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6



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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḍawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

Book Announcements

A. Michalewski, *La puissance de l'intelligible. La théorie plotinienne des Formes au miroir de l'héritage médioplatonicien*, Leuven U.P., Leuven 2014 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf-Mansion Centre, Series I, 51), vii + 264 pp.

The long line of scholarship on Plotinus continues with this interesting monograph on the key notion of the causality of Forms. The book falls into two main parts, one devoted to set the scene for Plotinus' views (I. "Le Démiurge et les Formes dans le médioplatonisme", pp. 7-96), and the other to outline the Plotinian doctrine of intelligible causality (II. "Plotin", pp. 99-223). It is completed by the *Index locorum* and bibliography. Its main thesis is that Plotinus' attitude towards Platonic Forms is shaped by the interpretive traditions of what we usually label Middle Platonism, and this both positively and negatively: Plotinus inherits from the Middle Platonic current of thought, but also parts company with some of its solutions. Hence, Part I is not intended as a mere historical background, rather it helps shed light on Plotinus' tenets discussed in Part II.

Michalewski features Middle Platonism as "caractérisé par l'affirmation de la transcendance des principes divins et l'intégration de l'aristotélisme dans l'exégèse des textes platoniciens" (p. 31). This has been done by generations of philosophers of Platonic allegiance, mostly under the pressure of the rise of Stoicism, with its cosmological doctrine that, though challenging Plato's, borrowed from the *Timaeus*: "Pour contrer l'appropriation stoïcienne du *Timée* qui faisait du dieu un intellect immanent au monde, les médioplatoniciens ont développé une lecture artificialiste de la cosmologie, dans laquelle le démiurge est un intellect séparé du sensible et distinct de l'âme du monde. La théorie des Formes prend dans le médioplatonisme une importance décisive: les Formes sont des principes contemplés par le démiurge pour fabriquer le monde sensible, intermédiaires entre le dieu et la matière. Le dieu est l'artisan du monde et les Formes sont ses pensées. Le statut principal des Formes est bien affirmé, mais leur importance étimologique reste problématique: si le monde est le produit d'une fabrication divine, la cause la plus importante est la cause fabricatrice et non la cause paradigmatique, qui lui est nécessairement subordonnée. La définition des Idées comme 'pensées du dieu' (...) reporte dans l'ordre suprasensible le rapport de suprématie que le stoïcisme établissait entre le dieu et ses *logoi*. De ce point de vue, la contestation médioplatonicienne du stoïcisme reste en partie tributaire de ce qu'elle veut dépasser. C'est un dépassement encore plus grand que propose Plotin" (pp. 95-6).

Contemporary scholarship generally concurs that Plotinus' 'internalist' thesis that Forms do not lie somewhere outside the divine Intellect, rooted as it might be in the Middle Platonist assessment of the so-called "ideas of God", goes even further than this. Michalewski agrees with this position. Plotinus does not limit himself to following in the footsteps of those Platonists who described the Forms as the thoughts of God; rather, he reacts time and again against the derivative status that such an assessment attributes to them. "C'est précisément contre une telle position d'infériorité des Formes que s'élève Plotin, en affirmant que les Formes sont non seulement intérieures à l'Intellect, contrairement à la position de Longin, mais qu'elles lui sont identiques" (p. 81).

It is Michalewski's conviction that the new status that Plotinus grants to the Forms if compared to their definition as τοῦ θεοῦ νοήματα is patterned after Aristotle. The Middle Platonists paved the way to an 'Aristotelian' turn that was driven to completion by Plotinus: "Portant à son plus haut degré

les tentatives de conciliation, ébauchées dans le médioplatonisme, entre la théologie aristotélicienne et l'interprétation du *Timée*, Plotin montre que c'est en se contemplant lui-même que le dieu est le démiurge du monde sensible: en se connaissant, il connaît la totalité des Formes" (p. 123). This reconstruction is grounded chiefly on Alcinoüs' and Numenius' distinction, different in details but inspired by a common attitude, between the first self-thinking God and a second divine intellect endowed with the demiurgic power – a topic where it is easy to detect, and previous scholarship has detected, a distinct Aristotelian flavour. Michalewski's point is that Plotinus follows the path laid out by Alcinoüs and Numenius, but goes even further in so far as he takes directly into account the core of Aristotle's metaphysics: the doctrine of ἐνέργεια. "Unissant les thèmes centraux de Platon et d'Aristote – la théorie des Formes et la conception de l'ousia comme *energeia* – Plotin définit l'intelligible comme ce qui est intérieur à soi, ce qui se saisit soi-même" (p. 145). Thus, the key notion in Plotinus' new assessment of the status of Forms is the Aristotelian ἐνέργεια: "Il s'agit de montrer que le concept d'*energeia*, élaboré par Aristote dans la *Métaphysique* comme alternative à l'ontologie platonicienne et à sa théorie des Formes, en est la pièce maîtresse. Loin d'en être la critique, ce concept ne prend son sens qu'au sein du platonisme bien compris. [...] Or, la stratégie argumentative de Plotin ne consiste pas à opposer purement et simplement à l'interprétation littérale du *Timée* le modèle aristotélicien qui dissocie la finalité naturelle de l'intentionnalité, mais à montrer comment le concept d'*energeia*, qui définit la nature des réalités intelligibles, rend caduque une interprétation technicienne de l'activité divine. Les analyses aristotéliciennes de la nature de l'intellect divin et de son activité fournissent les outils permettant de développer une nouvelle interprétation du texte platonicien dans laquelle il s'agit d'intégrer la définition de ἐνέργεια aux Formes elles-mêmes" (pp. 172-3).

As a consequence, the role of the Demiurge is completely redefined: "Pendant plusieurs siècles, le *Timée* avait nourri une lecture artificialiste de la cosmologie platonicienne. Plotin y coupe court en posant un cadre métaphysique dans lequel les principes dérivent éternellement les uns des autres et en s'appuyant sur les passages où il est question du repos du démiurge pour montrer que c'est précisément en restant en lui-même que le démiurge produit le monde" (p. 187).

It is surely not the case that the Michalewski sees Plotinus as an eclectic thinker drawing something from Plato and something from Aristotle without any precise awareness of the points of incompatibility between their respective metaphysical and epistemological views. Michalewski often alludes to Plotinus' intention to counter Aristotle's objections against the hypothesis of Forms. However, it seems to me that Plotinus' attitude towards Aristotle is more sophisticated – or convoluted if you like – than endorsing some of his key notions, and using them to restate Plato's. Take for example one of the treatises most recurrent – and *pour cause* – in this book, VI 7[38], which begins with a well-known, and aptly discussed by Michalewski, refusal of the Demiurgic "reasoning" that occurs in the *Timaeus*' narrative. This discussion includes the description of Forms as principles where what they are (ὅτι) and the reason why they are what they are (διὰ τί) coincide: an account grounded in Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics*, and a very sharp insight into the nature and role of intelligible principles, to which Michalewski devotes an interesting treatment (pp. 174-84). The course of Plotinus' reasoning about the status of Forms includes the following (VI 7[38], 4): before saying what the intelligible 'Man' is, one should be sure one knows accurately (ἀκριβῶς) what "the man here below" is (τὸν τῆδε ἄνθρωπον ὅστις ποτέ ἐστίν); now, this is far from being the case. Indeed, those who define 'man' in terms of ζῶον λογικόν have to face this problem: either the rational principle that makes a thing to be a 'man' is a real cause of its being a 'man', or it is a mere definition, that comes later with respect to the man that already exists. It goes without saying that the issue at stake is inspired by Aristotle's search for the λόγος τῆς οὐσίας, namely a discourse (*Metaph.* Z 10, 1034 b 20) that is expected to

provide the answer to the question “what is being for such and such a thing?”. That this chapter deals with *Metaph. Zeta* has already been noticed in scholarship (Chapters 4 and 5, esp. 1029 b 1 – 1030 a 4, feature in the *apparatus fontium* of Henry-Schwyzler). but Plotinus proves here to be keenly aware also of Aristotle’s point in *Zeta* 10, with his search for that kind of rational principle that provides the essential cause for something to be a ‘man’. Now, soul in the living being is precisely this: not only the *logos* providing the accurate description of what such a thing is, but also the cause of its being what it is: the forming principle of the individual substance of a living thing is described here as its οὐσία, its εἶδος, and τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι τῷ τοιόνδε σώματι (1035 b 14-16). This is what Plotinus has to say on this:

But one must [...] grasp the forming principle itself which makes, for instance, man; this applies especially to those who claim to define the essential nature in each case, when they define strictly and properly, καὶ μάλιστα, ὅσοι τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι ἀξιούσιν ἐφ’ ἐκάστου ὀρίζεσθαι, ὅταν κυρίως ὀρίζονται (VI 7[38], 4.23-28, trans. Armstrong).

When he claims that if we are to examine not the separate, Platonic Form, but precisely form in matter, we ought to search for the “forming principle itself which makes ... man”, the λόγος αὐτὸς ὁ πεποιηκὼς ... τὸν ἄνθρωπον, especially if our point is in each case to search for the τί ἦν εἶναι, Plotinus is evidently reacting to *Zeta* 10. In his eyes, the ‘Aristotelian’ definition of ‘man’ as ζῷον λογικόν is doomed to failure not because it does not meet the criteria of Platonic Form, but in so far as it does not meet the criteria of substance as defined in *Zeta* 10. Indeed, as he has pointed out shortly before, the definition ζῷον λογικόν comes after the man that already exists, but by no means can count as the latter’s rational cause, which was indeed what Aristotle was searching for.

It is a great merit of this book to raise again the question of Plotinus’ attitude towards the crucial, and most technical problems of Plato’s and Aristotle’s metaphysics.

CDA

Roger Arnaldez, *Aspects de la pensée musulmane*, Librairie Philosophique J.Vrin, Paris 2015 (Études musulmanes, 47), 316 pp.

This volume is the second edition of twenty-one essays by the eminent Islamologist Roger Arnaldez (1911-2006). Originally written by Arnaldez between 1955 and 1982, they were collected by the author himself in 1987 without any general introduction, a gap that is filled by another eminent Islamologist, Father Maurice Borrmans M. Afr.

The Introduction, “Roger Arnaldez (1911-2006). Philosophe et islamologue, au service d’un œcuménisme élargi et d’un dialogue difficile” (pp. 7-36) is in reality an essay offering a vibrant description of Arnaldez’ intellectual profile and of a lifelong endeavour for interfaith dialogue. Philosophy lies at the core of this dialogue, and this not only because of Arnaldez’s education, which combined the skills of a linguist mastering some twenty languages with his discipleship with Jacques Maritain and Maurice de Gandillac, but also because of an increasingly clear conviction that philosophy and its history provide the keys for interpreting religious experience. “Linguiste et traducteur, R. Arnaldez est ainsi attentif à l’expression linguistique de la philosophie et de la théologie, ce qu’illustre parfaitement sa thèse principale, *Grammaire et théologie chez Ibn Ḥazm de Cordoue*. [...] C’est pourquoi le présent ouvrage reproduit six articles qu’Arnaldez a publiés pour mieux faire connaître la pensée d’Ibn Ḥazm” (pp. 10-11). The titles of the sections in Borrmans’ introductory essay are instructive in this respect: “Islam et philosophie”, “Islam et sunnisme classique”, “Islam et mystique”, “Islam et christianisme”,