

OLYMPIODORUS ALEXANDRINUS PHILOSOPHUS

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FORTUNA

Olympiodorus, the younger, flourished during the sixth century of the Christian era in the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria. He was a student of Ammonius and was himself followed in the tradition by David and Elias. Olympiodorus was a commentator on works of both Plato and Aristotle, being the last of the Alexandrian School to write commentaries on Plato. Essentially nothing is known of his life and activities, other than what little can be learned from his own writings.

The extant writings of Olympiodorus include the following: (1) *In Meteora Aristotelis Commentaria*, (2) *Prolegomena logicae Aristotelis*, (3) *In categorias Aristotelis commentaria*, (4) *In Platonis Alcibiadem priorem commentaria*, (5) *In Platonis Gorgiam commentaria*, and (6) *In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria*. The *Vita Platonis*, which has often been printed separately and considered to be a separate work, is actually a part of the *In Platonis Alcibiadem priorem commentaria*; the *In Philebum Platonis commentaria*, previously attributed to Olympiodorus (e.g. *Platonis Philebus. Recensuit, prolegomenis et commentariis illustravit Godofredus Stallbaum*, Leipzig, 1820, X-XII, 235-88), has recently been attributed with better reason to Damascius. There are various manuscript Greek scholia and anno-

tations to several of Aristotle's writings which are sometimes attributed to Olympiodorus (see e.g. André Wartelle, *Inventaire des manuscrits grecs d'Aristote et de ses commentateurs*, Paris, 1963, nos. 322, 686, 1265, 1719, 1720, 1823, 1897, 1921, 1985). There do not seem to be any good reasons, however, for attributing these specifically to Olympiodorus (e.g. see the *Praefatio* by G. Heylbut in *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* XIX, 2 (Berlin, 1889), VI for the commentary on the *Ethica Nicomachea* attributed to Olympiodorus). It was only in the nineteenth century that it was shown conclusively by E. Zeller that the commentator on the Aristotelian writings was identical with the commentator on the Platonic Dialogues.

There is a single two line-epigram attributed to Olympiodorus in several late Aristotelian commentaries (see *Eliae Prolegomena philosophiae*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin, 1900 = CAG XVIII, 1) 14, lines 8-10; *Davidis Prolegomena philosophiae*, ed. A. Busse (Berlin, 1904 = CAG XVIII, 2) 31, line 34-32, line 2; *Epigrammatum anthologia graeca*. . . ed. E. Cougny (Paris, 1890), III, 320 [Appendix nova, cap. III, no. 177]). There is, however, no indication that this was known or translated before 1600.

Standing as he did at the very end of the ancient philosophical tradition, Olympiodorus apparently exerted no identifiable

subsequent influence on Western philosophical thought until the recovery of his writings in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. There seems to be no trace of his influence among medieval Hebrew writers. There is some indication that several works attributed to him (i.e. commentaries on Aristotle's *Meteora* and *De gen. et corr.* and Plato's *Sophistes*) were known by Arabic writers during the Middle Ages, when his name was evidently corrupted into such forms as 'Amkidorus', 'Amikurs', and 'Makidorus' (see Steinschneider, *AUG*, reprint Graz, 1960, pp. (58), (96), (97), (141). Michael Psellos (1018-1078) knew and used Olympiodorus' *In meteora Aristotelis commentaria*, but there seems to be no trace of Byzantine knowledge of the Plato commentaries between ca. 900 (when the archetype Venezia, Marc. gr. 196 was written) and the fifteenth century when it turns up in Bessarion's library.

In the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Olympiodorus' writings were recovered, although, except for the *In meteora Aristotelis commentaria*, the influence which they exerted was quite limited. There is no indication, moreover, that any of his other works were either printed or translated before 1600. They were known, however, to a reasonably wide circle of scholars through manuscript copies and, indeed, the manuscript diffusion had some traceable influence.

There was a single printing of the Greek text of the *In meteora Aristotelis commentaria* (Venice, 1551) in the sixteenth century. In addition, two Latin translations of the work were made, one by Joannes Baptista Camotius and the other by an anonymous translator. The work was, however, already known and cited from manuscript as early as 1520 by Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533). The commentary later became more influential on the meteorological writings of the second half of the sixteenth century, ultimately becoming one of the important standard ancient sources on the subject. It was cited often and discussed extensively, for example, in the writings of Lodovico Boccadiferro (1482-1545), Francesco Vimercato (ca. 1520- ca.

1580), Jacopo Zabarella (1533-1589), and Federigo Bonaventura (1555-1602).

The *Prolegomena logicae Aristotelis* and *In categorias Aristotelis commentaria*, which are apparently extant only in a single manuscript, seem to have drawn little, if any, attention prior to the nineteenth century. It is known, however, that this manuscript (presently, Modena, Biblioteca Estense, gr. 69) was previously in the possession of Giorgio Valla (1441-1500) and, later, of Alberto Pio (1475-1550) of Carpi.

The three commentaries on Plato's dialogues were known already in the mid-fifteenth century and exerted a distinguishable, if minor, influence on a variety of fifteenth and sixteenth century thinkers. Although there was no printing of the Greek text, nor was any translation made of any of the Plato commentaries before 1600, there is clear evidence to indicate a certain interest in them. First of all, there are a substantial number of Greek manuscripts extant, which were copied between 1400 and 1600. The sum of evidence available from the two most recent compilations of manuscripts which contain some part of Olympiodorus' commentaries on Plato (see Damascius, ed. Westerink, IX-XIV, and Olympiodorus (1913), V-X) indicates that there still exist at least two fifteenth century manuscripts and thirty-one sixteenth century ones. Moreover, the number of fifteenth and sixteenth century references to these writings of Olympiodorus is not insignificant. All three of the extant commentaries were already known by Cardinal Bessarion (1402-1472), who quoted passages from them both in his *In calumniatorem Platonis* and in a letter to Georgius Gemistus Pletho. Later in the century Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) utilized Olympiodorus' commentaries, particularly the one on the *Phaedo*, in his *Theologia Platonica*. The manuscript used by Ficino is still extant (Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. 37) and contains his marginal annotations. Among the numerous sixteenth century owners of manuscripts of one or another of Olympiodorus' works on Plato (for extensive listings see Damascius, ed. Westerink, IX-XIV, and Olympiodorus (1913), V-X) are to be included

such figures as Diego Hurtado de Mendoza (1503-1575), Francisco Mendoza y Bobadilla (1508-1566), Sebastiano Erizzo (1525-1585), Gian Vincenzo Pinelli (1535-1601), and Francesco Patrizi da Cherso (1529-1597). Of these the last is by far the most important. Patrizi had in his library two Olympiodorus manuscripts (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, D. 472. inf. and C. 79. inf.), one of which he also annotated (C. 79. inf.). In addition, Patrizi himself copied some excerpts from the *In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria* (Vaticano, Barb. gr. 179; see P. O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum*, II, 457), quoted from and discussed the *In meteora Aristotelis commentaria* in his *Discussiones peripateticae*, and mentioned Olympiodorus in several of his other works.

Although Olympiodorus was not unknown in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, it was not until the early nineteenth century that his commentaries were actually published. Fabricius (BG, X, 631) still spoke of 'Olympiodorus Platonius, cuius extant commentaria in varios Platonis libros, sed adhuc inedita omnia'. Indeed, even today, when there are accurate editions of his writings, the situation, as far as general knowledge of his writings and his influence, has not changed markedly since 1828, when Victor Cousin could say (*Nouveaux fragments*, 309): 'Olympiodore est si peu connu, que le plupart des historiens de la philosophie même les plus estimés pour l'étendue et l'exactitude de leurs recherches. . . font à peine mention de son nom. . . '*

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In Platonis Phaedonem commentaria, ed. W. Norvin (Leipzig, 1913) — see pp. V-X

(*) I wish to thank H.B. Gottschalk, James Hutton, P. O. Kristeller and L. G. Westerink for their help in the preparation of this article.

for a list of manuscripts. Prof. Westerink informs me that only section A, pp. 1-83 of Norvin's edition, is by Olympiodorus and that the rest must be attributed to Damascius on the same grounds as the Philebus commentary.

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(*) J. L. Heiberg, 'Nyplatoniske Commentarer til Platons Phaidon', *Nordisk tidsskrift for filologi*, IV ser., vol. V(1916), 15-21.

(*) O. Korcik, 'Olympiodor o stosunku logiki do filozofii w szkole stoików, perypatetików i platoników (Olympiodorus on the relation of logic to philosophy in the School of the Stoics, the Peripatetics, and the Platonists)', *Roczniki filozoficzne* 5,2 (1955-57), 27-29 (German summary in *Bibliotheca Classica Orientalis* 10, 1965, 254-255).

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B. Bessarion, Letter to Pletho, *ibid.*, III, 455-58.

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Federicus Bonaventura, *Pro Theophrasto atque Alexandro Aphrodisiensi*. . . apologia (Urbino, 1592), *passim*.

Federicus Bonaventura, *Anemologiae pars prior*. . . (Urbino, 1593), *passim*.

Federicus Bonaventura, *Opuscula*. . . (Urbino, 1627), esp. 1-155, *passim*.

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I. *In Meteora Aristotelis Commentarii*

The Greek text was first printed by the Aldine Press of Venice in 1551 in an edition uniform with the first printing of Camotius' Latin translation. It would seem probable that Camotius was also responsible for editing the Greek text, but there does not seem to be any clear evidence to indicate this. The work was not reprinted until the critical Berlin Academy edition of 1900 (see Bibliography above for full reference).

TRANSLATIONS

1. JOANNES BAPTISTA CAMOTIUS

A Latin translation of Olympiodorus' *In meteora Aristotelis commentarii*, made by Joannes Baptista Camotius, was first printed in 1551. There is no evidence that the translation was completed much before this date.

Prefatory Letter to Philippus Ghislerius (ed. Venice, 1551)

[*Inc.*]: (unnumbered fol. 3^r) Mihimet mecum saepius cogitanti, Philippe Eques ornatissime, eos mortales nunquam liberos satis sui iuris esse posse, quorum vita atque salus omnis obstricta tenetur beneficiis aliorum sempiternis; unum occurrit, quod meum animum quiescere atque interdum libere respirare non sinit. . . . Et quanquam ex ista amplissima et celeberrima totius Italiae civitate, quae suo summo honore et rerum disciplina atque omni autoritate alumna parensque florentissima studiorum omnium antiquitus semper extitit, atque ut extet in perpetuum, Deus optimus maximus faxit, pluribus civibus atque urbis doctoribus multum debeo; . . .eamque potissimum inter reliquas philosophiae disciplinas sequi summo studio soleas atque amplexari, quam *μετεωρολογικὴν* graeci vocant, quae pars philosophiae de iis rebus est, quae in sublimi regione generantur; forte evenit, ut dum in Olympiodori summi maximique philosophi commentariis lectitandis, quos in meteora Aristotelica conscripsit, multum diuque commoratus essem, quod ipsi me mirifice delectarent, idem quoque quum summo studio fecissem in scholiis Ioannis Grammatici in primum

meteorum, utriusque hominis commentarios Latinos statim facere meo insederit animo; ne tempore videlicet et otio hoc literarum abuti quasi per socordiam viderer. Quem laborem hac de gratia libenter suscepimus, ut non solum Graecis commentariis conscribendis, ex quibus quidam a nobis editi hodie extant, alique (bona salute) extabunt; sed aliorum quoque philosophorum commentariis Graecis, quum usus venit, e Graeco in Latinum sermonem vertendis studiosorum rationibus et commodis consuleremus. . .magis Graecos ipsorum philosophorum commentarios lecturum arbitror, quod Graece scilicet optime scis, et quae Graeca sunt, Graece quoque libenter legis. Tamen his quoque Latinis nostris legendis, quia utriusque praesertim orationis facultate plurimum delectaris, non mediocrem spero referes utilitatem; iucunditatem certe non parvam percipies earum rerum; quae quia variae multiplicesque extant in hac praesertim meteorologica disciplina, a Graecisque philosophis propter difficultatis magnitudinem graviter quodammodo atque subtiliter verbis tamen quam accommodatissimis tractantur; eae ut non prorsus inepte vel invenuste Latina quoque lingua dici possent, fecimus sedulo ac diligenter: quanquam hoc pensum brevioribus vigiliis quam tu existimare posses, et quasi subito atque extemplo confecimus. Non ignari tamen sumus multos esse locos pluraque verba, quae magno cum negotio etiam a doctissimis hominibus Latina fiunt; sive quia non magna adhuc ubertas Latinae orationis existat: neque enim scientiam vel artem ullam adhuc Latino sermone a maioribus nostris perfecte explicatam absolutamque accepimus, quanquam Latini scriptores plerique praecesserunt. seu potius quod Latina oratio quandam rerum scientiarumque explicandarum difficultatem sibi quasi a natura ingentem habeat, careatque venere illa verborum, qua Graeci tantopere gloriari solent. . ./. . .[*Expl.*]: (unnumbered fol. 4^v) Interim omni curriculo vitae tuae Deum opt. max. qui supra nos habitat coelipotens et a quo regitur hoc universum praesentem habeas atque optimis votis tuis benignum semper ac propitium. Vale. Venetiis.

Olympiodorus, *In meteora Aristotelis commentarii*.

[*Inc.*]: (fol. 1^r) *De primis itaque causis naturae*. Exordium huius propositi libri Aristotelis imitans vatem, qui est apud Homerum, scientem atque intelligentem, quae sint, quae fuerint, quae mox ventura trahantur. . ./. . . [*Expl.*]: (fol. 93^r) quaenam autem tantum ex aqua, et quae ex aqua et terra constant. Videtur deesse ultima actio et consideratio.

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1567, Venice: H. Scotus. With Camotius' translation of Joannes Philoponus, *Scholia in I meteorum Aristotelis*, fols. 3-130. BM.

Biogr.:

See above, vol. I, 100.

only in the unique manuscript cited below, seems to date from the sixteenth or, perhaps, early seventeenth century. The translator is probably also responsible for the Latin translation of Philoponus' *In primum meteororum Aristotelis*, which is contained in the same manuscript.

Olympiodorus, *In meteora Aristotelis commentarii*.

[*Inc.*]: (fol. 1^r) *De primis igitur causis nature*. Prohemium propositi libri Aristotelis quod imitatur vatem apud homerum, qui sciebat presentia, praeterita, et futura. . . / . . . [*Expl.*]: (fol. 112^r) ut dictum est quae quidem similes partes habentium terrae solum, quae autem aquae solum, quae autem terrae etiam aquae. Finis Metheororum Olympiodori interpretationis.

Manuscript:

Città del Vaticano, Vat. lat. 4559, s. XVI-XVII, fols. 1^r-112^v (Kristeller, *Iter*, II, 328).

2. ANONYMUS

This translation, which apparently exists