

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):

εἰ γὰρ ἔστι τόδ' ἔτι, τριχῶς ἐπιχειροῦμεν· ὁμοίως καὶ εἰ οὐκ ἔστι,
τριχῶς ἐπιχειροῦμεν· . . . τίνα ἔπεται, καὶ ταῦτα τετραχῶς· . . .
τίνα οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτὰ τετραχῶς· τίνα τε πρὸς ἑαυτὰ καὶ
τίνα πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς ἑαυτά, καὶ αὐτὰ πρὸς τὰ προ-
κείμενα· καὶ τίνα ἔπεται καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ αὐτὰ τετραχῶς.

¹ The text in V. Cousin, *Procli Philosophi Platonici, Opera Inedita, Pars tertia* (Paris 1864, repr. Hildesheim 1961) pp.1257ff (i.e. *Σχόλια εἰς 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 ἐστιν

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–155E): τίνα ἔπεται.

1.–4.

C. Hypothesis III (155E–160B): τίνα ἔπεται καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται.

1.–4.

II. εἰ ἐν οὐκ ἔστιν

A. Hypothesis IV (160B–163C): τίνα ἔπεται.

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 συμβήσεται*, 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):

ἔσονται οὖν ἐξ ὑποθέσεις· εἰ ἔστι, τί ἔπεται, καὶ τί οὐχ ἔπεται, καὶ τί ἅμα ἔπεται τε καὶ οὐχ ἔπεται· καὶ εἰ μὴ ἔστιν, ὁμοίως . . . ἢ γὰρ αὐτῷ τι συμβαίνει ἢ τοῖς ἄλλοις· καὶ τούτων ἐκατέρω διχῶς· ἢ αὐτῷ πρὸς ἑαυτό, ἢ αὐτῷ πρὸς τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ἢ πρὸς ἑαυτά, ἢ πρὸς αὐτό.

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 λογικόν (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: ὁ Παρμενίδης . . . δεικνύς 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)² 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,³ 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*.⁴ That they are found in the company of Proclus' commentary, especially in a fine edition, is an indication of the esteem

² 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).

⁴ M. Schanz, "Mittheilungen über platonische Handschriften," *Hermes* 11 (1876) 112f.

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, Klibansky⁵ 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 Damascius⁶ 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):

. . . εἰ καὶ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς λέγει κατηγορεῖσθαι τὸ ἔστι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος, ὅτε λέγομεν, τὸ μὴ ὄν⁷ δοξαστὸν ἔστι· δόξα γὰρ αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ὅτι ἔστιν ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν.

Stephanus, *ad Arist. De Int.* 21a32:⁸

. . . τὸ μὴ ὄν δοξαστὸν ἔστι. τοῦτο ὅλον δύναμαι εἰπεῖν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ ἔστι τοῦ μὴ ὄντος κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς κατηγορεῖται . . . δόξαν γὰρ ἔχομεν περὶ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος οὐχ ὅτι ἔστιν ἀλλ' ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν . . . ἰστέον ὅτι ὑπόθεσις ἔστι τοῦ Πλάτωνος . . .

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

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⁵ R. Klibansky, *Ein Proklos-Fund und seine Bedeutung* (Heidelberg 1929) 5 n.5.

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

⁷ τὸ ὄν Cousin.

⁸ *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* XVIII.3, *Stephani in librum Aristotelis de Interpretatione commentarium*, ed. M. Hayduck (Berlin 1885) p.52.23ff.