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Introduction

Albert Joosse

About midway the sixth century CE, a student in Alexandria is taking notes. He and his fellow students listen attentively to the Platonist philosopher Olympiodorus, who has just introduced them to the writings of Plato. The student writes:

Now if it is necessary also for us, who plead Proclus' cause, to bring Damascius into agreement with him, he [Olympiodorus]¹ says that knowing oneself in a civic way is the target [of the *First Alcibiades*] primarily.

Εἰ δὲ δεῖ καὶ ἡμᾶς τῷ Πρόκλῳ συνηγοροῦντας εἰς σύμβασιν ἄγειν αὐτῷ τὸν Δαμάσκιον, φησὶν ὅτι περὶ μὲν τοῦ πολιτικῶς γινῶναι ἑαυτὸν ἔστιν ὁ σκοπὸς προηγουμένως.

in Alc. 5.17–6.1; tr. GRIFFIN, mod.

This sentence serves as a window onto Olympiodorus' oeuvre, since it features several key elements of his profile as a philosopher. It is part of a commentary that, like all his works that have come down to us, is ἀπὸ φωνῆς, as its title says, i.e. consists of notes taken from lectures he gave.² This formal feature of Olympiodorus' work foregrounds the didactic side of his activity, which is also present in frequent references to classroom settings.³ In the sentence cited above, Olympiodorus appears as a teacher who reflects on the aims of his instruction.

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- 1 Olympiodorus is the most likely subject of φησὶν, given *in Alc.* 9.22–10.1 (Griffin 2015, 79 supplies 'Damascius').
 - 2 The physical location of Olympiodorus' teaching was probably the lecture hall complex excavated at Kom el-Dikka in Alexandria: see Derda *et al.* 2007 for descriptions and interpretations of the site. Watts 2006, 233–261 offers an account of the historical circumstances of Olympiodorus' teaching.
 - 3 See e.g. *in Gorg.* 40.1, 200.21W; 43.3, 224.25–26W; Westerink 1971, 16–18. The form of the commentaries is directly related to their didactic origin: they are divided into πράξεις (lectures), which in turn are divided into a θεωρία section (overview and statement of philosophical significance) and a λέξεις section (commentary on specific phrases and words); see Beutler 1939, 221–227. For a brief account of his works see Opsomer 2010, 697–702 and the listing in Griffin 2016b, 406–407.

The sentence also takes us to the heart of Olympiodorus' conception of doing philosophy. His expression of intent here is specifically to bring Damascius into agreement with Proclus; this is part of an overall strategy in his work. He bases his philosophy on what his predecessors have said. He comments on Plato, Aristotle and possibly other authorities, seeking close alignment with commentators of previous generations like Proclus and Damascius.

Olympiodorus bases his philosophy on his predecessors' work not only because they provide the material with which to teach and think, but also out of the very desire to bring these predecessors into agreement with each other. Olympiodorus is deeply convinced of the importance of agreement as a criterion for knowledge and as a prerequisite for a happy life. If he can show the underlying unity of his predecessors' views, that will constitute evidence that they are correct and that their views are worth adopting in one's own life. Hence he recommends to his students (*δεῖ καὶ ἡμᾶς*) that *their* way to approach philosophy too is via a reconciliation of authorities.⁴

The student continues to note that Olympiodorus then offers a position of his own, manifesting another basic element of his philosophical activity. It is of paramount importance to express your own judgement. If this judgement can show the underlying agreement between authorities, so much the better. Your judgement must be based on arguments, as he insists in a passage in the *Gorgias* commentary, even if your authority is Plato himself.⁵

The chapters in this volume seek to flesh out this picture of a philosophical teacher who brings his own judgement to bear on views and arguments from a centuries-old Platonic tradition. In keeping with the focus of the majority of papers at the original Utrecht conference, the volume is devoted to the philosophical profile of Olympiodorus and to his Platonic commentaries.

To varying degrees scholarship has moved away from the view that Olympiodorus espoused a simplified metaphysics compared to his Athenian colleagues, had an attitude of compromise towards the Christian community of

4 Agreement is evidence, not proof, of truth. As Olympiodorus remarks, the Democriteans are agreed about the existence of the void, but since there is none, they do not possess knowledge (*in Alc.* 92.5–7; the passage is well-known for its mention of Democriteans where the parallel passage in Proclus refers instead to the Christians, *in Alc.* 264.5–6).

5 *in Gorg.* 41.9, 214.13–25W. Characteristically, Olympiodorus states this point in part by recounting an anecdote about his teacher Ammonius' critical attitude towards Plato. See also *in Gorg.* 34.3, 175.11–20W; and *Prol.* 10.8–12, 27–34. Olympiodorus' insistence on critical judgement is not exceptional. See e.g. Ammonius *in Cat.* 8.12–18; Philoponus *in Cat.* 6.30–35; Simplicius *in Cat.* 8.26–29; Elias (David) *in Cat.* 121.34–122.5, 122.26–123.4. Cf. n. 14 below.

Alexandria, and a strong focus on Aristotle rather than Plato—as, in this view, befits a member of the Ammonian school of Alexandrian philosophy.⁶

Of particular value about this earlier approach to Olympiodorus is the focus on the strong continuities between his work and that of his teacher Ammonius, whom Olympiodorus cites approvingly, especially in the *Gorgias* commentary.⁷ It is also true that Olympiodorus' work gives us no evidence that his teaching included as complex a metaphysical picture of the world as that of Proclus—though it remains subject to debate whether this applies only to his teaching for a wider audience (from which it seems his commentaries derive) or also to Olympiodorus' convictions and perhaps inner-circle teaching.⁸

In the other respects, however, Olympiodorus does not fit into the picture of the Ammonian school as earlier historiography has presented it. His openness to Christian terminology is arguably not evidence of compromise but of a deep conviction that surface meanings from different traditions stand in different ways for the same underlying truth.⁹ On key aspects, moreover, he does not deviate from Platonic views, even where they are repugnant to Christian convictions.¹⁰

Olympiodorus' treatment of Aristotle, furthermore, clearly does not take precedence over his Platonic teaching. The opening lines of his *Prolegomena* to the *Categories* and of his *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* are programmatic. In the former work, he states:

6 Karl Praechter's account (1910, esp. 144–154) and its strong distinction between the 'Athenian' and 'Alexandrian' schools has been very influential. See Ilsetraut Hadot 2015 for a recent restatement of the case for minimizing these differences (her 1978 remains fundamental). Cf. Lloyd 1970, 314–316; Verrycken 1990; and for Olympiodorus specifically Westerink 1976, 23–25; Wildberg 2005, 324–325; Demulder and Van Riel 2015, 270–277; Filippi 2017, xiv–xvii.

7 See the index nominum to Westerink 1970 and JLT, 252 n. 739.

8 See Tarrant 2017, 41–44, who does diagnose some degree of simplification; Filippi 2017, xviii–xix, xxxvi–xliv, argues that Olympiodorus is a major representative of a phase in which the Neoplatonists codified and standardized the theoretical accomplishments of Proclus and his predecessors (cf. my comments in Joosse 2021); and for a brief earlier account Opsomer 2010, 705. Many have argued that the strongly pedagogical nature and context of his texts should make us wary of inferring simplicity of thought from simplicity of exposition. See e.g. Renaud 2008, 91–92; Demulder and Van Riel 2015.

9 Tarrant 1997, 188–191; Renaud 2006, 145–146; Opsomer 2010, 702–705; Griffin 2014; 2015, 5–6; Demulder and Van Riel 2015, 275–276.

10 See especially Fortier in this volume.

Because we wish to benefit from the fount of goodness there is an eagerness among us to cleave to Aristotle's philosophy, which endows life with the source of goodness.

Prolog. 1.3–5, tr. GERTZ¹¹

Olympiodorus refers back to these lines when he starts the *Commentary on the First Alcibiades* by saying:

Aristotle begins his own *Theology* with the statement that 'all human beings naturally reach out for knowledge; and a sign of this is their love of the senses'. But in beginning Plato's philosophy, I would go a step further and say that all human beings reach out for Plato's philosophy, because all people wish to draw benefit from it; they are eager to be possessed by its streams, and to render themselves full of Plato's inspirations.

in Alc. 1.3–9, tr. GRIFFIN, mod.¹²

Aristotle's philosophy serves as the source (or starting point, ἀρχή) for making life good, but Plato's philosophy fills us with inspiration. The language of inspiration used here¹³ expresses Olympiodorus' conviction that we must turn to Plato for knowledge of higher truths. But he displays an uncritical attitude to Aristotle nor Plato, correcting each if need be.¹⁴

Rather than focusing on reasons for rejecting an earlier paradigm, however, this volume presents a constructive picture of the Platonic aspects of Olympiodorus' teaching. Recent work on Olympiodorus has already done

11 'Ἐπειδὴ πηγῆς ἐθέλομεν ἀπολαύειν ἀγαθῶν, σπουδῆ παρὰ ἡμῖν τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους φιλοσοφίας ἀντέχεσθαι, τῆ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀρχῆ ἡχορηγούσης τὸ ζῆν[.].

12 'Ὁ μὲν Ἀριστοτέλης ἀρχόμενος τῆς ἑαυτοῦ θεολογίας φησὶν· 'πάντες ἄνθρωποι εἰδέναι ὀρέγονται φύσει, σημείον δὲ ἢ τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀγάπησις'. ἐγὼ δὲ τῆς τοῦ Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίας ἀρχόμενος φαίην ἂν τοῦτο μειζόνως, ὅτι πάντες ἄνθρωποι τῆς Πλάτωνος φιλοσοφίας ὀρέγονται, χρηστὸν παρ' αὐτῆς ἅπαντες ἀρύσασθαι βουλόμενοι καὶ κάτοχοι τοῖς ταύτης νόμασιν εἶναι σπουδάζοντες καὶ τῶν Πλατωνικῶν ἐνθουσιασμῶν πλήρεις ἑαυτοὺς καταστήσοντες.

13 And explored by Motta in this volume; see Tarrant in this volume for an account of the type of inspirations this may involve.

14 Note for instance the manner in which Olympiodorus disagrees with Aristotle at *in Alc.* 193.22–194.2: Alcibiades, he notes, has understood statecraft better than Aristotle, because he does not think the ἠθικός, οἰκονομικός, and πολιτικός are different. But, he adds, Alcibiades was not capable of this by himself: it was Socrates' influence. Other corrections of Aristotle at *in Mete.* 66.16–27, 74.17–76.5 (with 5.16–23 and 10.32–11.5, on the Milky Way); 144.8–145.5 (in defence of Plato); *in Alc.* 122.12–3, 145.6–11; 204.8–12, 210.11–12 (the Peripatetics, cf. *in Phd.* 10.3.5–6); *in Phd.* 10.1.5–10. Criticism of Plato can be found at *in Cat.* 112.19–113.15; *in Mete.* 16.25–17.7, 40.1–11, 301.17–25 (on these passages see Viano 2006, 74–77); cf. Renaud 2008, 100–102; Hadot 2015, 140–146. Cf. *in Phd.* 7.6.6–10.

much towards this aim. The field owes a great deal to the work of Harold Tarrant, who not only collaborated with Robin Jackson and Kimon Lycos on a fully annotated translation of the *Gorgias* commentary over twenty years ago, but has continued to work on the form and arguments of Olympiodorus' commentaries. The Utrecht conference too benefited greatly from his participation. Scholars in this field also owe a large debt to Leendert Westerink (1913–1990), whose editorial and interpretive work on Olympiodorus remains indispensable.

In general terms, Olympiodorus has profited from increased scholarly interest in Late Antiquity and in Late Ancient Philosophy in recent years. We are fortunate to have three excellent recent overviews of his thought and work.¹⁵ (Rather than giving another summary in this introduction, therefore, I will highlight key elements directly pertinent to the chapters in this volume in the sections below.) A number of annotated translations of Olympiodorus' works have appeared in recent years.¹⁶ Interest in the persona of Socrates has stimulated study of his Platonic commentaries, the *Gorgias* and *Alcibiades* commentaries being respectively the only and only complete treatment of these Socratic works in the Neoplatonic curriculum to have come down to us.¹⁷

The detailed scrutiny of Olympiodorus' work undertaken in this volume roughly revolves around four areas of interest: the profile of the philosopher that we find in Olympiodorus' work; his interest in perception and knowledge of oneself; his concern with the form of philosophical communication; and his position vis-à-vis his Christian surroundings.

1 Philosophical Profile

The figure of the philosopher appears in two guises in particular in this volume: in what his interests and materials are and in the ideal that he tries to embody. To start with the former, it is probable that Olympiodorus taught more than the core philosophical material conveyed in the Aristotelian and Platonic commentaries. For instance, his commentary on Paulus of Alexandria's *Εἰσαγωγικά*

15 Wildberg 2018; Opsomer 2010; Caluori 2018; and cf. Griffin 2017.

16 Griffin 2015, 2016a; Gertz 2018 translates Olympiodorus' *Prolegomena logica*, alongside Elias and David's *Prolegomena*; Filippi 2017 translates all Platonic commentaries in two volumes (with copious notes).

17 See especially the papers by François Renaud 2006; 2012; 2014; Renaud and Tarrant 2015, 190–244; and Tarrant 1997, 185–188.

concerns astrological matters.¹⁸ It is likely that he also taught rhetoric. Scholars have also cautiously suggested that he provided training in medicine.¹⁹ CRISTINA VIANO's contribution concerns his interest in chemistry. This is evident already from the *Meteorology* commentary. But Viano reopens the question of Olympiodorus' possible authorship of the alchemical commentary on a work by Zosimus, *On Action*. Viano agrees with the majority view that this commentary is not the work of Olympiodorus as it stands. The hypothesis she advances here, however, is that the first part of the work does substantially derive from Olympiodorus' pen, as comparisons with the *Meteorology* commentary show. In Viano's view, this layer of the text was updated (much) later by means of interpolations and of an additional second part consisting of citations from other philosophers and alchemical authors.

While Olympiodorus' range of interest was broad, the material he was able to work with was not always as extensive as was the case for, for instance, his contemporary Simplicius. Take the *Alcibiades* commentary, where scholars even doubt whether Olympiodorus had access to Proclus' treatment; and it is fairly clear he did not have access to earlier thinkers.²⁰ In the commentaries on the *Categories* and the *Gorgias* there is no trace of direct knowledge of authors before Ammonius. ANNE SHEPPARD shows that a similar situation holds for some of the literary works of which we find frequent citations in Olympiodorus. Sheppard finds no evidence that he knew much about the comedies and tragedies he cites. She also argues that the way in which he cites them shows that Olympiodorus did not have much interest in them either (I will return to Sheppard's contribution below on p. 9, in considering Olympiodorus' interest in the formal aspects of philosophical communication).

Working from a material basis that was in many ways restricted, Olympiodorus tried to pursue and to convey an ideal of what it is to be a philosopher. An important instrument for communicating this to his audience is the sketch of Plato's life which we find at the beginning of the *Alcibiades* commentary. ANNA MOTTA argues that this presents a unity of doctrine and

18 Warnon 1967 and Westerink 1971 offer persuasive arguments for ascribing this work to Olympiodorus. But cf. Opsomer 2010, 710; Caluori 2018, 2056.

19 Rhetoric: Westerink 1964, 176; cf. JLT 1998, 7. Medicine: Westerink 1964, 172, based on the frequency of citations from Hippocrates. Olympiodorus' student Elias refers to a commentary of his (Elias') on Galen's *De sectis*, in *Isag.* 6.9. A commentary on Hippocrates' *Prognostics* is attributed to David. Stephanus the Alexandrian philosopher and Stephanus the medical writer may be the same person. See Westerink 1976, 26–27.

20 Beutler 1939, 208.58–64; and Segonds 1985, lxxiv–lxxv are pessimistic about Olympiodorus' access to anyone else but Damascius (and about Olympiodorus' intellectual calibre); cf. Opsomer 2010, 708.

biography. The philosopher's biography offers a model of philosophical excellence for students to aspire to (and so as a point on the horizon to guide them through their reading of his work). It specifically turns the students towards themselves, Motta argues, which shows that the presence of the *Life of Plato* at the beginning of the *Commentary on the Alcibiades* is not incidental, but expresses a unity of purpose. But even before serving as a model for the students to aspire towards, the *Life of Plato* presents the ideal in virtue of which the master himself, Olympiodorus, is able to teach Platonism to the next generation.

Key in the portrait of Plato is the range of virtues it incorporates. Olympiodorus adopts from his predecessors an account of the degrees of virtue that ranges from the qualities that we are born with through the conditions of the soul informed by reason to the suprarational virtues in which the human soul is united with the divine. We thus get the series natural—ethical—civic—purificatory—theoretical—paradigmatic—and perhaps hieratic, which features in a number of the chapters in this volume. MICHAEL GRIFFIN highlights the psychological development of the student as he ascends along this series to become a more and more perfect philosopher, or, as Motta points out, more and more like Plato. In the first stages, this is a process of increasing psychological organisation, which paves the way for a liberation that leads to identification with the divine. Griffin emphasizes the inclusive nature of the higher stages of this scale. The philosopher operating at the theoretical level can still engage in civic matters. He also notes that the highest stages still contain specificity. In accordance with the *Phaedrus* (252d–253c) Olympiodorus envisages the philosophical ideal as assuming the character of the particular god to which we severally belong.

2 Self-Cognition

Crucial to the progress from natural virtue towards philosophical virtue is the turn towards ourselves. It is a main ethical concern for all Neoplatonists to turn us away from concentrating on the sensory dimension of reality, which is merely the product of soul, and to encourage us to identify with the highest aspects in ourselves, this being the route through which we can rejoin our origin. This explains the pivotal role of the *First Alcibiades*, which as the first dialogue of Olympiodorus' Platonic curriculum is the text in which students are encouraged to come to know themselves. It is not only in the commentary on this dialogue, however, that we find Olympiodorus to have a sustained interest and an approach of his own to self-cognition. In his comments in the *Phaedo* commentary, Olympiodorus seems to restrict self-cognition to the rational

soul: only it is able to revert to itself. PÉTER LAUTNER argues that this makes any kind of awareness of our perceptions that includes ourselves as subjects of that perception the province of the rational soul. Lautner also argues that Olympiodorus advances a rich view of perception in another respect. Unlike his immediate predecessors, he attributes perception of universals to animals.

Olympiodorus also seems to restrict the range of self-knowledge at the other end of the philosopher's development. As DANIELLE LAYNE points out, he speaks positively of a kind of ignorance of one's ignorance which besets the soul at the theoretical stage. This double ignorance, which involves the soul's unawareness of its embodiment, is superior to knowledge. Olympiodorus' remarkable conception of ignorance of oneself, Layne argues, involves a kind of reversal between those at the lowest and those at the highest end of the ladder of philosophical development. Alcibiades identifies with his body and reputation. He needs Socrates' method of purification to realize that his desires aim at real power rather than the images of power which he now focuses on. In this process of realizing what he really wants, Alcibiades comes to know his soul. The philosopher described in the *Theaetetus*, on the other hand, knows himself as soul but does not even realize his ignorance of his body and of life in the body.

Alcibiades, it seems, never actually achieves self-knowledge, even if Socrates puts him in the way of it. The aim of Olympiodorus in teaching the *First Alcibiades*, however, is very much for his students to reach civic self-knowledge. Olympiodorus' nuanced presentation of the aim (*σκοπός*) of the dialogue as civic, rather than theoretical self-knowledge or self-knowledge *simpliciter* raises the question of what distinguishes civic from other types of self-knowledge. My own chapter addresses this question. For Olympiodorus, civic self-knowledge involves embodiment, *metriopatheia*, and ourselves as individuals with particular interests. But even if civic life is responsible for our individuation, civic self-knowledge is not enough to know ourselves *as* individuals. This ambivalence about civic (self-)knowledge surfaces elsewhere: Olympiodorus affirms and denies that the civic knower is a philosopher. This shows, I argue, that Olympiodorus uses 'civic self-knowledge' as a transitional notion, not one that captures one precise stage of knowledge. Cognition and ignorance of oneself, then, are not necessarily fixed notions in Olympiodorus, but can be used at different places in his conceptual scheme.

3 Form of Philosophical Communication

Like other Neoplatonists before him, Olympiodorus is aware of the importance of formal aspects of philosophical writing and teaching. He works with the

interpretive assumption, standard since Iamblichus, that every aspect of a text should contribute to the one target (σκοπός) of that text. That makes him particularly sensitive to literary and dramatic features of Plato's dialogues, which Olympiodorus attempts to explain no less than argumentative elements in one comprehensive view of the respective dialogue. He also has a keen eye for the various ways in which Plato has Socrates adapt his words to the character of his interlocutor. For Olympiodorus, this is part and parcel of the life of the philosopher in the city. For the philosopher who operates at the civic level not only has knowledge of himself as an individual embodied being, but also engages with his fellows, leading them to the good life. As BETTINA BOHLE shows in her analysis of the *Gorgias* commentary and Hermias' *Commentary on the Phaedrus*, this involves rhetoric. According to both Olympiodorus and Hermias, Plato recognizes a true rhetoric that aims at the good, is able to explain itself, and pitches its message depending on the kind of soul with which it communicates. These high demands mean that true rhetoric is inseparable from philosophy. And in fact, Bohle argues, we would do best to view the rhetorician as the philosopher in his role of persuading, or rather teaching, others. Olympiodorus and Hermias' favoured rhetoric turns out to be the dialogue that Socrates is engaged in with his fellow citizens.

FRANÇOIS RENAUD zooms in on a specific instrument of communication in the dialogues: myth. Even though, as often, it is hard to gauge Olympiodorus' originality due to the loss of earlier *Gorgias* commentaries, we do find in his commentary a nuanced hermeneutic of myth. Olympiodorus distinguishes between philosophical myths and poetic myths. For both types of myth the important thing is to uncover their deeper meaning. The advantage of philosophical myth, however, is that their surface meaning does not harm those incapable of digging deeper. The temporal aspect of the final myth of the *Gorgias*, for instance, must be taken as part of the surface meaning. When the myth speaks of punishment after death, its deeper meaning concerns the here and now and involves, Renaud argues, the practice of Socratic dialectic. Myth thus has a double function: it stimulates the thought of those capable of unearthing deeper meanings and it appeals to all souls because it is an image of the truth. (I return to Renaud's chapter below, p. 10.)

ANNE SHEPPARD'S chapter, which we looked at before, also explores Olympiodorus' reflections on the dramatic form of Plato's works and the ethical function of literature, in relation to the views of his predecessors. In both cases, she argues, Olympiodorus' work helps us understand Neoplatonic views but does not constitute evidence that Olympiodorus' interest in the literary side of philosophy was exceptional.

His interests in the literary aspects of philosophy and the modes of its communication may have led Olympiodorus to find a new use for the idea that

Plato employed different registers of writing, as HAROLD TARRANT suggests. Earlier commentators related the style of discourses in Plato's works to their subject matter (following *Tim.* 29b4–5), weightier styles being used to treat weightier matters, or alternatively simple styles to speak of higher, and more simple, beings. Olympiodorus, Tarrant argues, seems to repurpose the characterization of discourses as 'inspired': it is no longer the subject matter but the divine person who speaks through the mouth of Platonic characters that determines whether a discourse is inspired.

4 Attitude towards Christians

The attitude which Olympiodorus takes towards his Christian contemporaries may provide an important background to these observations of philosophical style and its interpretation. Olympiodorus may have been the last pagan head of the school of Alexandria, which lends particular interest to the question of his attitude.²¹ Moreover, his work features a number of striking passages that present Greek notions in terms that are acceptable to a Christian audience.²² In view of that background it is remarkable, TARRANT notes, that the figures whose discourses Olympiodorus mentions as inspired at the beginning of the *Alcibiades* commentary do not seem to be very senior (with the exception of the demiurge of the *Timaeus*, harmless in a Christian context). Tarrant suggests that this may point to Olympiodorus' efforts to neutralize any threat a Christian audience may have felt at inspired pagan discourse in Plato's works. As talk of wine and aulos music as having inspirational effects may also indicate, Olympiodorus no longer seems to treat inspiration as very significant. And this, according to Tarrant, is not only a matter of communication but a matter of (a lack of) conviction.

A stronger emphasis on the communicative aspect of Olympiodorus' attitude emerges from FRANÇOIS RENAUD's analysis of how Olympiodorus characterizes Plato's mode of writing. The prominence of myths in Plato's writing are part of an overall esoteric strategy, which hides the truth from those who cannot understand it and stimulates those who can to search for it. Olympiodorus' own teaching too, Renaud suggests, can profitably be viewed

21 Olympiodorus may have had pagan successors: the work of Elias and David also contains notions usually deemed incompatible with Christian views, such as the eternity of the world. See Wildberg 1990, 37–46, who also suggests that the names 'Elias' and 'David' may have come to be attached to these works at a much later date.

22 *in Alc.* 21.15–17, 22.14–23.3; *in Alc.* 92.4–9, cf. Procl., *in Alc.* 264.5–6; Ol., *in Gorg.* 4.3, 32.9–33.3W; *in Gorg.* 47.2, 244.8–15W. For discussion see e.g. Griffin 2014, esp. 77–79.

as to some degree esoteric: it combines caution with an exhortation to come closer to the knowledge in ourselves.

There are, however, a number of issues on which Olympiodorus' open adherence to orthodox Platonism has long been recognized. SIMON FORTIER analyses what is perhaps the most remarkable of these: the doctrine of transmigration. Fortier substantiates the idea that this doctrine was eminently unacceptable to Christians. Olympiodorus' overt exposition of this doctrine is therefore clear evidence of his unwillingness to compromise on his Platonic views and may even have become a trademark of his Platonism for himself and his environment as well.

Some of the chapters assembled here argue that Olympiodorus developed novel ideas and approaches. In others the emphasis is rather on the continuity between his ideas and those of his predecessors. To some extent, this difference is of secondary importance. Olympiodorus is a representative of Neoplatonism precisely because he combines use of and deference to authorities with a strong conviction that arguments must carry the day and with enough independence of thought to offer solutions of his own, to forge new concepts and to put old ones to new purposes.

In these pages Olympiodorus emerges as a thinker interested in the formal aspects of philosophical communication and in issues of self-cognition, a thinker moreover who directs his efforts to finding the best stance between his old and broad tradition and new circumstances. This picture reflects interests in scholarship today. Present-day interests in turn help us see better what concerned Olympiodorus.

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