

PROCLUS' PLACE IN THE RECEPTION OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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Introduction

The Neoplatonist philosopher Proclus (412-485 AD) wrote extensive commentaries on the works of Plato which formed part of the curriculum in the late antique Platonic Academy in Athens. His surviving work includes incomplete commentaries on the *First Alcibiades*, the *Timaeus*, and the *Parmenides*, and a summary of some of his commentary on the *Cratylus*. These were all dialogues read in the standard curriculum of the pagan Neoplatonic schools¹ and it is usually assumed that in all these cases Proclus did in fact comment on the whole dialogue but the commentary has not survived in full. Other commentaries on dialogues which also formed part of the Neoplatonic curriculum no longer survive: Proclus himself mentions commentaries on the *Theaetetus*, on the myths in the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedo*, and on Socrates' 'palinode' in the *Phaedrus* while later authors mention commentaries on the *Phaedo*, on the whole of the *Phaedrus*, on the *Philebus*, and on Diotima's speech in the *Symposium*.² All these commentaries reflect Proclus' teaching activity.³ The work known as his *Commentary on the Republic* is rather different. It is not a commentary but a series of essays. Essays 1-5, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, and 15 all belong together. The heading for the first essay uses the term συνανάγνωσις 'reading in class', in its opening lines Proclus addresses his audience as 'you', and a few lines later he refers to οἱ συσχολάζοντες, 'those who are studying together'.⁴ It has been suggested that these essays were a course of introductory lectures on the *Republic*, perhaps intended not for students in the Academy but for an audience of 'serious amateurs', although it has also been argued that the first five essays assume philosophical knowledge and expertise and that the first one, discussing the overall

¹ See the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ed. L. G. Westerink (Amsterdam 1962) 26, esp. ll. 23-26 and Proclus, *in Alc.* 11.

² See Proclus, *in Tim.* I 255.25-26, *in Remp.* II 139.19-20, 179.13, 183.24, *in Parm.* 949.31-32, 1088.21-23, Olympiodorus *in Phd.* 9 §2, 8-9, Elias, *in Porph.* 2.10-11, Philoponus, *de Aet. mundi* 248.23-24, 251.8-10, 253.16, Damascius, *Isid.* 42, schol. *in Remp.* II 371.14.

³ For an account of that activity, cf. Marinus, *Life of Proclus* ch.22. See further A. J. Festugière, 'Modes de composition des commentaires de Proclus', *MH* 20 (1963) 77-100, reprinted in Festugière, *Études de philosophie grecque* (Paris 1971) 551-74.

⁴ See J. Mansfeld, *Prolegomena* (Leiden 1994) 22-23 and Proclus, *in Remp.* I 1.5-7 and 5.3-21. Mansfeld believes there is no reason not to ascribe the heading for Essay 1 to Proclus himself.

