

1. The place of the Republic in the Neoplatonic commentary tradition

If you asked a random philosopher of the 20th or 21st century ‘What is Plato’s most important book?’ we think he or she would reply ‘The *Republic*, of course.’ Thanks to the Open Syllabus Project we don’t need to rely on mere speculation to intuit professional philosophy’s judgement on this matter.¹ We can see what book by Plato professional philosophers put on the reading lists for their students. The Open Syllabus Project surveyed over a million syllabi for courses in English-speaking universities. Filtering the results by discipline yields the result that only two texts were assigned more frequently for subjects in Philosophy (that is, Philosophy subjects generally– not merely subjects on the history of Philosophy). Plato’s *Republic* comes third after Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and John Stuart Mill’s *Utilitarianism*. If you remove the filter for discipline, then Plato’s *Republic* is the second-most assigned text in university studies in the English-speaking world, behind only Strunk and White’s *Elements of Style*.² Thus graduates of English-language universities in our time and place are more likely to be acquainted with a work of philosophy than they are to be acquainted with any of the works of Shakespeare and the philosophical text through which they are likely to be acquainted with the discipline is Plato’s *Republic*. For us, it is Plato’s greatest work and certainly among the greatest works of Philosophy ever.

Philosophers and other university academics might be surprised to learn that their judgement was not the judgement of antiquity. In the first thousand years after Plato’s death, the award for ‘most influential book by this author’ would undoubtedly go to the *Timaeus*. Nothing he wrote attracted more philosophical discussion. After a slow start, the *Parmenides* caught up to finish equal first. The reading order of Platonic dialogues established by Iamblichus (born c. 245 CE) and followed by Neoplatonic philosophers in both Athens and Alexandria is simultaneously evidence of that assessment of importance and also partly its cause. Let us turn to the nature of the Iamblichean canon of Platonic dialogues and the *Republic*’s place outside of it.

The transition from Hellenistic to post-Hellenistic philosophy is, in large part, a revitalization of older Aristotelian and Platonic philosophies. As a result, the transition to

¹ <http://explorer.opensyllabusproject.org/>

² This result is principally due to the conservatism of the American (and to a large extent Canadian) university curriculum. They read ‘the greats’ – the British no longer do. The UK results, unfiltered by discipline, have books on research methods at the top. The first work in the top ten not dedicated to methodology or organisational behaviour is Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, which sneaks in at number nine.

post-Hellenistic philosophy was also marked by an increasing involvement of books in the activities characteristic of philosophers.³ In fact, this coincided with an increasing pursuit of bookish activities among the cultural elites of the Roman Empire.⁴ Given the size of the Platonic corpus, as well as the absence of Platonic voice in the dialogue form telling one how to read the books of Plato, practical questions about the arrangements of the Platonic dialogues and their purposes in education were particularly pressing. The account of various early attempts to order and classify Plato's dialogues has been related by Tarrant.⁵ When we turn to the Neoplatonists in particular, we find that Plotinus' free-ranging engagement with the Platonic dialogues does not recommend any particular reading order, though one can see that he frequently finds important insights contained in isolated passage from *Timaeus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus* and the *Parmenides*. The famous analogy between the Sun and the Good in *Republic* VII is of course prominent among the allusions to or citations of Plato's works in Plotinus' *Enneads*.

Porphyry, unlike Plotinus, approached the exegesis of Plato's works much more systematically and wrote commentaries. In addition to the fragments of his *Timaeus Commentary*, we have small bits of evidence pointing to the existence of commentaries on *Parmenides*, *Cratylus*, *Philebus*, *Sophist*, and *Phaedo*, as well as the *Republic*. Significantly, given the extent to which Socrates' criticisms of Homer dominate Proclus' *Commentary*, Porphyry too shows an interest in finding Platonic teachings in the works of Homer by means of allegorical readings. When we add to this the slender but nonetheless persuasive evidence of two other early Neoplatonists – Amelius and Theodore of Asine⁶ – we can see evidence of relatively thorough engagement with *Republic* among the first generation of Neoplatonic philosophers after Plotinus.

Iamblichus was the Neoplatonic philosopher who was perhaps most important for the subsequent fortunes of the *Republic* within the commentary tradition. He established a canon of twelve dialogues which he took to both sum up the entire philosophy of Plato and also to correlate with the gradations of the cardinal virtues that were developed by Plotinus and systematised by Porphyry.⁷ Thus canon formation is built around an ideal of moral and cognitive development intended to assimilate the soul of the Platonist to the divine – the

³ This was increasingly true of the Hellenistic schools themselves. It was not merely that reviving Aristotelianism or Platonism meant now paying close attention to books written by philosophers who had been dead for centuries. Stoicism and Epicureanism also became increasingly bookish. See Snyder (2000).

⁴ Johnson (2010).

⁵ Tarrant (1993).

⁶ See Baltzly (forthcoming).

⁷ Brisson (2006).

Neoplatonic specification of the *telos* or goal of living. The educational program was built around ten dialogues that progress from the theme of self-knowledge to the civic virtues to purificatory virtues to contemplative virtues, with different dialogues apparently promoting contemplation of various kinds and orders of being in the Neoplatonic hierarchy.

1. *Alcibiades I* – introductory on the self
2. *Gorgias* – on civic virtue
3. *Phaedo* – on kathartic or purificatory virtue
4. *Cratylus* – logical – on names -- contemplative virtues
5. *Theaetetus* – logical – *skopos* unknown
6. *Sophist* – physical – the sub-lunary demiurge
7. *Statesman* – physical – *skopos* unclear
8. *Phaedrus* – theological – on beauty at every level
9. *Symposium* – theological – *skopos* unknown
10. *Philebus* – theological – on the Good

These dialogues were classified as either physical or theological. The former seem to have had some connection to the being of things in the realm of visible nature (i.e. the realm of *physis*), while the latter dealt with incorporeal being (which the Neoplatonists take to be divine). Thus, according to Iamblichus, the *Sophist* had as its central unifying theme or *skopos* ‘the sub-lunary Demiurge’, probably on the grounds that the dialogue reveals the sophist to be one who traffics in *images* and the things here in the sub-lunary realm are images of the celestial and intelligible realms. By contrast, the Iamblichean *skopos* of the *Phaedrus* transcends the level of nature or *physis* by dealing with ‘beauty at every level’ – right up to Beauty Itself and the intelligible gods.

Two additional ‘perfect’ or ‘complete’ dialogues summed up the entirety of the doctrines communicated in the first decadic arrangement.

11. *Timaeus* – physical
12. *Parmenides* -- theological

Of these two, the former was a *summa* of all physical teaching, while the latter presented all Plato’s theology in one dialogue.

The *Republic* is conspicuously absent from this list. While we have evidence of commentaries by Iamblichus on *Alcibiades*, *Phaedo*, *Phaedrus*, *Sophist*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus* and *Parmenides*, we have no evidence of any work on the *Republic* by Iamblichus. Proclus mentions Iamblichus by name 114 times in his various other works, however there is not a single mention of him in the *Commentary on the Republic*. In a sense this is surprising. Two

things stand out about the dialogues on Iamblichus' list. First, many of them contain passages which relate a myth. Second, many of them contain passages that invite speculations of a Neopythagorean sort. Some of them, such as the *Timaeus*, contain both. Iamblichus' efforts to position Platonism as continuous with Pythagoreanism have been well documented by O'Meara.⁸ Prior to Iamblichus, Porphyry had given allegorical interpretations of the prologues and mythic passages in Plato, but these interpretations discovered mostly ethical teachings or teachings related to the soul.⁹ Iamblichus' interpretations of Platonic myths look beyond the realm of the human soul and interpret at least some of them as allegorically encoding important information about intelligible reality.¹⁰ So one might reasonably expect that the *Republic* would have been a prime candidate for elevation to Iamblichus' canon of important dialogues. There are three myths – at least by Proclus' reckoning (*in Remp.* II 96.4) – and while the Myth of Er might plausibly be supposed to have the fate of the soul as its main import, the Cave clearly aims higher and so should hold out attractions for the more “elevated” Iamblichus. Moreover, as Proclus' Essay 13 shows, the nuptial number had already attracted plenty of numerological speculation in the broadly Pythagorean tradition. So given Iamblichus' emphasis on mythic passages in Plato and on Pythagorean number speculation, it is somewhat surprising to find the *Republic* absent from his canon of dialogues.

There is broad consensus that one reason for the exclusion of the *Republic* from the Iamblichean canon of twelve key dialogues was pure practicality: it is simply too long. It has long been recognised that our written commentaries – with the exception of those of Simplicius – were grounded in classroom teaching, either very directly, as in the case of the commentaries *apo phonês* or somewhat more indirectly, as in the case of Proclus' commentaries.¹¹ If applied to the *Republic*, the sort of meticulous treatment that is offered to the texts like *Parmenides* or *Timaeus* would yield a course of lectures and a written commentary that would be positively vast. In addition, there may be issues about the unity of

⁸ O' Meara (1989). The idea that Plato's philosophy is ultimately Pythagorean philosophy is not, of course, a novel idea on Iamblichus' part. One could equally well cite Numenius in this regard and perhaps the Neopythagoreans who came before him. Cf. Bonazzi, Lévy and Steel (2007). But so far as the rest of the Neoplatonic commentary tradition was concerned, Iamblichus' intervention was probably the decisive one.

⁹ On Porphyry's place in the development of allegorical readings of the prologues and myths in Platonic dialogues, see Tarrant's discussion of the interpretation of the Atlantis myth; Tarrant (2007)

¹⁰ A good example of this tendency on the part of Iamblichus and those associated with him, like Theodore of Asine, to read Plato's myths at a metaphysically higher level than Porphyry is provided by the *Phaedrus*. Iamblichus identified key phrases in *Phdr.* 245c as providing clues to the structure of the intelligible realm. The 'sub-celestial arch', the 'revolution of the heaven', and the 'super-celestial place' all became important symbols, laden with metaphysical significance. Proclus identifies Iamblichus and Theodore as the philosophers who re-discovered this truth in Plato; cf. *Plat. Theol.* IV.23 68.23–69.8 and Bielmeier (1930).

¹¹ Festugière (1971), Lamberz (1987), Richard (1950).

the *Republic*. As far back as Praechter, it was recognised that one of Iamblichus' most influential contributions to the Neoplatonic reception was the elevation of the role of the central theme or *skopos* of a dialogue in the interpretation of individual passages.¹² Proclus does offer a *skopos* for the whole of the *Republic*, and in doing so reflects on previous disagreements about what its *skopos* should be. Yet while Proclus finds a single *skopos* for the dialogue – it is about both justice and the *politeia*, as these are two ways of looking at the same thing – it is not as neat and tidy as the central themes identified for other dialogues. Moreover, Proclus himself seems to treat the *Republic* as a *logos* that has other *logoi* within it, each of which can be subjected to the same questions that one normally opens the reading of a dialogue with. Thus in Essay 13 Proclus treats the so-called speech of the Muses (*Rep.* VIII 545e, ff) as a *logos* about which it is appropriate to offer opinions regarding its style and central theme. Similarly, the commentary on the Myth of Er opens with an identification of its theme (*prothesis*). So, in spite of the unity that Proclus seeks to impose upon the *Republic* in Essay 1, there emerges from the subsequent essays a sense in which the *Republic* constitutes a *logos* within which there are other *logoi*.

This observation intersects in an interesting way with a puzzling piece of information from the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*. The author of the latter work, in the passage immediately before elaborating the twelve canonical dialogues of Iamblichus, makes some observations on spurious dialogues. He notes that everyone accepts that *Sisyphus*, *Demodocus*, *Alcyon*, *Eryxias* and the *Definitions* don't belong in the Platonic corpus. He adds that Proclus rejected (*notheuei*) the *Epinomis* as genuine – in part because, on the assumption that the *Laws* remained unrevised at Plato's death, he couldn't have written the *Epinomis*. Then, surprisingly, the author of the *Anonymous Prolegomena* tells us that Proclus rejected (*ekballei*) the *Republic* and the *Laws* because they consist of many *logoi* and are not written in the manner of dialogues. Now, *ekballei* here cannot mean 'rejected as not a genuine work of Plato.' After all, Proclus has gone to considerable trouble to interpret the *Republic* and his works are littered with references to the *Laws*. Nothing in Proclus' writing suggests that he supposed these books to be anything other than more of the inspired philosophy of Plato – works that the Platonic *diadochus* (successor) has a duty to harmonize with the canonical dialogues of Plato. Moreover, Anonymous does not use *ekballei* in relation to the *Epinomis*, but instead *notheuei*. So it seems more likely that Anonymous supposed that

¹² Praechter (1910).

Proclus – or someone – had rejected *Republic for some purpose* – not rejected it as a genuine work of Plato. But what Platonist and what purpose?

One possible explanation is that *some* Platonist supposed that both the *Republic* and the *Laws* did not admit of a suitably tight single *skopos* in order that they should be considered among the twelve dialogues that perfectly and completely convey Plato's philosophy. If this were so, then it would not merely be the length of these works that kept them outside the Iamblichean canon, but rather principled concerns about whether these dialogues had the kind of unity that characterises a single living organism (*Phdr* 265c). This is the standard of unity expected for a truly important Platonic dialogue, as Proclus shows in his discussion of the seventh major topic in the preliminary to the discussion of any dialogue (*in Remp.* I 6.24–5). While the preliminary discussion – or at least as much of it as we now possess – suggests that Proclus thought this question could be answered in the affirmative, his actual practice in commenting on the *Republic* reveals the grounds on which others might well have doubted this. So our conjecture is that Anonymous was confused. It was not *Proclus* who rejected the *Republic* and the *Laws* for the purpose of inclusion within the central canon of Platonic works. It was rather another Platonist. We suspect, though we cannot prove, that this other Platonist was Iamblichus. Clearly, Iamblichus did not reject either the *Republic* or the *Laws* as *inauthentic*. After all, Iamblichus' letters show ample evidence of engagement with both works.¹³ Rather, we suspect that Iamblichus rejected both works as suitable for inclusion in the core curriculum that completely conveyed Plato's philosophy on the grounds that it did not satisfy the *skopos* requirement as satisfactorily as did those dialogues that were included. It seems to us not coincidental that this report on "Proclus" rejection of the "authenticity" of the *Republic* and the *Laws* immediately precedes Anonymous' account of the Iamblichean canon.¹⁴

The *Anonymous Prolegomena* goes on to report that some philosophers saw fit to include the *Laws* and the *Republic* in the curriculum. Accordingly, Anonymous feels obliged to say what the *skopos* is for each of these works. He reports a view on this matter similar to one that Proclus himself criticizes in his Essay 1. Each dialogue is about a different kind of

¹³ Dillon and Polleichtner (2009).

¹⁴ Our speculations are consistent with, but go beyond Westerink (p. xxxvii). He agrees that it is absurd to suppose that Proclus rejected the authenticity of a work on which he wrote an extensive commentary. He thinks that the word *ekballei* may mean 'merely that he left them out of the list of dialogues *proper*'. We're not sure exactly what that might mean. Perhaps he means what we have recommended: that their multi-book composition was a basis for excluding them from the canon of standard works taught in the Platonic schools and correlated with the moral progress of the pupil through the gradations of virtue. We think it likely that the initiator of this exclusion was Iamblichus, not Proclus, however. In any event, we agree with Westerink's assessment that 'there may be some misunderstanding here, either on the lecturer's or on the reportator's side'

politeia or constitution. According to Anonymous, the *skopos* of the *Republic* is the ‘unhypothetical’ (i.e. ideal) *politeia*, while the *Laws* concerns the *politeia* that is ‘hypothetical’ in the sense that laws and customs are laid down. Anonymous also refers to a ‘reformed’ *politeia* where we deal with the evil disturbances in our souls. The latter he takes to be the *skopos* of the *Epistles*.

Proclus himself criticises Platonists who take the *skopos* of the *Republic* to be merely the *politeia* in the external sense of a set of political arrangements (*in Remp.* I 8.6–11.4). In fact, the *skopos* of the *Republic* concerns the relations between the classes in the city and also the relation among the parts of the soul – both an internal and external *politeia*. Now, Proclus’ view is that the parts of the soul other than reason are not immortal (*in Remp.* II 94.4–19) and he thinks that Plato himself makes this clear at the end of the dialogue in *Republic* X. Nonetheless, since we live with the mortal, irrational soul as our companion, our way of life is twofold and so is our happiness (*in Parm.* 931.18–23). Political virtue – or better, ‘constitutional virtue’ – is the excellence that the whole soul possesses and in particular the excellence that arises for the whole as a consequence of how its *parts* are related. This political virtue and the corresponding political kind of happiness is the business of the *Republic* on Proclus’ view (cf. *in Remp.* I 26.29–27.5). Within the Iamblichean curriculum, the work that teaches political virtue and paves the way for the *Phaedo*’s treatment of kathartic or purificatory virtue is the *Gorgias*.

O’Meara collects in tabular form lists of works within the Platonic corpus and outside it that could be studied under the heading of ‘political virtue’ (pp. 65–7). He also notes that in our single surviving commentary on the *Gorgias*, Olympiodorus refers more often to the *Laws* and the *Republic* than to any other Platonic dialogue.¹⁵ So while the *Republic* did not make the list of Iamblichus’ twelve core dialogues, it was obviously treated as an important source of illumination for political virtue and political happiness. As a text to teach in the manner in which the Neoplatonists taught Plato, its length certainly made it less practical. There may also have been objections raised to the dialogue on the grounds of its unity. It might seem to us modern readers that the *Gorgias* – with its three distinct speakers and range of topics – is no more or less unified than the *Republic*. But Olympiodorus in his commentary tells us what unifies the *Gorgias*. Its *skopos* is political or constitutional happiness. The *form* of this kind of happiness is justice and temperance. (These are, of course, the virtues from *Republic* IV that involve all three parts of the soul.) The *efficient* cause of this kind of

¹⁵ See also Tarrant (2010).

happiness is the philosophical life, while its *paradigmatic* cause is the cosmos. On Olympiodorus' division of the parts of the dialogue, the conversations with Gorgias, Polus and Callicles elucidate the efficient, formal and final causes of political happiness respectively. So the unity of these causes yields a similar unity for the dialogue. We note that Proclus' specification of a similar *skopos* for the *Republic* does not yield a division of the text that is quite so neat and tidy. This could have given rise to the view that, among these two dialogues with similar themes, the *Gorgias* had a greater degree of unity than the *Republic*.

We believe that it would be a mistake to take a particular Platonic dialogue's place within (or outside) the Iamblichean canon too seriously. By 'too seriously' we mean that – in spite of the Neoplatonists' explicit identification of some dialogue as introductory or related to a lower kind of happiness than the contemplative *eudaimonia* and union with the divine that is the stated goal of their complete program of study – most 'beginning' commentaries do not consistently confine themselves to simple lessons on lower levels of reality. In truth, Proclus will happily import into his exegesis of an argument that is putatively concerned only with political happiness considerations having to do with the very highest levels of being. Thus, for example, his elucidation of Socrates' function argument in *Republic* I (352e–354a) relates the distinction between things that have a function F because they *alone* can perform that function and things that have a function G because they perform G *best* to the dual nature of the highest principle as both source of unity and source of goodness. Whatever they may say, in practice the Neoplatonic commentary tradition teaches *all* the mysteries of Platonism from *all* the dialogues that they interpret for their students. This observation is salient to the next section of our introduction. One of the things that has made modern scholars suspicious of the idea that Proclus' *Commentary* was ever intended by its author to be a single work is the fact that different essays within the collection seem to be addressed to quite different audiences. In fact, this is not unique to the *Republic Commentary*. Proclus seems to move freely between relatively straightforward exegesis and remarks on the most arcane of Neoplatonic doctrines in all his works. While the *Timaeus Commentary* is more frequently addressed to those with significant background knowledge, it is not invariably so. Moreover, the *Alcibiades Commentary* frequently digresses into material that seems to be directed to those who are not mere beginners.¹⁶

¹⁶ To take but one example among many, consider the digression on the 'more secret' of the doctrines on love described at *in Alc.* I 50.23, ff. Here the beginner is treated to ideas drawn from the *Chaldean Oracles*, as well as the 'three monads' that figure so prominently in Proclus' understanding of the *Philebus*. All this even before the student has completed the dialogue that allegedly instructs him in what he truly is – a soul!

2. The unity of Proclus' Republic Commentary

As long ago as 1929 Carl Gallavotti argued for the heterogeneity of the essays contained in the *Republic Commentary* as we now possess it and sought to establish a chronology for the composition of the scattered writings that have come to be included in it.¹⁷ The *Republic Commentary* we possess, Gallavotti argued, is a descendent, not of a unified work arranged by Proclus himself, but instead traces its origins back to a collection put together at some point after Proclus' death (p. xlvi). It combines independent pieces on topics in the *Republic* with an *Introduction* or *Isagoge*. The result is a kind of portmanteau of fundamentally disparate materials. Gallavotti supposed that some essays included under the title of the *Republic Commentary* are for beginners – the vestiges of the *Introduction* – while others are learned digressions on points of detail that would have been well beyond the understanding of the audience for the *Introduction*.

This hypothesis about the heterogeneity of the work has had consequences for its modern language translations. There is only one modern language translation of the entirety of Proclus' *Republic Commentary* – the three-volume French translation of A. J. Festugière published in 1970.¹⁸ Very substantial portions of the work were translated into Italian by M. Abbate in 2004.¹⁹ In 2012 Robert Lamberton published his translation of essays 5 and 6 (with facing page Greek text) under the title *Proclus the Successor on Poetics and the Homeric Poems*.²⁰ Abbate's choices about which parts of the *Republic Commentary* to include in his translation are conditioned not only by the limits of human endurance – the text of Kroll runs to 664 pages excluding the scholia he prints at the end – but also by his view about the nature of the work that we now possess. Abbate translates what he takes to be the original *Introduction*, omitting Essays 6, 12, 13 and 16. The last, Essay 16, is the massive line by line commentary on the Myth of Er. This is the only part of the *Republic Commentary* that goes through Plato's text with the same level of detail that we find in Proclus' other commentaries on the *Parmenides*, *Timaeus* and *Alcibiades I*.²¹ Lamberton feels similarly justified in translating only Essays 5 and 6 since he agrees with Sheppard's somewhat more circumscribed hypothesis about the underlying disunity of the *Republic Commentary* as we now possess it.²²

¹⁷ Gallavotti (1929).

¹⁸ Festugière (1970).

¹⁹ Abbate (2004).

²⁰ Lamberton (2012).

²¹ Unlike the case of the *Republic*, however, each of these sustained, line-by-line commentaries breaks off before the commentator reaches the end of the dialogue.

²² Sheppard (1980).

We wish to demur slightly from this scholarly consensus. In this section we argue that Proclus' *Republic Commentary* has more unity than is often supposed. In our view Sheppard shows that Gallavotti's more specific claims about the *order* of composition of the essays are not well-supported by the evidence.²³ She, Lamberton and Abbate nonetheless agree that the existing manuscript is clearly a mixture compounded from a student-oriented *Introduction* to the *Republic* (Essays 1–5, 7–8, 10–12, and 14–15) into which have been integrated other essays composed for different audiences, purposes and occasions. Thus they suppose that Proclus' *Republic Commentary* has significantly less unity than its single title would suggest. Indeed, Sheppard and Lamberton both argue that the work is not entirely consistent since Essay 5 presents a quite different taxonomy of poetry than Essay 6. Since the two essays are not consistent on this subject, we can safely infer that they belong to different layers of Proclus' intellectual development – even if we cannot identify the finer distinctions in intellectual development as Gallavotti had supposed.

We reply that even if it is granted that the essays in Proclus' *Commentary* had distinct purposes related to different settings and that the collection of essays may have grown organically as Proclus added to it, it remains that Proclus' *Republic Commentary* constitutes a work that is no less unified than Plato's own dialogue. We address the alleged inconsistency between Essays 5 and 6 in the introduction to Essay 6. For the moment, let us address individually the various 'oddities' that these commentators suppose to have been integrated with the *Isagoge to the Republic* to yield the present heterogeneous collection of works. In the next section we'll look at the content of the work as a whole and argue that it fits together rather better than these scholars have supposed.²⁴

What parts of the existing *Republic Commentary* are alleged to be accretions to the original *Introduction*? Essay 6 advertises itself as emerging from a lecture that Proclus gave for the celebration of Plato's birthday.²⁵ This would indeed be a special 'one-off'. Similarly, Essay 13 contains a lengthy discussion of the views of various Platonists on the nuptial number in the *Republic* and this level of discussion of earlier interpretations of Plato's text is not, on the whole, reproduced in other Essays. Essay 16 is a line by line commentary on the

²³ Sheppard (1980), 36–9.

²⁴ Our conviction in this regard has been substantially influenced by conversations with David Pass who completed his PhD thesis on the *Republic Commentary* at Berkeley and who was involved in the early stages of this project. David returned to the USA to pursue his career there and has not been involved in this book, but we are grateful to him for his dogged defence of the unity of the *Republic Commentary*. Readers who wish to see the case for a stronger unity thesis than that which we defend prosecuted with great zeal should consult David's thesis.

²⁵ For the relation of the written work to Proclus' birthday lecture and that lecture to a previous lecture by Syrianus, see Sheppard (1980), 32.

Myth of Er, while no other essay in the *Republic Commentary* proceeds by a detailed exegesis of every line of Plato's text. In addition Essay 16 is massive. It makes up roughly 40 percent of the whole of the *Republic Commentary*. The final appendix in Essay 17 discusses Aristotle's criticisms of Plato's *Republic* in his *Politics*. The only other essay in the *Republic Commentary* that treats a philosopher other than Plato at this level of detail is the short Essay 9 on the views of Theodore of Asine in relation to women's virtues.

But even acknowledging these oddities about 6, 13, 16 and 17, it still remains true that Proclus' *Commentary* contains at least one essay centred on one or more topics in all the ten books of Plato's dialogue. The work thus covers the whole of the *Republic*. Now, it is also true that it treats the topics discussed within these books with uneven levels of detail. But we believe this partly reflects judgements about which parts of the work are the most significant and/or most in need of interpretation by the Platonic *diadochus*. Modern books dealing with Plato's *Republic* as a whole have not lavished the same attention on the Myth of Er that Proclus does. But, by the same token, modern books dealing with Plato's *Statesman* have not treated the story of the cosmic reversal as a key moment in the dialogue. But all that we know of the tradition of Neoplatonic commentaries on the *Statesman* suggests that it was, for them, the part of the text that demanded the most detailed treatment.²⁶ The Neoplatonists seem to have regarded the mythic aspects of Plato's works as especially dense with hidden meanings of precisely the sort that the Platonic *diadochus* is suited to elucidate. Moreover, when we modern teachers of Plato lecture on the *Republic*, we do so to classrooms of people who have very little familiarity with philosophy and typically no previous acquaintance with Plato. This is not the case for the audience that Proclus addresses in his *Republic Commentary*. As Abbate notes, even the essays that Gallavotti supposes to constitute the *Introduction* presuppose significant technical vocabulary and acquaintance with the Platonic corpus.²⁷ If the elucidation of the Myth of Er occupies a number of pages in Proclus' book on the *Republic* that is disproportionate to the number of pages that the Myth takes up within the context of Plato's dialogue itself, then this may reflect either Proclus' judgement about what part of the dialogue is most important or his decision about what part of the dialogue his audience needs the most help in understanding or both. His judgement may not be ours and his audience is almost certainly not ours. But this does not mean that his exegesis of the Myth of Er is a separate enterprise that was only later folded into the same manuscript as the rest of his *Introduction* to the *Republic*.

²⁶ Cf. Dillon (1995).

²⁷ Abbate (2004).

We grant that Essay 6 notes the circumstances surrounding its composition and these are not merely the ordinary classroom setting implied by, say, the first lines of Essay 1. But nothing would prevent this work from now being used in that ordinary classroom setting. We also grant that the lengthy Essay 6 clearly aims to do more than introduce students to Plato's philosophy as it is conveyed in the *Republic*. It seeks to show that Plato's philosophy is in agreement with Homer's views on the gods – when, of course, Homer's theology has been carefully extracted from the poems' surface meaning by the application of appropriate interpretive methods. But this aim of reconciling Plato with other sources of authority is one that is common to *all* Proclus' commentaries. The *Timaeus Commentary*, for instance, often digresses to show the consistency of what is taught in the text at hand with the *Chaldean Oracles* or with Orphic verses. Granted, those digressions to harmonize Plato's teachings with other authoritative sources are not as extensive as Essay 6's efforts to reconcile Plato with Homer. But there are two important differences between Homer and, say, the *Chaldean Oracles*. First, Plato at least *appears* to attack Homer's theology in the *Republic* in ways that he does not, for instance, appear to attack other sacred sources of wisdom in the Neoplatonic canon. Second, there is simply a lot more Homeric text to be reconciled with the wisdom of Plato than is the case with these other sources of wisdom.

With respect to Essay 13 and the nuptial number, there exists a substantial scholarly literature on this question that has not been confined to antiquity.²⁸ If *we* now regard the interpretation of this obscure passage as a matter for a good footnote rather than a key to Plato's thought in the *Republic*, it is because we do not share with Proclus the confidence that Plato was a Pythagorean who communicated things to us through number symbolism. Everyone agrees that Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus* forms a unified work. But the density of his commentary on *Timaeus* 34b2–37c5 (where the Demiurge implants the various numbers and harmonies in the World Soul) outstrips even that concerned with the nature and identity of the Demiurge (*Tim.* 27c1–31b3). The commentary on the symbolic significance of the various numbers and harmonies similarly involves the exposition of the views of earlier commentators such as Porphyry, Amelius, and Theodore of Asine. As with the myths in Plato, the Neoplatonists regard passages having to do with numbers as conveying deep truths symbolically by Pythagorean means.²⁹ Nothing in Essay 13's occupation with what we might regard as a trivial puzzle or level of detail or the explanation of the views of earlier Platonists is inconsistent with Proclus' commentary practice as evidenced elsewhere. Given Proclus'

²⁸ Callataÿ (1996).

²⁹ Cf. Baltzly (2016).

interpretive preoccupations, there is no need to regard Essay 13 as an alien element integrated into an otherwise cohesive *Introduction* to the *Republic*.

Essays 8 and 9 present a slightly different challenge to our argument for the essential unity of Proclus’ *Republic Commentary*. Our view is that Essays 8 and 9 represent a ‘doublet’. Proclus treated the same topic once in Essay 9, drawing upon the work of Theodore of Asine. Essay 8 is longer, treats of further problems – though it covers some of the same problems – and does not mention Theodore.³⁰ It was perhaps intended to supersede the shorter essay, but both have been included in our current version of the *Republic Commentary*. But there is precedent for this. The *Timaeus Commentary* gives two considerations of one and the same lemma. Baltzly argued that this is evidence of a similar doublet in that work: the second version involves a reworking and expansion of some of Syrianus’ views that appear in the first treatment of the lemma.³¹ If the existence of such a doublet does not render the *Timaeus Commentary* a heterogeneous mix, the existence of such a parallel double treatment of the same topic in the *Republic Commentary* is not problematic in and of itself.

To appreciate the sense in which the *Republic Commentary* covers the whole of Plato’s dialogue, it is useful to line the essays up with the books of the *Republic* that they discuss.

Proclus	Book of Plato’s <i>Republic</i> that is primary focus
Essay 1 – on the seven <i>kephalia</i> of the <i>Republic</i> : (i) its <i>skopos</i> ; (ii) literary form; (iii) setting and characters; (iv) sense in which it concerns a <i>politeia</i> ; (v) the relation of its <i>politeia</i> to those in the actual world; (vi) means through which we consider it; (vii) the dialogue’s unity.) Incomplete – ends with (iii)	Book I
Essay 2 – on the arguments against	Book I

³⁰ Theodore is, in any case, a rather equivocal figure in Proclus’ commentaries. On the one hand, it is listed in the opening of the Platonic Theology as one of the inheritors of the true Platonic philosophy, along with Plotinus, Amelius, Porphyry and Iamblichus (*Plat. Theol.* I 6.16, ff). On the other hand, when one considers the reports of his views that Proclus provides us with, there is in fact very little that he finds in those views that he agrees with.

³¹ *In Tim.* Vol 4, p. 26.

Polemarchus' definition of justice Missing entirely	
Essay 3 – on the four arguments against Thrasymachus' definition of justice First two arguments missing	Book I (the remaining sections principally concern 351a–54c)
Essay 4 – precepts for poetic depictions of the gods	Book II esp. 379b–d and 380d–83c
Essay 5 – ten questions about the consistency of what Plato says about poetry both within the <i>Republic</i> and in relation to other dialogues	Books II, III and X, as well as <i>Phaedrus</i> , <i>Laws</i> and <i>Timaeus</i>
Essay 6 – on the agreement of Homer with Plato	Books II, III and X
Essay 7 – on the tripartite division of the soul and the virtues	Book IV
Essay 8 – on whether virtue in women is the same as in men	Book V, 451c–57c
Essay 9 – on the views of Theodore of Asine on whether men's and women's virtue is the same	Book V, 451c–57c
Essay 10 – on the difference between the philosopher and the lover of sights and sounds	Book V, 476a–480a
Essay 11 – on the Good	Book VI, 504d–509e
Essay 12 – on the Cave	Book VII, 514a–517e
Essay 13 – on the speech of the Muses and the interpretation of the nuptial number	Book VIII, 545d–??
Essay 14 – on the three arguments that the life of the just person is happier	Book IX, 580a–88c
Essay 15 – on the three main topics of book X	Book X <i>in toto</i>
Essay 16 – line by line commentary on the Myth of Er	Book X, 614b–21c

While it is true that the level of treatment afforded to each of the books is not what one would expect of a modern commentary on the *Republic*, this reflects differences of judgement about what parts of Plato’s dialogue are most important and which parts stand in greatest need of exegesis.

3. Looking forward to volumes 2 and 3

While we think that the collection of essays taken as a whole presents a reasonably unified attempt to interpret and explain the *Republic*, we will nonetheless preface each essay in each of the volumes in this series with a short introduction. Readers who find themselves unpersuaded by the argument of the previous section can treat the individual essays as self-standing, independent studies if they like. This volume contains Essays 1 and 3–6, each with an accompanying introduction. In this section we would like to preview the contents of volumes II and III. The previous section addressed the negative case against the basic unity of the *Republic Commentary*, viz. that the differences among its component parts suggest that what lay between the covers of our single ill-treated codex was a potpourri of works having only the text of the *Republic* in common. In addition to previewing the content of coming volumes, this section will make a positive case for the basic unity of the *Republic Commentary* by showing recurring ideas in Essays 7–16.

Essay 7 concerns the tri-partite division of the soul and the account of the four cardinal virtues in Book IV. It also provides us with an account of what distinguishes the political or constitutional gradation of virtue from others, and in particular, what distinguishes it from the contemplative virtues that the dialogues that come after the *Phaedo* in Iamblichus’ reading order are supposed to promote. To do this Essay 7 applies the distinction that Plato draws in the *Sophist* to the parts of the soul (and the analogous classes of persons in the ideal city). It is one thing to consider the virtue of the reasoning part (or the spirited or appetitive parts) *kath auto* or in itself and another to consider this part’s virtue *pros allo* or ‘in relation to another.’ The political virtues are manifested in the various psychic parts’ *relational* activities (I 208.29–30). Each gradation of virtue (ethical, political and purificatory) includes all four of the cardinal virtues. But within each gradation, one of the cardinal virtues is pre-

eminent. Justice is the virtue that is particularly characteristic of political virtue (*in Remp.* I 12.26–13.6).

Among these political virtues, some are more political – i.e. more relational – than others. The political gradation of wisdom is a virtue that reason alone exhibits in its own right. Similarly, the spirited part of the soul, since it ideally rules over appetite in conjunction with reason, gets its own proprietary virtue – courage. These two virtues Proclus calls ‘ruling virtues’ (*in Remp.* I 228.13) Appetite, since it is ideally only ruled and never itself a ruler, exhibits no virtue in its own right. Spirit is, of course, also subordinate to reason so it shares with appetite the virtue of self-control. Similarly, all the parts need to play their role in justice. Since virtues are states that tend toward perfection and living well, the political virtues exhibit a classic example of the Neoplatonic descent from greater to lesser perfection.

Psychic part	<i>kath auto</i> virtue	relational virtue
Reason	Wisdom	Justice, the cause of self-control
Spirit	Courage	Justice, auxiliary cause (<i>sunaition</i>) of self-control
Appetite		Justice, self-control

We have seen before that Proclus seeks to justify claims that Socrates’ Book I function argument that Socrates’ audience in the *Republic* simply accepts at face value. In Essay 7 Proclus similarly seeks to explain the subordination of appetite to spirit and spirit to reason by reference to the ordered metaphysical triad of *hyparxis*, *dynamis* and *nous*.³² So Essay 7 – though it belongs to the essays in the *Republic Commentary* that Gallavotti supposed to make up an *Isagoge* to the work – presupposes a significant understanding of Neoplatonic metaphysics and also elucidates the *Republic* by reference to logical distinctions drawn in the *Sophist*.

Essay 7 also paves the way for the discussion of whether the virtues are the same in men and women – the topic that occupies much of Essays 8 and 9. The introduction to Essay 7 makes the point that where the essence of x is the same as the essence of y, the virtues of x and y are the same too. Essays 8 and 9 both open by defending this claim where the values of x and y are male guardians and female guardians. But both essays also take up important intertextual questions in Platonism. In particular, how should one interpret the sameness of virtue in men and women in relation to the claims in the *Timaeus* that a soul will never make

³² For this triad, see *Plat. Theol.* I 80.21, ff. For the correlation with the soul, see *in Remp.* I 226.11–18 and MacIsaac (2009).

its first descent into a female body, with incarnation as a woman being reserved as a warning for those who have exhibited moral failings in their first incarnation (*Tim.* 42b)?³³ So while both essays have sections where Proclus explains Plato's *Republic* from the *Republic* itself, they also resemble Essay 5 in posing questions about how the *Republic* can be made consistent with other dialogues. Thus the intertextuality of Essays 7 and 8 is strikingly similar to that of Essay 5.

Essay 10 first seeks to show that the distinction that Socrates draws between Beauty Itself (which is one of the objects known by the philosopher) and the 'many beautifuls' that occupy the sight-lovers is compatible with the Neoplatonic distinction between participated and unparticipated forms. By Proclus' lights, there is a three-fold distinction: first there is an unparticipated form that serves as a paradigmatic cause of the participated form. Then there is the participated form that is a cause that is coordinate with or on the same level as the thing that participates in it, and only after that is there the beautiful particular. Proclus shows how Socrates' vocabulary can accommodate this three-fold distinction within its opposition between the one and the many. Indeed, it is thanks to this that we can easily see – he argues – that Plato does *not* recognise any such form as the Ugly Itself. Another puzzle that is internal to Neoplatonic metaphysics concerns the status of monadic forms in the region above the Moon. While here in the sub-lunary there are many instances of the form Donkey, above there is one and only one thing that participates in the form of Sun. In the latter case, the opposition between form and participant does not map onto the distinction between one and many. So while Essay 10 has the *Republic* as its point of departure, the questions that it concentrates on are intimately related to other dialogues – and particularly to the *Parmenides* where Socrates evinces some puzzlement about the range of Forms and whether there are Forms for valueless things like hair, dirt and mud. As with the essays previously discussed, there is very little sense in which Essay 7 is merely introductory in its implicit presuppositions about the level of the audience's understanding and, moreover, merely introductory to the *Republic*, whilst leaving other, harder Platonic dialogues to one side.

As one might expect, Essay 11 on the Good in *Republic* VII uses Plato's analogy with the Sun to explain the sense in which the Good is 'beyond being' in a distinctively Neoplatonic way. He does this by relating the analogy of the Sun in the *Republic* to other Platonic texts. Proclus considers three senses of 'the good'. The first is 'the good in us' – i.e.

³³ A problem that continues to attract attention among modern scholars. For a recent valuable contribution, see Harry and Polansky On Proclus' own – very different! – reconciliation of the two Platonic passages, see Baltzly (2013).

the thing that, being present to our lives, makes them go well. This good he takes to be the subject of discussion in the *Philebus*. Proclus takes Socrates' remark at *Republic* 505c about those who suppose pleasure to be the good as a ploy by which Plato broaches the topic of the good in us, but only in order to make clear that the good that he is *now* going to discuss is *not* the good in us. Similarly, Proclus is confident that the Good under discussion in the part of the *Republic* is not the Form of the Good considered as one Form among many. In order to show this, he turns now to the *Sophist* with its discussion of the 'greatest kinds' or *megista genê*. His essay briefly summarises a distinction between the *genê* which *constitute* each subject as the subject that it is and other Forms that *perfect* each subject. While the former are existence-endowing (*hyparchtikos*), the latter are perfection-endowing (*teleiôtikos*, in *Remp.* I 270. 24–5). The first group are made up of the *Sophist*'s greatest kinds (Being, Sameness, Difference) and, in a secondary way, Forms corresponding to sortals, such as Living Being, Horse, Man, etc. Perfective Forms include Justice, Strength, Beauty, etc. In one sense, we can speak of a Form of the Good that belongs to the same order as these perfective Forms, though it stands at the head of that order (270.19). Proclus calls this Form of the Good *to hôs eidos agathon* (271.15). Now, the perfection-conferring Forms are subordinate to the *megista genê* (and perhaps to the other constitutive forms like Man as well). After all, when something is good, it *is*. But a thing can *be* without being good. So Being (*to einai*) is not the same as being Good (*to eu*) and the latter is subordinate to the former (in *Remp.* 271.1–2). So the Good considered as a Form on the same level with Justice or Beauty is not the subject of discussion in *Republic* VII either, since the Good that Socrates discusses there 'is king over the intelligible realm' (*Rep.* 509d2).

The super-essential Good that lies beyond the Good as Form is the subject that Socrates now approaches by means of the analogy with the Sun. But Proclus supposes that he indicates it only in a veiled manner because of the presence of the sophists, Thrasymachus and Cleitophon, in front of whom one would not reveal the deepest mysteries (274.1–3). Accordingly, the analogy with the Sun hints only at what The Good is not or, more accurately, what it transcends. It transcends both Truth and Being (277.14–27) in as much as it is the cause of these things and the cause is superior to that of which it is the cause. Proclus argues at length that, as a result of this, the Good beyond Being is not an object of knowledge or *epistêmê*. Rather, the understanding (*gnôsis*) of it is negative and achieved by subtraction (*kata aphairesis*, 285.5) – a method of knowing that Proclus takes to be practised in the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides*. But Glaucon and the other participants in this discussion are not ready for such an exercise (286.5). Nonetheless, Proclus supposes that what is taught by

means of analogy in the *Republic* concerning the Good is one and the same with the doctrine that is conveyed in a very compressed manner in *Epistle II* 312e. Thus Proclus addresses the mysterious character of the analogy that is meant to illuminate the Good armed with several weapons from the Neoplatonists' hermeneutic armoury. First, he reads into Plato's text the metaphysics of ontological levels characteristic of Neoplatonism. Second, he avails himself of conspicuous inter-textuality in interpreting the *Republic* by reference to the *Sophist*. Finally, he accounts for the cryptic nature of Plato's words in the *Republic* by appealing to considerations involving audience, as well as to considerations about the ineffable nature of the highest principle of all.

Proclus' discussions of the analogies of the doubly divided line and the cave in *Republic VII* (Essay 12) similarly involve relating what is said in the *Republic* to other dialogues. Thus, for instance, the initial division of line into *two* halves – corresponding to the visible and the intelligible – is related to the passage in the *Philebus* (16c) where Socrates urges the person who wants to investigate being to see if, after having brought all the particulars under the one Form, there are two sub-species into which it divides (and if not two, then chose the smallest number possible in the process of division). Similarly, Proclus proceeds on the assumption that the further divisions of the line create a four-term geometric proportion of the sort that is said to be the most beautiful kind of bond at *Timaeus* 31c and the judgement of Zeus in *Laws VI* 757b. When Socrates describes the prisoner who has escaped from the cave getting accustomed to the world above, he remarks that he would first find it easiest to look at reflections in water or the night sky (*Rep.* 516a). Proclus takes this opportunity to relate the stars in the night sky to the idea, developed in his *Timaeus Commentary*, that both the heavenly spheres and the stars and planets are gods. The light of these heavenly bodies is analogous to the divine light of the Good that is reflected in the intelligibles. As the escaped prisoner needs to see the complete night sky before attempting to see the Sun, so too the philosopher needs to see the entire intelligible cosmos (*noêtos diakosmos*) before he can hope to approach the Good beyond Being. Finally, the fact that Socrates says that the vision of the Good is difficult to see at *Rep.* 517c1 is related to Socrates' similarly indirect approach to the Good in *Philebus* 65a1. There Socrates says that if he and Protarchus cannot hunt the Good down in a single Form that they will secure it by the conjunction of three: beauty, symmetry and truth. Presumably Proclus takes Socrates' mention of two of the 'three monads' of the *Philebus* – beauty and truth – in relation to the Good at *Rep.* 517c2–4 as sufficient warrant for supposing that here too Socrates counsels the philosopher to enter initially into the 'vestibule of the Good' in the manner that the *Philebus*

describes. Indeed, it is at this point in the *Republic Commentary* that Proclus refers his readers and/or auditors to his (now lost) book *On the Three Monads* in the *Philebus* (295.25).

Both Essays 11 and 12 form part of what Gallavotti took to be an Introduction to the *Republic*. He supposed that works such as Essay 6 on Homer and Plato, or the detailed exegesis of the Myth of Er were originally quite different in character and combined with these introductory materials on the *Republic* by some later editor. While it is true that Essays 11 and 12 contain parts that are more or less straight-forwardly exegetical of the *Republic*, we note here the extent of cross textual references, as well as the sophisticated understanding of Neoplatonic metaphysics that is presupposed by them. We believe that a better appreciation of these aspects of the “easy” parts of the *Republic Commentary* should diminish the temptation to see the work as made up of parts that are *radically* different in character. Both (relative) beginners and advanced students would find much to absorb and consider in these essays.

Republic VIII 545d marks a definite turning point in Plato’s dialogue, both in its content and in its style, though this fact has perhaps not been appreciated as fully as it should be by modern commentators. At this point, Socrates’ description of the ideal *polis* and the nature and education of its Guardians is complete. He now proposes to return to the earlier discussion of other kinds of *politeia* that had been postponed in order that he might address the objections voiced by his conversational partners at the opening of Book V. Since Plato goes on to highlight the deficiencies of the alternatives to the ideal civic and psychic constitutions by describing their devolution from that ideal, he must first confront the reverse of the question raised by Glaucon at 471c–e. Glaucon was happy to agree that the city described by Socrates was the best, but wondered about how it might *come about*. Following the revelation of the Guardians’ nature as philosophers and practitioners of infallible dialectical reasoning, there is now a genuine puzzle about how a city governed by such people could ever devolve into the increasingly fractured and fractious civic and psychic types that Socrates goes on to describe in Book VIII and the beginning of Book IX. It is as difficult to say how the Kallipolis could *fall apart* as it is to say how it could come about.

In Book V, Socrates’ response to Glaucon’s challenge about how the ideal city might come about begins by making a comparison with *painters* – the very same artists whose work will soon be dismissed as three removes from the truth in *Republic* X. It would be unfair to reproach a painter who had depicted in great detail the finest and most beautiful human being with the charge that he could not show with similar exactitude how this ideal man should come about. In explaining how the Kallipolis might fall apart, Socrates avails himself of the

poetic conceit of allowing the Muses to tell how the *homonoia* that insures the perpetuation of the best *politeia* could be lost. The first step in the Muses' tale concerns how the Guardians – impressive though their education might be – cannot through the means of reasoning combined with sense perception (546b1–2) grasp the optimum times for procreation. This optimum time is expressed as the nuptial number. Both the content and style of this passage is famously difficult, as befits the oracular speech of divine beings such as Muses. What is less noted is the fact that Plato seemingly attributes the *entire* account of the devolution of *poleis* and souls that makes up Book VIII to the Muses. At 547b1 Glaucon asks Socrates, 'What do the Muses say after this?' and while Socrates reverts to a more normal style of speaking at no point does he explicitly drop the pretence that he is reporting what the Muses say. Indeed, the poetic character of the narrative of civic and psychic decline is reinforced again at 550c4 when Socrates says, 'Shall we not speak after the manner of Aechylus of 'another man ordered after another city'?' at the beginning of the explanation of how oligarchy evolves from timocracy. In fact, the speech of the Muses is never explicitly drawn to a close.

Modern readers such as ourselves who are disinclined to credit Plato with an authority built on divine insight would be likely to suppose that he has merely used the voice of the Muses as a literary device. It serves to highlight a fulcrum upon which to turn the dialogue in a new direction and when it has served that purpose Plato just abandons it. Proclus, of course, is not such a modern reader. Essay 13 on the speech of the Muses is a response to the fact that at this point a new voice enters Plato's text. It also true the Essay is overwhelmingly focused on the proper interpretation of the so-called nuptial number. Proclus dedicates nearly three quarters of this eighty page essay to assorted numerological and astrological considerations about the proper interpretation of Plato's text, as well as the calculation of the most auspicious times for procreation more generally. But Essay 13 is not simply a learned digression cataloguing previous interpretations of an opaque but inconsequential detail of Plato's *Republic*. Proclus really does treat the speech of the Muses as a new *logos*. Accordingly we get some of the same preliminary questions asked of it as are asked of the dialogue as a whole in Essay 1. Its *skopos* is to reveal the causes for the destruction of the best *politeia*, and while one of these causes lies in the Guardians themselves, the other cause lies in the nature of the cosmos (II 7.8–16). The latter affords Proclus the opportunity to connect the speech of the Muses to Plato's *Timaeus*. The speech of the Muses also has a distinctive quality which is 'lofty' (*hypsêlos*, cf. 545c3) that is fitting for beings such as the Muses when they announce the destruction of the city in the manner of an oracle. Moreover,

the mode through which the teaching is communicated to us is one that requires Proclus, in his role as teacher, to spend a great many pages helping us to unlock the message. The teaching is *apophatic* by virtue of its speakers, for the Muses speak to us in the same manner as those who are inspired and give oracles. Moreover, the teaching is *iconic* by virtue of its subject, ‘for to indicate the truth from numbers is to teach from icons, and what is iconic is akin to souls and all that is cosmic’ (II 8.12–14). So the very first part of the speech of the Muses demands close attention. The Pythagorean technique of teaching from iconic numbers is compounded by the apophatic style of the Muses who deliver the lesson. Small wonder that Proclus feels justified in spending considerable time unpicking the meaning of the nuptial number! If he has chosen to spend more time on the nuptial number than on Plato’s account of the devolution of constitutions in the rest of Book VIII, then this may be because he took this part of Plato’s text to be the part with which his audience would need the most help.

Essay 13 is not merely concerned with the nuptial number. Proclus prefaces his detailed treatment of this subject with a discussion of the claim that ‘all that has come to be is subject to destruction’ (546a2). Proclus dedicates eight pages of his essay to the proper interpretation key concepts in Plato’s claim, such as ‘generated’ and ‘time’, and relates these to the teaching of the *Timaeus* on similar topics. Modern readers may find this exegesis of the *Republic* in terms of the *Timaeus* otiose. But we think that Proclus is not wrong to supply Plato with argument where it is needed. It *is* a genuine puzzle how the Guardians – whose competence to govern is grounded in knowledge of the Good – could allow the Kallipolis to fail. Plato has indeed painted himself into a corner by combining the portrait of his super-qualified rulers with the authorial decision to present the inferior states through a narrative of decline from an ideal. When Plato lets the Muses explain how this is possible, he implicitly invites the reader to judge the narrative of psychic and civic decline by the evidential standards we apply to poetry. He says, in effect, ‘Hear my tale the way you would hear Homer’s.’ Perhaps Proclus is not wrong to suppose that the same tale can be told to a different evidential standard.

We cannot be certain how or to what extent Proclus may have framed the preliminary discussion of the destructibility of all that is generated or the detailed discussion of the nuptial number that follows in terms of the broader aims of Book VIII. Essay 13 belongs to the second half of the manuscript of the *Republic Commentary*. As noted above Essay 13 was originally composed of an introduction and 45 paragraphs. The first eight paragraphs and part of the ninth are now missing in Vaticanus 2197 though Kroll recovered the first two pages of Essay 13 from elsewhere. The longer introduction that might well have explained why

Proclus chose to focus on these topics, among all the things in Book VIII worthy of comment, is a great loss. In view of this omission, we should be hesitant to dismiss Essay 13 as a scholastic excursus on a trivial detail in *Republic* VIII.

Essays 14 and 15 deal with Books IX and X respectively. The first is very short – only three pages and concludes with a diagram setting out the key points in the three arguments that seek to show that the just life is happier than the life of injustice. It does stand out as introductory but it is almost the only essay in the hypothesized *Isagoge* to the *Republic* that does. Essay 15 presents a similar overview of the three key arguments of Book X. Proclus provides a unifying structure to the topics treated in the concluding book of the *Republic*. There are three key topics: the condemnation of imitative poetry, the demonstration of the soul's immortality, and the providential care for souls that is exercised by gods and daemons as these human souls enter and leave mortal bodies. Proclus supposes that these apparently disparate topics are in fact unified by virtue of their psychological effect upon the reader. The discussion of the dangers of poetry is purificatory – it separates us from material images and from the false *paideia* associated with the faculty of imagination. The demonstration of the soul's nature has the effect of bringing about the soul's reversion upon itself. Finally, the teachings on the god's providential care for souls prompts the soul's reversion upon beings that are higher than itself (II 85.11–26). Thus the content of Book X is unified by the stages of separation from the body, reversion upon the self, and ascent to the divine that correspond to the gradations of virtues in Neoplatonic moral philosophy. Even though Essay 15 is far briefer than the line by line commentary on the Myth of Er that makes up Essay 16, Proclus nonetheless takes the opportunity to clear up certain important matters in the course of his exegesis of the main headings of Book X. Thus it is important that, after we have considered the demonstration of the soul's immortality, we be clear about *what part* of the soul is immortal. Proclus believes that *Timaeus* 69c7 shows that it is the rational soul alone – and not the irrational soul – that is immortal. (Syrianus' lectures on *Phaedrus* 245c5, as conveyed by Hermias, show the extent of the concern about making Plato consistent on this subject.³⁴) But we can also see that Plato means to restrict the argument for the soul's immortality to the rational soul by considering what is said at *Rep.* X 611e1. If we are to see the true nature of the soul, we must look to the soul's love of wisdom and the (intelligible) things to which the soul is attached. For Proclus, it is obvious that the irrational soul is analogous to the barnacles that have attached themselves to the sea god Glaucus. Finally, having divided the Myth of Er

³⁴ 245c5 is problematic since the most obvious reading has Socrates saying 'All soul is immortal.' Cf. Menn (2012).

into four principal parts, Proclus provides a very brief summary of the key symbolic elements in the myth. This summary leaves the door open for a longer, more detailed treatment. Indeed, Proclus characterises these brief accounts of the symbolic elements as ‘seeds’ that can be further developed by anyone who is willing and able to decode them (II 95.21–4). Thus the conclusion of Essay 15 leads quite naturally on to Essay 16. It is the development of the seeds planted here.

At several points in his *Republic Commentary* Proclus relates the three classes within the city to the various orders of gods that govern the cosmos. His introduction to the lengthiest essay in the *Commentary* – Essay 16 on the Myth of Er – returns to this theme. Like the speech of the Muses, the myth is its own *logos* and, as such, it has its own subject or *prothesis* (II 97.9). On the one hand, this is compatible with the investigation into the nature and value of justice that constitutes the *skopos* of the *Republic* taken as a whole. Thus the myth quite reasonably spells out the rewards that await the just and the unjust person after death. But, Proclus insists, a far simpler myth could have accomplished this without all the detail that is offered to us in the Myth of Er. So we can attribute an additional objective to Plato’s detailed myth and Proclus supposes that a clear indication of this further objective is given by Socrates’ remark at *Rep.* IX 592b2 that at least the ideal city exists as a paradigm *in the heavens* for anyone who wants to look at it and enrol himself as a citizen. Accordingly, the dual *prothesis* of the Myth of Er is to teach us about the *celestial republic*, in addition to reinforcing the rewards of justice and the penalties for injustice that we will meet after this life. In this celestial republic, the gods correspond to the Guardians. They regulate the cosmic laws announced by Necessity and his daughters, the Fates (*Rep.* 617c–d). The daemones correspond to the Auxiliaries, while the ‘ephemeral souls’ (617d6) correspond to the third class in the earthly republic. So while Proclus regards the myth of Er as a *logos* that is in some ways distinct (as was the speech of the Muses), it is nonetheless subordinate to the *Republic* and its aims.

This teaching takes the form of a myth because we are now dealing with higher matters (*theôrêtikôteros*) and so this is communicated in a manner that is not merely mythical, but actually mystical (II 99.21–2). While Proclus relates and endorses the responses of Porphyry to Epicurean criticisms of Plato’s use of myth, he also adds his own justifications for this mode of teaching. Myths present the intellectual light of truth clothed in fiction and this is fitting for human beings since we are ourselves partial intellects clothed by the faculty of imagination (II 107.25–108.15). The efficacy of myths, Proclus argues, is proved by parallel considerations about the efficacy of mystical rites. Here too, even people who do not

fully understand the truth that is unknowably concealed within the rites can be benefited (though this benefit is not inevitable). Proclus concludes his introductory remarks on the Myth of Er with a reference to his work, *On Mythic Symbols*, which is now lost to us.

What follows is a line by line commentary covering *Republic* 614b2–621b4 that takes up almost exactly 250 pages of Kroll's second volume. We will say more about the themes that dominate this commentary in volume 3 of this series. But it is perhaps helpful to put the level of exegetical effort involved on Proclus' part – at least as that effort is measured by pages – into some context. In his commentary on the myth of Er Proclus averages roughly 36 pages of exegesis for each OCT page of Plato's text. By contrast, the figure is over 40 pages per page for the surviving portion of the *Timaeus Commentary*. The ratio of commentary to pages of the dialogue commented on is lower in the case of Proclus' *Alcibiades Commentary* – about 24 to 1. So, gauged by the exegetical effort expended, the myth of Er has a 'semantic density' that Proclus regards as greater than that of the very first dialogue in the Iamblichean canon (the *Alcibiades I*) and one of the two keystone dialogues that complete the reading cycle.

Proclus' *Republic Commentary* concludes with a short treatise in which he addresses the criticisms offered by Aristotle in *Politics* II.2 1261a10, ff. Essay 17 was regarded by Gallavotti as a separate work that found its way into the diverse materials making up the current *Republic Commentary*. But at least he regarded it as a work of Proclus. Earlier scholars sought to assign it to the Platonist Euboulos who is mentioned in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.³⁵ The work is undoubtedly Proclus', but it is in very bad condition. Only the first eight pages survive and the last two of those are very scrappy indeed. Yet the content is one that a Platonist such as Proclus would see as intimately connected to the overall purpose of the *Republic Commentary*, for what Aristotle questions is the thesis that a *polis* is better to the extent that it is more *unified*. Doubt about this specific claim has obvious implications for the idea that the One is the source of all that is good and that degrees of unity coincide with degrees of being and of betterness. On the final page of what survives of Essay 17 Proclus draws the political concerns that motivated the work into the realm of metaphysics and the soul's salvation (368.7–10). Noting that most people put their private interests ahead of the common interest, he observes that nothing drags the soul down into the final stages of particularity than the affliction that Socrates calls 'individualism' (*idiôsis*, 462b). So the political issue of the unity of the state is set in the context of both the metaphysics of the One

³⁵ For details see the introduction to Stalley's translation of Essay 17; Stalley (1995).

or the Good and also the soul's descent into becoming. As tattered as the essay is in our present version of the text, it does not seem too far removed from the fusion of political thought, soteriology and metaphysics that characterizes the other essays in the collection. It is not, we submit, merely an appendix on matters only vaguely related to the other material in the *Republic Commentary*. Proclus seeks to defend the thesis that the more unified a thing is, the better it is. This claim is central to Proclus' philosophical project and we can discern even in the truncated version of this essay the manner in which he brought that political and metaphysical concern to bear on the final end of philosophical education – the elevation of the soul and its assimilation to the divine.

4. The value of Proclus' Republic Commentary

Over the past thirty years the research community in ancient Greek philosophy has made great strides in opening up the thought of the post-Hellenistic period and late antiquity to non-specialists. This effort has been comparable to the way in which Hellenistic philosophy was opened up to non-specialists in the 1970s and 1980s – though the task has been far greater since the sheer volume of late antique texts is so vast compared with our scattered evidence on the schools of the Hellenistic age. The vanguard of this opening up of late antique thought has, of course, been the Ancient Commentators on Aristotle project led by Sir Richard Sorabji, but in addition to this we now have English translations of many of the important Plato commentaries and other works emerging from a variety of presses, as well as the careful work of the Budé series in French.

Is this work important to anyone other than historians of philosophy? What relevance does Proclus' thought have to the philosophical concerns of the early 21st century? Perhaps more specifically – what value does an English translation of Proclus' *Republic Commentary* have for anyone who is not already enmeshed in the intricacies of late antique Neoplatonism? In this section we'll distinguish some ways in which works in ancient philosophy have applicability or relevance. We argue that Proclus' *Republic Commentary*'s relevance is not likely to be the same as that of some works of Aristotle or the Stoics. Rather, we'll argue that Proclus' essays on the Republic have relevance for 21st century philosophy because, if we are really to understand them, we must also understand much more about the broader intellectual life of late antiquity. The project of embedding Proclus' philosophy within the cultural project of pagan philosophers in the 5th century invites us to take up a similar perspective on the broader cultural significance of philosophy in our own time. We could, of course, do this

without using Proclus as a prompt, but he provides a useful contrast precisely because his cultural project seems so alien to us.

It is worth remembering that ancient Greek philosophy has been a source of ideas for contemporary analytic philosophers in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. (Those in the Continental tradition have seldom had doubts about the relevance of ancient philosophy to philosophy's present concerns.) Hilary Putnam claimed to find inspiration for functionalism in Aristotle's hylomorphic account of the soul-body relationship.³⁶ Martha Nussbaum, Julia Annas and Dan Russell have all used Hellenistic philosophy to good effect in developing insights in contemporary ethical theory and moral psychology.³⁷ Will late antique Neoplatonism have a similar direct applicability to existing problems in contemporary philosophy? Will it lead to the posing of new problems whose salience becomes suddenly relevant to us as a result of reflection on Neoplatonism?

We are not confident of a similar *direct* applicability of late antique Neoplatonism to the concerns of contemporary philosophy. Too much of Neoplatonic philosophy is too tightly tied to their metaphysics – a metaphysics many contemporary philosophers regard as largely implausible. Consider the debates about the extent to which Aristotle's function argument in *Nicomachean Ethics* I 7 presupposes his views about form and substance. Or the independence of Stoic views about the goal of living from their pantheism. There is scope for argument in these cases, but there is no comparable scope for arguing that the Neoplatonic view of the goal of living (assimilation to the divine) or the doctrine of gradations of virtue can be separated from their commitment to theism or to the incorporeality of the soul. To the extent that contemporary moral theorists are not theists and not soul-body dualists, the moral philosophy of the Neoplatonists will seem to them untenable. Similarly, Proclus' *Republic Commentary* makes it very clear that the Neoplatonists' ideas in political theory presuppose the belief that the cosmos is itself a single, unified living being that is providentially administered by a range of divinities, both encosmic and extra-cosmic. This cosmic community, they believe, is the paradigm for successful human political communities. To the extent that we find the former implausible, we will be inclined to regard the latter as holding merely historical interest.

The incompatibility between the preferred metaphysics of contemporary philosophers and Neoplatonists goes deep. It is not simply that many 21st century philosophers are atheists

³⁶ Putnam (1975). Putnam's claim to find the origins of functionalism in Aristotle was argued at greater length in Nussbaum (1978).

³⁷ Nussbaum (1994), Annas (1993) Russell (2012).

or materialists. These differences in ontology are undergirded by differences in the explanatory priorities of Neoplatonists in contrast with those of modern philosophy. We tend to see parts as ontologically prior to the wholes that they make up. From our point view, sentience, consciousness and thought are things whose causal evolution from insentient, unconscious and unthinking nature needs an explanation.³⁸ The Neoplatonists, by contrast, regard wholes as explanatory of the parts whose identities are dependent upon their inclusion in the whole. Intellect and soul are more ontologically basic and it is they who explain the emergence of material particulars.

We not only disagree with the ancient Neoplatonists about what demands an explanation, but we also differ in the sorts of *explanans* we reach for even when we share an *explanandum*. The contrast between our preferred problem-solving tool-kit and that of the Neoplatonists is nicely illustrated by one of those relatively rare cases in which we share a philosophical problem. For the Neoplatonists, the unity of things is a fact that demands explanation and the One is the (ultimate) explanation of that fact.

Until the emergence of the Problem of the Many in 1980 it is unclear that contemporary philosophers regarded the unity of things as a fact in need of an explanation. The Problem of the Many is often illustrated with the example of clouds, but the molecules making up your tea cup would serve as well. We think that, on the one hand, there is one cloud in the sky. But the edges of that cloud seem vague. We could draw its boundaries so as to include one water droplet and exclude another or vice versa. But this different composition would yield a different cloud. So how is it that we have just one cloud in that clear blue sky and not many?

The range of responses to the Problem of the Many form an interesting contrast with the Neoplatonists' straight-forward explanation – an ultimate source of unity that things can share in to a greater or lesser degree. Some contemporary philosophers have gone for nihilism: the unity of objects is, in fact, an illusion. There are parts, but not unitary objects composed from them. The other extreme response is one that has come to be called 'brutalism': it is just a brute fact that some parts – in this case, some water droplets – form a cloud while other aggregates of water droplets do not. While critics have complained that the brutalist response is *ad hoc* in so far as it posits a vast and unconnected body of brute mereological facts, no one has – to our knowledge at least – proposed a single 'one-maker' as

³⁸ To be fair, there are some contemporary metaphysicians who defend the priority of wholes over parts or pan-psychism. But even among the defenders of such views, there is a clear sense that one ought to come to this position as a last resort. The contrary views are regarded as so much more initially plausible that pan-psychism is (allegedly) vindicated only by the failure of the alternatives.

a solution. Such a proposal would, of course, have the effect of rendering the fact of each thing's unity no longer brute. It would instead be explicable in the same terms as the unity of all other things. No one today seems to have a taste for *that* kind of solution and the preferred tools for addressing the Problem of the Many tend to involve appeal to the vagueness of terms like 'cloud' or to the idea that the identity of one thing (e.g. one aggregate of water droplets with a cloud) is relative. In short, confronted with a philosophical puzzle, we tend to look for solutions in the way in which we *represent* the situation. The Neoplatonists would certainly agree that there are situations in which the soul's embodied condition leads us to misrepresent fundamental facts about the universe (e.g. the real nature of causation). But in the case at hand, they reach into the philosophers' tool-kit for a *metaphysical* solution: things are unified because, in addition to the things that are, there is something that is a source of unity that is itself so unified that it cannot strictly be said to *be* at all.

Given the divergences just discussed, we think it is unlikely that in making it easier for non-specialists to read late antique Neoplatonism we will contribute to contemporary philosophy in quite the same way that Long & Sedley or Inwood & Gerson did when they published source books on Hellenistic philosophy.³⁹ Nonetheless, the *indirect* applicability of Neoplatonism to contemporary philosophy is, we believe, fruitful and worth exploring.

In late antiquity Neoplatonism was part of broader educational and cultural projects. Moreover, the Neoplatonic philosophers seem to have been acutely aware of their involvement in those projects. Philosophy – and in late antiquity philosophy was largely synonymous with Platonism – was part of elite education or *paideia*. The mainstay of this education was rhetoric, but philosophy was not divorced from rhetoric. Plato was himself one of the paragons of good prose style. So any educated person would have had some acquaintance with his dialogues. The social function of elite education has been well described by historians of late antiquity.⁴⁰ It functioned as a marker of class and as a means through which one could assert a right to treatment of a certain sort. It was, in short, a valuable form of 'social capital.' The educated person was rendered capable of a style of speech and writing that did not merely evince his familiarity with the canon of great works but creatively deployed that familiarity to fashion a public persona. A claim to *paideia* was an implicit claim not to be treated in the ways unsuitable for a gentleman. So, for instance, one would not ordinarily flog a gentleman. The following anecdote about the pagan philosopher Hierocles illustrates the way in which *paideia* could be used to maintain the person's dignity

³⁹ Long and Sedley (1987), Inwood and Gerson (1988).

⁴⁰ For an overview and bibliography, see Watt (2012).

even in circumstances where he was not accorded the treatment proper to a gentleman. Damascius relates that when Hierocles went to Constantiople he came into conflict with Christian authorities and was flogged and exiled for some offense that Damascius does not relate. His response illustrates the attitude expected of the possessor of *paideia* in late antiquity:

As he flowed with blood [sc. after the flogging], he gathered some into the hollow of his hand and sprinkled it on the judge exclaiming: ‘There Cyclops, drink the wine now that you have devoured the human flesh.’ (fr. 45, Athanassiadi 1999)

The allusion to Homer’s *Odyssey* (9.347) through which Hierocles rebukes his judge is precisely the kind of learned remark that a cultured man should be able to make. Even when he has been subjected to a treatment that is unbecoming to an educated man, he asserts his superiority to his tormentors by a display of erudition – a display that only similarly erudite men might grasp and admire.

The pursuit of philosophy beyond that associated with the normal study of rhetoric was simultaneously consistent with the ideal of an educated person, but also in some ways undermined the values associated with the kind of public life that such education enabled. It is useful to remember that the Neoplatonists adapted a work such as Epictetus’ *Enchiridion* as a preliminary to the study of philosophy. The very stakes that *paideia* helped one to compete for – position, reputation, wealth – look rather less significant from the point of view that such a philosophical introduction encourages. We submit that philosophical *paideia* also went deeper. The educated person who had not gone so far as to pursue the life of the philosopher lived his education publically. The performance of *paideia* was always principally a crafting of the image of the self for others’ consumption. But philosophical education sought to transform one’s experience of all things so that you lived in and through metaphors drawn from the texts of the divine Plato. The performance of Platonic philosophy was not merely the construction of a self image for the consumption of others, but a construction of a different experiencing subject for the benefit of that subject. Neoplatonic philosophical writing always centred around the classroom and the discussion circle in which this personal transformation was pursued. The philosophical texts that we now possess are, we submit, not merely attempts to interpret Plato or to solve philosophical problems. They are steps along the way to a return of the soul to its divine origin. In practical terms, we think this means that they manifest signs of a project to think outside the concepts and assumptions recommended by embodied experience and to take on a new conceptual repertoire drawn from these

philosophers' understanding of Plato. They are philosophic texts, to be sure, but they are also psychagogic. This is the educational project in which late antique Platonism is engaged.

In addition to the educational project of coming to live through the Platonic dialogues, Platonists in late antiquity were engaged in at least two competing cultural projects. Pagan Platonists sought to exhibit many of the central texts of a gentleman's education, together with traditional civic practices, as part of a philosophically coherent whole. This is particularly evident in Essay 6 of the present volume in which Proclus seeks to show that the philosophical truths hidden behind Homer's allegorical poetry are consistent with Plato's divine wisdom. For their part, Christian Platonists sought to render the works of pagan philosophers (such as Plato) and the content of traditional *paideia* (such as Homer) safe for the consumption of young Christians. Writing on the influence of the Platonists Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, Peter Brown observes:

A subtle shift occurred by which the rhetorical antithesis between non-Christian *paideia* and "true" Christianity was defused. *Paideia* and Christianity were presented as two separate accomplishments, one of which led, inevitably, to the other. *Paideia* was no longer treated as the all-embracing and supreme ideal of a gentleman's life. It was seen, instead, as the necessary first stage in the life-cycle of the Christian public man. A traditional ornament, *paideia* was also a preparatory school of Christian character.⁴¹

Thus while the educational project of all the Platonist philosophers was personal and transformative, the cultural project was synoptic and public. Each kind of Platonist sought to weld the works that they all loved into a coherent whole consistent with their differing religious commitments. It was an effort to see how all the important things could, in the broadest sense, hang together and how the whole might be helpfully communicated to future generations.

Are contemporary teachers and writers of philosophy engaged in any comparable educational and cultural projects? In what way do our projects influence the form and content of our philosophical writing? These are questions that we seldom pose for ourselves. When we speak of the *indirect* application of late antique philosophy to contemporary problems, we have in mind the way in which the contextualising the practice of teaching philosophy, writing philosophy, and living philosophically in the late Roman Empire can make us aware of the significance of the broader context within which contemporary

⁴¹ Brown (1992), 123.

academics and students teach, write and attempt to live philosophically in the 21st century. Neoplatonic philosophical practice – suitably contextualised to their broader cultural aims – provides contemporary philosophers with an opportunity for us to see our own discipline with fresh eyes.

As different as the 21st century may be from the 5th, there is one clear bridge connecting us with Proclus. We noted at the outset of this introduction just how often academics in general (and not just philosophers) put Plato's *Republic* on the reading list for university courses. It was an important book for Proclus and for the Neoplatonists and it remains an important book for us. We too seek to understand it for ourselves and to explain it to students. Many of its themes – the nature of philosophy, the true aim of education – are as urgent for us as they were for philosophers in late antiquity. We are not naïve enough to think that answers that are wholly satisfactory for us in our time and place will emerge directly from Proclus' text. His *Republic* is not our *Republic* (though it must be said that he often draws our attention to features of Plato's text that we tend to overlook). Rather, part of the value of his book for us is the way in which it prompts us to think about our use of Plato's *Republic* in the projects we call education and our role in identifying and preserving what we regard as the best of our culture.

We will attempt to provide some observations on the broader projects of Neoplatonic philosophising in the course of our notes and introduction to the individual sections within this book. If the argument of this final section of the General Introduction is sound, then using the philosophy of late antiquity to shed light on contemporary philosophy must take historians of philosophy outside their usual comfort zone. If we are to use the Platonic schools of late antiquity as useful vantage point on the meaning of philosophy and true education for us, we will need to read more intellectual and social history than many historians of philosophy are wont to do. After all, to see philosophical education and the activities of philosophers in the broader cultural context of late antiquity, we need to know much more than the philosophical texts and the arguments to be extracted from them. This, at least, is our suggestion for finding contemporary relevance in late antique Neoplatonism. But whatever your interest in Proclus' *Republic Commentary*, we hope that the translation and essays in this volume will help you realise your *telos*.

5. Manuscript history, previous translations, transliteration and abbreviations

The text translated in this volume and the subsequent ones in this series is based on the 1899 edition of Kroll.⁴² 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 Damascus. 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 are now missing. Apart from these missing pages, however, 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 II. 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 II is replete with gaps and conjectures.

As noted above, the only other complete modern language translation of Proclus text is that of Festugière. 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' complex sentence structure and this is true, though perhaps to a lesser extent, of both Lambertson 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

⁴² Kroll (1899).

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 (*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. We mark some of the uses of these technical terms in the translation itself by giving the transliterated forms in parantheses. 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 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 liable 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.

Our volumes in the Proclus *Republic* series uses 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 *aüilos*, not *ahulos*. We also use the diaeresis to indicate where a second vowel represents a new vowel sound, e.g. *aïdios*. 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 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 ὠιογενής. 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: *proödos*, 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).

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).

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 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.

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.