication, such a view results in that the primary seeds of these conditions were originally mixed together – before the production of the world to begin – and that, subsequently, the generation of a quality came from their compositions or separations. Aristotle also finds in Anaxagoras the position that the opposites result from each other, in the sense that some of them reside in some others. He also stresses that the primary seeds of Anaxagoras cannot be sensibly conceived and the only knowledge we have on them is clearly indirect, that is to say, arises from our view that they are found mixed in beings. In fact, in every being a particular 'element' dominates in quantity over the others and this is due to a natural necessity. It should be mentioned that this is a judgement that after a while will be repeated by Democritus as

to Damascius continuity is functionally approached as a continuous process of organic developments but not mechanically in the sense of a material mass with no separations. So, vacuum should be considered as an energetic field, full of laws that make possible attractions and repulsions, as well as formations. The actually challenging would be to investigate how these conditions could function in the metaphysical world. The question, however, that could be raised is whether the Neoplatonic philosopher accepts a middle level between the metaphysical and the physical world, which would possess, in a developmental sense, the properties-functions of both. The former philosophers, Syrianus (cf. *in Metaph.* C.A.G VI 81.15-6.34) and Proclus (cf. the sixth book of *Theol. Plat.*), believed that this level does exist. All these and especially the metaphysical and the possible middle level are subject only by analogy to a scientific elaboration as non-phenomena. Considering the natural world, the debate turns to be scientifically more optimistic, since the sensible observation to which it is subject will be constantly developing due to the improvement of the technical tools. Therefore, it will constantly expand the factor that proves the scientific reason, that is, objectivity, which provides the requirements for valid, as far as possible, penetrations into what constitutes the requirement of the phenomena. Damascius remains a consistent metaphysician and constantly refers to divine sources, including in a strict henological-monistic perspective Anaxagoras' Intellect, which was supervising and configuring everything, although it was not the creator of the primary material complex system. For Damascius, who is a consistent exponent of ontological monism, material 'elements' originally hold the property of Intellect, as the source of Ideas and, exactly in this sense, namely, as holding the property of intellect, they are activated. On the relation of the Atomists with Aristotle, cf. Purley, David, "Aristotle and the Atomists on Infinity", in: Düring, Ingemar (ed.), *Naturphilosophie bei Aristoteles und Theophrast*, I. (Heidelberg 1969), pp. 85-96.

well, in his own theoretical and conceptual schemata, who was greatly influenced by Anaxagoras. Also interesting is that Anaxagoras' Intellect adds an active kinetic or spinning property, which contributes to the activation of the primary condition of the infinite 'elements' and the production of the corporeal mixtures. From what we have elaborated, we need to point out that Damascius considers that the material 'elements' should primarily have movement as a property given by the metaphysical archetypes. But this also needs a thorough elaboration in order the main differences between him and the Pre-Socratic philosophers to be identified with respect to the source of movement. Finally, we could contend that, by accepting generally the concept of infinite as an ontological, both metaphysical and natural, category, Damascius probably adopts the position of the endless separation and composition of the 'elements'. However, according to the scientific measures of that era, this separation cannot be conceived in terms of natural science, but only in terms of mathematics, in the light in a way of the Platonic dialogue *Timaeus*.⁴⁸

This debate, however, cannot be closed in this article. In the following chapters,⁴⁹ Damascius discusses the details of the topic, that is, the relations of the 'forms' with the 'parts' and the 'elements', the elaboration of which will provide the tools to the investigation on how he generally utilizes Aristotle's *Physica* as well as other positions of the Pre-Socratic philosophers. In these chapters, Damascius never stops following a strictly scientific approach on the topics at the same time as he discusses, in an actually more skeptical way, the relations of the three ontological realities investigated here by us. It should be mentioned that in some cases he also stresses the impasses that research faces, without ever falling in a pessimist and unfruitful agnosticism. For Damascius, there is no final conclusion to close the investigation, which means that he constantly renews his methodological models and broadens or re-orientes his questions towards a new direction.

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⁴⁸ Cf. Plato, *Ti.* 34b-36d.

⁴⁹ Cf. Damascius, *Pr.* II 176.8-214.11.

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