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Introduction to Book 5

THE INTEGRITY AND STRUCTURE OF BOOK 5

As in all previous volumes Proclus offers an extended discussion of his text of Plato's Timaeus, which is the same in most of its details as our text. Since it is most important that a Neoplatonic commentary should be able to relate everything in a Platonic dialogue to a single goal or purpose (skopos), Proclus does not choose to leave out any of the material, but to relate *everything* to his vision of what the dialogue is trying to achieve. The text that comes down to us contains each chunk of Platonic text, ranging from a couple of words (if very important for Proclus' interpretation) to several lines, followed most commonly by some more general interpretation followed by further comments on the little details of the language. This division, into what are called the *theoria* and the lexis is more obvious in those commentaries that spring directly from classroom activities, often as recorded by a note-taker, but traces of it remain in Proclus' work, which is no doubt meant to be of a longerlasting nature and to be read by generations of readers, for it was seen by Proclus as one of his major achievements (Marinus, VProc. 38).

Unlike the two previous books, Book 5 of Proclus' Timaeus Commentary is no longer governed by any strong structural influence other than the text of the Timaeus itself, of which it continues to take note of every word that Plato wrote. It covers 40e5-44d2, a little less than four Stephanus pages, fractionally more than Book 4 (37c6–40e4). There is some question about whether this book is finished, and for two reasons. First, Philoponus (Aet. p. 364 Rabe) cites several Proclan lines that relate to Tim. 50c and gives their context as 'the fifth logos of the exegetic [discussions] on the Timaeus'. Citation of ancient book numbers is often muddled in the early tradition; but one may in any case question whether the logoi of the work are supposed to be identical with the books that have come down to us, and, if not, how (if at all) they relate to what we have. Second, the recensio vulgata writes at the end: 'Proclus' [work] on the Timaeus has been discovered as far as what lies before us; it is unclear whether he also interpreted what follows.' This remark is natural enough, and does not in itself show that anything has been lost. My belief is that this book (at least) concludes at a highly plausible point, when Proclus, citing Iamblichus, has warned that much

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of the ensuing material which the text is now introducing, and which concerns life in the body, is to us unknowable. Furthermore, the book concludes with brief remarks on the character of Timaeus' monologue *as a whole*, which is arguably best done at the point where a major part of the commentary, perhaps even the commentary as a whole, concludes.

Book 5 is already long enough to stand alone. While the longest extant book of this commentary was Book 2 with 317 pages in Diehl's edition, and then Books 3 and 1 with 254 and 204 pages respectively, Book 5, with 195 pages, is almost as long as Book 1, and considerably longer than the 161 pages of Book 4. There should be no doubt that the point of Plato's text at which it terminates is appropriate, since it constitutes the end of chapter XV in Archer-Hind's 1888 edition. Conversely, this book had begun just a few lines into his chapter XIII, at what may appear today to be a rather less natural point – between the general remarks about sublunary gods and daimons and the specific treatment of gods that Plato names. This division is curious, but, as Baltzly explains (2013: 31-3) the living inhabitants of the four elements at *Tim.* 39e–40a were taken to be various grades of supernatural beings. Hence, 40d3-5 serves as a link between 'the visible and generated gods' just treated and various other divinities that defy any explanation on Timaeus' part at 40d6-7, divinities that are assumed to be much as Greek tradition had postulated (d7-e4) by a curiously trusting and respectful 'Timaeus'. I What Timaeus leaves out Proclus is determined to supply, and his treatment of these beings offers not only the final episode in the unfolding of the gods, but also the first episode in the account of intelligent life within this familiar world of change. So these gods are the pinnacle of the next level of creation.

The conviction that the point where the manuscripts end is not arbitrary, but a rational place to stop where the actual methodology would then have to change because of the nature of the subject matter, leads me ask whether Proclus had not originally concluded his running commentary on the *Timaeus* at the end of our Book 5, subsequently completing a collection of essays (with or without lemmata), reminiscent of his commentary on the *Republic* and confined to selected topics. Such a collection might either have served as an appendix to the five

¹ The sentence at 40e3–4, which concludes 'let it hold and let it be said' ($i\chi \epsilon \tau \omega \tau \kappa \kappa \alpha \lambda \epsilon \gamma \epsilon \sigma \omega$) can just as easily be seen to have something final about it as to be introducing what follows. In fact the account of the generation of the nine named gods that followed might seem to be something more definite, that Timaeus can offer on his own authority rather than simply deferring to the poets. Whatever the case, it is to be noted that Proclus himself is not denying some continuation here, for he opens Book 5 with the following words: 'The account of the sublunary gods is a continuation of the study of the heavenly gods ...'.

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books that we possess or have constituted a separate work. We do already know that he planned to follow his running commentary by an advanced study of the mathematics arising in Book 3, as observed by Festugière (1966–8: III 60n) and Baltzly (2007: 80n), for it is foreshadowed as something that will come 'at the end of the treatment' (II 33.30) or 'after the entire treatment' (II 76.23), and importantly would not be part of the commentary (*hypomnêmata*, II 76.26). Could he have undertaken a number of such additional essays?

Testing such a theory would be challenging, but a cursory examination of the allusions and/or references to the Timaeus elsewhere in Proclus can give us some indication of how much other parts of Timaeus' monologue had stuck in his mind. Since many of the references or allusions in the *Platonic Theology* have little to do with theology and more to do with the appeal of the words themselves, there is no reason to expect that any substantial part of the work would fail to register in the very useful Index Auctorum in the sixth volume of the edition of Saffrey and Westerink (1997: 214-17). Yet out of approximately six and a half columns of references there are only twenty-eight Plato-entries listed for Stephanus pages 44 to 92 inclusive (involving thirty-five individual Proclan parallels), forty-nine out of seventy-six pages, or 64.5 per cent. None of these entries pertain to 43e-47d, 58e-68d, or 77c-92b. There were fifteen entries (nineteen Proclan parallels) for 47e-55c, three (five parallels) for 58a-d, five for 68e-71d,² single entries for 74c and 77b, and three (four parallels) for 92c. Clearly some passages had left a far more lasting impression on Proclus' mind than others.

Inevitably, the *Timaeus* commentary itself also contains references or allusions to material later in the work, but a glance at Diehl's *Index Auctorum* will show that he noted just over thirty parallels with material between 47e and 55d, and approximately the same number for all the rest of 43e–92, of which only six belonged to 43e–47d. This again singles out 47e–55d as one passage to which Proclus was likely to allude, and it is to this that the Philoponus fragment of Proclan *Timaeus* exegesis belongs. Again, material in the last five pages is foreshadowed about ten times, and it is to 89e–90c that the Arabic fragment pertains. One might therefore have expected Proclus, if he treated the rest of the work at all, to have treated 47e–55d and the closing pages in greater detail than

² Here the entry for 71d5 does not require that Proclus should have the passage in mind, only a word that occurred here and four times earlier. That at 69c4 is similar, as are those at 68e2 (alternative for 24d5–6) and 69c3 (alternatives for 41a7), but that passage is of higher profile.

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Work	43e-47d	47e–55d	55e-57	58a–e	59–67	68-71	72–88c	88d–92
Theol.	0	15	0	3	0	5	2	3
in Alc.	Ι	2	0	0	0	Ι	0	2
in Crat.	0	2	0	0	0	0	I	0
in Parm.	0	23	0	0	0	Ι	2	4
in Remp.	I	7	0	I	0	3	8	2
in Tim.	6	33	I	3	I	2	II	7
Total	8	82	I	7	I	I 2	24	18
Av. p. page	1.6	IO	0.5	7	0.1	3	1.5	4

Table 1 The citation of later parts of the Timaeus in Proclus

most of the rest. The *Platonic Theology* in my view reinforces this impression. So indeed do the commentaries on the *Parmenides*, the *Alcibiades*, the *Republic*, and the *Cratylus*.³ Table 1 lists for each work the number of Platonic passages listed in the relevant index for certain Stephanus pages.

I do not wish to make too many claims for these results, given that editors' policies regarding what is listed in their notes or their indices will vary, and that none of them will have had in mind the purpose for which I use them. In collating the information, as also in determining where to begin and end sections in the table, I have had to make a few subjective choices. Even so, the results are clear enough. Some parts of the *Timaeus* after 43e have demonstrably made a lasting impression on Proclus' mind, principally 47e-55d and the final few pages, while two further passages centred on Stephanus pages 58 and 69 were also likely to be remembered as he wrote. Given that he is most likely to have remembered passages regularly employed in teaching, Proclus' lost words on the Timaeus probably concentrated on such passages. But one further word of caution is warranted. Proclus treated Timaeus 17a-27b reasonably fully in Book 1, but the rate of citations of material from here is also rather thin elsewhere.⁴ This demonstrates that there can be no absolute correspondence between the frequency of citations and Proclus' willingness to write a detailed running commentary on a passage.

³ I use Steel's index (2009: 450-1) to *in Parm.*, Westerink's to *in Alc.* (1962), Pasquali's (1908) for *in Crat.*, and Kroll's (1901) for *in Remp*.

⁴ Diehl lists no citations of these pages anywhere in his Books 3–5, and just one (22e) in Book 2; Steel gives references to 17a, 19e, 20a–c, 22b, and 24d; Saffrey and Westerink to 24e and 26e; and Kroll to 17b, 19d, and 21c.

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My investigation leads me to conclude provisionally that our text of Book 5 is complete in Diehl, and that he offered no full treatment of the work thereafter. Certainly he acknowledges the content of all these pages with a very broad brush at in Tim. I 6.7-21, but there is nothing here to show how much Proclus' own plan included. And it is to be remembered first that even his treatment of 42e5-44d2 is remarkably economical by Proclus' standards, while the Arabic fragment on 89e3-90c7 is disappointingly thin given the high profile of the material,⁵ amounting to only eight pages in Festugière and just over eleven in Arnzen's edition. At the beginning of Book 5 Proclus could write eleven pages of Diehl's Greek (corresponding to twelve of Festugière's French) on barely more than a single line of Plato's text (40e5). Since the Platonic lemmata of the Arabic do not seem to have been epitomized there is no need to suppose that we are missing anything of importance from Proclus' contributions either; yet there is a noticeable lack of reference to earlier Platonist views and little argument. Moreover, the Proclan discussion is preceded by what Arnzen (2013: 13-14) refers to as a 'Preamble', which summarizes 87c1-89e2 before introducing the following text up to the natural break at 90d7.⁶ Arnzen suggests that 'the Arabic "Preamble" reflects Proclus' preface to a new τμῆμα or βιβλίον starting at this point of the Platonic text'.⁷ Yet it is hardly possible that it can be introducing at this late stage a whole new book of our commentary unless Proclus' text has been radically epitomized. It would make more sense, I believe, if the preamble were introducing, and setting in context, his discussion of a supplementary question concerning how the soul's health may be restored – in other words, this preamble to the Arabic fragment gives credence to the idea that after 44d Proclus had offered only a modest treatment of some supplementary portions of text rather than the continuous running commentary.

A word should therefore be said about the surviving fragment concerning the shifting forms in the receptacle that Philoponus (*Aet.* 11) has bequeathed to us. My translation runs as follows:

Perhaps it is better to say that he has referred also to the enmattered forms and not only the qualities as 'going in and going out' (50c4-5). For it is these that are

⁷ Arnzen (2013: 13–14), cf. (14) 'the Arabic "Preamble" may be a literal translation of the closing paragraph of Proclus' preface to the last book of his *Timaeus* commentary'.

⁵ I note the following from Arnzen's abstract (2013: 1): 'its conciseness and shortcomings raise certain doubts about its completeness'.

⁶ However, compare Arnzen's observation that 'it is not evident, whether the present "Preamble" is supposed to introduce the reader only to *Tim.* 89e3–90d7 or to the entire remaining part of the dialogue'.

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the likenesses of the intelligibles,⁸ not the qualities. Hence it is worth examining where this [kind of] form goes. For if on the one hand it enters into nature, that would be odd, for it would involve nature in receiving one of the things that are posterior to itself and derived from itself. It would be rather as if somebody were claiming that anything at all were to enter into the intelligible from generation. But if we say that it is entering into a different matter, we shall be speaking contrary to the evidence, for we do not see, when fire is extinguished and its matter is turned to air (cf. 49c3-4), other [matter] being set on fire. But if on the other hand they come to be within themselves, they will be intelligible, selfestablished, and without parts. In that case from where did their solidity come, from where their extension, from where the conflict (polemos)9 over their common receptacle? For things that are within themselves do not fight over their underlying position, nor indeed do they require anything underlying them. Yet if such forms can be neither in nature nor in themselves, nor [still] in the matter after their destruction, it is necessary that they must retreat into non-being;¹⁰ for, while the matter remains for ever, 'this thing'¹¹ as a whole does not at all remain,12 but only its [immanent but recurring] form that goes on being established without generation and perishing without destruction.

It seems that Proclus is looking at the things 'going in and going out' of the receptacle very much like reflections of an object in a hall of moving mirrors. The reflections will come and go, but when they are absent they have not gone anywhere else, and when they return again they have not come from anywhere. If I am close to interpreting this correctly, then we have an interesting piece of theory whose focus is not just on *Timaeus* 50c, but on the whole passage going back to (at least) 49c. That does not of course mean that Proclus is not commenting on a more limited lemma, which would in that case have to include 50c4–6. However, the material is compatible with an essay-like treatment of a wider question in the manner of most of the essays in the commentary on the *Republic*. While this short fragment leaves us with the impression of

- ⁹ While this could perhaps be an allusion to the disorderly motion at 52d–e, seen in the light of the Heraclitean theory of warring elements, I think that the basic idea is that several forms are fighting to appear in the same place.
- ¹⁰ The claim of these shifting appearances to 'be' is severely qualified at 49d1-3, but note also the language of 'clinging on to being' or never being anything at all at *Tim.* 52b3-5.
- ¹¹ Cf. the attack on the notion that any of the appearances could be 'this' thing rather than 'that' thing at 49d–50a; compare with Philoponus' ὅλον τοῦτο Plato's ὅτιοῦν τοῦτο at 49d2.
- ¹² With οὐ γὰρ ὅλον τοῦτο ὑπομένει compare Plato's φεύγει γὰρ <u>οὐκ ὑπομένον</u> τὴν τοῦ τόδε καὶ <u>τοῦτο</u> [sc. φάσιν], 49e2–3; that Plato's verb is transitive, may perhaps count against the intransitive translation such as I have used here, and one might prefer 'for it does not at all admit "this"...', though I feel that Festugière's translation strays too far from anything that Proclus could be extracting from Plato's text. I have also consulted here the translation of Philoponus by Share (2010), who admits to some uncertainty.

 $^{^8}$ τὰ ὁμοιώματα τῶν νοητῶν, cf. 50c5: τῶν ὄντων . . . μιμήματα.

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a more detailed treatment of the Platonic text than Proclus seems to have given to 89e–90c,¹³ it certainly does not prove that Proclus' continuous running commentary had gone beyond 44d.

As for the passage from Proclus' *in Rempublicam* printed by Diehl at III 358.5–19, it is reminiscent of *in Tim*. III 294.22–295.14, though Proclus may in any case be forgetting that his detailed arguments were stated in the commentary on the *Phaedrus (in Tim*. III 295.3–14). There is no reason to regard it as involving commentary on the later pages.

I conceive of the internal construction of Book 5 as approximately in accordance with our Analytical Table of Contents that precedes the translation. After the discussion of the generation of the sublunary gods, Proclus will go on to discuss the Demiurge's address to 'the young gods', his preparation of souls for mortal creatures, his showing them the laws of fate by which they will be governed, his act of 'sowing' of these individual souls, his delegation of creative powers to the young gods, and their embrace of the task of bodily creation. Proclus' Greek text, of course, is divided internally only according to the Platonic lemmata, plus various indications by Proclus that he is moving on to another topic. In following the practice adopted in earlier volumes I have imposed an additional conceptual framework for understanding the work by adding three levels of headings. These headings have no independent authority, sometimes following, but often deviating from, the divisions used by Festugière. They are simply designed to reveal something of Proclus' systematic approach to this commentary as to just about everything else that he undertook.

THE SOURCES OF BOOK 5

If Proclus did not extend his commentary to everything that remained in the *Timaeus* then it would be quite wrong to expect that his predecessors would have done so. Proclus seems to have tackled just about all material more fully than any of his predecessors, and that is partly because he has made it his business to engage with the prior tradition, to the extent that he was aware of it, on all points of contention. It has already been argued in the introduction to volume I of this series (Tarrant 2007: 33–4) that commentators before Plotinus were known to Proclus principally through Porphyry.

In Book 5 Porphyry is mentioned only twice, at 234.19 and 272.17. At 234.18–19 the reference is actually to the followers of Porphyry (oi $\pi\epsilon\rho$ i $\Pi o\rho\phi u\rho_1 o\nu$), which adds a level of vagueness that almost matches

¹³ Philoponus cites it partly for its quality of argument, and there may perhaps be an implied criticism of earlier interpretation at the beginning, where the author suggests a better interpretation of things 'going in and going out' at the beginning.

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the reference to 'the likes of Atticus and Albinus' shortly beforehand. We certainly do not have to imagine that Proclus had texts of any of these authors in front of him, for there is then a reference to Iamblichus and those who follow him, and it seems clear that they explicitly reject the positions associated with Porphyry and the others, making it entirely possible that Proclus was simply taking their views from Iamblichus. At 272.17 Proclus is raising Porphyry's conception of fate as nature, and though one might expect Porphyry to be finding this view in the *Timaeus* Proclus does not have to have a *Timaeus* commentary in mind here, and one assumes that Porphyry's position on such a popular issue of philosophy will have been well known to him. Moreover, I have noted (note to 187.16) that in discussions of Neoplatonist views of the sublunary gods there are places where one would have expected Porphyry's views to feature if they were known.

Now if Porphyry's commentary was no longer being employed as a regular source (as I am suggesting), then one would expect the amount of material dealing with Porphyry's contemporary Amelius,¹⁴ and again with pre-Plotinian Platonists and Pythagoreans, such as Plutarch, Albinus, Numenius, Atticus, and Severus, to become sparse. However, though Amelius has disappeared as a named source,¹⁵ there seem to be rather more references to the second-century exegetes in Book 5 than in Book 4 (where Porphyry is three times mentioned), three at 212.8–9, two at 234.17 as discussed, and one each at 196.18 and 247.15. But there are no references to middle Platonists in the last 110 pages of the book. One may tabulate as in Table 2.

By contrast the influence of Iamblichus appears to continue unabated, and he is named around twenty times. Book 1 had accounted

Philosopher	Named Bk 4	Named Bk 5	Exact Bk 5 reference
Plutarch	0	I	212.9
Albinus	0	I	234.17*
Numenius	2 [34.1, 103.28]	I	196.18*
Atticus	1* [37.12]	3	212.8, 234.17*, 247.15
Severus	0	Ι	212.8
Amelius	2 [33.33, 103.18]	0	
Porphyry	3 [33.31, 64.10, 65.1]	2	234.19*, 272.17

Table 2 Platonists named in Books 4 and 5 [*= periphrastic reference]

¹⁴ References to Longinus had disappeared even after Book 1, and Amelius is mentioned in all the first four books; Harpocration was mentioned only in Book 2 (304.22–305.6).

¹⁵ Note that I am attributing to Amelius III 173.14–15; below pp. 51–2.

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(wholly or partially) for twenty-five fragments in Dillon's 1973 collection, and Book 2 for twenty-one; the rate dips in Book 3 to fourteen, with twelve in the short Book 4, and then sixteen in Book 5. Theodorus' name, after being mentioned only once in Book 1 (and in the prefatory material at that), occurs at an average of five times per book thereafter, until Book 5, where it is found nine separate times. Ten passages are listed as fragments in Deuse's collection, while the commentary as a whole accounts for twenty-four. Surprisingly, a new interpreter, Aquila, now appears for the first time at 263.7, but there is no evidence that he left a written interpretation of the *Timaeus* more broadly. The identity of Aquila, and his possible importance, is discussed at that point.

Because Proclus is known to have been quite young when he wrote this commentary or at least a version of it (Marinus, *VProc.* 13), it is reasonable to think of the influence of his immediate teacher Syrianus as pervasive,¹⁶ though it would require considerable effort to demonstrate that it is more indebted to him than other works of Platonic interpretation presumed to have been written later.¹⁷ Book 5 accounts for five of the twenty-five fragments of Syrianus' views on the *Timaeus* in Wear's 2011 edition, but the interesting thing is that the last of them occurs at 278.9–32. After this final contribution to *Timaeus* 41e3–4, the familiar references to Proclus' teacher or master disappear from the text. The only exegetes thereafter referred to will be Iamblichus and Theodorus.

The consequence of this disappearance of several of his predecessors from the debate will be a more rapid treatment of Plato's lines. So far he had covered thirty-eight lines of OCT Plato in 107 Diehl pages, but he will now cover three and a half pages of OCT in just sixty-five Diehl pages. This seems to be a direct result of the decreased amount of engagement with his predecessors on matters raised by the text. Theodorus will be mentioned once more, but not on a matter of exegesis of the text at hand, and Iamblichus three times. It may well be that only Iamblichus had previously managed to offer line by line exegesis of the *Timaeus* right up to 44b. Proclus is at his best when engaging with others who belonged to the intellectual world of late antiquity, and

¹⁶ It is worth noting that there is no sign of the presence of Syrianus' predecessor Plutarch of Athens in this commentary, and we may assume that the *Phaedo* was the only work of Plato that Proclus had studied with him (Marinus, *VProc.* 12).

¹⁷ The *Platonic Theology* is obviously later than the commentary on the *Parmenides* and contains only about ten references to Syrianus, though it still claims to be indebted to his views, and the earlier commentary on the *Parmenides* contains about the same number. The second book of the commentary on the *Republic* is, unlike the first, almost as free of references to Syrianus as that on the *Cratylus*, and there are two in that on the *Alcibiades*. Unfortunately the details of the chronology of the works are hard to fathom.

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Diehl Pages	Explicit refs. to Timaeus	Explicit refs to Plato	Ratio
162–94	3	3	1:1
195-227	I	6	1:6
228-60	2	13	1:6.5
261–93	2	5	1:2.5
294-326	5	9	1:1.8
327-56	3	3	1:1
Total	16	39	

Table 3 Explicit references to 'Plato' and 'Timaeus' in Book 5

consequently the decreasing level of engagement seems to impact at times on the quality of his exegesis; he begins to look a little like a lonely navigator in poorly charted waters. This adds to the reasons why his line-by-line commentary should have ceased at 44b. At any rate, the later chapters of Book 5 demonstrate the difficulty of maintaining a full scholarly commentary beyond the point where prior exegetical labour has ceased.

Parallel to this diminished presence of Proclus' predecessors is an increased tendency to look upon the character Timaeus rather than the author Plato as the one who is speaking. Festugière typically treats Proclus' references to somebody saying something in the course of Timaeus' monologue as references to what *Plato* says, believes, or makes clear. However, at least during Book 5 there are perhaps sixteen explicit references to the character Timaeus doing these same things.¹⁸ Explicit references to Plato, where Proclus might instead have chosen to refer to Timaeus, occur at over double the rate,¹⁹ and it is worth noting that there is some unevenness here as demonstrated in Table 3.

Even though I have tried to avoid counting the cases where Proclus has in mind the combined position that Plato takes in the *Timaeus* and in other dialogues, my distinct impression is that where Proclus is polemically engaging with earlier Platonist interpreters he is much more likely to argue about what *Plato* says or thinks, because this is the key issue over which generations of interpreters have fought. As such material dies out towards the end of the commentary, perhaps because few predecessors

¹⁸ I count the following: 168.8, 17, 184.16, 203.11, 239.11, 257.32, 264.7, 284.8, 294.3, 8, 299.10, 300.5, 319.1, 338.26, 344.25, 29.

 ¹⁹ I count the following 39 cases: 164.12, 168.1, 183.31, 196.10, 201.32, 203.26, 205.25, 214.22, 223.12, 228.14, 229.3, 29, 231.11, 233.10, 236.12, 245.22, 247.6, 248.9, 249.5, 23, 251.22, 255.1, 263.18, 266.2, 15, 267.14, 273.19, 282.8, 299.14, 300.14, 303.21, 308.28, 310.10, 316.22, 322.19, 323.3, 326.19, 331.3, 334.1.