The Commentaries of Proclus on the First Book of Euclid's Elements of Geometry Translated by Thomas Taylor (London, 1792) Book II, Chapter 6

Transcribed by David R. Wilkins

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[Thomas Taylor, The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus, Vol. 1, pp. 103–104 (1792).]

CHAP. VI.

Concerning the Purport of Geometry.

BUT, perhaps, some one may enquire in what the design of this treatise consists? To this I answer, that its design is to be distinguished as well according to the objects of enquiry, as according to the learner. And, indeed, regarding the subject, we must affirm, that all the discourse of geometry is concerning the mundane figures. Because it begins from such things as are simple, but ends in the variety of their constitution. And, indeed, it constitutes each of them separately, but at the same time delivers their inscriptions in a sphere, and the proportions which they contain. On which account some have thought, that the design of each of the books is to be referred to the world; and they have delivered to our memory, the utility which they afford us in the contemplation of the universe. But distinguishing the design with respect to the learner, we must affirm, that its purpose is the institution of elements; and the perfection of the learners cogitative powers in universal geometry. For beginning from these, we are enabled to understand the other parts of this science, and to comprehend the variety which they contain. And, indeed, without these, the discipline of the rest, is to us impossible and incomprehensible. For such theorems as are most principal and simple, and are most allied to first suppositions, are here collected in a becoming order. And the demonstrations of other mathematicians, use these as most known, and advance from these in their most complicated progressions. For thus Archimedes, in what he has writ concerning the sphere and cylinder, and Apollonius, and the rest of mathematicians, use, as evident principles, the things exhibited in this treatise. Its purpose, therefore, is the institution of learners in the whole geometric science, and to deliver the determinate constitutions of the mundane figures.