Notes on a Commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides*

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A little-known analysis of the argument in Plato's *Parmenides* is found in the anonymous scholia which complement Proclus' incomplete commentary on the dialogue in a number of MSS.¹ The preservation of these scholia in sixteen MSS indicates their interest to students of the dialogue in the XIII to the XVI centuries, while their existence as a Byzantine commentary on the *Parmenides* and their relation to Proclus' commentary invite us to examine them more closely. The analysis itself will be presented first, and then their position in the history of Byzantine scholarship.

The author of the scholia divides Parmenides' argument, unusually, into six Hypotheses. The size of Proclus' commentary on the First Hypothesis being sufficient to discourage the addition of any further material, the scholia begin with the Second Hypothesis, and a detailed exposition of the system of division does not occur until the beginning of the Third Hypothesis. This suggests that the scholia are incomplete as we have them. Nonetheless, the system is pointedly referred to in the discussion of the Second Hypothesis (Cousin p.1267.18ff), and the way in which it would be applied to the First Hypothesis is described (Cousin p.1289.1ff).

The analysis, in its abstract form, is quite simple and is presented by the author of the scholia as follows (Cousin p.1288.4ff):

\[
\begin{align*}
\varepsilonι \ \gammaαρ \ \varepsilon \zetaɪ \ \tauοδ' \ \varepsilonτι, \ \tauριχ\omegaς \ \varepsilonπιχειρο\thetaυμεν· \ \delta\muως \ \kαι \ \varepsilonι \ \ουκ \ \varepsilonτι, \\
\tauριχ\omegaς \ \varepsilonπιχειρο\thetaυμεν· \ \ldots \ \tauινα \ \varepsilonπεταν, \ \kai \ \tauα\tauα \ \tauετα\chiω\varsigma· \ \ldots \\
\tauινα \ \ουκ \ \varepsilonπετα\nu, \ \kai \ \alphaυτα \ \tauετα\chiω\varsigma· \ \tauινα \ \tauε \ \pi\rho\delta \ \epsilonαυτ\alpha \ \kai \ \\
\tauινα \ \pi\rho\delta \ \tauα \ \alphaλλα, \ \kai \ \alphaυτα \ \pi\rho\delta \ \epsilonαυτ\alpha, \ \kai \ \alphaυτα \ \pi\rho\delta \ \tauα \ \piρ\κε\epsilon\muενα· \ \kai \ \tauινα \ \varepsilonπεταν \ \kai \ \ουκ \ \varepsilonπεταν, \ \kai \ \alphaυτα \ \tauετα\chiω\varsigma.
\end{align*}
\]

¹ The text in V. Cousin, *Procli Philosophi Platonici, Opera Inedita*, Pars tertia (Paris 1864, repr. Hildesheim 1961) pp.1257ff (i.e. *Σχόλια ἐκ τὸν Πλάτωνος Παρμενίδην*) has been used for this study. For a discussion of the Proclus-*Parmenides* MSS, including those containing the scholia, see R. Klibansky, *Plato Latinus* III (London 1953) xxix f.
Its application to Parmenides' argument is best seen in an outline:

I. εἰ ἐν ἐκτιν
A. Hypothesis I (137c–142a): τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται.
   1. For the One in relation to itself.
   2. For the One in relation to the others.
   3. For the others in relation to themselves.
   4. For the others in relation to the One.
B. Hypothesis II (142a–155b): τίνα ἔπεται.
   1.–4.
   1.–4.

II. εἰ ἐν οὐκ ἐκτιν
   1.–4.
B. Hypothesis V (163c–164a): τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται.
   1.–4.
C. Hypothesis VI (164b–166c): τίνα ἔπεται καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται.

The first source for this interpretation is found in the Parmenides itself (136a4–c5) where Parmenides indicates the procedure one must follow in an exercise such as is proposed by Zeno. There, he states that in order truly to γυμνασθῆναι τὸν λόγον, it is necessary to consider the subject in both a positive and a negative manner (I and II above), and in each case, to examine the results of comparisons of the matter under consideration and its opposites (1–4 above). The three categories, τίνα ἔπεται, τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται, and τίνα ἔπεται καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται (A–C above), are not found enunciated in the Parmenides. Parmenides uses only the first, actually in the form τί συμβηκεται, and not in a categorical sense. The three, as categories of analysis, are drawn from another source: Proclus' commentary on this passage of the dialogue (i.e. 136a4–c5). A comparison of Proclus' remarks with those of the author of the scholia cited above reveals this kinship (Cousin p.1001.29ff):
This passage from Proclus, or perhaps a descendant of it in a later work (although I find no reference to this analysis anywhere else), was certainly the most significant inspiration for the author of the scholia, for these categories are the foundation of his six Hypotheses and their explication is the primary function of the scholia.

Proclus labels this analysis τὸ λογικὸν (Cousin p.1000.36), and he follows it with his analysis διὰ τὴν τῶν πραγμάτων φύσιν (Cousin p.1002.35), his major analysis from which nine Hypotheses are derived. At the beginning of his notes to the Second Hypothesis, the author of the scholia indicates that he too is analyzing the dialogue from the standpoint of logic: δ Παρμενίδης . . . δεικνύει τὴν δύναμιν τῆς διαλεκτικῆς (Cousin p.1257.21), and following the lead indicated by Proclus, he recognizes only six Hypotheses. He does this formally, recalling the original plan at each stage with a reference to the particular category under consideration. By analyzing the Parmenides 'logically', the author distinguishes himself from Proclus, whose commentary is metaphysical. This is not to say that there is no metaphysical commentary in the scholia, but only that they appear more closely akin to the later Aristotelian Platonism common in sixth-century Alexandria than to the Neoplatonism of Proclus and earlier generations.

The scholia first appear in a deluxe Plato ms of the XIII century (Paris, BN ms gr. 1810) which contains eight dialogues, two of which (the Phaedrus and the Parmenides) are accompanied by Neoplatonic commentaries, and the Timaeus Locrus. Located in the margin and in the same hand as the text of the Parmenides, the scholia were not, however, composed for this ms or its exemplar; this is evident when quotations of the dialogue found in the scholia are compared with the text the scholia accompany. The two texts are sufficiently different that both Burnet and Diès, in their editions of the dialogue, and Brumbaugh in his edition of the text of the hypotheses, cite readings from both. At best, it can be said that the scholia entered the ms family sometime around the end of the XII century, for part of the text of the Parmenides in the ms proper is taken from the XII-century Venice ms, Marcianus gr. 185. That they are found in the company of Proclus' commentary, especially in a fine edition, is an indication of the esteem

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3 Klibansky, op.cit. (supra n.1) xxxiv: "... maiore ornatu instructus maioreque diligentia conscriptus esset quam alii plerique illius aetatis codices."

3 J. Burnet, Platonis Opera II (OCT, Oxford 1901); A. Diès, Platon, Oeuvres complètes VIII.1 (Paris 1923); R. S. Brumbaugh, Plato on the One (New Haven 1964).

in which they were held in the XII century. It is unlikely that the scholia were chosen for inclusion in the ms on the basis of their Proclan flavor, for Proclus' name is nowhere mentioned in them, and the bit of Proclus which the author borrowed is small and quite incidental to the mainstream of Proclus' argument. Rather, they were probably chosen because of their size, that is, they were a short commentary on the *Parmenides* which was available in the XII century.

The actual time of composition of the scholia can be determined only from internal evidence. On the basis of the combination of quotations from Aristotle and a quotation from the Septuagint found in the scholia, Klibansky has suggested that they were composed in Alexandria around the time of John Philoponus. Assuming that the scholia are not an abridgement of a much larger work, they appear unworthy of the ambitious Philoponus, and are probably the work of one of his students. The reliance of the scholia on writings of Damascius and Proclus supports this. A comparison, for example, of the reference by the author of the scholia to a passage from Aristotle (*De Interpretatione* 21a32) with the commentary of Stephanus of Alexandria on that passage suggests a community of interpretation available to both authors:

**Scholia (Cousin p.1259.18ff):**

\[ ... \text{ἐὶ καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης κατὰ συμβεβηκός λέγει κατηγορεῖθαι} \]
\[ τὸ ἔστι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, ὅτε λέγομεν, τὸ μὴ ὄντος ἐστὶ. \]
\[ δάξα γὰρ αὐτῶ ὅπω ἔστιν ὅτι ἔστιν ἄλλ᾽ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν. \]

**Stephanus, *ad* Arist. *De Int.* 21a32:**

\[ ... \text{τὸ μὴ ὄντος ἐστὶ. τὸ ὁλο ὅντος ὑποθέσω. ἦπερ ἀλλο} \]
\[ τὸ ἔστι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς κατηγορεῖται. \]
\[ δάξα γὰρ ἥχομεν περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐχ ὅτι ἔστιν ἄλλ᾽ ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν. \]
\[ ἱστέων ὅτι ὑπεύθεσί ἔστι τοῦ Πλάτωνος. \]

In all, it is unlikely that the scholia were composed much after the time of Stephanus.

DUMBERTON OAKS, WASHINGTON

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6 Relevant excerpts from Damascius, *De Principiis*, are provided by Cousin in his notes.

7 τὸ δὲν Cousin.