

*The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 4 (2010) 181-215 Ioane Petritzi, *Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos*, eds. Lela Alexidze and Lutz Bergemann, B. R. Grüner Publishing Company, 180 US dollars (Book Reviews)

*Ioane Petritzi Kommentar zur Elementatio theologica des Proklos*, published in the series *Bochumer Studien zur Philosophie* (No. 47), is a welcome contribution to the study of a remarkable 12th century Georgian philosopher. Petritsi is the first in history to have translated Proclus' *Elements of Theology* in its entirety, thus pre-dating by more than a century the comparable task that William Moerbeke undertook at the request of Thomas Aquinas. The significance of Petritsi's translation lays in the fact that the Greek manuscript that he used predates all extant manuscripts. This means that the Georgian text, which is faithful to the Greek manuscript to the point of syntactic exactitude, can be used to establish the most reliable version. Dodds could not have realised this since the English translation of Petritsi's rendering, which he had asked David Lang to produce, contained a number of errors. As a result, Dodds' famous critical edition of Proclus' treatise was undertaken without the benefit of having Petritsi's translation to hand.

The commentary which accompanies the translation shows Petritsi to have been an original philosopher in so far as his synthesis of Neoplatonism and other ancient systems of thought with the Christian biblical tradition is both bold and accurate. The commentary is mostly made up of his lecture notes for his students at the Gelati School, which had hitherto only been available in a Russian translation, published in the prestigious Soviet series "Philosophical Heritage No. 91" (1984). The new German translation and edition by Lela Alexidze and Lutz Bergemann surpasses it in both the faithfulness of the translation and the scholarlyness of the commentary that accompanies it. This is as should have been expected since the editors have meticulously studied the vast scholarly literature produced since the Russian edition was made.

In the introductory chapters the editors give an outline of Petritsi's life and works before placing both in the historical and philosophical context of contemporary Byzantium. Petritsi, as the editors demonstrate, must have been related to the Imperial philosophic school in Constantinople that flourished under the polymath Michael Psellus and his turbulent disciple John Italus in the years 1045-1083. A short and lucid overview of the entire Georgian literature of the Middle Ages helps the Western reader to realize that, for all his originality, Petritsi is part of a tradition that started from 5th century and continued for centuries afterwards. The introductory chapter also contains a critical assessment of Petritsi's translation and commentary, in which emphasis is placed on the points where the Georgian translator diverges from the Greek text used by Dodds in his 1963 edition—forty-eight such instances are meticulously studied. One such instance is of a particular importance, for the Georgian translation contains an additional

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proposition that is absent in the extant Greek manuscripts (prop. 129). The editors persuasively argue that this interesting proposition, which fits in well with Proclus' overall metaphysical framework, is not Petritsi's own inclusion, but represents a Greek textual tradition different from that of the extant texts.

A whole chapter is devoted to a controversial part of the main body of Petritsi's work, namely the so called *Epilogue*. Against some scholars (E. Chelidze, D. Melikishvili, M. Raphava), who have recently claimed that the text of the *Epilogue* should be kept separate from the main body of the commentary on Proclus, the editors argue that the *Epilogue* is, in fact, an integral part of Petritsi's commentary. In my view, the controversy will only be settled after further philological and philosophical investigations into the commentary are undertaken. The introductory chapters contain full information about the extant Georgian manuscripts of the text and photographs of two leaves of an ancient manuscript are included, one of which has in it Petritsi's original drawing, which graphically depicts Aristotle's syllogistic method. The editors had access also to the oldest 13th century manuscript, which was not available in 1937 to the first editors S. Kaukchishvili and S. Nutsbidze. A short section deals with the 13th century Armenian translation of Petritsi's work and its later Georgian translation in the 17th century.

The new German translation is outstandingly faithful to the original Georgian text. The footnotes provide philological information on Petritsi's titanic effort to create a philosophical terminology in his native tongue, as well as giving useful references to the philosophical and theological sources of Petritsi's ideas. Petritsi's Georgian terms are given in Georgian characters, for which a

transcription is provided in one of the chapters of the introduction. Many references to other scholarly works that discuss different points of Petritsi's ideas are also supplied.

The book contains user-friendly indices of proper names and philosophical terms as coined or used by Petritsi, a short German-Georgian-Greek glossary of philosophical and theological technical terms as well as an extensive bibliography of primary texts and secondary literature which is the most complete to date.

Overall, this is an excellent new edition of Petritsi's *magnum opus*. It can even be called a breakthrough in so far as it enables Western readers for the first time to gain access to this hitherto hidden corner of medieval philosophy. The book will be of benefit to all those interested in philosophy and, more particularly, in the medieval Neoplatonic tradition of Eastern Christendom.

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