

PROCLUS' ELEMENTS OF THEOLOGY IN FOCUS

Abstract for panels at the 7th Annual ISNS Summer Conference, held in Krakow, Poland on 18-21 June, 2009 at the Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education „Ignatianum”

Recent years (decades) have seen a surge of philosophical interest in Proclus, partly due to the publication of new editions of some of his works, as his *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* and his *Platonic Theology*. The importance and relevance of his philosophy has been elucidated from various perspectives. Yet, scholarship seems to have shrunk back from what is arguably Proclus' most influential and at any rate a philosophically pivotal work, his *Elements of Theology*. Of course, any interpreter of Proclus must draw on the *Elements*, but few, if any, recent studies actually centre on the work turning it into their explicit theme. Maybe awe and reverence for E.R. Dodds' brilliant 1933 edition play a part here, in spite of the fact that from a philosophical point of view it must be (and increasingly is) considered unsatisfactory. This is one reason why we think it reasonable to put up at the upcoming ISNS 2009 conference a session, perhaps a double session, dedicated to the *Elements of Theology*. At the same time we are toiling with the idea of organizing at the occasion of the imminent publication of our fresh German translation (plus Greek text plus extensive introduction plus annotation) of the very treatise an accompanying volume with interpretations of the *Elements*. An ISNS session might serve as a first collection and inventory of contributions.

Possible themes are, of course, abundant. We will be happy to see the treatise approached from many different angles and have scrutinized and interpreted for instance its:

1. *literary character*: what are its pretensions, what is its method, what is the nature of its construction? Can it be considered a Neoplatonist compendium, as Dodds claims? What in fact is a *stoicheiosis*? What is the position of this *stoicheiosis* in the *corpus* of Proclus: is it an early or a late work? Does it relate, and if so how, to other writings? What is to be gleaned from here for the purport of the text? Etcetera.

2. *philosophical content*, which has

a. *metaphysical* aspects: how does Proclus represent causation? What is immanence and what presence of the transcendent? What are the self-constituted elements? Inevitably: how must henads be interpreted? What is the nature of the threefold intellect (are the three different types of divine intellects of the *Platonic Theology* be found in the *Elements*)? How does intellect relate to true being? In what does the doctrine of threefold participation consist and is it philosophically tenable? Etcetera.

b. *religious* aspects: why exactly does Proclus call his treatise *Elements of Theology*? How do metaphysics and theology relate? What exactly are gods? What gods does Proclus describe in the treatise? What is the relation between the abstract *Elements* and practical religion?

c. *anthropological* aspects: does this treatise bear on human life? What does it teach us with regard to Proclus' conception of man? And with regard to that of his ethics?

3. *historical* and *historical-systematical* position: how do the *Elements* relate to Plotinus? To Porphyry? And to *De mysteriis*? Did Proclus produce the *Elements* at a circumstantial occasion, and if so, at what (possibly)? What is the relation of Proclus' *Elements* to the *Elements of Theology* quoted by Dionysius the Areopagite and attributed to Hierotheos? How did the *Elements* find their way to Medieval thought (if someone is still interested)? What does this teach us concerning the Platonic current in Western – and Eastern – metaphysics? How was the treatise received by modern scholarship? How did it (did it?) stamp the picture of Neo-Platonism? Why did Thomas Taylor produce two translations of the treatise? What are their qualities? What is the treatise's role in 19th Century German philosophy (Hegel, Creuzer)? Etcetera again.

Apart from these *exempli gratia* issues many other topics are possible, suggestions for which we will receive eagerly.

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