

Oracles, Dreams and Astrology in Iamblichus' *De Mystериis*

But to what shall I compare the spectacles of a philosopher? To a clear dream by Zeus, circularly borne along in all directions; in which, indeed, the body does not move, but the soul travels round the whole earth, from earth ascends to heaven, passes over every sea, flies through every region of the air, runs in conjunction with the sun, revolves with the moon, is carried round with the choir of the other stars, and nearly governs and arranges the universe, in conjunction with Zeus! O blessed journey, beautiful visions, and true dreams!

Maximus of Tyre, Dissertation VI

All things are full of gods.

Iamblichus, De Mystериis, I.9

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Introduction

Iamblichus' views of oracles, dreams and astrology are deeply interesting, not least because these three types of divination were well-known and commonly used in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, and at least two of these types, dreams and astrology, are still used as divinatory tools by many people today. All three types of divination, in their highest manifestation, were viewed by Iamblichus as the supra-rational reception of inspiration and illumination from the gods. Viewed in this light, Iamblichus' views on divination support and enhance his description of theurgy, and help to clarify the ways in which divination could be used in theurgic ritual.

Theurgy, which literally means "divine work" was a form of ritual used by later Neoplatonist philosophers such as Iamblichus. The major concern of the theurgist is *anagoge*, the raising of his or her soul to divinity, to attain union with the gods. Theurgic rituals employed "symbols" (*symbola*), which are words or material objects which were thought to have special connections with the divine, linked

with divinity through *sympatheia*. The divine *symbola* were also thought to be contained within the soul and are related to the chains of being which permeate every grade of reality within the cosmos. Theurgy links different levels of being throughout the metaphysical cosmos. Therefore, by using the divine *symbola* the theurgist was able to realise its inherent divinity; such theurgic experiences were thought to be orchestrated and co-ordinated by the gods themselves.¹

Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis* is the most extensive surviving treatise from the ancient world on polytheistic religious phenomena, such as divination and sacrifice, and on theurgy and the reasons for ritual.² This work, which was composed in the late third century AD³ as a reply to Porphyry's *Letter to Anebo*, is written under the guise of the Egyptian priest "Abammon."⁴ Book III is devoted to divination (**mantikh**) and divine inspiration (**enqousiasmo~**): responding to Porphyry's request for a clear description of "what happens in predicting the future,"⁵ Iamblichus clearly distinguishes two types of divination: inspired divination, such as oracles and possession by the gods and inductive divination, such as haruspicy and augury. This categorisation of divination is entirely based on traditional Graeco-Roman conceptions, following Plato and Cicero in drawing such a distinction. The significant features of these two categories of divination will be examined, using the case studies of three types of divination: oracles, dreams and astrology.

Inspired and Inductive Categories of Divination

Iamblichus begins by discussing inspired divination and then turns to the second type: inductive or "human" divination. Iamblichus seems to distinguish these two modes of divination by their proximity to the divine. For example, he opens Book III with a discussion of the principle of inspired divination (**mantikh**):

"Qeion de kai uperfue~ anwqen te apo tou ouranou katapempomenon, agennhton te kai aidion autofu~ prohgeitai."

"But it is a thing divine, supernatural, sent from heaven above; both unbegotten and eternal, it takes priority by its own nature."⁶

Here, Iamblichus asserts that inspired divination is divine and eternal – it comes directly from the gods. According to Iamblichus, the principle of inspired divination is that its supreme power belongs to the gods and is therefore given to humans by them. Therefore, everything else is subordinate and instrumental to the fact that it is sent by the gods.⁷ This accords with Iamblichus' view that the prophet or *mantis*, when he or she is divinely inspired, is wholly possessed by the

gods and does not act or experience in a human manner; when delivering his or her prophecies he or she entirely transcends corporeality, accomplishing “divine acts.”⁸

Inductive divination is an entirely different phenomenon from the inspired mode of divination. In his initial discussion of this category of divination, it is clear that Iamblichus considers it to be a largely “human” endeavour (**tech-anqrwpinh-**), and far less accurate than the inspired mode of divination, since he describes the predictions made as the result of “guessing” and “supposition.”⁹ Iamblichus explains that this type of divination operates using signs which are implanted (or illuminated) by the gods through nature and also through the agency of daemons who are concerned with creation. These signs (**shmeia, sumbola**) are perfect since they are implanted by divinities or semi-divine beings. This process is clearly based on the concept of **sumpageia** (sympathy) as Iamblichus himself states.¹⁰ The concept of *sympatheia* is based on the idea that the cosmos is a single, living being and therefore everything within the cosmos is interconnected and related through likeness and sympathy. Emanations from the gods illuminate all subsequent ontological levels of reality, permeating every strand of the cosmos, including the physical world. This encompasses the idea that truth or “real being” is expressed in different levels of reality in the way most appropriate to that level. It also includes the ‘microcosm-macrocosm’ idea, which views the physical world as a harmonic reflection or expression of the divine.

However Iamblichus emphasises the central role of human interpretation in deciphering these signs in inductive divination:

“..shmeioi~ tisi touto qeioi~ crhtai ek qewn epiteloumenoi~ kata poikilou~ tropou~. Apo de tw n qeiwn teknhriwn kata thn suggeneian tw n pragmatwn pro~ ta deiknumena shmeia sumballei pw~ h techh kai stocazetai thn manteian, ex eikotwn tinwn authn sullogizomenh.”

“...this kind uses divine signs that have been perfected by the gods in various ways. From divine signs, in virtue of the relationship of things to the signs shown, the technique somehow draws conclusions and guesses at the divination, inferring it from certain probabilities.”¹¹

Iamblichus implies that inductive divination is inferior to the inspired mode of divination; this inferiority seems to stem from the human interpretation and supposition of the meaning of these signs rather than the nature of the signs themselves, which proceed directly from divinity. Thus Iamblichus’ distinction between inspired and inductive divination is based on their proximity to divinity: inspired divination is caused by the supreme power of the gods whereas inductive divination depends ultimately upon human interpretation and skill.¹² This implication is confirmed when Iamblichus discusses the comparative value of these modes of divination:

“esti men oun o tropo~ th~ manteia~ outo~ toiouto~ panth diesthkw~ tou qeiou kai alhqinou tropou, peri smikrwn te kai efhmerwn pragmatwn dunameno~ prolegein, peri tw~ en th dihrhmenh fusei keimenwn osa hdh peri thn genesin emferetai, kinhsei~ te af’ eautwn parecei toi~ dunameno~i~ auta~ decesqai, kai paqh polueidw~ empoiei toi~ pefukosin epithdei~ ei~ to sumpascein: dia paqou~ de ouk an paragenoito pote h teleia prognwsi~: auto gar malista to atrepton te kai aulon kai panth kaqaron tw mellonti epiballein eiwqe, to de summignumenon pro~ to alogiston kai skoteinon tou swmatoeidou~ kai ulikou plhroutai pollh~ agnwsia~: oqen oudepote thn toiauthn teknikhn kataskeuhn ei~ to manteuesqai apodecesqai axion. Oude crhsqai auth epi megalh~ spoudh~ dei, oude allw crwmenw pisteuteon w~ econt~i par’ eautw safe~ kai gnwrimon ti teknhrion th~ alhqeia~. Tosauta dh kai peri th~ toiauth~ manteia~ hmin eirhsqw.”

“Therefore since such a mode of divination [i.e. inductive divination] is entirely different from the mode which is divine and true, it has the power to predict only trifling and everyday events, things which lie in the sphere of divided nature and directly concern generation, and which impart motions from themselves to those who are able to receive them, and create multifarious passions in things naturally fit for impassionment. Perfect foreknowledge, by contrast, is never achieved through passion. For it is that which is entirely immutable and also immaterial and entirely pure that is accustomed to apprehending future events; but that which is mingled with the irrationality and shadowiness of corporeal forms and matter is filled with abundant ignorance. Thus an artificial contrivance of this sort should in no way be valued as a mantic procedure. Nor should one even pay much regard to it, nor have confidence in another who makes use of it as if it possesses any kind of clear and proven sign of truth in its own right.”¹³

Iamblichus asserts that inductive divination is inferior to inspired divination on the grounds that it is mingled with the world of corporeality, whereas the inspired mode is entirely immaterial and eternal. This recalls Iamblichus’ differentiation between these modes of divination in Book III. Because of its inherent nature as a human endeavour, inductive divination can only predict everyday events, those directly concerned with the physical world of generation. This is in direct contrast to inspired divination which bestows eternal and divine knowledge on those who utilise it. Because of its greater potential in providing more divine forms of knowledge, inspired divination is the appropriate form of divination for the theurgist, as Iamblichus clearly states near the culmination of his work:

“Monh toinun h qeia mantikh sunaptomenh toi~ qeoi~ w~ alhqw~ hmin th~ qeia~ zwh~ metadidwsi, th~ te prognwsew~ kai twn qeiwn nohsewn metecousa kai hma~ qeiou~ w~ alhqw~ apergazetai.”

“Only divine mantic prediction, therefore, conjoined with the gods, truly imparts to us a share in divine life, partaking as it does in the foreknowledge and the intellections of the gods, and renders us, in truth, divine.”¹⁴

By stating that divine *mantiké* is conjoined with the gods, Iamblichus characterises inspired divination as a theurgic ritual. Iamblichus’ characterisation of inspired divination as eternal, divine and ultimately dependant on divinity, rather than on any human skill, might lead the modern reader to conceptualise this mode of divination as “irrational.” Indeed, scholars have often viewed theurgy and consequently, Iamblichean Neoplatonism, as “irrational” and “superstitious” according to a modern Cartesian dichotomy between thought and action where religious ritual is viewed as being in sharp opposition to “rational philosophy.”¹⁵ However, if inspired divination and theurgy are viewed as “irrational” then one misses the point entirely. Rather, Iamblichus is suggesting that inspired divination, like theurgy, transcends rationality: it is supra-rational since its principle is divine and eternal. Both inspired divination and theurgy involve the human soul perceiving the cosmos from the eternal perspective of the gods. According to Iamblichus, the gods are consistently and permanently united with the principle of Intellect:

“Nou~ toinun hgemwn kai basileu~ twn ontwn tecnh te dhmiourgikh tou panto~ toi~ men qeoi~ wsautw~ aei paresti telew~ kai autarkw~ kai anendew~, kata mian energeian estwsan en eauth kaqarw~...”

“So then, Intellect, as leader and king of the realm of Being, and the art which creates the universe, is present continuously and uniformly to the gods, perfectly and self-sufficiently free from any deficiency, established in itself purely and in accordance with one sole activity...”¹⁶

Since the principle of Intellect is eternally present to the gods, Iamblichus explains that the gods comprehend the supreme ends of all activities and essences within themselves. Such divine knowledge is contrasted with the incomplete, limited rationality of the human soul, which is the faculty that characterises inductive divination:

“Kai to men kata mian oxeian akmhñ ta telh twn energeiwn olwn kai ousiwn suneilhfe, to d’ ap’ allwn ei~ alla metabainei, kai apo tou atelou~ procwrei ei~ to teleion.”

“The former [i.e. the gods], in a single swift moment, comprehends the supreme ends of all activities and essences, while the latter [i.e. the soul] passes from some things to others, and proceeds from the incomplete to the complete.”¹⁷

The gods comprehend the entire cosmos from a unified, complete and eternal perspective, as Iamblichus states, contrasting this perspective with the generally partial and limited mode of operation of the human soul:

**“kai toi~ men to metron tw n olwn h to toude aition sundromon
paresti dia panto~, h de tw qeiw perati aforizetai, kai toutou
metecei meristw~.”**

“The gods have present to them throughout, concurrently with their essence, the measure of the universe or the cause of this, while Soul is defined by the divine principle of limit, and participates in this in a partial mode.”¹⁸

Iamblichus suggests that the theurgist-philosopher can unite their intellect and the divine part of their soul with the gods and in this way transcend their human rationality, replacing this limited and partial perspective with a broader, unified divine perspective and thus exchanging their human life for a more divine one:

**“en gar tw qewrein ta makaria qeamata h yuch allhn zwhn
allattetai kai eteran energeian energei kai oud’ anqrwpo~ einai
hgeitai tote, orqw~ hgoumenh: pollaki~ de kai thn eauth~ afeisa
zwhn thn makariwtathn tw n qewn energeian anthllaxato.”**

“...for in the contemplation of the “blessed visions” the soul exchanges one life for another and exerts a different activity, and considers itself then to be no longer human – and quite rightly so: for often, having abandoned its own life, it has gained in exchange the most blessed activity of the gods.”¹⁹

By viewing everything from an eternal, divine perspective, the theurgist can view events in the past, present and future, since they are all based on the divine pattern which comprises their primary, first cause. Such a view is particularly clear in Iamblichus’ discussion of dream divination, as will be discussed further below. Therefore, according to Iamblichus, inspired divination, which is supra-rational, *surpasses* rationality rather than being in a dualistic opposition to it (which would make it “irrational”).

It follows from this that the theurgist, who practised inspired divination in theurgic ritual, must also have been a philosopher, with all the implications of that word in late antiquity: the ancient philosopher was often involved in a contemplative and spiritual praxis and “way of life.” In practical terms, the

theurgists in Iamblichus' school at Apamea in Syria would have been highly trained philosophers, attending lectures and studying Pythagoreanism, Plato and Aristotle, as well as the Chaldean Oracles.²⁰ Iamblichean Neoplatonism was a philosophical system that was innovative both in terms of its textual interpretation and the active religious demands that it placed upon its followers.²¹ Indeed, theurgy held a strong appeal for those with philosophical inclinations: for example, the emperor Julian, who was himself a Neoplatonist influenced by Iamblichus, became a student of Maximus of Ephesus after learning of his theurgic activities.²² By the 370's AD, Iamblichean Neoplatonism had influenced the Athenian Neoplatonist School, so that during the time when Plutarch of Athens and then his successor Syrianus were Heads of the School, a thorough grounding in philosophy, mathematics, astrology and other subjects was given to students, leading to a higher level of religious teaching.²³ The Neoplatonic theurgist-philosopher Proclus, who succeeded Syrianus as Head of the Athenian School, taught an even more extensive range of religious rituals to his students, and also taught Chaldean and Orphic texts extensively, as well as the philosophical training in Plato and Aristotle.²⁴ During the late antique period, philosophers in general were among the most highly educated and rational people of their time.²⁵ Such practical details thus accord well with the idea of inspired divination and theurgy as supra-rational, rather than "irrational," modes of experience.

I would like to suggest that Iamblichus' endorsement of inspired divination as appropriate for the theurgist, and implied dismissal of the use of inductive divination to the theurgist, explains and contextualises the apparent condemnation of inductive divination contained in the Chaldean Oracles:

**"mh ta pelwria metra guh~ upo shn frena ballou:
ou gar alhqeih~ futon en cqoni estin...
asterion proporeuma sequen carin ouk eloceugh.
aigrio~ orniqwn tarso~ platu~ oupot' alhqh~,
ou qusiwn splagcnwn te tomai: tad' aqurmata panta,
emporikh~ apath~ sthrigmata. feuge su tauta,
mellwn eusebih~ ieron paradeison anoigein,
enq' areth sofia te kai eunomia sunagontai."**

"The starry procession has not been brought forth for your sake. The wide-winged flight of birds is never true, nor the cuttings and entrails of sacrificial victims. All these are playthings, the props of commercial fraud. Flee these things, if you would open the sacred paradise of piety, where virtue, wisdom, and good order are brought together."²⁶

Since the Chaldaean Oracles discuss theurgic practices and the metaphysical principles upon which they are based, this comment seems to imply the

inappropriateness of inductive divination for the theurgist, rather than constituting an outright dismissal of this mode of divination.

It is worth noting that the division of divination into inductive and inspired types had a long history in the Graeco-Roman tradition.²⁷ The Platonists and the Stoics always distinguished between these two types of divination, which they also refer to as ‘natural’ and ‘artificial.’²⁸ Plato not only makes this distinction, but comments explicitly on their comparative value as modes of prophetic knowledge:

“osw dh oun telewteron kai entimoteron mantikh oiwnistikh~, to te onoma tou onomato~ ergon t’ ergou, tosw kallion marturousin oi palaioi manian swfrosunh~ thn ek qeou th~ par’ anqrwpwn gignomenh~.”

“The ancients, then testify that in proportion as prophecy is superior to augury, both in name and in fact, in the same proportion madness which comes from god, is superior to sanity, which is of human origin...”²⁹

Plato here not only asserts that **mantikh** (inspired divination) is superior to augury (representative of inductive divination), but significantly, he comments that divine, prophetic madness is superior to sanity, which is of human origin. Thus, Iamblichus postulates a conceptual framework of different modes of divination which accords with Plato’s distinction between divine madness and human sanity. Both Plato and Iamblichus evaluate these types of divination by the criteria of their respective proximity to the divine.

Oracles

Iamblichus’ conceptual framework of inspired divination can be seen particularly clearly in his examination of oracles,³⁰ one of the most famous types of ‘inspired divination’ in the ancient world.³¹ There were numerous oracle sanctuaries throughout the Graeco-Roman world, consulted frequently by kings and state officials, as well as by individual inquirers. Oracles were a common and widespread form of divination during antiquity, and oracular sanctuaries were religious, civic, social and educational institutions.

Firstly, Iamblichus discusses Apollo’s Oracle at Claros in Asia Minor, which prophesies by means of water. The prophet performs many preliminary ceremonies and drinks from the spring in the subterranean chamber before delivering his oracles. Iamblichus concludes that it is obvious that the water has oracular power, but only because the power of the god infuses the water, illuminating it with a prophetic power.³² He explains that the divine exercises its power by a process of illumination or emanation, giving prophetic power without any kind of detraction from itself,

because of its eternal, unchanging and whole nature.³³ Iamblichus also adds that the water bestows the purification of the prophet's soul so that it is receptive enough to receive the inspiration or illumination from the god. However, it is the presence of the god which *ultimately* causes the inspiration of the prophet.³⁴ Iamblichus' comment that the presence of the god holds aloof from no one who through a kindred nature is in union with it depends on the Neoplatonist principle that "like produces like."³⁵ This principle clarifies Iamblichus' idea that the gods can use the prophet as an instrument in divination because the human soul contains something divine within it which it can recollect.³⁶ This suggests the theurgic idea that the divine part of the human soul can achieve union with the gods.

The prophet's ritual preparations are also required so that his soul will be in the receptive state required to receive the god's presence. According to Iamblichus, the prophet's ritual preparations included a day and night of fasting, and a "withdrawal and separation from human affairs," to sacred, remote places, which certainly implies contemplation and solitude.³⁷

Iamblichus' account of the Pythia at Delphi also emphasises the fact that the inspiration she experiences comes wholly from the god and that the prophetess becomes the god's possession.³⁸ As with the prophet at Claros, the divine causes the oracular inspiration itself, while the preparations undertaken by the prophetess are instrumental in preparing her soul to be receptive enough to receive the inspiration of the divinity.

The third oracle discussed is the Oracle of Didyma in Asia Minor. Iamblichus refers to the "woman at Branchidai," the prophetess of the oracle and a member of the sacred family who were descended from Branchos and were charged with custodianship of the Oracle at Didyma. Iamblichus relates the ritual preparations undertaken by the prophetess at Didyma: she either held a staff or sat on an axle while prophesying, dipping her feet or skirt in the water and inhaling vapour which rose from it. Before the divination session, she bathed in sacred water, fasted for three whole days and remained within the innermost sanctuaries.³⁹ Iamblichus concludes his description by explaining the purpose of such ritual preparations:

"kai gar auta panta paraklhsin tou qeou wste paragenesqai kai parousian exwqen epideiknusin, epipnoian te qaumasian oian prin kai ei~ ton sunhqh topon afikesqai..."

"For all these things show that the god has been invoked, and that his arrival comes from without, a marvellous inspiration even before coming to his accustomed place."⁴⁰

Thus, oracular sanctuaries seem to have had well-established, traditional ritual preparations which, according to Iamblichus, invoked the god and prepared the

prophet or prophetess to be in the requisite state of receptivity in order to receive the inspiration of the god.

Dream Divination

Iamblichus' distinction between inspired and inductive divination, or divine and "human" divination, is also clearly evident in his discussion of dream divination. This was well-known and common in antiquity, particularly in the form of the popular healing process of "incubation" where those who were sick would go and sleep in sanctuaries sacred to Asclepius or some other healing god, who was thought to appear to them in an oracular dream, giving advice and instructions leading to recovery.⁴¹

Iamblichus explores the nature and characteristics of dream divination, in response to Porphyry's inquiry about divination in sleep, which raised the point that when one is asleep they have an inferior level of consciousness to when they are in a waking state.⁴² Iamblichus emphasises here that this characteristic of dreams may be correct for "human" dreams, those which arise from the soul, from *phantasia* or the imagination.⁴³ Here Iamblichus makes a clear and strong differentiation between 'human' dreams and dreams that are "god-sent" (**qeopemptoi**) or in other words, divine. In this, Iamblichus follows traditional Greek conceptions of dreams; such a differentiation between divine dreams and those originating in the imagination can be traced back as far as Homer and is echoed by Virgil.⁴⁴ If we examine Iamblichus' descriptions of the nature of divine and human dreams, it seems apparent that he considers these two types of dreams to fall into the two categories of inductive and inspired divination. Firstly, then, it seems important to consider Iamblichus' description of "human" dreams, which he describes as:

"...twn apo yuch-, h twn en hmin ennoiwn h logwn anakinoumenwn, h osa apo fantasiwn egeiretai h tinwn meqhmerinwn frontidwn:"

"...things coming from the soul, either from thoughts or words stirred up in us, or in such things as arise from our fantasies, or from everyday concerns of some kind."⁴⁵

Iamblichus seems to be indicating that "human" dreams originate ultimately from human faculties: the human soul and imagination, or from human affairs and everyday concerns. Thus, these dreams originate from the human world of generation, linking them to inductive divination which, as Iamblichus stated in Book VI, is concerned only with the world of generation. Iamblichus continues by asserting that as far as human dreams are concerned:

“a tote men estin alhqh tote de yeudh, kai epi tinwn men tugcanei tou onto~, epi de twn pollwn apotugcanei.”

“Sometimes these things are true, sometimes false; and in some cases, they chance upon reality but, in many cases, they fail to attain reality.”⁴⁶

The word **tugcanei** (“chance upon”) strongly implies the idea that these kind of dreams operate via some aspect of human guesswork which must originate in the human soul or imagination. If this is the case, then this description of the operation of “human” dreams matches the description of inductive divination given by Iamblichus, it is a “human skill” (**tecnh~ anqrwpinh~**) accomplished through “estimation and supposition” (**stocasmou kai oihsew~**).⁴⁷ Thus, according to Iamblichus’ schema, “human” dreams would seem to fall into the category of inductive divination: both “human” dreams and inductive divination are inferior to divine dreams and inspired divination respectively because they ultimately originate from human faculties or skills, which only contain a partial and limited knowledge, rather than being derived directly from divinity.

Iamblichus then elucidates the nature and character of divine dreams, which he refers to as **qeopemptoi** (“god-sent”).⁴⁸ Such dreams occur during transitional states between sleeping and waking and vice versa, when a sudden voice is heard offering guidance about the future. Sometimes an intangible and incorporeal spirit encircles those lying down – this “spirit” is not visually perceptible but it is otherwise perceptible with a different kind of consciousness and awareness.⁴⁹ Interestingly, Iamblichus explicitly describes this “spirit,” “When entering, it makes a whooshing sound...” (“**...roizomenou te en tw eisienai...**”).⁵⁰ Iamblichus’ use of the word **roizo~** here is intriguing, since this word is a Pythagorean and Chaldean term for the sound caused by the planetary revolutions.⁵¹ The Chaldean Oracles describes the Ideas as “rushing forth” (**roizew**) from the Paternal Intellect into the womb of the goddess Hekate.⁵² At least from the time of Plato’s *Timaeus*, the music or harmony of the spheres was connected closely with the creation and function of the Cosmic Soul, who was identified with Hekate in the Chaldean Oracles.⁵³ In the *Vita Pythagorae*, Iamblichus asserts that Pythagoras purified the confused minds of his disciples, sending them into a *prophetic* sleep with his musical imitations of the celestial spheres.⁵⁴ It is especially interesting that Iamblichus also links this particular sound with the induction of a prophetic sleep, just as here it is linked with a prophetic spirit encircling the individual while they are asleep as a mediatory force for the conveyance of divine dreams to humans, connecting the human soul to divinity.

Within the *De Mysteriis*, Iamblichus also uses the term **roizo~** in his discussion of the occurrence of divine possession among the devotees of Cybele,

Sabazios and the Korybantes during the performance of musical rituals. In his discussion of the operation of these musical rituals, Iamblichus asserts that the sounds and tunes are properly consecrated to each of the gods, and kinship is properly assigned to them in accordance with their proper orders and powers and the motions in the universe itself and “the harmonious sounds rushing from its motions.”⁵⁵ This is a strong connection between cosmology and divine possession. Iamblichus seems to be suggesting that when the individual reaches the supra-rational state where they receive divine inspiration and illumination, they hear the rushing noise which was thought to characterise the harmonious motions of the interconnected, living cosmos. Iamblichus then discusses another type of divine dream:

“Allote de fwto~ epilamyanto~ lamprou kai hremaiou katecetai men h tw n ofqalmwn oyi~ kai summuei te, anapeptamenh ousa proteron: ai d’ allai aisqhsei~ dieghgermenai tugcanousi, kai sunaisqanontai pw~ ei~ to fw~ oi qeoi ekfainontai, osa te legousin akouousi kai osa drwsin isasi parakolouqousai. Teleioteron d’ eti toude qewreitai, hnika an kai h oyi~ bleph kai o nou~ errwmeno~ epakolouqh toi~ drwmenoi~, kinhsi~ te tw n qewroutwn sunuparch.”

“At other times, however, when a light shines brightly and peacefully, not only is the sight of the eye possessed, but closed up after previously being quite open. And the other senses are awake and consciously aware of how the gods shine forth in the light, and with a clear understanding they both hear what they say, and know what they do. This is observed even more fully when the sight is active and also the mind, with full vigour, understands the things done, and there is a response at the same time in those observing.”⁵⁶

Iamblichus’ assertion that this state of consciousness and awareness of the gods shining forth is observed even more fully when the sight is active and the mind is vigorous clearly alludes to the theurgist-philosopher, who had trained his mind to be vigorous through profound contemplation, ritual and rational, discursive thinking. It is interesting that Iamblichus’ description of this type of divine dream is so similar to his description of the operation of the oracles. As we have seen in the case of Claros, Iamblichus asserts that the water has oracular power because the divine *illuminates* the spring, thus filling it with prophetic power. Iamblichus also uses this terminology of illumination when discussing what happens to the prophet himself:

“ei~ kaqaran edran th~ eautou yuch~ ellampousan ecei thn tou qeou epipnoian, akwluton te auth parecei thn katokwchn kai thn parousian teleian anempodiston.”

“...he has the inspiration of the god illuminating the pure sanctuary of his own soul, and providing for it an unhindered divine possession, and a perfect and unimpeded presence.”⁵⁷

The terminology of divine illumination is also utilised by Iamblichus in his discussion of the prophetesses at Delphi and Didyma. His description of the Pythia being, “illuminated by the ray of divine fire,” as the fiery spirit rises from the aperture and envelopes her entirely in a circle, filling her with divine brightness,⁵⁸ is remarkably similar to the description of the spirit which encircles the dreamer and the light which shines brightly and peacefully on the dreamer. In a similar sense, Iamblichus comments that the woman at Branchidai is “filled by the divine radiance.”⁵⁹ Clearly, Iamblichus’ terminology of divine illumination and radiance applies to both divine dreams and oracles, showing a common mode of receiving the divine in different types of inspired divination.

At the end of III.2, Iamblichus tells Porphyry, “you must apply yourself to these fundamentals of a true knowledge of dreams, and follow the full arguments about divination in sleep.” As before, Iamblichus emphasises the importance of understanding the principles of a phenomenon such as divination before attempting to understand particular manifestations or occurrences of that phenomenon. Since he has just commented on the fact that some people confuse “human” and “divine” dreams because sometimes the “human” dreams encounter by accident some foreknowledge of the future, Iamblichus is also stressing the importance of distinguishing between the two categories of divination, inspired and inductive. In the following chapter Iamblichus turns to discuss the principles upon which divine dreams are based.

Iamblichus quotes Porphyry’s statement that the soul has a double life, one with the body and the other apart from the body. When one is awake one mostly uses the life in common with the body, apart from when thinking or engaging in pure thoughts. In sleep, Iamblichus postulates, we are completely freed from the chains of the body and engage in a life detached from generation.⁶⁰ Iamblichus then describes what he considers to be the philosophical basis of dream divination:

“Tote dh oun, eite noeron eite qeion tauton uparcon eite kai en ekateron idia kaq’ eauto on, to th~ zwh~ eido~ anegeiretai en hmin kai energei h pefuken. Epeidh oun o men nou~ ta onta qewrei, logou~ d’ h yuch twn gignomenwn en auth pantwn periecei, eikotw~ dh kata thn periecousan aitian tassomena en toi~ prohgomanoi~ autwn logoi~ progignwskei ta mellonta. Kai tauth~ d’ eti teleioteran poieitai manteian, hnika an toi~ oloi~, af’ wn apemerisqh, sunapth ta~ moira~ th~ zwh~ kai th~ noera~ energeia~: plhroutai gar apo twn olwn tote

**th~ pash~ eidhsew~, w~ epi to pleiston exikneisqai tai~ ennoiai~ tw
peri ton kosmon epiteloumenwn.”**

“At this time, then, this form of life, whether it is intellectual or divine, which is the same thing, or each one separately, it is aroused in us, and energises according to its own nature. Since the intellect, then, contemplates real beings, and the soul encompasses the principles of everything coming into existence, it is reasonable that it should know beforehand future things arranged according to their predominant principles, and the first cause which encompasses them. And it produces an even more perfect divination, surely, when it unites its apportioned lots of life and intellectual activity to the universals from which it had been separated. For it is then filled from the universals of total knowledge, so that, for the most part, it arrives at conceptions of what goes on in the cosmos.”⁶¹

Here Iamblichus argues that in sleep, the human body is detached from the chains of generation and, therefore, can potentially contemplate real beings. This idea is based on the Neoplatonist principle that “Like produces Like” since Iamblichus states that the soul encompasses the principles of everything coming into existence, and therefore has the potential to participate in an intellectual and divine form of life. Iamblichus’ statement is also clearly based on the Platonic Theory of Recollection, the theory that the human soul has seen the Forms, or divine principles, before it first descended into a body.⁶² Iamblichus infers that since the soul encompasses the principles of everything coming into existence, it is reasonable it should know beforehand future things arranged according to their first principles, and the first cause which encompasses them. This is based on the Neoplatonist concept that all things are contained in potentiality in that which causes them, a notion that is fundamental to the Neoplatonist metaphysical structure of the cosmos.⁶³ Thus, Iamblichus asserts, by knowing the principles, the soul can know future (and past and present) matters which arise from specific principles. It is clear then, that Iamblichus views god-sent dreams as a supra-rational phenomenon since he postulates a movement from a rational understanding of philosophical principles to a unified divine perspective which views these principles and their primary causes in their totality.

Iamblichus claims that the intellect produces an “even more perfect divination” when it unites its apportioned lots of life and intellectual activity to the universals: when it is filled with the universals of total knowledge, it can arrive at conceptions of what goes on in the cosmos. Iamblichus later adds:

**“ Ean de tou~ logou~ tw~n gignomenwn anagh pro~ tou~ aitiou~ autwn
qeou~, dunamin ap’ autwn proslambanei kai gnwsin analogizomenhn
osa te hn kai osa estai, qewrian te panto~ cronou poieitai kai tw~n
en tw cronw sumbainontwn episkopei ta erga, taxin te autwn kai
epimeleian kai epanorqwsin thn proshkousan metalagcanei:”**

“If, however, it refers accounts of things happening to their causes, that is, to the gods, it receives from them a power and knowledge embracing things that were and will be, and takes a view of all time, and surveys events happening in time, and it participates in their order, care and appropriate movement.”⁶⁴

This section shows the common purpose of inspired divination and theurgy: the *mantis* and the theurgist attempt to refer accounts of things happening to their first, highest causes, i.e. the gods. By doing this, the *mantis* and the theurgist can survey all events happening in time and thereby participate in their order, care and appropriate movement. The theurgist seeks to unite his soul to the highest cause, the gods, and thereby participates in the order and care of the universe, imitating the creative action and intellection of the Demiurge.⁶⁵

Astrology

Iamblichus’ view of astrology, like dreams, seems to fall within both categories of divination: inspired and inductive. Iamblichus discusses astrology in Book IX of the *De Mysteriis*, but does not specifically focus on it. Rather, it is discussed as a by-product of his exploration of the nature of the personal daemon. Porphyry had raised the challenge of whether one can discover their personal daemon through the master of the house; i.e. by discovering the ruler of the astrological birth chart. Through recognising one’s personal daemon, Porphyry suggests, one could neutralise the power of fate through performing sacrifices.⁶⁶ Iamblichus responds by disclosing the full nature of the personal daemon, and given Porphyry’s challenge, Iamblichus also has to deal with the bearing of astrology upon the discovery of the personal daemon. Porphyry had also questioned the art of “casting horoscopes” itself and whether one can discover the “master of the house” at all.⁶⁷

In response to Porphyry’s inquiry about astrology, Iamblichus clearly concurs that this science is true:

“...outw kai peri th~ maqhmatikh~ anteroumen, w~ uparcei men alhqh~, oi de planwmenoi peri auth~ ouden eidote~ tw~n alhqwn antilegousin. Sumbekhke de touto ou peri tauthn monhn, alla kai peri pasa~ ek qewn paradoqeisa~ anqrwpoi~ episthma~: proionto-gar aei tou cronou, pollw tw qnhtw kai pollaki~ anakerannumenai, exithlon to qeion hqo~ th~ gnwsew~ apergazontai. Enesti mentoi kai ei bracu touto, estin omw~ enarge~ ti teknhrion th~ alqeia-diaswzein. Epei kai th~ tw~n qeiwn periodwn anametrhsew~ en ofqalmoi~ esti katadhla ta shmeia, opotan ekleiyei~ hliou kai

selhnh~ kai parabola~ pro~ tou~ aplanei~ astera~ th~ selhnh~
promhnuh, kai sunomologoumenh fainetai th~ proshmasia th~ oyew~ h
peira. Ou mhn alla kai ai dia panto~ tou aiwno~ swzomenai tw
ouraniwn thrhsei~ para te Caldaioi~ kai par' hmin summarturosi
pro~ thn alhqeian th~ episthmh~ tauth~.”

“...so also in the case of astrology our response is that it itself is true, but those who are wrongly informed about it fall into contradictions, since they know nothing of the truth. This situation, after all, is not peculiar to it alone, but is true of all the sciences that have been handed down by the gods to men; for progressively, in the course of time, through the repeated admixture of much that is mortal, the divine character of the knowledge contained in them comes to be extinguished. It is nonetheless possible, even if to a small degree, to preserve some clear proof of the truth of this science. For the signs of the measuring function of the heavenly circuits are manifest to our eyes, when they announce the eclipses of the sun and moon and conjunctions of the moon with the fixed stars, and the experience of our sight is seen to confirm their prognostications. In addition, the observations of celestial phenomena preserved down the ages by both the Chaldaeans and ourselves [i.e. the Egyptians] testify to the truth of this science.”⁶⁸

Iamblichus notes as a proof of astrology that the Chaldeans and the Egyptians have preserved records of celestial phenomena and their confirmation of their prognostications down through the ages. However, he clearly sees one type of astrology as an inductive form of divination. This is apparent in his comments that those who misuse astrology fall into contradictions and have mixed much that is mortal into the divine character of astrological knowledge. In other words, they have transformed it into a *techne*, a human art, and have failed to preserve the divine *mantiké* in its pure form.

This distinction is also apparent in Iamblichus' discussion of the discovery of the personal daemon, which refers to two possible approaches. One approach is theurgic, summoning the daemon down from the higher causal principles, operating on a universal basis and transcending the realm of nature. The second approach is technical (**tecnikh~**): it operates on an individual level, following the dictates of nature, using horoscopes and resorting to the visible cycles of the generated realm.⁶⁹ Clearly then, Iamblichus considers a certain type of astrology to be an inductive art; his description recalls the characteristics of inductive divination that he has set out earlier. It is a technical and human skill, operating on an individual level in the realm of nature and generation. This is confirmed when Iamblichus refers to contemporary astrologers as, “those experts who operate within the bounds of nature.”⁷⁰ Indeed it is important to remember how astrology was practised in the time of Iamblichus: astrologers often used this type of divination in a very predictive way based on a mechanical and deterministic view of the world, to predict everyday type of events in the realm of generation rather

than attempting to fit the symbols of the stars into any type of metaphysical context. For example, astrology was often used to predict the deaths of emperors, and Roman emperors themselves used astrology to discover potential rivals so that they could destroy them.⁷¹ Astrologers at this time were often strongly fatalistic, seeing the stars as causes rather than as signs or indicators.⁷² The Neoplatonist philosopher Plotinus wrote a treatise entitled *On Whether the Stars are Causes*, in which he criticised astrologers for making the planets causes of temperaments, events and circumstances rather than signs of such phenomena.⁷³ It is important to realise here that Iamblichus is not attacking astrology itself, but rather the ultimate purpose of all inductive types of divination, which are technical, human arts concerned with the world of generation. For the theurgist, only inspired, theurgic types of divination are ultimately useful since these are the types of practices which conjoin and connect our soul with the gods.

Iamblichus clearly allows that astrologers clearly can discover the ‘master of the house’ but that this type of predictive, technical astrology is not the best means for the discovery of the personal daemon. He suggests that there is a more sacred, theurgic type of astrology which can be used far more effectively and accurately to discover the true nature and essence of the personal daemon:

“...parwmen, w~ meizon ergon ep’ amfotera ta sumbainonta skeywmeqa: eite gar dunaton euren ton oikodespothn th~ genesew~, esti dhpou kai o ap’ autou didomeno~ daimwn gnwrmo~: eite akatalhpto~ estin, hmei~ men auton agnooumen kata ge thn upoqesin tauthn, ouden de htton o te oikodespoth~ esti kai o ap’ autou didomeno~ daimwn. Ti oun kwluei dia geneqlialogia~ men duskolon auton einai ei~ euresin, dia th~ iera~ de manteia~ h qeourgia~ euporian einai pollhn ei~ episthmhn; olw~ de oude apo tou oikodespotou monou endidotai, alla pollai eisin arcai autou kaqolikwterai h kata ton oikodespothn. Eti de h toiauth meqodo~ teknikhn tina eisagei kai anqrwpinhn thn peri ton idion daimona pragmateian:”

“...let us consider, as a more important question, what the consequences might be in each of these two cases: if it is possible to identify the master of the house of birth, then the daemon which is granted by this is also knowable; if on the other hand it is beyond our grasp, then we on this hypothesis are ignorant of it, but nonetheless there is such a thing as the master of the house and likewise the daemon granted by it. What is there, then, to prevent this daemon being difficult to discover by means of the casting of nativities, but that sacred divination offer great facilities for its identification? In any case, it is not only the master of the house that imparts this information; there are many principles more universal than the master of the house. Furthermore, such a method of procedure introduces a technical and human perspective in to the enquiry about the personal daemon.”⁷⁴

While Iamblichus does not deny that it is possible to discover the personal daemon by using technical, astrological information, he argues that inspired divination and theurgic ritual offer a more perfect knowledge of the personal daemon.

How does Iamblichus see astrology working as a type of inspired, sacred divination which operates on a theurgic level, then? The place of astrology as inspired divination within theurgic ritual makes sense if we consider it in the light of some of the most central ideas about theurgy. In X.2 Iamblichus states that, “truth co-exists in its essence with the gods, and not merely in harmony with them, based as it is in the intelligible realm.”⁷⁵ Theurgic ritual uses symbols as tools for contemplation and realisation and as a reminder to the theurgist that all things are reflections of, and illuminated by, the divine as they manifest in each successive level of reality. Iamblichus describes the signs of the zodiac and the stars and all things in the heavens as symbols of the divine:

“ Epei de kai pan morion tou ouranou kai pan zwdion kai pasa tou ouranou fora kai pa~ crono~, kaq’ on kineitai o kosmo~, kai panta ta en toi~ oloi~ decontai apo tou hliou...paristhsi kai tauta~ o sumboliko~ tropo~ th~ shmasia~...”

“Since, then, every portion of the heavens, every sign of the zodiac, all the heavenly motions, and all time, according to which the cosmos is moved, and all things in the universe receive the potencies emanating from the sun...the symbolic method of signification represents these as well...”⁷⁶

If astrology is viewed as a system of mapping symbols of the divine, then the role of astrology as inspired divination in theurgic ritual becomes clearer. This is based on a worldview where the cosmos is seen as a living, ensouled unity, with each level of reality reflecting and moving in accordance with divine principles, as Iamblichus states:

“Ei de dei kai touto eipein, to ouranion swma pro~ authn thn aswmaton ousian tw n qewn esti suggenestaton...mimeitai d’ autwn kai thn tautothta th kata tauta kai wsautw~ kai pro~ tauta kai kaq’ ena logon kai mian taxin aidw kinhsai, kai thn qeian zwhn th sumfutw toi~ aiqerioi~ swmasi zwh.”

“It must also be remarked that heavenly body [i.e. the corporeal substance of the heavenly bodies] is closely akin to the incorporeal essence of the gods...It is also imitates their identity by its eternal movement according to the same principles, directed towards the same end and according to a single rationale and order, and their divine life by its life that is connate with the aetherial bodies.”⁷⁷

By contemplating the signs of the zodiac and the celestial phenomena in horoscopes as symbols and reflections of the gods, the theurgist can fully receive and recognise the divine patterns within him or herself. Gregory Shaw, who refers to this type of astrology as “astral theurgy,” has discussed the way in which this type of astrology can help the soul recognise when it is participating in the gods in an unbalanced way.⁷⁸ He cites Iamblichus’ example of Saturn and Mars,⁷⁹ pointing out that the gods are blameless and collectively establish the perfection of the cosmos, yet because we have not learned to receive them, in our anger we might be described as struggling with Mars, or in our rigidity suffering from the weight of Saturn. Iamblichus criticises contemporary astrologers for viewing planets such as these, which symbolise the gods, as maleficent, indicating that this is one way in which astrology has become an inductive or ‘human’ art since it has in this sense fallen away from the true nature of divinity. He address Porphyry as follows:

**“h d’ exh~ epizthsi~ h sh diaporei, pw~ autwn oi men eisin
agaqopoioi, oi de kakopoioi. Eilhptai men oun apo tw
geneqlialogwn auth h doxa, panth de diamartanei tou onto~. Agaqui
te gar eisin apante~ kai agaqn aitioi wsautw~, pro~ en te agaqn
apobleponte~ eneidw~ periagontai kata monon to kalon kai agaqn.”**

“In your next question, you ask, “How is it that some of them are beneficent, and others maleficent?”” This belief is derived from the casters of horoscopes, and is completely at odds with reality. For in fact all alike are good and causes of good, and looking towards one single good they direct themselves unitarily to the Beautiful and Good alone.”⁸⁰

Theurgists understand the true nature of reality, and thus realise that any seemingly maleficent influences indicate our lack of proper receptivity which prevents us from fully participating in these divine energies rather than indicating the nature of the gods themselves. Therefore, theurgists using theurgical astrology would create a receptivity appropriate to these divinities so that their emanations might be fully received. Theurgic ritual involves the gathering of specific stones, plants or animals at specific times, since these objects and times were thought to be associated with the gods whose presence was invoked.⁸¹ There is also no doubt that theurgic rituals themselves were carried out at specific times calculated astrologically as sacred to a particular deity or set of deities. But, more fundamentally for the theurgist, astrology encompasses the entire circuit of the heavens which reflects the divine procession through which, according to Plato, we travelled with the gods before descending for the first time into the world of generation.⁸²

Iamblichus is arguing that astrology should not be used in a technical and human manner to preoccupy us with the lowest realms of generation; rather, it

should be used to return our focus to the divine, since symbols, manifest in the realm of generation, are full of gods. Iamblichus constantly asserts the need to contemplate the divine origin of such symbols in order to realise our own divine origin, and thus conjoin our soul with the gods. According to Iamblichus, rather than turning one away from the material world, such a theurgical process helps one to fully realise the true beauty of the world, since one views it as illuminated by and filled with the emanations of divinity.

Conclusion

To conclude, Iamblichus views oracles, dreams and astrology, in their highest and most perfect manifestations, as inspiration and illumination from the gods, which operate on a supra-rational level. For Iamblichus, such inspired modes of divination can bestow eternal and divine knowledge, connecting our soul with the divine. In this way, Iamblichus' description of these types of inspired divination enhance his exploration of theurgy in the *De Mysteriis*, clarifying the role of inspired divination within theurgic ritual. The pattern established here for the primacy of inspired divination over inductive divination could thus be viewed as a reflection of Iamblichus' wider claim of the superiority of theurgy above a merely rational, discursive philosophy.⁸³

At the very beginning of his work, Iamblichus states that he will provide explanations in theurgical terms for those topics dealing with theurgy.⁸⁴ As a final thought, I would like to suggest that Book III, which deals with divination, could itself be viewed as a ritual, a textual *symbolon* and a sacred, ritualistic invocation of the divine reality which it describes.⁸⁵ The structure of Book III reflects and symbolises the process of procession and illumination from the divine realm to the mortal realm and the reversion to the divine from the mortal world. Iamblichus opens Book III with a discussion of the divine principles of divination, then he discusses the varieties of divination through which the gods illuminate the world of generation, starting with the inspired types of divination which are closest to the gods and moving on to the inductive types which are more human. At the end of the book he reverts to discussing the divine principles of true *mantiké*, which lead the theurgist to the gods. In this way, Iamblichus reflects the cycle of procession and reversion, and symbolises and reflects the entire metaphysical structure of the cosmos in his narrative. Book III traverses the metaphysical and psychic landscape of ascent and descent.⁸⁶ I would like to suggest that such a structure may have been intended as an initiatory tool for the kind of philosophical contemplation which can lead to theurgical visions. In this sense, in the way that it symbolises and reflects the hierarchical levels of reality of the cosmos, Iamblichus' text could itself be viewed as a ritual.

¹ Cf. Iamblichus *De Mysteriis* I.12 (41.3-42.13); I.21 (65.2-11); V.21-22; V.23 (232.1-233.13), trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003). All quotations and translations are from this edition, unless otherwise stated. Henceforth, this work will be cited as *DM*. For an insightful and thorough account of Iamblichean theurgy, cf. Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995). Cf. also Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 131-153; Gregory Shaw, "Divination in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus," in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed. Robert M. Berchman, 231-233 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998); Gregory Shaw, "Containing Ecstasy: The Strategies of Iamblichean Theurgy," *Dionysius* 221 (2003), 53-88; Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 115-130; Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 77-133; Sarah Iles Johnston, "Rising to the Occasion: Theurgic Ascent in its Cultural Milieu," in *Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, ed. P. Schafer and H.G. Kippenburg, 165-194 (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of their Texts* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 204-226.

² Marsilio Ficino coined the modern title, *De mysteriis Aegyptiorum, Chaldaeorum, Assyriorum*. The original title of this work was, *The Reply of the Master Abamon to the Letter of Porphyry to Anebo, and the Solutions to the Questions it Contains*. Cf. Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: De Mysteriis*, ed. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, xlviii (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Peter T. Struck, "Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Book 1," in *Religions of Late Antiquity in Practice*, ed. R. Valantasis, 489 (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000).

³ Scholars are in general agreement that the *De Mysteriis* was written within this specific period. For its assignation to c.300 AD see H.D. Saffrey, "Abammon, Pseudonyme de Jamblique," in *Philomathes: Studies and Essays in the Humanities in Memory of Philip Merlan*, ed. R.B. Palmer and R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, 231-233 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff 1971); Polymnia Athanassiadi, "Dreams, Theurgy and Freelance Divination: The Testimony of Iamblichus," *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 116, n.13. For a suggestion of 280 AD see John Dillon, introduction to *Iamblichi Chalcidensis In Platonis Dialogos Commentarium Fragmenta*, ed. and trans. John Dillon, 13, 18 (1973). Cf. Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: De Mysteriis*, ed. and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, xxvii (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).

⁴ Cf. Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, eds and trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, xxxi-xxxvii (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), for a comprehensive discussion on the pseudonym Abammon.

⁵ Iamblichus *DM* III.1 (99.9-10).

⁶ Iamblichus *DM* III.1 (100.6-7).

⁷ Iamblichus *DM* III.1 (100.8-9; 100.12-101.3).

⁸ Cf. Iamblichus *DM* III.1 (100.14-101.2); III.4 (109.10-110.3).

⁹ Iamblichus *DM* III.15 (135.1-2).

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- ¹⁰ Iamblichus *DM* III.16 (138.1 – 5)
- ¹¹ Iamblichus *DM* III.15 (135.6 – 136.4)
- ¹² For a discussion of the way in which Iamblichus envisages the causation of inspired and inductive modes of divination, see my forthcoming paper, “Consulting the Oracle: The Mantic Art and its Causation in Iamblichus’ *De Mysteriis*,” in *International Society of Neoplatonic Studies Conference Anthology*, ed. John Finamore and Robert M. Berchman, 73-88 (New Orleans: University Press of the South, forthcoming 2007).
- ¹³ Iamblichus *DM* VI.4 (244.10 - 245.7).
- ¹⁴ Iamblichus *DM* X.4 (289.3 – 5).
- ¹⁵ Cf. Zeke Mazur, “*Unio Magica*: Part II: Plotinus, Theurgy, and the Question of Ritual,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004), 42-43, 39, who states: “These exiguous testimonia have frequently given scholars the impression that the Neoplatonists already imagined a fundamental contrast between theurgy and ‘real’ philosophy, a contrast often anachronistically mapped onto the modern antinomy between rationality and ritual.”
- ¹⁶ Iamblichus *DM* I.7 (21.14-22.4).
- ¹⁷ Iamblichus *DM* I.7 (21.7-10).
- ¹⁸ Iamblichus *DM* I.7 (22.9-11).
- ¹⁹ Iamblichus *DM* I.12 (41.10-13).
- ²⁰ Cf. John Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis: In Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden: Brill, 1973), 14-17. Cf. also John Dillon, “Iamblichus of Chalcis,” *ANRW* II.36.2 (1987), 868-869.
- ²¹ Cf. Edward J. Watts, *City and School in Late Antique Athens and Alexandria*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 87-89: “This new curriculum [i.e. that of Iamblichean Neoplatonism] emphasised the study of the divine in its everyday courses and, at its highest level, functioned as a sort of pagan religious training.”; Gregory Shaw, “Divination in the Neoplatonism of Iamblichus,” in *Mediators of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams and Theurgy in Mediterranean Antiquity*, ed. Robert M. Berchman, 229 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).
- ²² Eunapius *Lives of the Sophists and Philosophers* 475, trans. Wilmer Cave Wright (Loeb Classical Library, 1922). Cf. Edward J. Watts, *Ibid*, 88-89.
- ²³ Edward J. Watts, *Ibid*, 92-93.
- ²⁴ Marinus *Life of Proclus* 18-19, trans. Mark Edwards (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).
- ²⁵ Cf. Edward J. Watts, *Ibid*, 5-6, who states that: “The value of *paideia* [i.e. education] was widely recognized in ancient society. Indeed, there was a belief, common to men throughout the ancient world, that the educated man was one whose soul progressed ‘towards excellence and the condition proper to humanity’ while his uneducated contemporaries were less rational, less refined, and less humane.”
- ²⁶ Chaldean Oracles, Fragment 107, trans. Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text Translation and Commentary*, (Leiden: Brill, 1989). Cf. also the comments of Emma C. Clarke in *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, 157, n.210 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
- ²⁷ Cf. A.H. Armstrong, “Iamblichus and Egypt,” *Les Etudes Philosophiques* 2-3 (1987), 179, who observes that Iamblichus’ work contains a great deal on traditional observances of Hellenic public worship.

- ²⁸ Plato *Phaedrus* 244d2-6, trans. H.N. Fowler (Vol I, Loeb Classical Library, 1982); Cicero *De Divinatione* II.XI.26-27; I.VI.11, trans. W.A. Falconer (Loeb Classical Library, 1923): "There are two kinds of divination: the first is dependent on art, the other on nature"; Cf. also I.XXXIII.72; Georg Luck, *Arcana Mundi: Magic and the Occult in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1985), 231, 271.
- ²⁹ Plato *Phaedrus* 244d2-6, trans. H.N. Fowler (Vol I, Loeb Classical Library, 1982).
- ³⁰ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (123.10 – 11).
- ³¹ Anne Sheppard, "Iamblichus on Inspiration: *De Mysteriis* 3.4-8," in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark, 140 (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).
- ³² Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (124.13 – 125.6)
- ³³ Cf. Iamblichus *DM* III.12 (129.1 –4): "...the divinatory power of the gods is bounded by nothing divisible, neither by place, nor by a divisible human body, nor by a soul contained in any single form of divisible entities, **but being separate by itself and indivisible, it is wholly present everywhere to those able to share in it.**" [my bold]. Cf. also III.19 (146.7 –10). Cf. John Finamore, "Iamblichus on Light and the Transparent," in *The Divine Iamblichus: Philosopher and Man of Gods*, ed. H.J. Blumenthal and E.G. Clark, 59 (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).
- ³⁴ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (125.6 – 126.3).
- ³⁵ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (125.7-10). For the principle that, "like produces like," cf. *DM* III.20 (148.4-9); V.20 (227.13-228.2).
- ³⁶ Cf. Iamblichus *DM* III.9 (120.2-10), which discusses the different types of ecstasy and rituals to Cybele, Sabazios and the Korybantes, which included music to bring the initiate to a state of divine inspiration. Iamblichus explains the divine using the human being as an instrument with reference to the human soul's recollection of the divine harmony, a clear echo of Plato's theory of recollection. Cf. also Iamblichus' discussion of dreams at III.3 (106.11-14).
- ³⁷ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (125.11-126.1).
- ³⁸ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (126.4 – 127.3).
- ³⁹ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (127.4-13).
- ⁴⁰ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (127.127.13-128.1).
- ⁴¹ Cf. Iamblichus *DM* III.3 (108.6-8); Sarah Iles Johnston, *Religions of the Ancient World: a guide* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), 385.
- ⁴² Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (102.12-103.2).
- ⁴³ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (103.2-5).
- ⁴⁴ Homer *Odyssey* 19.560-67, trans. A.T. Murray (Loeb Classical Library, 1919), reprinted: 2nd edn: 2003; Virgil *Aeneid* 6.893-896, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (Vol I, Loeb Classical Library, 1978); Cf. Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, 121, n.155 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
- ⁴⁵ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (103.2 – 5).
- ⁴⁶ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (103.5 – 6).
- ⁴⁷ Iamblichus *DM* III.15 (135.1 – 2). Cf. also III.15 (135.9 – 10).
- ⁴⁸ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (103.7).
- ⁴⁹ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (103.8-104.1).

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- ⁵⁰ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (104.1 – 2).
- ⁵¹ Cf. Chaldean Oracles, Fragments 37; 146; H. Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy: Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the later Roman Empire*, ed. M. Tardieu: 3rd edn: 1978, 19, n.46 (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1956); Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, 141, n.188 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
- ⁵² Chaldean Oracles, Fragment 37.
- ⁵³ Sarah Iles Johnston, *Hekate Soteira: A Study of Hekate's Roles in the Chaldean Oracles and Related Literature*, 101, n.31, 104, 108 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).
- ⁵⁴ Iamblichus *On the Pythagorean Life* 15.65.3, trans. Gillian Clark (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1989); Cf. Emma C. Clarke, introduction to *Iamblichus: On the Mysteries*, trans. Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell, 141, n.188 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003).
- ⁵⁵ Iamblichus *DM* III.9 (118.13 – 119.3).
- ⁵⁶ Iamblichus *DM* III.2 (104.4 – 10).
- ⁵⁷ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (126.1-3).
- ⁵⁸ Cf. Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (126.4 – 11).
- ⁵⁹ Iamblichus *DM* III.11 (127.5).
- ⁶⁰ Iamblichus *DM* III.3 (106.3-9).
- ⁶¹ Iamblichus *DM* III.3 (106.9 – 107.4).
- ⁶² Plato *Phaedrus* 250b5-251a7.
- ⁶³ Proclus *Elements of Theology* Proposition 18: “Everything which by its existence bestows a character on others itself primitively possesses that character which it communicates to its recipients.” Trans. E.R. Dodds (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1933).
- ⁶⁴ Iamblichus *DM* III.3 (107.11 – 108.3).
- ⁶⁵ Gregory Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 54), describes “theurgy as demiurgy.”
- ⁶⁶ Iamblichus *DM* IX.3 (275.1-3)
- ⁶⁷ Iamblichus *DM* IX.2 (274.3–7)
- ⁶⁸ Iamblichus *DM* IX.4 (277.9 - 278.8).
- ⁶⁹ Iamblichus *DM* IX.1 (273.2-9).
- ⁷⁰ Iamblichus *DM* IX.2 (273.11-274.1).
- ⁷¹ Cf. Tamsyn Barton, *Ancient Astrology*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 41-49. The emperor Domitian destroys the foremost men to blockade any future rivalry. For Tiberius employing astrologers to root out men whose nativities reveal an imperial future, see Juvenal, *Satires*, 10.94; Dio Cassius, 57.19.3-4.
- ⁷² Cf. Tamsyn Barton, *Ibid*, 73.
- ⁷³ Plotinus, *Enneads*, 2.3.(52), trans. A.H. Armstrong (Vol II, Loeb Classical Library, 1966). Although note the reservations of Marilyn Lawrence, “Who Thought the Stars are Causes? The astrological doctrine criticized by Plotinus,” in *International Society of Neoplatonic Studies Conference Anthology*, ed John Finamore and Robert M. Berchman, 17-32 (New Orleans: University Press of the South, forthcoming 2007) who argues that Plotinus misunderstood contemporary astrological technical vocabulary which he analysed too literally, interpreting this system as a chain of causality rather than as a method of interpretation

⁷⁴ Iamblichus *DM* IX.5 (279.5-15).

⁷⁵ Iamblichus *DM* X.2 (287.3-4).

⁷⁶ Iamblichus *DM* VII.3 (253.2-6).

⁷⁷ Iamblichus *DM* I.17 (51.9-10; 51.13 – 52.3).

⁷⁸ Gregory Shaw, “Astrology as Divination: Iamblichean theory and its contemporary practice,” in *International Society of Neoplatonic Studies Conference Anthology*, ed. John Finamore and Robert M. Berchman, 89-102 (New Orleans: University Press of the South, forthcoming 2007).

⁷⁹ Iamblichus *DM* I.18 (55.5-10).

⁸⁰ Iamblichus *DM* I.18 (52.13 – 53.4).

⁸¹ Gregory Shaw, “Astrology as Divination: Iamblichean theory and its contemporary practice,” in *International Society of Neoplatonic Studies Conference Anthology*, ed. John Finamore and Robert M. Berchman, 89-102 (New Orleans: University Press of the South, forthcoming 2007).

⁸² Plato, *Phaedrus*, 254b.

⁸³ For a view of philosophy culminating in theurgy, see Proclus, *Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides*, 74k, trans. Glen R. Morrow and John M. Dillon (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987): “These dialectical operations are the preparation for the strain towards the One, but are not themselves the strain.”

⁸⁴ Iamblichus *DM* I.2 (7.3-5).

⁸⁵ This idea depends upon the view that language itself can be a *symbolon*. Cf. Iamblichus *DM* V.15, where a kind of sacrifice that is wholly immaterial is mentioned. Cf. also Sara Rappe, *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 167-179, who suggests that Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* presents itself as a theurgic, textual *symbolon* with the status of a ritual invocation, since it enumerates the successive orders of gods and metaphysical grades of reality. She states that, “To read the text as an ideal reader is to take part in a theurgic ritual.” (p.172).

⁸⁶ I owe this phrase to Sara Rappe, *Ibid*, 179, who states: “As if it were a theurgic rite, combining all the divine series in order to re-create a sacralized cosmos, the *Platonic Theology* divulges a kind of cosmic prehistory in which the psychic landscape, the geography of ascent and descent, is traversed in detail.”