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A Platonic *Deuteronekuia*:

Proclus' Homeric Account of *Phaedo*'s Evil Souls.

In the 10th chapter of the 6th essay of his commentary in Plato's *Republic*, Proclus deals with Plato's criticism of Homer's descriptions of Hades (*Resp.* 386a-387d) and attempts to show that, transcending apparent disagreements, Homer and Plato have the same view of the afterlife.

Among the Homeric passages quoted by Plato, Proclus focuses his attention on the beginning of the 24th book of the *Odyssey* (XXIV, 1-6), the so-called *Deuteronekuia*. In those six verses Homer describes the journey of the suitors' souls down to Hades: they are led by Hermes who appears here for the first time as *psychopompos*. Homer compares their cry to the cry of a flight of bats who fly away after their chain has been broken (they hang upside down, linked one to another in a 'wondrous cave').

The aim of my paper will be to explore how Proclus interprets these verses as a poetic rendering of Plato's account of the evil souls in *Phaed.* 81b-e. In that passage Plato describes the different destiny of the souls after death: those which have practiced philosophy and carried out an honest and pure life leave earth as pure spirits in the 'world of ideas', their lost motherland; on the contrary, the souls which have rejected philosophy and have lived only for bodily and material pleasures are doomed to retain 'the bodily' (which is heavy, loud, earthly and visible) and to wander around graves like ghosts, in desperate search of another body in which to incarnate themselves again.

Proclus reads this passage through his theory of the vehicle (*ochema*), maintaining that a life bound to material pleasures weigh down the soul's vehicle, which becomes shadowlike, material, 'charged from behind', drawing a great mass of material substance. This kind of evil souls remain still attached to semi-material vehicles in Hades.

In particular I shall analyze two very interesting passages (*in Remp.* I, 120 3-10; 121 10-24 Kroll) in which Proclus, identifying the souls of the suitors with the aforementioned Platonic/Procline impure souls, provides several metaphorical links between the latter and the Homeric confused *eidola* represented as bats.