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978-0-521-84658-5 - Proclus: Commentary on Plato's *Timaeus*: Volume V: Book 4:

Proclus on Time and the Stars

Translated with an Introduction and Notes by Dirk Baltzly

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## PROCLUS

### *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*

Proclus' Commentary on the dialogue *Timaeus* by Plato (d. 347 BC), written in the fifth century AD, is arguably the most important commentary on a text of Plato, offering unparalleled insights into eight centuries of Platonic interpretation. It has had an enormous influence on subsequent Plato scholarship. This edition nevertheless offers the first new English translation of the work for nearly two centuries, building on significant recent advances in scholarship on Neoplatonic commentators. It will provide an invaluable record of early interpretations of Plato's dialogue, while also presenting Proclus' own views on the meaning and significance of Platonic philosophy. The present volume, the fifth in the edition, presents Proclus' Commentary on the *Timaeus*, dealing with Proclus' account of static and flowing time – an aspect of Neoplatonic metaphysics that has already attracted significant scholarly attention. In this volume we see Proclus situating Plato's account of the motions of the stars and planets in relation to the astronomical theories of his day. The volume includes a substantial introduction, as well as notes that will shed new light on the text.

Dirk Baltzly is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Tasmania and Adjunct Research Professor at Monash University. His recent publications include *Reading Plato in Antiquity* (co-edited with Harold Tarrant, 2006); *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. III* (Cambridge, 2006); and *Proclus: Commentary on Plato's Timaeus, vol. IV* (Cambridge, 2009).

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*Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*

VOLUME V

Book 4: Proclus on Time  
and the Stars

TRANSLATED WITH AN  
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

DIRK BALTZLY

*University of Tasmania and Monash University*



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*Richard Charles Baltzly and Linda Knight Baltzly*

ἐσθλῶν μὲν γὰρ ἅπ' ἐσθλὰ μαθήσεαι

(Theognis, *Eleg.* 1.35)

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## Acknowledgements

The project to translate Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* received initial financial support from the Australian Research Council in the form of a Discovery grant spanning the period 1999–2004. The translation team supported by this grant included Harold Tarrant (Vols. I and VI), David Runia and Michael Share (Vol. II) and Dirk Baltzly (Vols. III, IV and V).

Support for my work on this volume in particular has been provided by the USA's National Endowment for the Humanities through a fellowship at Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study in the northern hemisphere academic year 2010–11. I am enormously grateful to the NEH for this support. As for the Institute for Advanced Study, words fail me. If there is a heaven for scholars, it looks very much like the Institute. Heinrich von Staden is, as everyone knows, the soul of kindness. My time at IAS was also shared with Stephen Menn, from whom I learned a great deal. Marian Zelazny and the staff at the Institute made the transition from Melbourne winter to Princeton summer and back again administratively frictionless.

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### Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to my mother and father, who, between them, taught primary and secondary students in the Maysville school district for 60 years. Such has been their ethic of service that I would love and respect them even if I had not had the great good fortune to be their son.

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[More information](#)*Note on the translation*

In this translation I have sought to render Proclus' text in a form that pays attention to contemporary ways of discussing and translating ancient philosophy, while trying to present the content as clearly as possible, and without misrepresenting what has been said or importing too much interpretation directly into the translation. I have not sought to reproduce Proclus' sentence structure where this seemed to create a barrier to smooth reading, for which reason line and page numbers will involve a degree of imprecision. The French translation by A. J. Festugière is an invaluable starting point, and it is still a useful and largely faithful rendition of Proclus' Greek.<sup>1</sup> However, my collaborators in this series and I consider it worthwhile to try to make the philosophical content and arguments of Proclus' text as plain as possible. To that end, we have not hesitated to break lengthy sentences into smaller ones, shift from passive to active voice, or provide interpolations that are indicated by square brackets.

In all five volumes in this series, the text used is that of Diehl.<sup>2</sup> Deviations from that text are recorded in the footnotes. Neoplatonism has a rich technical vocabulary that draws somewhat scholastic distinctions between, say, intelligible (*noêtos*) and intellectual (*noeros*) entities. To understand Neoplatonic philosophy it is necessary to have some grasp of these terms and their semantic associations, and there is no other way to do this than to observe how they are used. Volumes in this series mark some of the uses of these technical terms in the translation itself by giving the transliterated forms in parentheses. On the whole, we do this by giving the most common form of the word – that is, the nominative singular for nouns and the infinitive for verbs – even where this corresponds to a Greek noun in the translated text that may be in the dative or a finite verb form. This allows the utterly Greek-less reader to readily recognise occurrences of the same term, regardless of the form used in

<sup>1</sup> Festugière (1966–8). All the volumes in this series are enormously indebted to Festugière's fine work, even if we have somewhat different aims and emphases. Our notes on the text are not intended to engage so regularly with the text of the *Chaldean Oracles*, the *Orphic Fragments*, or the history of religion. We have preferred to comment on those features of Proclus' text that place it in the commentary tradition.

<sup>2</sup> Proclus (1904).

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the specific context at hand. We have deviated from this practice where it is a specific form of the word that constitutes the technical term – for example, the passive participle of *metechein* for ‘the participated’ (*to metechomenon*) or comparative forms such as ‘most complete’ (*teleôtaton*). We have also made exceptions for technical terms using prepositions (e.g. *kat’ aitian*, *kath’ hyparxin*) and for adverbs that are terms of art for the Neoplatonists (e.g. *protôs*, *physikôs*).

This policy is sure to leave everyone a little unhappy. Readers of Greek will find it jarring to read ‘the soul’s vehicles (*ochêma*)’ where ‘vehicles’ is in the plural and is followed by a singular form of the Greek noun. Equally, Greek-less readers are likely to be puzzled by the differences between *metechein* and *metechomenon* or between *protôs* and *protos*. But policies that leave all parties a bit unhappy are often the best compromises. In any event, all students of the *Timaeus* will remember that a generated object such as a book is always a compromise between Reason and Necessity.

Our volumes in the Proclus *Timaeus* series use a similar system of transliteration to that adopted by the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle volumes. The salient points may be summarised as follows. We use the diaeresis for internal breathing, so that ‘immaterial’ is rendered *aiûlos*, not *abulos*. We also use the diaeresis to indicate where a second vowel represents a new vowel sound, e.g. *aîdios*. Letters of the alphabet are much as one would expect. We use ‘y’ for υ alone as in *physis* or *hypostasis*, but ‘u’ for υ when it appears in diphthongs, e.g. *ousia* and *entautha*. We use ‘ch’ for χ, as in *psychê*. We use ‘rh’ for initial ρ as in *rhêtôr*; ‘nk’ for γκ, as in *anankê*; and ‘ng’ for γγ, as in *angelos*. The long vowels η and ω are, of course, represented by ê and ô, while iota subscripts are printed on the line immediately after the vowel as in *ôioгенês* for ὡογενής. There is a Greek word index to each volume in the series. In order to enable readers with little or no Greek to use this word index, we have included an English–Greek glossary that matches our standard English translation for important terms with its Greek correlate given both in transliterated form and in Greek. For example, ‘procession: *proôdos*, πρόδος’.

The following abbreviations to other works of Proclus are used:

- in Tim.* = *Procli in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–6).
- in Remp.* = *Procli in Platonis Rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901)
- in Parm.* = *Procli commentarius in Platonis Parmenidem (Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita pt. III)*, ed. V. Cousin (Paris: Durand, 1864; repr. Olms: Hildesheim, 1961).

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*in Alc.* = *Proclus Diadochus: Commentary on the first Alcibiades of Plato*, ed. L. G. Westerink. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1954). Also used is A. Segonds (ed.), *Proclus: Sur le premier Alcibiade de Platon*, vols. I et II (Paris, 1985–6).

*in Crat.* = *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. G. Pasquali (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908).

*ET* = *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).

*Plat.Theol.* = *Proclus: Théologie Platonicienne*, ed. H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, 6 vols. (Paris: Société d'édition "Les belles lettres", 1968–97).

*Hyp.* = *Procli Diadochi hypotyposis astronomicarum positionum*, ed. C. Manitius (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909).

*de Aet.* = *Proclus: on the Eternity of the World*, ed. H. Lang and A. D. Marco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Proclus frequently mentions previous commentaries on the *Timaeus*, those of Porphyry and Iamblichus, for which the abbreviation *in Tim.* is again used. Relevant fragments are found in:

R. Sodano, *Porphyrii in Platonis Timaeum Fragmenta* (Naples: Instituto della Stampa, 1964).

John Dillon, *Iamblichi Chalcidensis in Platonis Dialogos Commentariorum Fragmenta* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973).

It is now possible to add a collection of fragments by Proclus' teacher.

S. Klitenic Wear, *The Teaching of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2011).

Proclus also frequently confirms his understanding of Plato's text by reference to two theological sources: the 'writings of Orpheus' and the Chaldean Oracles. For these texts, the following abbreviations are used:

*Or. Chald.* = Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldean Oracles: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

*Orph. fr.* = *Orphicorum fragmenta*, ed. O. Kern (Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1922).

Majercik uses the same numeration of the fragments as E. des Places in his Budé edition of the text.

Finally, we are now able to add a remarkable new reference work on late antique philosophy to our list of standard abbreviations:

CHPLA = Lloyd Gerson (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Philosophy in Late Antiquity*, 2 vols. (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

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References to the text of Proclus' *in Timaeum* (as also of *in Remp.* and *in Crat.*) are given by Teubner volume number, followed by page and line numbers, e.g. *in Tim.* II. 2.19. References to the *Platonic Theology* are given by book, chapter, then page and line number in the Budé edition. References to the *Elements of Theology* are given by proposition number.

Proclus' commentary is punctuated only by the quotations from Plato's text upon which he comments: the lemmata. These quotations of Plato's text and subsequent repetitions of them in the discussion that immediately follows that lemma are in bold. We have also followed Festugière's practice of inserting section headings so as to reveal what we take to be the skeleton of Proclus' commentary. These headings are given in centred text, in italics. Within the body of the translation itself, we have used square brackets to indicate words that ought perhaps to be supplied in order to make the sense of the Greek clear. Where we suppose that Greek words ought to be added to the text received in the manuscripts, the supplements are marked by angle brackets.