At the beginning of the second chapter of her study of Proclus' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, Kutash claims that her “primary focus” is “…Proclus' metaphysical doctrine as it applies to the *Commentary on Timaeus* and to nature as a divine bestowal” (22). Many of her readers, I believe, will take issue with this statement. There is very little on nature itself in this work, and, as Kutash develops her accounts of the ten gifts of the Demiurge, it becomes clear that Proclus' metaphysical doctrine plays a decidedly secondary role. Her main interests are in the theological aspects of the *Commentary*, in the redemptive capacity of procession and reversion, and in Proclus' belief in the enhancement of the possibility for assimilation to the divine and eternal spheres that study of Plato's cosmology and cosmogony can bestow on his readers. In Kutash's understanding of the text, Proclus achieves a blend of metaphysics and mysticism such that a new philosophical outlook emerges.

This becomes amply clear in the introduction, where Kutash outlines the attempts of recent scholars to determine whether, on the whole, the *Commentary* is a work of philosophy or of theology, or is a carefully wrought balance of both. Kutash maintains that we must be acutely aware of the fusion of traditional Platonicism with the theology of the Chaldaean Oracles that is a mainstay of the Athenian school of Neoplatonism, as well as with the Orphic and Mithraic religions. She is sensitive to the possible charge of over-emphasis on theological perspectives in the *Commentary*, as we all should be when considering the school's idea of the place of *Timaeus* in the study of Plato relative to *Parmenides*. But, in what amounts to an expression of alliance with other well-known commentators on Proclus, she argues for a seamless coalescence of the theoretical and the theological in the *Commentary*.

Before embarking on an analysis of the ten demiurgic gifts, Kutash takes account of the political and social dimensions of Proclus' work. Proclus was forced to contend with the marginalization of pagan philosophical thought and religious belief that held sway in his day. We are told of the influence on Proclus and his school of the emperor Julian's refurbishing of pagan philosophy and the promotion of theurgy as both an intellectual and political cause, in an attempt to reverse earlier efforts to eradicate pagan practices and their impact in the aftermath of Constantine's conversion. There is evidence of covert efforts by teachers of Neoplatonism to train pagan politicians to become actively engaged
in fomenting opposition to Christian dominance. The subsequent crackdown on pagan teaching was directed at the Athenian school in particular, rather than at all the schools of pagan philosophy, such as those in Alexandria, since various Neoplatonist malcontents had migrated to Athens. Against this background, Kutash wants to argue for polemical allusions to Christianity in the Commentary as Proclus continues pagan Platonism’s stand against the ascendant religion. His theological ‘rhetoric’ had political implications, she argues, and we should not overlook the political and social designs embedded in the metaphysics of the Commentary as part of Proclus’ efforts to preserve the viability of the theological foundations of pagan culture.

With the third chapter Kutash begins her formal analysis of the ten gifts. Here she is concerned with the association between the allegories of Atlantis and the Constitution of Athens and the first gift, the Demiurge’s granting of perceptibility to the material world. She considers in detail the cosmic tension introduced by the contrariety of opposites which, according to Proclus, was allegorized in the opening section of the dialogue. She pays special attention to the threat posed by matter, both its chaotic opposition to the ordering power of the Demiurge and its potential for infinite manifoldness. In this context again she finds a political and social dimension, which comes across most clearly in Proclus’ interpretation of the myth of Atlantis.

The second of the gifts is proportion (analogia), the bond that harmonizes the elements and all multiplicity. Proportion is particularly related to the autozoion (rendered as the Living-being-itself), the guarantor of continuity and ‘mediator in nature’. The study of geometric proportions in nature transcends geometry and arithmetic, leading us from particular triadic and tetradic relationships in the world to a universal science of proportion and harmony which, for Proclus, is the study of Being itself. Such mathematical physics extends to Proclus’ interpretation of the construction of the World Soul, which brings to the material world its own ratios that instill unity over its indivisible and divisible components. Kutash’s discussion of this gift is multifarious, encompassing Proclus’ debt to Euclid and to harmonic theory in his account of the ratios that are achieved in the formation of the World Soul, the fundamental importance of the tectratys, Proclus’ understanding of the text describing the five regular solids found in his account of ‘stereometric creation’, and his views on the nature of numbers as causes (presumably formal causes). The upshot is that mathematical principles govern all aspects of the generated world and are manifested at all levels of reality. In this scheme, which embodies a view of numbers that Kutash differentiates from the positions of Nicomachus, Iamblichus, and Syrianus, the mathematization of entities throughout the cosmos is one outcome of the activity of the higher causes.

Book 2 of the Commentary Kutash finds to be devoted to the subsumption of the physical world to higher causes, and to what knowledge of it we can attain.
This is also what Proclus identifies with the third gift (found in *Timaeus* 32c). She continues to emphasize Proclus’ intent to demonstrate that these causes impose limits on what would otherwise be an ever-expanding multiplication of entities in the world of becoming. Relevant to Proclus’ interpretive purpose in this regard are the five axioms drawn from various lemmata and providing the basis for ensuing demonstrations, as well as the Paradigm, the Good, intelligible Life, evil, and the question of the generation of the cosmos, on all of which Kutash provides short discussions.

The fourth, fifth, and sixth gifts—self-sufficiency, sphericity, and uniform circular motion—Kutash describes as “…the last of the “imminent manifestations of divine bestowal” (115) such that they operate on both metaphysical and physical levels. Her accounts of the relationship of sphericity to wholeness, intelligible beauty, and the self-motion of Soul, of Soul’s self-sufficiency, and of the privileged status of circular motion in Proclan metaphysics lead her to a prolonged depiction of Proclus’ place in the history of ancient astronomy. We are told of his distaste for the exaggerated complexity of some of his predecessors; in explanations of the paths of the heavenly bodies Proclus preferred simplicity and comprehensiveness to others’ reliance on empirical observation and calculation. In his view, a sufficient doctrine of the heavens should be grounded in metaphysical principles and reflect their harmony, completeness, and the cohesiveness that is ensured by a single pattern of causes.

As she describes the seventh gift, that of Soul, Kutash proceeds to elaborate the different senses in which Proclus understands its intermediate nature. In keeping with her guiding vision for the book, that one should maintain a ‘vision of the whole’ when reading the *Commentary*, she examines Proclus’ notion of the ultimate unity of the human soul despite its multiplicity, as well as the continuity of the motions of Intellect, Soul, and nature that is guaranteed by the mediating power of Soul.

Soul’s relationship with time, the eighth gift, affords a transcendent continuity in the cosmos that supersedes the series of discrete moments that characterizes the material world and the descended soul’s life in it. Soul’s self-identity is assured through the Monad of Time, to which it is subordinate. Proclus’ ideas of this relationship, and of time’s own subordination to eternity, help him solve the paradoxes of Plato’s *Parmenides*. As preserver of permanence and continuity, monadic time is closely linked to providence.

The ninth gift, ‘the sanctuaries of the gods’ who bring completion to the universe, allows Proclus to fill the void that occurs in all abstract philosophical systems, the lack of an adequate account of causal agency in the form of divine forces. For this he invokes all manner of encosmic gods to stand for metaphysical principles that are themselves sterile. Giving names to these divine agents provides a more vivid articulation of efficient causality and underscores the mystery
of creation. The practice of identifying static intellectual principles with Hellenic or oriental deities Kutash rather curiously labels a Proclan ‘conceit’.

An elaboration of the completion of the universe brought about by the ninth gift forms the tenth. In this section Proclus is concerned in large part with the orders of souls, particularly with lower souls and the reconciliation of mortal with immortal life that the principle of an all-pervasive continuity requires. Proclus states unequivocally that for mortal souls unification is impossible; only assimilation is attainable. Limitations on the possibilities for the soul’s reversion are due to the extreme transcendence of the One and to the soul’s bond with its vehicle, by which it is estranged from the gods. How it can overcome these limitations according to Proclus is the subject of an extended discussion, highlighted by an explanation of the effectiveness of Proclan theurgy and an attempt to set it in the context of his ontology and epistemology.

In the final chapters Kutash provides a fuller assessment of the hierarchy of souls and their places in the respective domains of providence and fate, along with a concluding look at Proclus’ unique reading of Plato. In the first of these discussions she looks at the respective roles of moral responsibility, philosophical reflection, and theurgy in the soul’s efforts to rid itself of its confinement to multiplicity and to enable itself to assimilate to the divine causes. With the spiritual exercises of theurgy Proclus overcomes Plato’s strong division between the worlds of Being and becoming. So, although there are always dangers associated with the mortal soul’s identification with its corporeal life, it suffers no permanent rupture from the divine world. In her conclusion Kutash first notes as a fundamental principle of Proclus’ exegesis that Plato’s dialogues set out a coordinated set of doctrines in various modes of articulation, and then further develops facets of Proclus’ metaphysics that arose earlier in her analysis: the importance of intermediation in its several forms and instantiations, the three levels of infinity, the ‘Limited/Unlimited Dichotomy’ that allows for both procession and reversion, providence, and fate.

Kutash’s study is an interesting blend of metaphysical/theological analysis and homage to Proclus’ brand of mysticism. There is at times a certain meandering quality to the discourse, but the thread tying it all together is her consistent concern to reveal the redemptive nature of soul’s assimilation to the divine realms. There is too little direct reference to the text; rather, Kutash is for the most part content to provide her own characterization of the thought of Proclus or to outline the findings of other scholars without sufficient evaluation of the many issues involved, so that what emerge are normally only the broad contours of the philosophy of the Commentary. This is not to say that her study is superficial, for she is generous in her descriptions of all of the levels of his metaphysical system. But despite her frequent appeals to the participation of providence and fate, nature,
cosmogony, causality, and the nature of evil in Proclus’ articulation of the ten gifts, we are left with an unfinished picture of the underlying doctrines. This, along with the lack of a critical appraisal of the contemporary scholarship that she cites and the sometimes highly embellished language, to some degree weaken the discussion. Nonetheless, as a testament to the importance of theology in Proclus’ exegesis in the Commentary, this book is a success.

John Phillips
John-Phillips@utc.edu
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

2) Statements such as “The circular apocatastasis enacted by redemption countervails dissipation into destruction” (p. 221) and “Dissipation into destruction is countervailed by the circular apostasies enacted by assimilative redemption” (p. 225) can be a bit much for the reader.