Iamblichus' Response to Aristotle's and Pseudo-Archytas' Theories of Time

Sergey Trostyanskiy

ABSTRACT   This article aims to shed light on certain aspects of Iamblichus' theory of time that have not been sufficiently examined to date in the scholarly literature. As of today, there are a mere handful of scholarly works tackling Iamblichus' solutions to the paradoxes of time in particular, and his contribution to the developments of the Neoplatonic theory of the subject more generally. This article attempts to redress the lack of literature on this topic by examining Iamblichus' response to Aristotle's and Pseudo-Archytas' theories of time. It begins with a brief survey of the philosophical developments that led to and were formative for Iamblichus' philosophical explorations of the area in question. Then it moves on to provide a detailed account of Iamblichus' own unique and puzzling theory of time. The author applies the method of comparative analysis, scrutinizing Iamblichus' solution to the paradoxes of time against the backdrop of Aristotle's and Pseudo-Archytas' theories. The author identifies firm scholarly grounds for doing so from within the tradition of Iamblichus studies initiated by the ground-breaking research of Shmuel Sambursky and Salomon Pines and continued, *inter alia*, in the subtly nuanced analysis of Richard Sorabji and John Dillon. The author concludes that Iamblichus successfully resolved the paradoxes of time and that his conception lent itself to a more effective highlighting of the ordering function of time.

KEYWORDS   Aristotle; Iamblichus; motion; Pseudo-Archytas; time

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✍ Sergey Trostyanskiy, Union Theological Seminary, 3041 Broadway, New York, NY 10027, USA ✉ st2399@columbia.edu

Preamble

Time has proved to be an enigmatic subject for scholars. Its nature, mode of existence, and so on, are by no means easily discernible. In the fourth century BC, Aristotle, in his various treatises on nature and logic, took great pains to spell out the issues pertaining to time, with the aim of furnishing philosophically plausible solutions to the various challenges it posed. His account, along with his entire discourse on nature, went on to become amongst the most influential in the history of philosophy and science. Ever since, this subtle and persuasive theory of time has continued to fascinate, and at times perplex, scholars. During the late Roman/Byzantine Empire (250–1453 CE), Aristotle's physics had become part of the standard philosophy curriculum in both the Athenian and the Alexandrian academies. Voluminous commentaries on Aristotle were produced at that time, carefully commenting on and elucidating the meaning of each and every detail of his treatises. In the third century CE, the "Divine" Iamblichus wrote his own *scholia* on Aristotle's *Physics* (and *Categories*), aiming to expound the intricacies of the subject of time. In his work he followed the tradition of the commentators from his own Neoplatonic School, in particular Plotinus and Porphyry, as well as the Neopythagorean school represented by Pseudo-Archytas, synthesizing in this way various distinct exegetical threads. His "intellectual interpretation" of Aristotle's philosophical themes sought to disclose the deeper metaphysical significance of each topic under consideration. In the course of this, and while attempting to resolve the *aporiai* generated by Aristotle's conception of time, Iamblichus produced an account that paved the way for subsequent generations of Neoplatonic thinkers, including Proclus and Damascius, where philosophical endeavors were concerned. Iamblichus' response to Aristotle's and Pseudo-Archytas' theories of time will form the subject of this article.

Aristotle had structured his own theory of time around the paradoxes of time discussed in the antecedently existing philosophical literature. Apparently, though, he was not able to fully resolve those paradoxes. The main temporal *aporiai* that have kept on puzzling philosophers ever since are those that cluster around the twin paradoxes of the non-existence of time and the constantly changing instant. At the same time, the many and varied attempts to resolve them have produced what is by now a quite well-defined field of studies. Where the present topic is concerned, these paradoxes, together with the questions they entail, have preoccupied the tradition of commentators and modern scholars. Such questions may be set out as follows: What is the nature of time? Do motion and time en-

tail one another? Is there some kind of timeless motion? Is there a form of motionless but time-bound process? What, ultimately, is motion? Can procession and reversion on the part of self-constituted beings be classified as motion? What are the status and scope of applicability of the category "when?" And finally: does time itself move?

Issues relating to time also perhaps lay at the very core of the agenda of Neopythagorean philosophy. The enigmatic philosopher Pseudo-Archytas in some sense may be said to have paved the way for the exegetical directions explored by Iamblichus with respect to the topic. The idea of conflicting characteristics that define the subject of time, already explicit in Aristotle, was brought to the forefront of philosophical investigations by this somewhat mysterious thinker, and seems to have greatly stimulated the development of Iamblichus' own conception.

Preparing the Ground: Iamblichus and the Issue of Time

As Shmuel Sambursky and Salomon Pines rightly note, in the eyes of the Neoplatonists generally and Iamblichus in particular,

> [t]he intelligible world has still something of the statics characterizing the One, but it already contains the multiplicity of ideas. The intellectual world is characterized by an ambivalent state, which is partly static and partly dynamic.[1]

Sambursky, following Arthur H. Armstrong,[2] suggests that since the intelligible world, in the eyes of the Neoplatonists, exhibited differentiation, and since a certain dynamism characterized the "behaviour" of its hypostases, issues of time, eternity, perpetuity, etc., had of necessity come to the forefront of philosophical and theological developments over the course of the philosophical discussions of late antiquity. A debate over whether it was possible to philosophize—or rather engage in theological reflection—about intellectual beings conceived as partaking of motion (and rest) certainly took place in Neoplatonist circles. Indeed, the Neo-

1. Shmuel Sambursky and Salomon Pines, *The Concept of Time in Late Neoplatonism: Texts with Translation, Introduction, and Notes* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Section of Humanities, 1971), 13.

2. Arthur H. Armstrong, "Eternity, Life, and Movement in Plotinus' Accounts of Nous," in *Le néoplatonisme: [Actes du Colloque de] Royaumont, 9–13 Juin 1969*, Colloques Internationaux du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Sciences Humaines (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1971).

platonist conceptions of procession and reversion presented the intellectual realm as experiencing some sort of dynamism. However, it was by no means clear what this might entail. The precise connection between these ideas and that of motion was left unspecified, and what complicated the situation, moreover, was that the notions capable of expressing the dynamic character of the intellectual realm (e.g., procession and reversion) had not featured in Aristotle's treatises. In addition, they did not correspond to the types of motion found in the standard Aristotelian classification of motion.

What, then, is motion (κίνησις)? How does it relate to becoming or "coming-to-be" (γένεσις)? According to Aristotle, becoming concerns in the first instance change of place (i.e., locomotion), and only then qualitative and quantitative changes (alteration, increase and diminution). In the *Physics*, at certain points, he classifies these types of coming-to-be as species of motion—albeit that becoming is here predicated of the subject with qualifications, since the subject that moves preserves its essential form while replacing certain non-essential characteristics. The subject thus comes-to-be "such and such." For instance, it comes-to-be tired, altering a characteristic that previously defined its state (i.e., that of being rested). A formal change, on the other hand, that is coming-to-be without qualification, and an unqualified passing-away, is just another type of change wherein the subject undergoes essential transformation. As a result, a new form is introduced. Aristotle classified this type of change as mutation (μεταβολή).[3] However, in the context of his discourse on time he used the two terms (i.e., "κίνησις" and "μεταβολή") interchangeably.[4]

What is time? Aristotle, attempting to make sense of time, defined it as "the number of motion" in respect of before and after.[5] This definition tied time to motion by classifying it as a property of motion. According to Aristotle, time does not exist on its own right but is one of the character-

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3. To sum up: "Ὅταν μὲν οὖν κατὰ τὸ ποσὸν ᾖ ἡ μεταβολὴ τῆς ἐναντιώσεως, αὔξη καὶ φθίσις, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ τόπον, φορά, ὅταν δὲ κατὰ πάθος καὶ τὸ ποιόν, ἀλλοίωσις, ὅταν δὲ μηδὲν ὑπομένῃ οὗ θάτερον πάθος ἢ συμβεβηκὸς ὅλως, γένεσις, τὸ δὲ φθορά." Aristotle, *Gen. corr.* 319b31–320a2. Text following the edition Aristotle, *On Generation and Corruption*, ed. and transl. Charles Mugler, in *De la génération et de la corruption*, Collection des universités de France, Série grecque 444 (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 1966).

4. Thus, "μηδὲν δὲ διαφερέτω λέγειν ἡμῖν ἐν τῷ παρόντι κίνησιν ἢ μεταβολήν." Aristotle, *Phys.* 218b19. All passages quoted from the *Physics* follow the edition Aristotle, *Physics*, ed. William D. Ross, in *Aristotelis Physica*, corrected edition, Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca Oxoniensis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966).

5. "ὅτι μὲν τοίνυν ὁ χρόνος ἀριθμός ἐστιν κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον καὶ ὕστερον." Ibid., 220a24–5.

istics of motion, and being in time—of moving things. Time places limits
in respect of existence on things that come to be, change, and pass away.[6]
It measures the extent of their motion and determines the order of motion
(their relation to one another as prior or posterior, or "before and after").

Aristotle further nuanced his argument by specifying the kind of num-
ber he had in mind. He tells us that this number (pertaining to motion)
is not one but "the many," its most basic unit being two, similar to the
two extreme points that mark off a line.[7] This reiteration now presents
that which is countable in moving things as responsible for establishing
the limits of motion. Hence, number here is the limit of motion, or rather,
of some particular duration of the moving thing. He notes, however, that
setting out the limit does not indicate an actual division of the contin-
uum of our sublunar realm—one that is in a state of motion. By indicating
duration, we intellectually delimit (or potentially divide)[8] the continuum
in order to delineate the starting point and end point of motion: a state
where a new motion begins and a state where it comes to rest, arriving at
immobility. The two "nows" initiate and terminate our counting. What-
ever lies in between is number as it pertains to that motion. Hence the
latter is a "concrete" and composite number—one that fixes the limits of
motion relating to the moving thing.

Number as it pertains to motion is a continuous quantity, and whatever
is continuous should, by virtue of this, be infinitely divisible. However,
we learn from Aristotle that one aspect of time, namely the "now," is
an extensionless instant—one that, as such, is discrete and indivisible.
This extensionless instant divides the present from the past. Aristotle tells
us, in the first place, that an instant is not a composite number. Rather,
it is an abstract number, the numerical monad ("οἷον μονὰς ἀριθμοῦ").[9]
Hence, its nature and the nature of the "proper" parts of time are
heterogeneous, and as such, the "now," according to Aristotle, cannot be
a part of time. Again, he holds that the parts are the measure of the whole
and insists that they should be homogeneous. Nevertheless, if looked at
from a different perspective, the "now" is an element of time of some
sort. In that case, then, time is apparently both divisible and indivisible.
This paradox tells us something about a key aspect of Aristotle's theory
of time: "Time, like a line, is continuous and the now, like a point, is

6. Aristotle, *Cael.* 281a28–31, cf. *Phys.* 221b30–31.
7. "ἐλάχιστος γὰρ κατὰ μὲν ἀριθμόν ἐστιν ὁ εἷς ἢ οἱ δύο, κατὰ μέγεθος δ' οὐκ ἔστιν."
Aristotle, *Phys.* 220a31–2.
8. Ibid., 222a10–21.
9. Ibid., 220a4.

indivisible."[10] The "now" is a potential divider and actual unifier of time, an extensionless instant that, nevertheless, secures the continuity of a temporal series. This dual impact of the "now" both divides and unites the continuum framing such a series within the schema of what precedes and what follows. The now is always the same and ever different.

In general, according to Aristotle, becoming entails motion and mutation, while motion (or change) is something measurable, and is ordered according to the schema "before and after." Time measures the duration of existence of sensible particulars. And the category of "when" assigns temporal predicates to moving subjects.

It should be noted in this context that Aristotle's categorial schema has been an enduring subject of contention among commentators. Its critical reassessment, for the most part, was commenced in the third century by Plotinus, who launched a massive attack on it, endeavoring to reassess Aristotle's accounts so as to properly delineate the sphere of application of the categories. He rejected Aristotle's categorial schema, arguing that it lacks coherence because homonymy creeps into the discourse and makes the application of the schema unviable. Iamblichus, taking Plotinus' critique of these categories along with Porphyry's attempted defense as his starting point, elevated the process of critical appropriation of Aristotle's schema to its highest level so far. A significant innovation was his "intellectual interpretation" (νοερὰ θεωρία) of the categories.[11] In his commentaries on the *Categories*,[12] he argued that the area of application of the categories is not exclusively concerned with perceptible things—thus ruling invalid Aristotle's and Porphyry's view of the subject. Hence, things designated through the medium of concepts by irreducibly simple significant expressions are not perceptible things alone: he extended the usefulness

10. Ursula C. M. Coope, *Time for Aristotle:* Physics *IV. 10–14*, Oxford Aristotle Studies 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 18.

11. For instance, analyzing the category of substance, Iamblichus, as John Dillon rightly notes, "professes, by the employment of analogical reasoning, to discern the co-existence of contraries at the level of intelligible substance as well—to wit, Motion and Rest, Sameness and Otherness, the very μέγιστα γένη of the *Sophist* which Plotinus in *Ennead* 6.2 adopted as the 'categories' of the intelligible world. The only difference, Iamblichus maintains, is that on the intelligible plane the contraries are present, not successively, but simultaneously. . . . At the lowest level, which is the physical, the opposites can be present only alternately." John M. Dillon, "Iamblichus' noera theōria of Aristotle's *Categories*," in "Iamblichus: The Philosopher," ed. Henry J. Blumenthal and John F. Finamore, special issue, *Syllecta Classica* 8 (1997): 71, doi:10.1353/syl.1997.0013. Hence, Iamblichus distinguished between intelligible and physical substances and delineated their characteristics. The same method is applied to other categories as well.

12. Which are be found in Simplicius' commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*.

of the categories to include things from that other realm "there" too. And so the scope of the categories was redefined, and now also embraced some intellectual things (τὰ νοερά). In this way, Iamblichus refused to confine the utility of the categories to within the sphere of sensible things.

Moreover, various Neoplatonist thinkers, while seeking to instigate a project of reconciling Plato with Aristotle, endeavored to make sense both of Aristotle's conception of time, and of his notion of "when," so as to extend their application beyond the world of perceptible things. As a result of this line of philosophical development, a certain readjustment of the categorial schema of Aristotle to make the category of "when" applicable to intellectual beings assumed paramount significance. Even within the boundaries of the logical investigations emerging from the Neoplatonic attempt to make sense of Aristotle's theory of predication, the subject of time was thus extensively discussed. According to Aristotle, that which is "in" time (or exists in time) must be measured in terms of time, since its existence is encompassed by time. To such an existence we may apply the category of "when." Consequently, temporal characteristics predicated of sensible particulars exhibit the duration of their motion/s or of their existence in general. However, as far as things in the realm of intellect are concerned, the proper measure of their existence is not time but eternity. Therefore, the category of "when," according to Aristotle, is not applicable to the intellectual subjects.

The question one may wish to ask in response to this concerns how we should classify these dynamic characteristics of the intellectual realm. Are they kinds of motion? If so, then can this "intellectual motion" be consistently framed in terms of the schema "before and after"? We will review the answers provided by Iamblichus shortly.[13] For now, we should just note that it is indisputable that since the dynamic aspects of the intellectual realm are not the same as those that belong to the realm of sensible particulars, their mode of participation in time must also differ.[14] In general, the idea that intellectual beings, in one way or another, exhibit certain dynamic aspects necessitated an explanatory account of how, precisely, this could be possible—and, if it were indeed possible, what the mode of participation would consist in. Moreover, the question of whether the time-bound predicates belonging to the category of

13. See Proclus, *In Parm.* 1217.13–1219.9.

14. Iamblichus would describe this motion as the downward tendency of issuing from being to becoming. For an excellent analysis of the subject in hand, see Stephen E. Gersh, *Kinēsis akinētos: A Study of Spiritual Motion in the Philosophy of Proclus*, Philosophia antiqua 26 (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

"when" can be said of the intellectual subject remained open. Indeed, we must note in this context that the Neoplatonists reassessed Aristotle's conception of motion and becoming, so as to extend the application of these to the categories of relation, of acting, and of being-acted-upon.[15] A more general construal of becoming was then introduced: in the words of Simplicius, it "is a kind of unfolding, unwinding out of being . . . an unfolding of permanence in being."[16] This rendering of becoming allows one to apprehend certain intellectual beings as subject to becoming, since they indeed unfold their being so as to extend their efficacy to all participants.

Did these developments signify steps in preparing the path to the Neoplatonists' grand vision of an intelligible universe unraveling itself in a series of processions that can be framed within the "before and after" schema? Not immediately. A traditional pre-Iamblichian approach was to measure "intellectual motion" by the standard of eternity. At times the notion of perpetuity was also used. Even so, a set of questions revolving around those dynamic aspects of the intellectual perhaps led some Neoplatonists to reassess the notion of time and all related conceptions. Another reason for a critical re-evaluation of Aristotle's theory of time came from the fact that Aristotle himself was unclear about how to resolve the *aporiai* of time—in particular, the paradoxes of the non-existence of time and of the constantly ceasing instant. It should be noted, however, that Iamblichus' inclusion of the hypostatic soul and its activities under the ordering domain of a higher time proved more than adequate to express certain dynamic aspects of the intellectual.

The Homonymy of Time: The Hypostatic Monad and the Flow
   of Existence

According to Pseudo-Archytas, a Neopythagorean philosopher of whom we know little, but whose authority (as an authentic ancient philosopher of the late-fifth-to-early-fourth century BC) Iamblichus took to be beyond question, there are two properties of time: (1) the unhypostatic, and (2) the indivisible.[17] Let us consider the former right now. What does "τὸ ἀνυ-

15. This is the subject of Book 3 of Simplicius' *In Phys.*
16. Ibid. 775.29–31. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 67.
17. "τὸ δὲ ποκὰ καὶ ὁ χρόνος καθόλου μὲν ἴδιον ἔχει τὸ ἀμερὲς καὶ τὸ ἀνυπόστατον." Pseudo-Archytas, *Fragmenta*, 29.11–12. Text following the edition of Pseudo-Archytas, *Fragments*, ed. Holger Thesleff, in Holger Thesleff, *The Pythagorean Texts of the Hellenistic Period*, Acta Academiae Aboensis. Series A, Humaniora 30, no. 1 (Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1965), 3–48.

πόστατον" ("unhypostatic") mean? Modern scholars at times render it as having the highly specific meaning of "non-existent" (perhaps following Aristotle's arguments pertaining to the first paradox of time), or as "unreal,"[18] "transient,"[19] or "insubstantial."[20] Hence as regards "the unhypostatic" a range of possible meanings would seem to be discernible.

In order to become clear about the meaning of the "hypostatic," we may need to look at the literature formative for the philosophical discourse of the time. Within late antique thought, "hypostatic" could stand for "subsisting" or "self-subsisting." On the other hand, that which is unhypostatic lacks in the first instance subsistence of its own kind. This may indicate that an unhypostatic being is attached to, or dependent for its existence on, the being of some primary existents (hypostases or substances). In contrast, that which is hypostatic can subsist in its own right. This meaning roughly corresponds to that of Aristotle's "primary substance." However, within the scope of Neoplatonist thought, we may also see similar terms being used (e.g., "τὸ αὐθυπόστατον") to indicate that which is ingenerate (ἀγένητον)[21] and thus indestructible (ἄφθαρτον).[22] These and other characteristics, predicated of the self-constituted, indicate its intellectual origin. The hypostatic and self-constituted transcend things measured by time in respect of their existence.[23] The unhypostatic, by contrast, is generated and destructible, being subject to time, etc. The indivisible (τὸ ἀμερές), meanwhile, exhibits certain features similar to the ingenerate, thus also pointing to its intellectual origin.

Iamblichus, it seems, held that these opposing characteristics are incompatible. One way of resolving this paradox was to argue that since these characteristics of time (i.e., its being un-hypostatic and indivisible) are incompatible, they are not to be predicated of the same entity.[24] In this context, he argued that the indivisible, being a property of time, cannot be unhypostatic. To present it as unhypostatic would amount to introducing a self-contradictory entity. Neither can we apprehend the

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18. Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 29.

19. Ibid.,14.

20. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 353.16–354.5. Cf. the translation in Simplicius, *On Aristotle, Categories 9–15*, ed. and trans. Richard Gaskin, The Ancient Commentators on Aristotle (London: Duckworth, 2000), 86.

21. "Πᾶν τὸ αὐθυπόστατον ἀγένητόν ἐστιν." Proclus, *El. theol.* prop. 45. Text following the edition of Proclus, *The Elements of Theology*, 2nd revised ed., ed. and transl. Eric R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

22. Ibid., prop. 46.

23. Ibid., prop. 51.

24. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 353.19–20.

unhypostatic as indivisible. However, if our unitive conception of time—one that embraces both incompatible characteristics—is to appear cogent, these characteristics are not to be predicated of the subject without qualifications. Perhaps these characteristics, while not being in themselves absolutely co-predicable, could still be predicated of time when accompanied by certain explanatory notes such as would serve to rule out impossible and self-contradictory conclusions.

Iamblichus' resolution of this paradox (implicit in Pseudo-Archytas' theory of time) consisted, in my view, in his proceeding via a unitive conception of time. Even so, this unitive conception exhibited a certain complexity, in that it sought to separate out and explicate various theoretical levels within the unitive conception itself. Each level was defined by its primary characteristic: i.e., as either indivisible or unhypostatic, and each described a particular ontological realm that fell under it. Hence, we may say that the starting point of Iamblichus' investigations was in fact the homonymy of time.

According to Sambursky and Pines, with Iamblichus there began "a radically new conception [of time], substantializing time as a hypostatic entity of its own in a way that differed from anything said before of the nature of time."[25] Indeed, Iamblichus had introduced the monad of time as subsisting in the intellectual. He classified it as transcendent, above generation, and subsistent in itself.[26] This transcendent time (ὁ ἐξῃρημένος χρόνος) contains and orders the measures of some intellectual and all "immanent" (within the cosmos) motion. As such, indeed, "it would be different from the time which is the object of observation by the physical philosophers."[27] Iamblichus classified this intellectual monad of time by means of the following expressions: "ὁ γενεσιουργὸς χρόνος," "ὁ ἐξῃρημένος χρόνος," "ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ἀμέθεκτος χρόνος," "ὁ χωριστὸς χρόνος," "μονὰς χρόνου," "ὁ σύμπας τῷ ὄντι χρόνος."[28] In so doing, he was breaking with an old convention that distinguished between time and eternity and their proper objects (sensible and intelligible / intellectual) by introducing a "time" whose seat was in the intellectual itself.

Iamblichus apparently distinguished between the two "times"—the higher time, represented by the transcendent monad, and the lower one,

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25. Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 12.

26. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 794.20.

27. Ibid., 793.28–9. English translation in Iamblichus, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis dialogos commentariorum fragmenta*, ed. and transl. John M. Dillon, rev. second ed., Platonic Texts and Translations, vol. 1 (Dilton Marsh, Wiltshire: The Prometheus Trust, 2009), 173.

28. Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 107.

described as flowing and shifting. Even so, as Richard Sorabji has rightly indicated, certain quotes from Iamblichus (passed on to us by Proclus and Simplicius) may also create the impression that what is at stake is a single time, and the things that participate in it.[29] In this respect, John Dillon has pointed out that the characteristic of the intellectual monad of time is "to comprehend as a whole, statically, and from above in the intellectual realm, all the flux of physical events,"[30] whereas the characteristics of the lower time are that it is immanent within and inseparable from particulars. Thus there appears to be one single intelligible monad, and the things that participate in it. Indeed, there exist various quotes suggesting that the flow of time occurs in the participants themselves: these are always coming into being and "cannot receive the indivisible essence (οὐσία) [of time] motionlessly, but . . . they partake of it at different times with different parts of themselves."[31] Or rather, following Sambursky's translation—which remains faithful to the text (by properly explicating the original geometrical analogy)—"a different part of them touches (ἐφαπτόμενα) this essence."[32] Sensible particulars, according to Iamblichus, share in their intelligible paradigm and acquire their essential integrity: it is added to them when they themselves come to be a unitary whole in virtue of having attained their ultimate end.

There are, indeed, various passages in Simplicius' exposition of Iamblichus' conception of time that suggest that Iamblichus had a rather divisive conception of time—one that carefully distinguished between the two ontologically heterogeneous and conceptually distinct times. Even so, there are also multiple passages that point to a rather unitive notion of time, conceived as an intermediate entity situated between eternity and the cosmos. Thus, instead of positing two causally determined and conceptually distinct times, Iamblichus perhaps just meant to introduce the idea of there being two aspects of time: namely, the indivisible (where this indivisibility again pointed to its intellectual origins), characterized by the actuality and perfection of its essence,[33] and the unhypostatic—characterized by the downward tendency of the subject which issues from being into becoming. Taking into account Iamblichus' theory of partici-

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29. Richard Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 37.

30. Dillon, "Iamblichus' noera theōria," 76.

31. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 354.21–3. English translation by Gaskin in Simplicius, *On Aristotle, Categories 9–15*, 87.

32. Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 29 and 35.

33. Simplicius would add to this, "immobile essence" ("ἀκίνητον οὐσίαν," *In Cat.* 353.23).

pation and its phases, the compresence of the two times may also thus be apprehended as the two modes of a single time. Perhaps this also reflects "Iamblichus' principle of combining every antithesis into one 'idea,' as it were, and one notion."[34]

What does the above analogy tell us? What are the meanings of "participation" and "touch" in the above passage? To be sure, the mere notion of participation does not of itself entail any geometrical allusions, such as might tie the subject to the sphere of extended magnitudes. However, the analogy of touch immediately creates an impression that some sort of tangent, a contact at a single point, is what we are dealing with here. Sambursky, elaborating on the meaning of the passage, would argue that:

> [t]he time of the sensible world flows along the sides of the angle like a conveyor belt, touching the static time of the intellectual world only at the vertex, at the point of its flowing Now. But the vertex also glides and passes along this static time from the earlier to the later in such a way that, consecutively, a different Now coincides with a different point of static time. Thus we experience in succession the co-existing points of intellectual time.[35]

Such an analogy may then entail that sensible particulars move and touch the static time with different parts, the monad of time itself being inextended, unmoved, and not serially ordered. However, it could also mean that such static time offers a blueprint for flowing time, which can thus be apprehended as extended, and as itself consisting of an ordered series. Under this latter scenario, the time that flows, and the things / motions that are "in" it, would move along the line of, and "touch," some point situated on this ordering paradigm. However, the paradigm itself would be an extended matrix, in the sense of some sort of line with multiple (inextended) points on it. Sambursky's conveyor-belt analogy fully sustains this latter rendering of how the time generated, and the things in that time, would touch the static time. But what kind of entity would this static / transcendent time then amount to? Would it, too, have parts? Would it consist of an ordered series, and would it itself move?

Simplicius' report indicates that time, for Iamblichus, as that which is intermediate between eternity and the cosmos, has a dual nature. On the one hand, it is ordered in relation to eternity. On the other hand, it coexists with the cosmos and orders its activities. It is extended in the cosmos,

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34. Damascius, *In Parm.* 166.24–5, transl. Dillon, in Iamblichus, *in Platonis dialogos*, 399.
35. Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 15.

but lacks extension in the realm of the intellectual.[36] According to Iamblichus, "an intellectual time which transcends the cosmos and governs the psychic world . . . is placed in the noeric world."[37] This entity is

> the number of self-moving movement [regarded] as a time-like monad. . . .
> [I]t is the extension in regards to the pre-existing order of movement, in
> which earlier and later are arranged beforehand and provide the actions and
> movements with order. For one cannot infer the earlier and later of things
> without the pre-existence of time *per se*, to which also the order of actions
> is referred.[38]

Iamblichus, in this passage, tells us first about the ontological position and function of this monad. However, the monad of time also appears to be internally differentiated. Proceeding still further, he tells us that it is extended in regard to the pre-existing order of movement. This may be visualized as a number (either finite or infinite) of inextended points situated on a line that is extended. The passage may indeed be regarded, then, as lending support to Sambursky's conveyor-belt analogy. Moreover, the analogy seems to become even more isomorphic to the abovementioned rendering of the process of temporal ordering, once we learn that the monad itself is, in some ways, in motion. Yet even so, there may also be a different rendering of the section in question, presenting both extension and temporal order (earlier and later) as properly belonging to moving things that touch the pattern with different parts while the pattern itself simply remains static and inextended. In this way, the meaning ascribed to the analogy earlier also finds textual support in Iamblichus' fragments. We may then conclude that the usefulness of the analogy of "touch" is apparently limited, since one can arrive at contrary, but equally valid, interpretations concerning its meaning.[39] Indeed, Iamblichus' discourse, supported as it is by the drawing of various analogies, at times seems to leave space for diverging interpretations of the same subject.

In this context, the ordering function of the monad of time is clearly stressed by Iamblichus. Perhaps he had in mind something like the following: the order of temporal things cannot be merely accidental. As we

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36. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 794.35–795.3.

37. Sarah Klitenic Wear, "Syrianus the Platonist on Eternity and Time," *Classical Quarterly*, new series, 58, no. 2 (2008): 648, doi:10.1017/s0009838808000694.

38. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 352.14–21, transl. Gaskin, in Simplicius, *On Aristotle, Categories 9–15*, 85.

39. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 774.35–781.13.

learn from Plato, the ordering of all motions within the cosmos is the
key function of the Demiurge, who structures all activities in it according
to a pre-existing pattern. This also means that an unorganized multitude
is transformed into an ordered and beautiful body. Here, Peter Manch-
ester's suggestion of the Pythagorean idea of a musical scale as the or-
ganizing pattern seems more than appropriate: the musical scale defines
the sequence of sounds that are either sung simultaneously, or one after
another, or in combination.[40] Similarly, the structuring pattern of all mo-
tions arranges them synchronically or diachronically, or rather as a com-
bination of both, just as if the motions were mimicking the notations on a
sheet of music (structured according to the harmonic scale). And likewise,
a temporal series will be a combination of synchronic and diachronic mo-
tions, arranged in the schema of before and after, or prior and posterior, or
of being simultaneous with. A page of notated music necessarily contains
a pre-ordained order. In much the same fashion, Iamblichus argued, the or-
dering paradigm must be pre-existent, essential, and necessary. Indeed, a
unique feature of Iamblichus' conception was his imposition of the monad
of time as an ordering matrix for the cosmos. Hence, then, Iamblichus in-
troduced time as the ordering principle here in place of eternity—but this
time, and the time of physical philosophers, show up as mere homonyms.

The time described metaphorically by Iamblichus as flowing and shift-
ing, and which is an integral part of the flux of existence (that is typical
of sensible particulars), can by no means be thought of as pre-existent,
ontologically stable, etc. This time, also classified as generated (ὁ γενη-
τὸς χρόνος), exhibits similarities with Aristotle's talk of "the number of
motion." It is tied to the flux of existence. As such, this time, according
to Iamblichus, is not a good candidate to perform the intended ordering
function. That function can only be performed by Iamblichus' "higher"
time—one that resembles eternity. Such time transcends generation, thus
being uniform with itself.

As we learn from Aristotle, the schema of before and after (or earlier
and later, or prior and posterior) firstly belongs to time, and secondly—to
number. However, it also has another meaning, which involves exhibiting
order of a non-specific kind, as well as the further significance of indicat-
ing what is more or less "honorable according to nature"—that is, what has
natural priority or posteriority in respect of value and the commanding of

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40. Peter Manchester, *The Syntax of Time: The Phenomenology of Time in Greek Physics
and Speculative Logic from Iamblichus to Anaximander*, Ancient Mediterranean and Me-
dieval Texts and Contexts, Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition
2 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 25.

respect. Finally, there is also the additional meaning of "before and after" that points to a causal relation between things wherein the existence of one necessitates the existence of the other.[41] Apparently, Iamblichus took into account all these meanings so as to combine them into one concept of time. He presented the higher time as an ordering principle that has a measuring scale (i.e., number) and exhibits a pre-ordained dependence of that which is posterior upon that which is prior. This order or ordering principle, he argued, is not "an order which is ordered, but one which orders, nor one which follows upon principles which lead it, but which is a leader of, and senior to, things perfected by it."[42] A flowing and shifting time, on the other hand, is ordered and posterior. It is less honorable and is causally dependent upon the higher time. It can, according to Aristotle's conjecture, be classified as "the number of motion"—where this is construed as being inseparable from moving things. So the lower time is contingent on motion, while the higher—i.e. hypostatic—time makes things that fall under it ordered according to the pre-existing paradigm in a necessary way. This time then sets out the pre-existing order of motion and determines the extension of the existence of moving things.

But how is the order pre-ordained? How does the part through which a motion can touch the matrix come to be defined? This does indeed concern the order and direction of motion, and then of time. Recently, Ursula Coope and John Bowing, among others, have pointed out that the idea of the order and direction of motion and time in Aristotle leaves room for various interpretations, and that ultimately Aristotle does not provide a viable solution to the issue in question.[43] If we follow Aristotle's treatment of the subject, it may appear that motion should define the order and direction of time. However, Iamblichus' depiction of time as an ordering paradigm seems to reverse the order. It is the pre-existing paradigm of time that orders motions. But how is that possible? We may suggest the following analogy: motions seem to "ascend to" or "participate in" the paradigm, so as to receive their order. At any rate it is, once again, the pre-existing paradigm that determines the sequence of motions according to some kind of pre-ordained schema. Accordingly, the order and direction of motion is not contingent but necessary. It seems that Iamblichus offered a viable solution to the issue of how order is possible, thus resolving one of the *aporiai* that had not been properly addressed by Aristotle.

41. Aristotle, *Cat.* 14a35–14b22.
42. Iamblichus, *In Timaeum* fr. 63, in *In Platonis Dialogos*, 173.
43. Coope, *Time for Aristotle*; John Bowin, "Aristotle on the Order and Direction of Time," *Apeiron* 42, no. 1 (2009), doi:10.1515/apeiron.2009.42.1.33.

IAMBLICHUS' SOLUTION TO ARISTOTLE'S PARADOXES OF THE NON-
    EXISTENCE OF TIME AND OF THE CEASING INSTANT

More importantly, as regards the general contours of Iamblichus' dis-
course on the "nature" or being of time, he has provided us, I would sug-
gest, with the solution to some of the major paradoxes of time—those that
were apparently left unresolved by Aristotle. For instance, in investigating
Aristotle's conception of time, inquiring into its strong and weak points,
and, ultimately, formulating his own theory, Iamblichus provided a solu-
tion to the issue of the non-existence of time.[44]

Iamblichus' argument seems to be the following: time and its ele-
ments / parts in one sense do not exist, and in another do. The homonymy
of time thus needs to be taken into account. As far as the lower time is
concerned, all or some of its parts indeed do not exist. The meaning of
existence, according to Sorabji, can be rendered as "being present in the
now."[45] Hence, they are not present (i.e., in the "now") simultaneously.
Even so, as far as the higher time is concerned, it is a simultaneous
whole. It is a being of its own kind, a hypostatic entity which has its own
place within the schema of beings. It is not itself subject to motion (with-
out qualifications) or serial ordering. However, if we look at the topic
in hand from a different perspective, pursuing a unitive approach (thus
combining all types or aspects of time into one conception), we may also
recognize that time, or its parts, both exist and do not exist—so long as
we take due account of the fact that all of the appropriate qualifications
to this statement necessary to make such a unitive conception cogent
must then also be furnished.

Hence, Iamblichus' solution was that time in its higher phase, so to say,
is hypostatic, existing as a simultaneous whole. It is not itself chopped
into temporal bits. All its parts (if there are such) are inextended. How-
ever, its lower phase is such as to be inseparable from moving things. It
is a part of the flow of "becoming." As such, it is not present as a whole

44. Aristotle, in his *Physics* 4.10, noted that there is reason to believe either that it does
not exist, or that its existence is quite obscure. Why so? Because, first of all, the existence of
time which belongs to the past no longer exists, and secondly, because that of time which
belongs to the future does not yet exist. Hence, time, if looked at from this perspective, is
composed of non-existents: of those that are no longer, and those that are not yet. Hence,
time apparently does not exist. Moreover, time as a continuous quantity is divisible into
parts. Some of those parts are in the past and some of them will be in the future, whereas
the present now is not a part of time, since time is not made up of "nows." However, if
something is in existence, all or at least some of its parts must exist. Contrary to this, that
which is composed of non-existent parts cannot exist.

45. Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, 15.

simultaneously, but is framed into a serial order according to the schema of before and after. Hence, we may predicate non-existence, unreality or non-substantiality of the lower time. Even so, the unitive conception of time does allow us to say that time (or parts of time) does and does not exist—that it is and is not real or substantial. For this reason, the being of time is blurry or non-existent only where its lower phase is concerned. The paradox of the non-existence of time is resolved by Iamblichus via the imposition of the phases of time, by tracking the homonymy of time and distinguishing proper characteristics that define particular phases of time. This also allowed Iamblichus to properly distinguish the characteristics of time, including its non-existence, in a way that restored overall coherence to the conception of time.

Iamblichus, moreover, offered a very intriguing solution to the paradox of the constantly ceasing instant, approaching the latter via his exegesis of Pseudo-Archytas.[46] In his commentaries on Aristotle's *Categories*, Pseudo-Archytas asserted that

> every now is a partless and indivisible limit of the former time and a begin-
> ning of the future, like the point of a straight line which is broken, [namely
> the point] at which the breaking occurs and which becomes the beginning
> of one straight line and the end of another.[47]

He continued by saying that the now "is continuously becoming and is never preserved according to number, yet it is indeed so according to its form."[48] Hence, that which is partless and indivisible was spoken of by Pseudo-Archytas as always becoming. But how is that possible? How can that which is inextended and partless move, unless incidentally? One pos-

46. Aristotle set out the paradox of the ceasing instant by questioning whether the now which marks the boundary of the past and the future always remains one and the same, or is always different. His argument was as follows: on the face of things, the now should always be different, since none of the parts of time (i.e., past and future) are simultaneous. Then the prior now would have to cease-to-exist at some time. However, it could neither cease-to-exist in itself, nor could it cease-to-exist giving way to another now, since the nows do not exist one next to another. Then, they would have to exist simultaneously, which is impossible. On the other hand, the now cannot be the same since (i) no determinate divisible thing has a single termination, and (ii) if both what is before and what is after are in this same now, things happened long ago would be simultaneous with what has happened today. Then there would be no before or after.

47. Pseudo-Archytas, *Fragmenta* 29.19–22. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 25.

48. Ibid., 29.13–15.

sible answer would be to follow Aristotle's lead and assert that the now, while preserving the unity of its being, nevertheless, accepts contrary characteristics.[49] However, Aristotle's answer did not seem persuasive to Iamblichus, while Pseudo-Archytas' conjecture did not appear convincing to him either.

So how does the now feature in Iamblichus' account? Trying to solve the issues clustering around the notion of the now, Iamblichus, following Pseudo-Archytas, maintained that the now holds together and makes continuous the whole of time. He agreed with the latter that "to hold together and to make continuous is a property of the indivisible only."[50] Meanwhile, "to become one thing after another and to perish and always to flow is most characteristic of the participation of the Now in becoming."[51] He thus distinguished between the two nows, or the two phases of the now, one participated by and inseparable from the things that come-to-be, and the other separate from such participants and always remaining at rest. Iamblichus then proffered some further qualifications to his argument by saying that indivisibility cannot be predicated of moving objects since every motion is continuous and thus divisible.[52] On the contrary, the indivisible is static in respect of its being. Otherwise, if it were always in the process of becoming, it could not preserve its form.

Once again following in the footsteps of Pseudo-Archytas, Iamblichus distinguished between the formal and numerical unities, arguing that it is the form that constitutes the identity of the indivisible now, whereas its changing numerical otherness indicates the mutability of participating things. This would seem to mean that the formal, i.e., intelligible, aspect of the now belongs to the higher time (or aspect of time), whereas its numerical aspect, one that defines the being of moving things, is always different, characterizing as it does the lower and ever-changing now. Such a distinction would resolve Aristotle's paradox of the ceasing instant and remove Pseudo-Archytas' tension between the two nows, or the two aspects/phases of the now, by reallocating them to their proper places in the schema of beings (taking into account the grades of reality that fall under the same conception) so as to restore coherence. Here, again, the homonymy of the now finds its coherence within the same unitive conception of time.

49. Aristotle, *Physics* 190a15–22.

50. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 355.6–7. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 31.

51. Ibid., *In Cat.* 355.7–8. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 31.

52. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 54.15–17.

The paradox of the constantly ceasing instant is, then, resolved in the following way: the now, according to Iamblichus, is both the same and not the same. It is the same as far as its essence or form is concerned, yet it is not the same insofar it divides the past and the future from one another, since at the instant of dividing it branches out and becomes two: one marking off the end of the series and being "the last," the other setting out the starting point for the new series and thus being "the first."[53] He would, then, say again that the ever-changing numerical otherness indicated the mutability of the participants, whereas the formal sameness is the marker of the indivisible now.[54] In the words of Iamblichus,

> the form remains the same and indicates the identity of the indivisible Now. And this could well be expressed, if we could grasp in one thought that which is static within the flux of becoming.[55]

The now then "holds together in itself the whole of time and makes it continuous," but in the participants becomes different and serially ordered through division. The same conjecture applies to the whole of time, which is one and the same in its form, but many and ever changing insofar as it becomes immanent to the participants. Here, too, the homonymy of time at first indicates multiplicity, but later this multiplicity is reabsorbed into a single and unified conception.

Does Time Itself Move?

According to Plato, time is the image of eternity moving according to number. However, the number that makes motion quantifiable can move only incidentally. So what, then, is the meaning of this motion? Iamblichus will indeed present time as both moving and being at rest. It is moving as compared with eternity. This hypostatic intelligible paradigm is then said to move. How so? Has it not been classified as immobile? Apparently, its immobility is not the same as the eternal stasis. In order to illustrate this theory Iamblichus offers us the analogy of the soul in the body. The soul, if compared with the Intellect, appears divisible, since indivisibility belongs more properly to the Intellect. Even so, when compared to the divisible essence of sensible particulars, the soul is said to be indivisible. Again,

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53. Ibid., 8.354.21–22.
54. Ibid., 354.24–6, cf. *In Phys.* 787.24–6.
55. Simplicius, *In Cat.* 354.26–7, trans. Gaskin, in Simplicius, *On Aristotle, Categories 9–15*, 87.

the grades of reality, and an appropriate allocation of certain (at times opposite) characteristics to the subject in hand, demands that one and the same thing shall be classified as both divisible and indivisible, moving and motionless, depending on the particular angle from which it is viewed.

Similarly, Iamblichus' generating time moves only with respect to eternity. The meaning of motion here indicates metaphorically, I assume, a lesser degree of ontological stability compared to that of the Intellect. The ontologically stable Intellect is frozen in eternal repose. A less ontologically stable monad of time, on the contrary, can be thought of as a being in motion. A metaphor is indeed at the service of metaphysics here. However, time also appears to move insofar as it is participated in, measuring movements and moving incidentally with them. And, finally, time is also said to move in respect of the activities that proceed from it, being now in the participants and co-extending with them. However, in all other ways it will be at rest.[56] Hence, the meaning of motion varies according to context, at times approximating the original Aristotelian meaning of incidentally moving time, at other times marking off the phases open to participation (those that exhibit features that properly belong to the participants), and at still others metaphorically delineating the schema of beings in respect of ontological stability.

The Kind of Motion that Time Measures

It has been pointed out in various settings that, in respect of his imposition of a higher time, Iamblichus was indebted to Plato's two-world metaphysics wherein sensible particulars participate in intelligible patterns so as to receive their share of the order and beauty of the intelligible. That paradigmatic image, taken as a model, in some ways necessitated in this instance Iamblichus' bifurcating picture of time, bearing in mind that eternity was no longer the paradigm for fluid time and the things it encompassed, but only for the higher time. Even so, Iamblichus' conception of time was also largely indebted to the results that came out of his *scholia* on the *Parmenides*. There Plato, while deducing the notions of younger, older, of the same age with itself, and others, had clearly delineated the two aspects of time: one flowing and shifting, the other statically unitive.[57] Now, if the rationale of Iamblichus' account was to make sense of the place of motion and time in the *Parmenides*, would the higher time quantify the motion of intellectual things? How did he handle this Platonic challenge? It is one

56. Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 30.30–32.6.

that comes from the fact that intellectual things, according to the Neoplatonic interpretation of Plato's grand dialogue, move, being thus qualified by such time-bound characteristics as first, last, younger, older, etc.

We can also rephrase the question and ask about the kind of motion that time measures. Is it only the motions of sensible particulars (within the cosmos)? What about the "motion" of self-constituted entities? Is it measured by eternity? One thread in the philosophy of the commentators was to present the (higher) time as an ideal pattern that measures exclusively the motion of sensible particulars. Iamblichus indeed agreed that, while participating in intelligible paradigms, sensible particulars also participate in the hypostatic time, so as to be ordered. They cannot receive the "static essence of time" in its entirety (i.e., all at once), but, instead, receive it through being in motion (i.e., part by part). They "touch" the essence of time with different parts at different moments, but what would that mean in this new context? First of all, this statement indicates that sensible particulars cannot encompass the whole of time in respect of their existence. Neither can they encompass an entire extension of their existence all at once. They extend their existence by being in motion, their existence being chopped into temporal bits. These bits are framed in series. Therefore, this statement tells us that the intelligible pattern of time does not merely preordain the movements (or flow) of sensible particulars, and nor does it confine the notion of order within the schema of logical relations (similar to that of a proposition to a theorem). It also determines the order of their temporal bits.

Can static time also delineate the mode of existence (or measure the becoming) of intellectual beings, in the sense of those that preserve their essential integrity? And if so, what kind of beings are they? There were different opinions regarding the issue at stake, one of which was reported by Damascius. Sarah Klitenic Wear has given us a lucid description of these opinions, and noted that

[t]he fourth opinion (1216.37) appears to be that of Iamblichus, who postulates an archetypal Time. He argues that the One is not Eternity, and is not established with Time. Time is, instead, the causal principle of the intel-

57. As Richard Sorabji has rightly pointed out, "in the *Parmenides* Plato describes time as traveling, and talks of something (the One) traveling with it from the past via the now to the future, which implies that the now stands still and is overtaken. On the other hand, Plato also says that the now is always present to the One, which implies that the now travels along with it. It looks as if Plato needs a static and traveling now." Sorabji, *Time, Creation, and the Continuum*, 43.

lectual order—terms such as "older," "younger," and "the same age" reflect
relative levels of intellect.[58]

Iamblichus' response was quite extraordinary: he opted for the inclusion
of some intellectual beings into the realm of things measured by the higher
time. Firstly, he mentioned the (hypostatic) soul, and then the becoming
that proceeds from it. Thus, the soul and the energy that proceeds from
it come first. Then the participants follow. Iamblichus' position was in-
deed innovative. Plotinus' influential conjecture was that time originates
with the soul,[59] and this conjecture seems to have played a guiding role
for the entire field of studies (also as it entered Christian discourse). Ac-
cording to Iamblichus, and contrary to Plotinus, the higher time controls
and measures the "movements" of the soul.

So how, we may ask, does the generative time measure the motion of
the soul? Iamblichus' response was that since the motion of the soul is
not the same as that of sensible things, time orders its activities without
chopping it up into temporal bits and framing them in series. The notion
of order in this context extends, we may infer, only to the "measurements"
of "honor"—i.e., of superior vs. inferior phases of an entity in the schema
of beings. It may also "measure" or define the causal and/or logical rela-
tion between these entities. But does it mean that it measures "motionless
motions?" This, we may respond, again depends on the classification of
such motions: they will be motionless as far as the Aristotelian classifi-
cation is concerned, but viewed from a different angle may be thought
of once again as experiencing a certain dynamism, proceeding forwards
and reverting back, extending their energy to the participants, etc. What
is important in this context is that Iamblichus' time measures this "intel-
lectual motion" without chopping it up into temporal bits. It arranges the
activities of intellectual beings—those that give birth to all other things.

And what, then, of the "motion" (i.e., order of "before and after") of
the higher hypostases? According to Iamblichus' exegesis of Plato's *Par-
menides*, the language of "older" and "younger," attributed to the One-
being refers to the order of intellectual things.[60] They are thus ordered as

58. Klitenic Wear, "Syrianus the Platonist on Eternity and Time," 653.

59. Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.7[45].

60. As Sambursky and Pines rightly note, "Time is the earlier and later in the intellectual
order, the first cause of all secondary causes in the different hypostatic levels." Sambursky and
Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 16. Hence, there is the earlier and later in the intellectual order.

61. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 793.22–6. English translation by Dillon, in Iamblichus, *In Platonis
dialogos*, 175.

being inferior, superior or located on the same level in the schema of beings. However, he would insist that these terms, if applied to the higher objects, should not be confused with temporally ordered series. Moreover, the intellectual order of causes does not entail motion *per se* (in its Aristotelian sense, construed as including generation and corruption, alteration, increase and diminishing, and locomotion). He would tell us that

> the notion of "before" and "after" in this order [i.e., the intellectual setting-in-order proceeding from the Demiurge] we do not understand in the sense of changes involving movements, nor in any other sense, but we define it as the sequence of causes and the continuous combination of generations and primary activity and power which brings motions to fulfilment and as all things of this sort.[61]

A motionless activity that generates motion is thus depicted metaphorically through the invoking of these characteristics. However, what these predicates really intend to communicate is the order of beings and their causal efficacy.

It should also be noted that the Neoplatonists tried to clear away Aristotle's rigid distinction between actuality and potentiality (δύναμις). They spoke of actuality and its δύναμις, in the sense of the power of intellectual beings. "Powers" stands here for something like a capacity to have efficacy, to be participated in, etc. Hence, intellectual entities do not move by changing and mutating. They rather extend their power to the participants. Their dynamic aspect does not consist in motion *per se* (which would once again correspond to motion according to Aristotle's schema), but in their capacity to extend their power to the lower levels of being. In other words, a type of motion that is quite different (from the Aristotelian one)—a "spiritual motion" (if we may use this analogy after Stephen T. Gersh)—is in play. This "motionless motion," as far as the soul is concerned, is embraced and ordered by the higher time. However, time no longer orders the motion of the higher hypostasis. Instead, the being of the higher hypostases is measured by eternity alone.

The Significance of Iamblichus' Theory of Time and Its Reception in Late Neoplatonism

Iamblichus conceptualized time as an intermediate entity situated between eternity and the cosmos. Where its higher phase is concerned, this entity is akin to eternity, but its lower phase, by contrast, is immanent to

and inseparable from motion and moving things. It is hypostatic in regards to its higher phase as represented by the ingenerate monad of time, while it is insubstantial insofar as its lower phase is concerned. However, both phases of time represent parts of a unitive conception of time. The monad of time functions as the ordering paradigm of the motion of the soul, of the energy that proceeds from it, and of all sensible particulars that participate in time and motion. It is pre-existent, essential, and necessary. It thus controls and orders the activities of the soul and the motions within the cosmos. The lower (i.e., flowing and shifting) time, being inseparable from motion, shares certain characteristics intrinsic to moving things. It also, we may assume, measures particular motions by indicating their duration (the number of motion in respect of before and after).

Iamblichus started his investigation with a critical reassessment of the prior tradition as represented by Aristotle and Pseudo-Archytas (and, to a lesser degree, Plato). His response to this tradition sought to restore the coherence of Aristotle's and Pseudo-Archytas' conceptions of time, wherein certain conflicting characteristics had been attributed to the subject in hand. Iamblichus' innovative approach seemed to successfully resolve the paradoxes of time—those, that is, that Aristotle had reported in his *Physics*. Indeed, his conception of time was capable of better accentuating the ordering function of time. His re-evaluation of the sphere of application of the "when" resulted in the inclusion of some intellectual beings within the schema of the category corresponding to this term. His account gained wide philosophical recognition from amongst commentators, with a significant portion of Simplicius' commentaries revolving around Iamblichus' account of time.

Iamblichus' theory of time was fully supported by Proclus. As Simplicius noted, Proclus philosophized "about separate time in a similar way to Iamblichus."[62] In his commentary on the *Timaeus*, Proclus fully endorsed Iamblichus' idea of ingenerate time.[63] In a purely Iamblichian fashion he insisted that the time participated in is not separated from becoming. He then classified this aspect of time "in the same way as Aristotle and assumed that Aristotle has said that time exists only with

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62. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 795.5–6. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 48.

63. There he argued that "time by its essence and through the activity resting in itself is thus eternal and a monad and a center, and simultaneously it is continuous and number and circle, in respect of that which is proceeding and participating." Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 36.30–37.3. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 53.

respect to the Now."[64] Hence, the higher phase of time, according to Proclus, precisely matches Iamblichus' rendering of the generating time, whereas the lower phase, again following Iamblichus' lead, corresponds perfectly with Aristotle's account of time. Thus, Proclus fully accepted Iamblichus' theses about the nature and function of time, and he also endorsed Iamblichus' conjecture regarding the monad of time as ordering movements of certain intellectual beings.[65] So the generating time measures the motion and activities of the soul—and, he would argue, "the first number itself . . . governs the intellectual things in an analogous way to the One Being that governs the intelligible things."[66]

On the other hand, we also learn of Damascius' appreciation of Iamblichus' theory. Yet Simplicius adds that "because of his . . . sympathy with Iamblichus, Damascius did not hesitate to attack many of Proclus' doctrines."[67] Even so, the key concern of Damascius was with generated time and the physical motion that it measures. In this respect, Damascius' innovative teaching went way beyond Iamblichus' theory, which paid little attention to issues pertaining to the time that is inseparable from moving things. Arguably, we may also trace some influences associated with Iamblichus' theory of time in the Christian discourse of that time— in particular in Cyril of Alexandria. However, the precise origins and conceptual underpinnings of some Christian authorities cannot be easily detected. It is perhaps not an impossible endeavor to measure the extent of Iamblichus' influence beyond the lifespan of Neoplatonism, especially beyond the sixth century, marked by Justinian's closure of the Athenian Academy. However, the scarcity that obtains in respect of scholarly sources does not allow us to proceed further and make any definitive statements in this respect.

64. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 795.9–11. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 49.

65. "[b]eing full of potency for measurement and desirous to measure the movements of the essence of the soul, and the being, activities and affections of the physical and corporeal [essence], it [time] proceeded according to number." Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 19.3–6. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 51.

66. Proclus, *In Tim.* 3, 19.3–6. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 51.

67. Simplicius, *In Phys.* 795.16–17. English translation in Sambursky and Pines, *The Concept of Time*, 49.

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