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Edited and translated by Dirk Baltzly, John Finamore, Graeme Miles  
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## PROCLUS

### *Commentary on Plato's Republic*

The commentary on Plato's *Republic* by Proclus (d. 485 CE), which takes the form of a series of essays, is the only sustained treatment of the dialogue to survive from antiquity. This three-volume edition presents the first complete English translation of Proclus' text, together with a general introduction that argues for the unity of Proclus' Commentary and orients the reader to the use that the Neoplatonists made of Plato's *Republic* in their educational program. Each volume is completed by a Greek word index and an English-Greek glossary that will help non-specialists to track the occurrence of key terms throughout the translated text. The first volume of the edition presents Proclus' essays on the point and purpose of Plato's dialogue, the arguments against Thrasymachus in Book I, the rules for correct poetic depictions of the divine, a series of problems about the status of poetry across all Plato's works, and finally an essay arguing for the fundamental agreement of Plato's philosophy with the divine wisdom of Homer which is, in Proclus' view, allegorically communicated through his poems.

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*Commentary on Plato's Republic*

VOLUME I

Essays I–6

TRANSLATED WITH AN  
INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY

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*This book is for Sir Richard Sorabji – intellectual demiurge  
for the translation of so much late antique philosophy and  
thoroughly good bloke.*

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We are grateful to John Burke for his meticulous work in preparing the Greek word index, and to the community of scholars working on late-antique philosophy, especially those in Australasia. Our thanks go to many colleagues whose comments and questions at conferences and elsewhere have been helpful, in particular Harold Tarrant, Han Baltussen, Michael Champion, Michael Share, and Peter Adamson. David Pass, who was involved with this project in its early stages, provided valuable stimulus to our thinking about the text, especially the question of its unity. At the University of Tasmania we would like to thank Jonathan Wallis and Jayne Knight for their collegial support.

## *Note on the Text and Translation*

The text translated in this volume and the subsequent ones in this series are based on the 1899 edition of Kroll.<sup>1</sup> We have reproduced in the margins the page numbers and approximate line numbers of this edition with the page numbers indicated by bold type. Kroll notes in his introduction that the two parts of Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic* once formed a single codex which was copied in the ninth or tenth century by the same copyist who produced the Parisianus 1807 manuscript of Plato (Plato A), as well as Marcianus 246 containing Damascius. At some point, the codex was split in two. The first half remained in the Laurentian library (codex LXXX 9), while the latter half found its way into the Vatican collection (Vatic. 2197). Neither manuscript is complete. The Laurentian manuscript breaks off midway through Essay 1. The remainder of that essay, along with all of Essay 2 and the first half of Essay 3, is now missing. Apart from these missing pages, however, the first part of the codex is in relatively good condition and there are few lacunae. The Laurentian manuscript forms the basis of Kroll's volume 1.

The Vatican manuscript forms the basis of Kroll's volume 2. It also lacks pages at the beginning. It once opened at the start of Essay 13. From what remains, we can see that this essay was originally composed of an introduction and 45 paragraphs, but the first eight paragraphs and part of the ninth are now missing in the Vatican's copy. Kroll was, however, able to print the first two pages of Essay 13 on the basis of a sixteenth-century copy produced prior to the damage sustained by the manuscript presently in the Vatican. Unlike the Laurentian manuscript, Vatican 2197 is not only missing pages, but the top margins are in very poor condition. As a result, Kroll's volume 2 is replete with gaps and conjectures.

The only other complete modern-language translation of Proclus' text is that of Festugière, though portions of the text have been translated into Italian and English.<sup>2</sup> As in the case of Festugière's translation of Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, his translation of the *Republic Commentary* is an accurate rendition of Proclus' Greek and includes many valuable notes. Festugière frequently preserves much of Proclus'

<sup>1</sup> Kroll (1899).    <sup>2</sup> Festugière (1970), Abbate (2004), Lamberton (2012).

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complex sentence structure and this is true, though perhaps to a lesser extent, of both Lamberton and Abbate. Thus it is not uncommon to find one of Proclus' fifteen-line sentences translated by a very long sentence, with lots of embedded clauses, in the existing modern-language translations of the *Republic Commentary*. While this works well for advanced scholars who want an aid to their reading of the Greek text, it cannot be said that this degree of fidelity to the original encourages non-specialists to refer to the only major work on Plato's most famous dialogue to survive from antiquity. Accordingly, it seemed to us that there was a need for an English translation that makes the reading of Proclus a somewhat more inviting proposition. In what follows we have not hesitated to break up sentences or to render Proclus' Greek into an English style that flows somewhat better. It cannot be said that we have given Proclus an elegant prose style – that would be, in Proclus' terminology, a truly daemonic achievement! – but we hope that we have made him easier to read without overstepping the faint line that separates the degree of interpretation that accompanies any act of translation and a degree of interpretation that is rightly criticised as a mere gloss or summary of an ancient text. Nonetheless, if what you value in a translation is a modern-language version that allows the expert reader to see the original Greek text hovering just below the page like the shade of poor Patroclus, this book is not for you. This book seeks to move the readership for Proclus' *Republic Commentary* beyond the realm of those experts who could read the text in Greek if they wanted to.

For the benefit of those who do not read Greek, it is worthwhile to point out that Neoplatonism has a rich technical vocabulary that draws somewhat scholastic distinctions between, say, intelligible (*noētos*) 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. We 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 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 present participle of *metechein* for 'the participated' (*to metechomenon*) or comparative forms such as 'more complete' (*teleiōteron*). We have also made exceptions for

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technical terms using prepositions (e.g. *kat' aitian*, *kath' hyparxin*) and for adverbs that are terms of art for the Neoplatonists (e.g. *prôtôs*, *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 liable to be puzzled by the differences between *metechein* and *metechomenon* or between *prôtôs* and *prôtos*. But policies that leave all parties a bit unhappy are often the best compromises.

Our volumes in the Proclus *Republic* series use the system of transliteration adopted in Cambridge's Proclus *Timaeus* series. This, in turn, is similar to the system used in 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. *aidios*. Letters of the alphabet are much as one would expect. We use 'y' for υ alone as in *physis* or *hypostasis* – just because it looks odd otherwise – but 'u' for u 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 *φωγενής*. 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*, *πρόοδος*'.

The following abbreviations to the works of Proclus are used:

- in Remp.* = *Procli in Platonis Rem publicam commentarii*, ed. W. Kroll, 2 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1899–1901)
- in Tim.* = *Procli in Platonis Timaeum commentaria*, ed. E. Diehl, 3 vols (Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–6)
- in Parm.* = *Procli commentarius in Platonis Parmenidem (Procli philosophi Platonici opera inedita pt. III)*, ed. V. Cousin (Paris: Durand, 1864; repr. Olms: Hildesheim, 1961)
- 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*, tomes I et II (Paris, 1985–6)

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- in Crat.* = *Procli Diadochi in Platonis Cratylum commentaria*, ed. G. Pasquali. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1908)  
*ET* = *The Elements of Theology*, ed. E. R. Dodds, 2nd edn (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).  
*de Aet.* = *Proclus: on the Eternity of the World*, ed. H. Lang and A. D. Marco (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)  
*de Mal.* = *Proclus: On the Existence of Evils*, trans. J. Opsomer and C. Steel. (London: Duckworth, 2003)  
*Dec. Dub.* = *Proclus: Ten Doubts Concerning Providence*, trans. J. Opsomer and C. Steel. (London: Bloomsbury, 2012)  
*Prov.* = *Proclus: On Providence*, trans. C. Steel (London: Duckworth, 2007)

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

- Or. Chald.* = Ruth Majercik, *The Chaldaean 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 Edouard des Places in his Budé edition of the text.

References to the text of Proclus' *in Remp.* (as also of *in Tim.* and *in Crat.*) are given by Teubner volume number, followed by page and line numbers separated by a full stop, 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.

We have followed Festugière's practice of inserting section headings so as to reveal what we take to be the underlying structure of Proclus' commentary. These headings are in angle brackets and centred, as they are in the French translation. Within the body of the translation we have used square brackets to indicate words that we thought needed to be supplied to make the sense of the Greek text clear. Where we suppose that Greek words need to be added to the text received in the manuscripts, the supplements are marked by angle brackets.