

A better sense of Kepler's own approach is given by the complete version of his renowned statement when the circular orbit which he had calculated turned out to differ from Brahe's data by eight minutes (one minute of arc is one-sixtieth of a degree): "these eight minutes alone will have led the way to the reformation of all of astronomy."

The first sentence of the same paragraph, conveniently ignored by the Aristotelians, reads "Since the divine benevolence has vouchsafed us Tycho Brahe, a most diligent observer, from whose observations the 8' error in this Ptolemaic computation is shown, it is fitting that we with thankful mind both acknowledge and honor this benefit of

God." Here, and throughout his life's work, Kepler understood that the key to science is the understanding that "it neither was nor is right" (as he quotes from Plato's *Timaeus* at the start of his youthful *Mysterium Cosmographicum*) "that he who is the best should make anything except the most beautiful."

—Sylvia Brewda

Plato's Method Versus Neoplatonism

John M. Dillon is to be commended for completing this first-ever English translation of Proclus' *Commentary on Plato's Parmenides* after Glenn Morrow, who had translated nearly half of it, died in 1973. The only previous translation of this work into any modern language was published in 1900 in German. Therefore, this translation is extremely valuable; not because Proclus (A.D. 410-485) provides us with a valid interpretation of Plato's dialogue—which he does not—but rather for two other reasons.

First, it has historical value, particularly in light of the fact that Plato's *Parmenides* dialogue, like most of Plato's writings with the exception of the *Timaeus*, was not itself available in the Latin West even during the lifetime of Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa (1401-64). Therefore, Proclus' work, which was probably translated into Latin in the 1280's, was the sole means by which this critical dialogue by Plato was available to the Renaissance thinkers, including Cusanus.

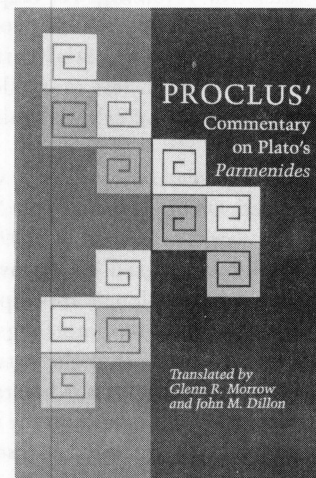
Second, even though the "neo-Platonic" method employed by Proclus leads him to a erroneous interpretation of Plato's dialogue as a whole, it nonetheless serves a useful negative function. Proclus' attempt to derive a positive philosophical system from the *Parmenides* is clearly not the intent of Plato's dialogue nor does it reflect Plato's own method, and Proclus' commentary is therefore a useful contrast from a methodological standpoint to the approach taken to Plato's *Parmenides* in the recent period by Lyndon LaRouche in such locations as his *In Defense of Common Sense* and *Project A*.

The immediate thing that one notices about Proclus' commentary is, that despite its length it extends only to the end of the dialogue's first hypothesis, or less than half the extent of the whole. From this first hypothesis Proclus constructs a Neoplatonic metaphysical system.

The first hypothesis of the *Parmenides* is "if there is a *one*, the one will not be many." From this hypothesis Proclus derives the idea of a transcendent God, who is beyond being and therefore prior to anything created. Although he does not comment at length on the second hypothesis, he does make reference to it. The second hypothesis is "if a one *is*, it cannot be and yet not *have* being." The "one which is" is therefore both a one and a many.

While not endorsing Proclus' method nor his interpretation of the *Parmenides per se*, to which he had no direct access, Nicolaus of Cusa, referring explicitly to Proclus' commentary in such locations as *On the Origin* (1459) and *On the Not-Other* (1462), argued on behalf of a notion of God, the Absolute One, as Not-other, i.e., as not many, in contradistinction to the universe it transcends, which, being created (having being) *is* both one—in likeness of the Absolute One—and also other or many.

There is a fascinating passage in Proclus' *Commentary* which is coherent with Cusanus' notion that the Not-other or God is "the other of the other," i.e., is not only transcendent but also immanent in His creation. Citing Plato's letters, Proclus writes: ". . . a divine light is kindled in us through which there comes about—in such a



Proclus' Commentary on
Plato's *Parmenides*
translated by Glenn R. Morrow
and John M. Dillon
Princeton University Press,
Princeton, 1987
616 pages, paperbound, \$24.95

way as is possible to us—a glimpse of it, which makes us participate in it in respect of that part of ourselves that is most divine. But the most divine thing in us is the One in us, which Socrates called the illumination of the soul, just as he called the truth itself light. This illumination is our individual light, and so, if it is not impious to say this, here also like is apprehensible by like: as the sensible is by sensation, the opinable by opinion, the knowable by science, so by the One in ourselves do we apprehend the One, which by the brightness of its light is the cause of all beings, by which all participate in the One."

On the other hand, Cusanus criticized Proclus for his attempt to construct a rational defense of the existence of a multitude of pagan gods through his doctrine of *henads*. Cusanus' concept

of the Absolute One as triune and creative, is totally in conflict with Proclus' notion that the Absolute One is not the intelligible father who causes all things; for, according to Proclus, the primal God is the generator of the plurality of gods, only some of whom are fathers.

Lyndon LaRouche, who has been able to study the *Parmenides* directly, arrives at the same conclusions concerning the dialogue which Cusanus was able to distill from Proclus' methodologically erroneous *Commentary*. Whereas Proclus interprets the *Parmenides* as the allegorical expression of a positive philosophical system, LaRouche correctly sees the dialogue as a polemic against the Eleatic school of philosophy represented by both Parmenides and Zeno. For LaRouche, what Plato does in the *Parmenides* is to demonstrate the absurd and self-contradictory conclusions to which one is led by deductive succession from the axiomatic assumptions of the philosophy of Parmenides, in which the One is conceived as static or linear.

LaRouche argues in effect that what Plato proves in the *Parmenides* dialogue is precisely the same thing that Cusanus proves in "On Squaring the Circle." In the latter, Cusanus shows that the perimeter of a polygon can never be made co-extensive with that of a circle by the method of exhaustion; in fact, the more sides the polygon has, the more points it has at which it is distant from the circle. Similarly, as long as Parmenides assumes that unity is incapable of qualitative change, and is rather measurable by simple linear extension, his attempts to define the relationship of the many to the One will necessarily fail.

Although Proclus was unable to remove the real Plato entirely from his *Commentary*, it is this concept of the Absolute One as Creator, of the universe as capable of qualitative change, and of man as capable of effecting qualitative change through his use of reason—all implicit in Plato's devastating polemic against Parmenides' linearity—which eluded him, and which LaRouche, using the method of Cusanus and Plato, has found.

—William F. Wertz, Jr.

Yearning for the Malthusian Millennium

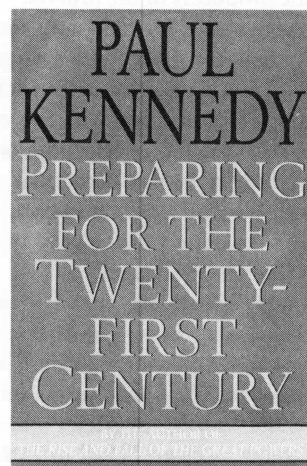
Admittedly, British-born, Yale University historian Paul Kennedy has compiled an impressive array of data and has taken up some provocative and challenging themes. But, for the most part, his work is a mixture of monumental incompetence combined with disinformation and fraud.

Kennedy is arguing for a new geopolitical cult rooted primarily in an updated version of the worldview of Parson Thomas Malthus. The driving force, and central threat, in Kennedy's world, as in the late eighteenth century of Malthus, is demographic growth. Rapid demographic growth is a determining factor in causing wars and political instability, with the added twist today that it also damages the "global environment." Combatting the threat of "overpopulation," in Kennedy's view, justifies, or necessitates, an imperial world order ruled by rentier-financier interests.

'Winners and Losers'

Technology, such as it exists in Paul Kennedy's future universe, will predominantly help those who are at present better off—primarily the Japanese and several European nations—and hurt the worst-off, the Africans being at the bottom of the heap. The only two frontier technological developments that he grants real significance to are biotechnology and robotics. Biotechnology will certainly increase food production, but it will be dominated by powerful multinational corporations and will be effectively denied to the developing sector. Robotics, meanwhile, will mainly work to the benefit of Japan and a handful of other countries, but will progressively undermine manufacturing labor, thereby further hurting countries with large populations, which require "labor-intensive" approaches.

What this combination of demographically determined history and selectively developed technology adds



Preparing for the
Twenty-First Century
by Paul Kennedy
Random House, New York, 1993
428 pages, hardbound, \$25.00

up to, in Kennedy's view, is that the world inevitably has "winners and losers," as in a sports match: "History is, once again, producing its lists of winners and losers. Economic change and technological development, like wars or sporting tournaments, are usually not beneficial to all."

Consistent with this, is Kennedy's view that "Malthus' England" is an example of a "winner" in history. "Malthus' England," of course, is a term synonymous with "the British Empire," which "won" only because it conquered and devastated other peoples. Kennedy is less than frank, employing British diplomatic euphemism instead, as when he attempts to contrast how "the British escaped their Malthusian trap" with the case of India, which is "much closer to Malthus' model." India's population, he writes, "also doubled and redoubled in the nineteenth century, but on a much less productive base. Furthermore, because the Indian states had been unable to resist Britain's East India Company militarily, their subjects could