Sarah Klitenic Wear, *The Teachings of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides*, Leiden-Boston 2011, 353 pp., ISBN 978 90 04 19290 4.

Syrianus, son of Philoxenus, Head of the Platonic School of Athens from 432 to 437 AD, is both an old and a new figure in the history of the study of Neoplatonism. He is old if we consider that his works both on rhetoric (commentary on Hermogenes' *De ideis* and *De statibus*) and philosophy (commentary of the B, Γ, M and N of Aristotle's *Metaphysica*) were edited in the early 20th century. But still, despite the fact that Karl Praechter did an excellent work on Syrianus from the 1920's onwards, the latter was better known as "the teacher of Proclus" till the 1980's.

Things began to change gradually from 1980, when Anne Sheppard published her Oxford D.Phil. *Studies on the 5th and 6th Essays of Proclus' Commentary on the Republic* (*Hypomnemata*, 61, Göttingen), where she discussed extensively issues that had to do with the possible debts of Proclus to Syrianus.

But it was not until the mid-1990's that Syrianus gained his rightful position in the history of philosophy. The two-volume work of Loredana Cardullo (*Siriano esegeta di Aristotele I. Frammenti e Testimonianze del Commentario all' Organon*, *Symbolon*, 14, Firenze 1995 and *Siriano esegeta di Aristotele II. Frammenti e Testimonianze del Commentario alla Fisica*, *Symbolon*, 15, Catania 2000) provided us with valuable material that shed light on Syrianus' lost commentaries on Aristotle, namely his commentary on the *Organon* (*In Categorias*, *In de Interpretatione*, *In analytica priora*) and on the *Physica*. In her introduction, Cardullo also mentions fragments from Syrianus' commentary on the *De Caelo* and on other books of the *Metaphysica*, but does not include them in her edition.

After Cardullo's pioneering work, the reviewer's *The Homeric tradition in Syrianus* (Thessaloniki, 2004) appeared, to be followed by Angela Longo's *Siriano e i principi della scienza* (Napoli 2005). As Jonathan Barnes wrote on page 27 of the preface of Longo's book, "Most of what is published nowadays on ancient philosophy is reheated cabbage (...). But it's nice to have a change from cabbage". The two-volume English translation by John Dillon and Dominic O'Meara of Syrianus' work on the *Metaphysica* (2006 and 2008—in fact the first translation of the ancient text in a modern language) pushed matters even further and made Syrianus more well-known as a philosopher. In 2009 A. Longo also edited the papers that were delivered in the September 2006 Geneva Colloquium on Syrianus' metaphysics.

The most recent addition to this series of books that brings Syrianus to his proper place in the history of philosophy is Sarah Klitenic Wear's *The teachings of Syrianus on Plato's Timaeus and Parmenides*. In this detailed scholarly work, Wear actually continues Cardullo's work on Syrianus' fragments. In a very

well-organised volume, an introduction (pp. 1-29) precedes the fragments. Wear first briefly presents Syrianus' life and works and then she provides the reader with a detailed and comprehensive account of Syrianus' philosophy. Issues such as Syrianus' teachings on the One, the basic principles of Peras and Apeiria, the Henads, the Aeon, the Demiurge, the Soul, Matter and Evil are adequately presented.

The discussion that follows is pivotal for anyone interested in separating Syrianus' doctrines from Proclus'. Wear deals with the complicated issue of Proclus' direct debt to Syrianus. She concludes that the majority of Syrianus' works were actually oral teachings, in other words, lectures on various topics, followed by discussions with Proclus. Separate problems such as the possibility of the existence of a commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* and *Parmenides* (a commentary not mentioned by Proclus but actually used by Damascius) are discussed in the course of the book. A brief but illuminating presentation of modern scholarship on Syrianus is the last section of the well-written introduction.

The body of Wear's book is the edition, translation and commentary of the 25 fragments on the *Timaeus* (pp. 32-212) and the 15 fragments on the *Parmenides* (pp. 214-331). The book aims to reconstruct the major tenets of Syrianus' teachings on these dialogues, and Wear's attempt is successful. Using Proclus and Damascius as sources, she presents, as comprehensively as possible, a picture of Syrianus' view of the dialogues, taking into account the fragmentary nature of the evidence and the methodological difficulties the whole task includes.

Among the fragments, we may distinguish *In Tim.* fr. 3 as it discusses the particular function of grades of daemons and also shows the relationship between the grades, correcting his predecessors on the matter and *In Tim.* fr. 6, which discusses the place of the Demiurge in Syrianus' structure of the cosmos, as well as how the placement of the Demiurge corresponds to his function. *In Tim.* fr. 11 is also important, as it gives evidence of Syrianus' explanation of Platonic arithmetic and geometry in terms of ontology. The connection between geometry and hierarchical metaphysics is also to be found in Syrianus' *In Met.* 85,38-86,2, but his thought becomes clearer through Proclus' elaboration, as Wear rightly points out. *In Parm.* fr. 5 is also of key importance, as it shows how Syrianus develops the system of Platonic principles, in which reality is the result of the conjunction of Limit (Monad in the *In Metaphysica*) and Unlimitedness (Dyad in the *In Metaphysica*). Wear competently analyses the complex function of the two principles, using Proclus' evidence, Syrianus' passages from the *In Metaphysica* and the existing secondary literature.

We should also stress the eminent presence of the Orphic material in the fragments, as it sheds light to Syrianus' use of this important philosophical and religious tradition. It should be noted, however, that the author uses the old

edition of the Orphic fragments by Kern and not the recent one by Bernabé. The book ends with Bibliography (pp. 335-344), an Index of philosophical terms and names (pp. 345-347) and an Index of passages of ancient authors used throughout the course of the work (pp. 349-353).

The careful and detailed study of S. Klitenic Wear is a work of the highest standard, which nonetheless reads easily because of its clear structure. It successfully continues Loredana Cardullo's work on Syrianus' fragments and is thus sure to give boost to the study of Syrianus as an important philosopher of late antiquity.

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