Proclus of Lycia (412–485) was one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity, producing the most systematic version of late Neoplatonic thought. He exercised enormous influence on Byzantine, Medieval, Renaissance and German Classical philosophy, ranking among the top five of ancient philosophers in terms of the number of preserved works. Despite this he is rarely studied now, the enormous intricacy of his system making the reading of his treatises difficult for beginners. This book provides the first comprehensive introduction to all the basic areas of Proclus’ thought. It carefully guides the reader through his metaphysics, theology, epistemology, and theory of evil, as well as his sophisticated philosophy of religion. It also sets Proclus in the historical, social and religious context of late antiquity, offering a synthetic account that will appeal to historians and students of ancient religion.

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PROCLUS

An Introduction

RADEK CHLUP
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Acknowledgements

The present work could not have been written without the help of my friends, colleagues and institutions. The first impulse which eventually led to the production of this book was my year-long research stay in 1998/99 at The Dublin Centre for the Study of the Platonic Tradition, founded at Trinity College by Professor John Dillon. Under his auspices I organized a regular reading of Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, which for the first time gave me the opportunity to summarize Proclus’ system and search for ways to introduce it to beginners. Ten years later Professor Dillon helped me to find a publisher for the present book, and generously offered to provide comments on about half of the manuscript as well as to help me improve my English idiom.

It was not until 2006, though, that I actually returned to Proclus and started to write this book. Originally, it was written in Czech as an introduction to my translation of Proclus’ essay *On the Objections of Plato against Homer and the Art of Poetry*, published in Prague in 2009. Already in 2007, however, my good old friend Christoph Helmig (one of the original participants in my Dublin Proclus seminar) persuaded me to prepare an expanded English version as well. Christoph supported me throughout: not only did he give me excellent comments on several chapters (particularly on my treatment of Proclus’ epistemology), but he also scanned for me numerous articles unavailable in my country.

The preliminary Czech version of the book was read carefully by several of my Prague friends. Particularly helpful were the comments provided by Matyáš Havrda (who was the editor of the Czech book), Vojtěch Hladký (who spent hours discussing various issues with me, and as an expert on Michel Foucault inspired me to write the experimental account that is now in chapter 9) and Filip Karfík (whose sharp criticism helped me to completely reorganize the book in its English version).

Portions of the manuscript were read by various other international scholars: Dirk Baltzly commented on my account of evil and ethics, Edward
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## Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

**Editions and Translations of Proclus’ Texts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition/Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>De dec. dub., De prov., De mal.</td>
<td><em>Procli Diádoci tria opuscula (De providentia, libertate, malo)</em>, latine Guilelmo de Moerbeke vertente et græce ex Isaacii Sebastocratoris aliorumque scriptis collecta, [editit Helmut Boese], Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1960 [I refer to treatise, chapter and line].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De sacr.</td>
<td><em>Catalogue des manuscrits alchimiques grecs</em>, publié sous la direction de Joseph Bidez . . . [et al.], tome VI, Bruxelles: Lamertin, 1928, s. 148–51 [I refer to page and line].</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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* I only list those editions and English translations which I have used. A complete list of editions and translations is available at [http://www.hiw.kuleuven.be/dwmc/plato/proclus/proclused.html](http://www.hiw.kuleuven.be/dwmc/plato/proclus/proclused.html).
Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

Oxford: Clarendon, 1963 (1933') [I refer to proposition and line within it].

Hymni

Proclus' Hymns: Essays, Translations, Commentary, by R. M. van den Berg, Leiden: Brill, 2001 [I refer to the number of hymn and line within it].

In Alc.

Proclus: Commentary on the First Alcibiades of Plato, critical text and indices by L. G. Westerink, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954 [I refer to section and line within it].


In Crat.

Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria, edicit Georgius Pasquali, Leipzig: Teubner, 1908 [I refer to section, followed by page and line].


In Eucl.

Procli Diadochi in primum Euclidis elementorum librum commentarii, ex recognitione Godofredi Friedlein, Leipzig: Teubner, 1873 [I refer to page and line].


In Parm.


In Remp.


In Tim.

Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum commentaria, edidit Ernestus Diehl, vols. i–iii, Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–6 [I refer to volume, page and line].

Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

**PT**  

## Editions of Works by Other Ancient Philosophers

**Alcinous**  

**Ammonius**  
*In De int.* – *In Aristotelis librum de interpretatione commentarius*, edidit A. Busse, (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 4.3), Berlin: Reimer, 1897 [I refer to page and line].

**Atticus**  

**Calcidius**  
*In Tim.* – *Timaeus a Calcidio translatus commentario instructus*, (Plato Latinus 4), London, Warburg Institute, 1962 [I refer to section].

**Chrysippus**  

**Corp. Herm.**  

**Damascius**  
*De princ.* – *Dubitationes et solutiones de primis principiis*, ed. C. É. Ruelle, vols. 1–2, Paris: Klincksieck, 1889 [I refer to volume, page and line].


**Hist. phil.** – *The Philosophical History*, text with translation and notes by Polymnia Athanassiadi, Athens: Apamea Cultural Association, 1999 [I refer to fragment numbers].

**Dionysius**  

**Hermias**  
*In Phaedr.* – *In Platonis Phaedrum scholia*, edidit et apparatu critico ornavit P. Couvreur, Paris: Bouillon, 1901 [I refer to page and line].

**Chald. Or.**  
*Oracles Chaldaiques: A vec un choix de commentaires anciens*, texte établi et traduit par Édouard des Places, troisième tirage revu et corrigé par A. Segonds, Paris: Belles Lettres, 19963 [I refer to fragment numbers].
Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

Iamblichus

De anima – Iamblichus, *De anima*, text, translation, and commentary by John F. Finamore and John M. Dillon, Leiden: Brill, 2002 [I refer to fragment numbers].

De com. math. – Iambliche de communi mathematica scientia liber, ed. U. Klein (post N. Festa), Leipzig: Teubner, 1891 [I refer to section and line].


Julian


Marinus


Nemesius


Numenius


Olympiodorus

In Gorg. – Olympiodori in Platonis Gorgiam commentaria, ed. L. G. Westerink, Leipzig: Teubner, 1970 [I refer to section and line].


Plotinus


Porphyry

De abst. – *De l’abstinence*, texte établi, traduit et annoté par Jean Bouffartigue (tome 1–11) et par Michel Patillon et Alain Ph. Segonds (tome 111), tome 1–111, Paris: Les Belles Lettres,
Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

1977, 1979, 1995 [I refer to book, chapter and paragraph].

De regre, – De regressu animae in Joseph Bidez, Vie de Porphyre, le philosophe néo-platonicien, avec les fragments des traités Peri agalmaton et De regressu animae, Leipzig: Teubner, 1913 [I refer to fragment numbers].

Sent. – Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes, ed. E. Lamberz, Leipzig: Teubner, 1975 [I refer to chapter, followed by page and line].


Sallustius


Simplicius

In Cat. – In Aristotelis categorias commentarium, edidit K. Kalbfleisch, (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 8), Berlin: Reimer, 1907 [I refer to page and line].

Ps.-Simplicius

In De an. – In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria, ed. M. Hayduck, (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 11), Berlin: Reimer, 1882 [I refer to page and line].

Syrianus:

In Aristotelis metaphysica commentaria, edidit W. Kroll, (Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca 6.1), Berlin: Reimer, 1902 [I refer to page and line].

ABBREVIATIONS OF WORKS WITH STANDARD PAGINATION

Aristotle

De an. = De anima
Eth. Nic. = Ethica Nicomachea
Met. = Metaphysica
Phys. = Physica
Pol. = Politica

Plato

Alc. I = Alcibiades I
Apol. = Apologia Socratis
Gorg. = Gorgias
Phd. = Phaedo
Phdr. = Phaedrus
Phlb. = Philebus
Pol. = Politicus
Resp. = Respublica
Editions and abbreviations of ancient works

Symp. = Symposium
Tht. = Theaetetus
Tim. = Timaeus

Plutarch
De an. procr. = De animae procreatione
De Iside = De Iside et Osiride
De defectu = De defectu oraculorum
Note on translations used

Not being a native speaker, I have tried to use existing English translations of Neoplatonic works whenever possible. For Proclus’ *Elements of Theology*, I have used the translation by E. R. Dodds; for his *Parmenides Commentary* the translation by G. Morrow and J. Dillon (which I have adjusted to the new edition of *Steel*); for the *Cratylus Commentary* the translation by B. Duvick; for the *Euclid Commentary* the translation by G. Morrow; for *On the Existence of Evils* the translation by J. Opsomer and C. Steel; for *On Providence* the translation by C. Steel; for the *Alcibiades Commentary* the translation by W. O’Neill; for *De sacrificio* the translation by B. Copenhaver. For the *Timaeus Commentary* I have used the new Cambridge University Press translation by D. Runia and M. Share, but only for book ii (vol. 1 205–458 in the edition of Diehl). Translations from all other Proclus’ works are mine. As for other authors, for Marinus’ *Life of Proclus* I have used the translation by M. Edwards, for Iamblichus’ *On the Mysteries* the translation by E. Clarke, J. Dillon and J. Hershbell, for Porphyry’s *On Abstinence* the translation by G. Clark, and for Plotinus (as well as for Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*) the translation by A. H. Armstrong.

While using these translations, however, I have not hesitated to modify them whenever I have judged this to be necessary for the sake of clarity or precision. In some cases, these modifications are actually quite radical (particularly with Dodds’s slightly dated translation of the *Elements*). It follows that the final responsibility for the accuracy and intelligibility of all the translations is mine.