DAMASCIUS ON THE *PARMENIDES*

L. G. WESTERINK, J. COMBÈS (edd.): *Damascius:* Commentaire du Parménide de Platon. *Tome IV*. Avec la collaboration de A.-P. Segonds et de C. Luna. (Collection des Universités de France publiée sous le patronage de l'Association Guillaume Budé.) Pp. lxvii + 266. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2003. Paper, €60. ISBN: 2-251-00512-9.

This is the last volume in the series published between 1997 and 2003 by CUF, of Damascius' (*c.* 462–post-538 A.D.) *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* (*in Parm.* henceforth). Conforming to the CUF format, the volume comprises a short introduction (pp. ix–lviii) outlining in this case the arguments of the included part of the commentary, followed by the French translation facing the Greek text with critical apparatus (*apparatus fontium* and *apparatus lectionum*) (pp. 1–135, corresponding to fols 381^{r}–435^{r} Marc. Gr. 246), followed in its turn by a set of notes (pp. 137–207). A lexicographical appendix (pp. 209–18), *addenda et corrigenda* (pp. 219–29), *index nominum* (pp. 231–40), *index locorum* (pp. 241–9), and *indiculus notarum* (pp. 251–62), all concerning the four volumes of the work, complete the book.

The tradition has not been very generous in preserving the ancient commentaries on *Parmenides*. We are left only with a few fragments (7 fols) of a pre-Proclean commentary (*Codex Taurinensis* F VI 1), and with Proclus' and Damascius' commentaries. All the information about the tradition of such commentaries as well as their interpretations of the Platonic text comes exclusively from the latter two. Moreover, the extant part, however remarkably extensive, of Proclus' commentary concerns only the first hypothesis. Thus the importance of Damascius' text emerges, as being the only extant commentary to cover hypotheses 2–9, albeit the commentary concerning the first hypothesis is missing.

In delivering his commentary, Damascius seems to follow closely the exegesis of Proclus with which he has more than occasional quarrels; he proceeds by raising a set of successive questions concerning each hypothesis which he will then be answering, and at the end of each section (in the case of this volume, once per hypothesis) devotes some space to discussing specific textual difficulties raised by the dialogue. Conforming to the principles of Neoplatonic exegesis of the *Parmenides*, to each hypothesis an ontological level has to be matched, and Damascius does it conscientiously, usually by answering the first question raised in relation to each hypothesis, namely the one concerning its *skopos*. The analysis is condensed, sharp, and lucid, even if quite often hard to grasp at a first reading. The philosophical and the theological are interspersed, and although, in my opinion, the first prevails by far, this is not an easy read for someone not familiarized with the intricacies of various previous Neoplatonic philosophers' doctrines.

The oldest extant MS of the text is Marcianus Graecus 246, from the ninth century A.D., and the commentary covers fols 216^{r}–435^{r}. It comes in the continuation of another work of Damascius, *Δαμασκίου διαδόχου ἀπορίαι καὶ λύσεις περὶ τῶν πρώτων ἀρχῶν* (henceforth *de Princ.*), which has been considered by several scholars as the commentary to the first hypothesis. However, it has been proved on the basis of structural and philosophical analysis that the two works are independent and that the commentary starts only with fol. 216^{r} and it lacks the part concerning the first hypothesis. The text has been edited only once before by Ch.-Æm. Ruelle in 1889 and

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the part published in this volume covers Volume II, pp. 246.1–322.14 in Ruelle's edition.

This edition is well done and supersedes its predecessor—which is not surprising, since from 1959 onwards Westerink has provided us with a modern edition for each of the extant works of Damascius, except *Vita Isid*. The input of Segonds, Combès, and Luna is, where it is acknowledged, usually felicitous.

The translation is overall accurate, although one cannot fail to notice that it is born out of almost thirty years of exegesis of these texts, in which Combès seemed sometimes to dominate the field, and thus to shape the recent view on Damascius' *de Princ*. and *in Parm*., while carrying, not at all concealed, the philosophical legacy of J. Trouillard.

There are several objections and quibbles I have against the introduction (to the first volume), the translation, or the Greek of this edition, but the space of this review is too limited for such an endeavour. Moreover, the scholarship on Damascius is still young and thin, and there is plenty of opportunity and room for dissent or approval. Nevertheless, I would like to point out here at least three instances where I have such quibbles: *in Parm*. 4.22.17–18: *Ἔτι δὲ ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις τὰ χείρω κρείττω φανεῖται, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐφίστησιν ἐν τῇ ἕκτῃ ὑποθέσει*. I am not convinced that *αὐτὸς* here refers to Proclus and not to Parmenides (i.e. Plato), since it is he who speaks *in* the hypothesis while Proclus might have a point to make *about* it, in which case *ἐν . . . ὑποθέσει* would be superfluous. *in Parm*. 4.94.20–1: *ἤδη γὰρ καὶ τοῦτό που οἶδεν ὁ Πλάτων, ὡς καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἄλλοις ἐπισημαίνεται*. I cannot accept that the editors are right in taking *αὐτὸς* to refer again to Proclus and not to Plato. The point Damascius is making is that he believes (*που*) that Plato knows (a certain thing) as it is shown in another work than the *Parmenides*, namely in the *Timaeus*. I cannot see why W. & C. would refer to Proclus 'in parte *Comm. in Tim.* nunc deperdita' when the reference to Plato's dialogue is at hand, the passage puts forward Damascius' theory, and there is no trace of it in the extant Proclus.

Last but not least, I can only regret that the *marginalia*, some of which are in Bessarion's hand, have not been considered important enough to include in this edition, even in the format of an appendix, as W. did in his edition of Damascius' *in Phaed*.

That said, the joint enterprise of W. & C. (with the help of A.-Ph. Segonds and C. Luna) has produced a most useful edition with a rich and learned body of notes and which is already the reference edition of this text and, beyond any doubt, the result of genuine *ἀληθείας ὠδῖνας* (to use Damascius' terminology). It is sad that neither of the editors lived long enough to see the whole work in print.

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AVICENNA AND ARISTOTLE

R. WISNOVSKY: *Avicenna's Metaphysics in Context*. Pp. xii + 305. London: Duckworth, 2003. Cased, £50. ISBN: 0-7156-3221-3.

An adequate understanding of Arabic philosophy is now generally acknowledged to require an intimate understanding not only of Aristotle, but also the Neoplatonists, and especially Neoplatonic commentaries on Aristotle. The work under review represents a major advance in our grasp of how late ancient commentators, beginning with Alexander, influenced Arabic philosophy.

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