

ANCIENT APPROACHES TO PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

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DIRECTOR & GENERAL EDITOR: JOHN NORTH

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS: RICHARD SIMPSON

**ANCIENT APPROACHES
TO PLATO'S *REPUBLIC***

**EDITED BY
ANNE SHEPPARD**

**INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL STUDIES
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The cover image shows a copy, in Luni marble, of the portrait of Plato made by Silanion *c.* 370 BC for the Academia in Athens. From the sacred area in Largo Argentina, 1925. Musei Capitolini, Rome.
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PROCLUS' PLACE IN THE RECEPTION OF PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*

ANNE SHEPPARD

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.

aim (σκοπός) of the dialogue, is addressed to an audience of exegetes, or future exegetes.⁵ The remaining essays are of varying length and origin. I shall say more about the individual essays later in this paper but first I should like to explore a little further the vexed question of the place of the *Republic* in Proclus' teaching programme.

Chapter 5 of Albinus' *Eisagoge*, written in the second century AD, includes the *Republic* in a short list of dialogues that the student should read but the dialogue does not figure in the canon laid down by Iamblichus and adopted in the later Neoplatonic schools. The main text which records that canon, the sixth century AD *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, makes the puzzling statement that Proclus ἐκβάλλει the *Republic*, apparently meaning that he excluded it from the canon.⁶ Whatever the reason for such an exclusion – perhaps simply the length of the dialogue⁷ – it is clear that Proclus regarded the *Republic* as an important dialogue, was aware of earlier discussion of it, and took a particular interest in certain aspects of it, as we shall see. Another way of approaching Proclus' interest in the *Republic* is to consider the use he makes of it in the *Platonic Theology*.⁸ This work is not a commentary but a discursive account of Proclus' metaphysical system in which he tries to show that all aspects of that system can be found in the works of Plato. The account of the attributes of the gods in *Rep.* II 379a-383c is used in I 18-21, the account of the Good and the analogy of the Sun in *Rep.* VI 506d-509c is drawn on both in II 4-7 and in VI 12, and the mention of the three Fates in *Rep.* X 617b-e, in the myth of Er, is picked up in VI 23. As we shall see, there are some significant links between these uses of the *Republic* in the *Platonic Theology* and the essays which form the *Commentary on the Republic*.

The longest of those essays, the sixth, on Plato's treatment of Homer and poetry, and the sixteenth, a commentary on the myth of Er, are also the ones which have received the most scholarly attention. In the next two sections of this paper I shall survey the contents of the individual essays in more detail, referring to modern scholarly literature on particular essays,⁹ as well as to the parallels in the *Platonic Theology*, so as to gain a clearer picture of the kind of interest Proclus took in the *Republic*.

⁵ See C. Gallavotti, 'Eterogeneità e cronologia dei commenti di Proclo alla Repubblica', *RFIC* 57 (1929) 208-19 and 'Intorno ai commenti di Proclo alla Repubblica', *BPEC NS* 19 (1971) 41-54; A. D. R. Sheppard, *Studies on the 5th and 6th essays of Proclus' commentary on the Republic* (Göttingen 1980) Ch.1; Mansfeld (n.4, above) 36 and 88 (where the phrase 'serious amateurs' is used); M. Abbate, *Proclo. Commento alla Repubblica. Dissertazione I, III, IV, V* (Pavia 1995) 17.

⁶ See *Anon. Prol.* (n.1, above) 26.6 with the discussion in *Prolégomènes à la philosophie de Platon*, ed. L. G. Westerink, J. Trouillard, and A. Ph. Segonds (Paris 1990) lxxvii-lxxviii.

⁷ As has been pointed out by Westerink, Trouillard, and Segonds (n.6, above) Proclus also 'excluded' the *Laws* but he is quite familiar with it and regularly uses a number of passages; in particular *PTI* 14-16 draws on the theological material in *Laws X*.

⁸ I am grateful to Peter Adamson for pointing me in this direction when an earlier version of this paper was read at the Institute of Classical Studies.

⁹ It should be noted here that there is a complete French translation of the *Commentary on the Republic*, with notes, by A. J. Festugière, 3 vols (Paris 1970) and an Italian translation, with notes and appendices, by M. Abbate of essays 1, 3, 4, and 5 (n.5, above) and of essays 7, 8, 9, and 10 (Pavia 1998). I regret that I have not been able to consult the complete Italian translation, with notes,

Essays 1-5, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, and 15

Essay 1 provides an interesting example of the way in which the theme and subject-matter of a dialogue were studied in the philosophical schools of late antiquity. Proclus begins with some general remarks about what should be included in the introduction to a Platonic dialogue. He lists seven issues which should be considered before studying the *Republic*: the aim (σκοπός); the genre (εἶδος); the matter (ὕλη) as displayed in the characters and setting; the different types of constitution (πολιτεία) according to Plato; the nature of the constitution which conforms to reason, whether one or more than one; how Plato wants us to regard the chosen constitution and whether he has given a complete account of it; and finally the consistency of the work as a whole.¹⁰ If essays 1-5, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, and 15 did indeed constitute a course of twelve lectures on the *Republic*, this essay will have been the first lecture in the course. It breaks off at the point where Proclus is about to discuss the characters of the dialogue, *i.e.*, in the middle of the discussion of the third of the seven issues listed at the start. It is disappointing not to have Proclus' preliminary treatment of the issues relating to Plato's discussion of types of constitution. His account of the aim of the dialogue includes a discussion of the title Πολιτεία. He argues that the dialogue is about both the constitution and justice (δικαιοσύνη), both politics and ethics, appealing to Plato's own analogy between the city and the soul, although in the other essays, as we shall see, he has little to say about the political themes of the *Republic*. Four quaternions of the MS are missing, which means we lack the latter part of the first essay, the whole of the second, and the beginning of the third.¹¹ However we know from the summary of titles of the essays included at the beginning of the MS that essay 2 dealt with Socrates' reply to Polemarchus' definition of justice in *Rep.* I. Essay 3 is also concerned with *Rep.* I, with Socrates' argument with Thrasymachus; the surviving portion of the text relates to *Rep.* 351b-354a. Abbate has pointed out that the discussion in this essay uses ideas and terminology found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹² At 24.8 Proclus refers to the view of Plotinus' pupil, Amelius. It is worth noting that Proclus also refers to Amelius four times in essay 13 and once in essay 16.¹³

Essay 4 turns to the θεολογικοὶ τύποι, the attributes of the gods, laid down in *Rep.* II 379a-383c, at the beginning of Plato's discussion of the role of poetry in educating the future rulers of the ideal state. Proclus leaves discussion of poetry to essay 5 and concentrates in essay 4 on the goodness, immutability, and truthfulness of the gods. The importance of these

by the same author of essays 1-5, 7-12, 14-15, and 17 (Milan 2004). At the time of writing a team led by Dirk Baltzly is about to embark on a complete English translation.

¹⁰ Cf. Mansfeld (n.4, above) 22-23 and 30-33. Mansfeld's statement (32) that 'the first two essays of Proclus' work were devoted to' these seven issues seems to be a mistake. I take it that they were all covered in Essay 1.

¹¹ On the MS see further below p. 115.

¹² See Abbate's translation of essays 1, 3, 4, and 5 (n.5, above) 17, 49 n.4, 52-53 n.16.

¹³ For the references and some brief comments on Amelius' exegesis of the *Republic*, see H. Dörrie† and M. Baltes, *Der Platonismus im 2. Und 3. Jahrhundert nach Christus*, *Der Platonismus in der Antike* 3 (Stuttgart- Bad Canstatt 1993) 206.

attributes for a Neoplatonist view of the gods is very clear in the longer discussion of them found in *PT* I 18-21. Saffrey and Westerink's notes on these chapters of the *PT* indicate the parallels not only with *in Remp.* essay 4 but also with passages in other works of Proclus. In particular, the discussion of the origin of evil at *in Remp.* 37.23-39.1 offers, as Proclus himself says, a short summary of views he expounds at greater length both in the *PT* and elsewhere, including the doctrine of *παρυπόστασις*.¹⁴

The structure of essay 4 falls neatly into two parts: 27.9-37.2 expounds what Plato has to say about the attributes of the gods, filling out the material in *Rep.* II by references to other Platonic texts such as *Laws* X 894c-e and 900d-902b, the *Parmenides*, and *Meno* 77b-78b, as well as Aristotle on the movement of the heavens.¹⁵ The latter part of the essay, 37.3-41.29, considers three problems, or *ἀπορίαι*, which pose a challenge to the attributes set out in *Rep.* II: the origin of evil, the explanation of how the gods appear to men,¹⁶ and the possibility of false oracles.

Essay 5, on the kinds (εἴδη) of poetry and on Plato's view of the best kind of harmony and rhythm, is structured entirely as a discussion of ten *ἀπορίαι*, all relating to the treatment of poetry and music in *Rep.* II 379a-III 402a. This part of the *Republic* was the subject of much discussion from the fourth century BC onwards and it should be no surprise that in this essay Proclus is engaged in responding to criticisms of Plato by Aristotle, Aristoxenus, and others. The continuing debate over this part of the dialogue probably explains why this essay is structured entirely according to the format of 'problems and solutions', with no time spent on simply expounding Plato's text.¹⁷

In essay 7 Proclus moves on to *Rep.* IV, discussing the three parts of the soul and the account of the four cardinal virtues according to that division into parts. This essay is considerably longer than the others in the group of twelve essays which may have formed a

¹⁴ Εἴρηται μὲν οὖν διὰ πλείονων ἐν ἄλλοις περὶ τούτων, λεγέσθω δὲ καὶ νῦν συντόμως εἰ δοκεῖ ... (37.23-24). See H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink, *Proclus. Théologie platonicienne* 6 vols (Paris 1968-1997) I (1968) 151-56, esp. 152 (n.1 for p. 83) for a list of texts in which Proclus expounds his view of evil. On *παρυπόστασις* see A. C. Lloyd, 'Parhypostasis in Proclus' in *Proclus et son influence*, ed. G. Boss and G. Seel (Zurich 1987) 145-57 and J. Opsomer and C. Steel, 'Evil without a cause: Proclus' doctrine on the origin of evil and its antecedents in Hellenistic philosophy' in *Zur Rezeption der hellenistischen Philosophie in der Spätantike*, ed. T. Fuhrer, M. Erler, and K. Schlapbach (Stuttgart 1999) 229-60, esp. 244-60.

¹⁵ Festugière (n.9, above) points out that Proclus' reference at 32.20 to the *Parmenides* for the claim that every Form is a god is misleading. Kroll takes the reference to be to *Prm.* 134c but it is true that rather thick Neoplatonic spectacles would be required to understand that passage as stating that every Form is a god. (Cf. also Abbate's translation of essays 1, 3, 4, and 5 (n.5, above) 64, n.26.) The reference to Aristotle on the movement of the heavens at 35.28-29 is taken by Kroll as a reference to *De caelo* II 4 but by Festugière as a reference to *Meteor.* I 2, 339a25f.

¹⁶ On Proclus' treatment of this second problem see Abbate's translation of essays 1, 3, 4, and 5 (n.5, above) 127-30.

¹⁷ For discussion of essay 5 see Sheppard, *Studies* (n.5, above) 21-27, 104-23; A. Sheppard, 'Music therapy in Neoplatonism' in *Philosophy and the sciences in antiquity*, ed. R. W. Sharples (Aldershot 2005) 148-55; S. F. Moro Tornese, 'Music and the return of the soul in Proclus' commentaries on Plato's *Timaeus* and *Republic*' in this volume, pp. 117-28.

lecture course: the Greek fills some thirty pages of Teubner text (*in Remp.* I 206.6-235.21). Festugière divided it into three separate and loosely related discussions.¹⁸ If it did indeed form part of a lecture course, perhaps Proclus devoted more than one lecture to the topics of this essay, or perhaps he expanded his lecture on these topics considerably when he came to prepare a written version. Proclus is largely concerned to expound Plato's views but he sets the psychological and ethical discussion of this part of the *Republic* in a broader metaphysical and cosmological context. Since Proclus, like other Neoplatonists, accepted a broadly Aristotelian psychology he is concerned to work out how sense-perception (αἴσθησις) and imagination (φαντασία) are related to the three parts of the soul described in the *Republic*, although characteristically, and indeed not unreasonably, he presents his discussion as a way of finding consistency between *Rep.* IV, *Timaeus* 77b on plants as capable of sense-perception, the account of memory and sense-perception in *Philebus* 39b, and the analogy of the wax tablet in *Theaetetus* 191c. Interestingly, Proclus also shows knowledge of the rather different, eight-part division of the soul put forward by the Stoics. He ascribes this to Medius, a Stoic philosopher of the third century AD, and his knowledge of it comes from Porphyry's report of a discussion between Medius and Longinus.¹⁹

Essay 8, on the equality of men and women in *Rep.* V, overlaps considerably with essay 9, a separate piece discussing Theodore of Asine's views on this topic. It is no surprise to find Proclus using the same material in different contexts, and we need not assume that essay 9 was written later. It may well be that a tradition of earlier discussion lies behind both essays.²⁰ Essay 10 deals with the latter part of *Rep.* V and discusses the distinction between the philosopher and the lover of opinion (the φιλόδοξος) and between ἐπιστήμη and δόξα. Proclus appeals to Aristotle no less than three times in this essay (at 259.5-7, 263.20-23, and 265.12-13), regarding Aristotle as supporting the view that Socrates' concern with definitions led him to an understanding of the Forms and treating passages of the *Posterior* and *Prior Analytics* as supporting Platonic epistemology and metaphysics.²¹ At 267.24-28 he appeals in a similar way to Plotinus, *Enn.* IV 7.8.²²

¹⁸ Festugière (n.9, above) II 13-39.

¹⁹ See *in Remp.* I 233.29-234.30. For discussion of essay 7, see Abbate's translation of essays 7, 8, 9, and 10 (n.9 above) 101-09; M. Abbate, 'Gli aspetti etico-politici della Repubblica nel commenti di Proclo (dissertazioni VII/VIII e XI)' in *La Repubblica di Platone nella tradizione antica*, ed. M. Vegetti and M. Abbate (Naples 1999) 207-18; M. Abbate, 'Metaphysics and theology as methodological and conceptual paradigms in Proclus' ethico-political theory' in *Proklos. Methode, Seelenlehre, Metaphysik*, ed. M. Perkams and R. M. Piccione (Leiden 2006) 186-200; G. MacIsaac, 'The soul and the virtues in Proclus' *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*', *Philosophie antique* 9 (2009) 115-43.

²⁰ See A. Longo, 'Gli argomenti di Teodoro di Asine sull'educazione comune di uomini e donne nel *Commento alla Repubblica* di Proclo (I 253-5 Kroll)', *Elenchos* 23 (2002) 51-73. Essay 8 is also discussed in Abbate's translation of essays 7, 8, 9, and 10 (n.9 above) 111-14, in Abbate, 'Aspetti etico-politici' (n.19, above), and in Abbate 'Metaphysics and theology' (n.19, above).

²¹ See the notes on these passages in Abbate's translation (n.9, above) 81-82, 91, and 93-94.

²² On Proclus' interpretation of *Rep.* 476a2-6 in essay 10, see Abbate's translation (n.9, above) 115-20.

In essay 11 Proclus turns to the discussion of the Good and the analogy of the Sun in *Rep.* VI 506d-509c. This passage of the *Republic* is crucially important for Proclus. He uses it extensively in Book II of the *Platonic Theology*, where chapters 4, 5, and 6 set it alongside passages from other dialogues, particularly the *Parmenides*, which Proclus took as referring to the One, or the Good, while chapter 7 focuses specifically on the analogy of the Sun. Whereas *PT* II is concerned with the first principle of Neoplatonic metaphysics, the last book, *PT* VI, deals with the hypercosmic gods, further down the system. Apollo, the Sun god, is one of these, and so Proclus returns to the analogy of the Sun in *Rep.* VI at *PT* VI 12. 58.27-59.18 and 62.9-24. As in the *Platonic Theology*, Proclus in essay 11 explicitly links the Good in *Rep.* VI not only with the One of the first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* (285.23-26) but also with the highest of the 'three kings' of the *Second Letter*, which the Neoplatonists regarded as a genuine work of Plato (287.10-14).²³ Modern discussions of the *Republic* normally take the analogies of the Sun, Line, and Cave together. Proclus however devotes a separate short essay, essay 12, to the Line and the Cave, largely concerned to expound Plato's text.²⁴

If essays 1-5, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, and 15 derive from a course of lectures, those lectures would appear largely to have ignored both the political aspects of the ideal state set out in *Rep.* II-V and the discussion in *Rep.* VIII and IX of the ideal state's decline and the degenerate types of constitution. Essays 1-5, 7, 8, and 10-12 deal with ethics, theology, aesthetics, education, psychology, and metaphysics but not with politics. Even if the missing part of essay 1 included some discussion of political theory, the absence of that topic from the other essays remains striking. Essay 14 goes straight to the arguments in *Rep.* IX that the just man is happier than the unjust, although 81.14-27 does offer a brief summary of the analogy between the different types of state and the different types of person set out in *Rep.* IX 577-80. This essay is very short – only just over two pages of Teubner text – and makes no attempt to do more than summarize Plato's arguments. It ends with a diagram setting out the three ways in which, according to Plato, the just man is happier than the unjust, and the subdivisions of those three ways. A similar diagram precedes essay 15, on the division of subject matter in *Rep.* X. There is no way of knowing whether these diagrams go back to Proclus or have been added to the MS at a later stage. Essay 15 does indeed proceed in a manner corresponding to the diagram, setting out the different topics of *Rep.* X, including a short account of the myth of Er at 92.20-92.25.²⁵

²³ On Proclus' view of the Good in essay 11, see W. Beierwaltes, 'Proklos' Begriff des Guten aus der Perspektive seiner Platon-Deutung' in *Procliana* (Frankfurt 2007) 85-108 (also in *Being or Good? Metamorphoses of Neoplatonism*, ed. A. Kijewska (Lublin 2004) 99-120). Cf. also Abbate, 'Aspetti etico-politici' (n.19, above). On exegesis of the *Second Letter* in antiquity see Saffrey and Westerink (n.14, above) II (1974) xx-lix.

²⁴ Although the MS title for essay 12 is 'On the cave in the seventh book of the *Republic*' Proclus in fact devotes several pages at the beginning of the essay to the Line (287.20-290.27). For some discussion of essay 12, see Beierwaltes (n.23, above).

²⁵ The treatment of the myth of Er in essay 15 is discussed briefly in D. Cürsgen, *Die Rationalität des Mythischen* (Berlin 2002) 170-72.

Essays 6, 9, 13, 16, and 17

The remaining essays are very diverse. We have already seen that essay 9 overlaps with essay 8, but differs from it in being a direct discussion of the views of Theodore of Asine. Essay 17, which discusses Aristotle's objections to the *Republic* in *Politics* II, is of the same type as essay 9. The essay is incomplete and material is missing from the final pages but enough survives for us to see how Proclus approached the topic. He defends unity as the good of politics, arguing firmly for an organic view of the state. Metaphysical concerns about the right way to understand 'unity' dominate his discussion. We know from Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* (ch. 20) that Eubulus, a contemporary of Plotinus, had written on the same subject; although Proclus does not refer explicitly to earlier treatments of his topic it seems likely that he is drawing on a tradition of interpretation here just as he does in the other essays.²⁶

I have discussed essay 6, on Plato's treatment of Homer and poetry, at length elsewhere. This essay derives from a special lecture given at the annual celebration of Plato's birthday in the Athenian Neoplatonic school. It draws extensively on the work of Proclus' teacher, Syrianus, as well as on the rich earlier tradition of Homeric interpretation, much of which was concerned to defend Homer against Plato. It has attracted attention particularly for its use of allegorical interpretation and the development of a theory of inspired poetry.²⁷

Essay 13 deals with the speech of the Muses in *Rep.* VIII 546a-547a. Proclus explains at the beginning of this long essay that he is going to expound both the views of 'the ancients' (οἱ παλαιοί) and additional points that have puzzled him and that he has called his discussion μέλισσα, 'a bee', because the bee is said to be sacred to the Muses (*in Remp.* II 1.4-12).²⁸ One might suppose that this essay fills the gap identified above in the twelve essays of the 'lecture course' by considering the decline of the ideal state – and so it does, in a way, but the bulk of it is devoted to discussion of the mysterious 'nuptial number' of 546b-c rather than to any broader issues in political theory.²⁹ Although modern commentators fight rather shy of trying to make sense of the 'nuptial number'³⁰ it is clear from Proclus' lengthy treatment that it was the subject of much discussion in antiquity. Proclus reports the views of many earlier commentators on the passage and

²⁶ For an English translation of this essay, preceded by a brief discussion and followed by notes, see R. F. Stalley, 'The unity of the state: Plato, Aristotle and Proclus', *Polis* 14 (1995) 129-49.

²⁷ See Sheppard, *Studies* (n.5, above), R. Lamberton, *Homer the theologian* (Berkeley 1986), 180-232, O. Kuisma, *Proclus' defence of Homer* (Helsinki 1996), P. T. Struck, *Birth of the symbol* (Princeton 2004) 238-53. I regret that I have not seen R. Pichler, *Allegorese und Ethik bei Proklos. Untersuchungen zum Kommentar zu Platons Politeia* (Berlin 2005).

²⁸ On the textual problems at the beginning of this essay see Festugière (n.9, above) II 105 n.1.

²⁹ Some particularly difficult parts of Proclus' discussion of the 'nuptial number' are commented on in the three excursuses by F. Hulstsch printed at the end of Kroll's Teubner text, *in Remp.* II 384-413.

³⁰ James Adam devoted an appendix to it in his edition of the *Republic*, 2 vols (Cambridge 1902) II 264-318. For a recent discussion, see E. Ehrhardt, 'The word of the Muses (Plato *Rep.* 8.546)', *CQ* NS 36 (1986) 407-20.

there are striking parallels between some of his comments and the notes found in P.Oxy. XV 1808, a papyrus of the second century AD.³¹

It has been suggested that the speech of the Muses was regularly studied alongside the dialogues in the Iamblichean canon³² but it seems more likely that, like Plato's criticisms of Homer, it was simply a popular and much-discussed part of the *Republic*. Proclus' interest in it reflects not only his extensive knowledge of earlier scholarship but also his interest in theological and mythical subjects. Near the beginning of the essay he makes some comments on the σκοπός of the speech, on its lofty literary style (χαρακτήρ ὑψηλός), and on the manner of its teaching, which he describes as a mixture of the revelatory (ἀποφαντικός) and the 'iconic' or image-using (εἰκονικός).³³ These comments are similar in kind to 'literary critical' comments made by Proclus and other Neoplatonic commentators elsewhere, including in essay 1 of the *in Remp.*³⁴

Essay 16 is a full commentary on the myth of Er, addressed to Proclus' pupil and biographer, Marinus, and set out in the same way as Proclus' commentaries on other Platonic dialogues, with a preliminary discussion of the purpose (πρόθεσις) of the myth, of the choice of lives, and of Plato's use of myth in general, followed by a wide-ranging commentary attached to lemmata from Plato's text. The concluding lines describe this essay as a ὑπόμνημα.³⁵ As in his commentaries on other Platonic dialogues Proclus draws extensively on earlier discussions and uses individual lemmata as starting points for lengthy disquisitions. The essay has been examined in a monograph by Dirk Cürsger.³⁶ Some of the material reappears in *PT VI 23* where Proclus uses *Rep. X 617b-e* as a source for his account of the Fates as gods separated from the world, between the hypercosmic and encosmic gods.³⁷

³¹ See K. McNamee and M. L. Jacovides, 'Annotations to the speech of the Muses (Plato, *Republic* 546b-c)', *ZPE* 144 (2003) 31-50.

³² See Cürsger (n.25, above) 168.

³³ *in Remp.* II 7.8-8.14. Cf. the four modes of exposition – inspired, dialectical, symbolic, and iconic – distinguished by Proclus in *PT I 4* and *in Parm.* 645.7-647.18, discussed in J. Pépin, 'Les modes de l'enseignement théologique dans la *Théologie platonicienne*', S. Gersh, 'Proclus' theological methods: the programme of *Theol. Plat. I.4*', and A. Sheppard, 'Plato's *Phaedrus* in the *Theologia Platonica*', in *Proclus et la théologie platonicienne*, ed. A. Ph. Segonds and C. Steel (Leuven and Paris 2000) 1-14, 15-27, and 415-23, and in C. Steel, 'Le jugement de Proclus sur le style du *Parménide*' in *Agonistes. Essays in honour of Denis O'Brien*, ed. J. Dillon and M. Dixsaut (Aldershot 2005) 209-25, esp. 220-25.

³⁴ On Proclus' relationship to the literary critical tradition see F. Walsdorff, *Die antiken Urteile über Platons Stil* (Bonn 1927) Ch. IV.9, esp. 91-108, Sheppard, *Studies* (n.5, above), 117-19 and 124-29, Steel (n.33, above), A. Sheppard, 'Literary theory and aesthetics' in *All from One. A guide to Proclus*, ed. P. dHoine and M. Martijn (forthcoming, Oxford 2014).

³⁵ On the meaning of this term as applied to Neoplatonic commentaries, see E. Lamberz, 'Proklos und die Form des philosophischen Kommentars' in *Proclus, lecteur et interprète des anciens*, ed. J. Pépin and H. D. Saffrey (Paris 1987) 1-20.

³⁶ See Cürsger (n.25, above) esp. 164-377.

³⁷ See the notes in Saffrey and Westerink (n.14, above) VI (Paris 1997) 99-109 and 180-85.

Conclusion

Proclus' commentaries, including the so-called *Commentary on the Republic*, have often been treated as a quarry for the views of earlier commentators. However, like his true commentaries, his essays on the *Republic* also contain much material of interest for Proclus' own views on the topics discussed. Most of these essays have received only limited scholarly attention and would repay further study. How and when they were put together and presented as a 'commentary' remains something of a puzzle. The suggestion of Erich Lamberz, that they were combined as one work in the ninth century, around the time when the surviving archetype MS was written, seems plausible.³⁸ There is said to have been a Syriac translation of essay 16, the commentary on the myth of Er, which is now lost.³⁹ Meanwhile the essays survived in Greek, and the archetype MS was 'corrected' in the eleventh or twelfth century. It is now split into two parts, one in the Laurentian library in Florence, the other in the Vatican library. The Laurentian portion was bought by Johannes Lascaris in 1492 from an Athenian called Harmonius. The first printed edition of that part of Proclus' text derives from a fifteenth-century copy of the Laurentian MS in the library of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. The second part of the MS had a more chequered history; three sixteenth century copies of it survive.⁴⁰ Kroll's Teubner text, published in two volumes in 1899 and 1901, was the first printed edition to contain all seventeen essays. Most of them appear to have been hardly known until the appearance of that edition, although the English Platonist Thomas Taylor translated a few pages of the commentary on the myth of Er in 1825 in a book entitled *Fragments that remain of the lost writings of Proclus*.⁴¹ This paper has been largely concerned with Proclus' place in the ancient reception of Plato's *Republic*. His place in the larger history of that reception, through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance into the modern period, remains to be explored.

Royal Holloway, University of London

³⁸ Lamberz (n.35, above), 2 n.3.

³⁹ G. Endress, *Proclus Arabus* (Beirut/Wiesbaden 1973) 29. Cf. E. R. Dodds, *Proclus. The elements of theology* 2nd edn (Oxford 1963) xxviii-xxix.

⁴⁰ See Kroll's introductions to the Teubner text, I (Leipzig 1899) v-vii, II (Leipzig 1901) iii-vii and Gallavotti, 'Intorno ai commenti di Proclo' (n.5, above).

⁴¹ Taylor's translation is available online at www.sacred-texts.com/cla/flwp/flwp27.htm.

