Brisson, Luc, and Pradeau, Jean-François (eds.), *Plotin. Traités 42-44. Sur les genres de l'être I, II et III*. GF Flammarion, 1348. Présentés, traduits et annotés par Luc Brisson. Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2008. Pp. 367. ISBN 978-2-0812-1145-2.

This book is the seventh volume to be published in the planned series of translations and commentaries of the whole of Plotinus' *Enneads* in their chronological order, under the editorial direction of Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau. Treatises 42, 43 and 44, which are to be considered as a whole, from both a historical and a theoretical point of view, are devoted to the issue of the categories, or, more precisely, to the genera of being. Introduction, translation and notes are all by Luc Brisson, but have been examined collectively in the context of a seminar.

In the introduction Brisson (hereafter B.) first outlines the historical context and the *status quaestionis* of the debate on the categories before Plotinus (basically Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics). He then illustrates Plotinus' *pars destruens* which consists, firstly, in a long and accurate critical analysis of Aristotle's categories ('substance', quantity, relation, quality, time, place, position, state, action and passion) and, secondly, in a briefer critique of the Stoics' categories (substrate, quality, disposition, and relative disposition).

Obviously, Aristotle is Plotinus' first target. His hard position against Aristotle's theory of the categories contrasts with the more moderate standpoint taken by Porphyry in the *Isagoge*. B. follows H.D. Saffrey ("Pourquoi Porphyre a-t-il édité Plotin? Réponse provisoire", *Porphyre, Vie de Plotin II*, Paris, Vrin, 1992, pp. 31-64) in suggesting that this disagreement between the two philosophers could be the reason behind the otherwise mysterious attack of melancholy that led Porphyry to abandon Rome towards Sicily, and to part from his beloved master and friend.

B. points out clearly that, beyond the detailed criticism of the single categories, Plotinus' ultimate argument both against Aristotle and the Stoics is their lack of a neat distinction between the sensible and the intelligible world. Plotinus rejects Aristotle's conception of a unique rank of categories and censures the Stoics for attempting to reduce the whole of reality to the material (or, better, the corporeal) element.

B. then follows Plotinus in his *pars construens*, in which he presents himself as a true interpreter of the divine Plato, distinguishing two levels of categories, one belonging to the intelligible word and the other belonging to the sensible word. The first level consists of the five genera of the *Sophist*: 'Substance', Rest, Movement, Sameness and Otherness (the One is the source of the categories, but cannot itself be a category since it is beyond being) while the second level is made up of 'substance', quantity, quality, movement, relation. If looked at from the point of view of the first genera, these two levels of categories have nothing in common but the name, because the 'being' of intellectual entities and the 'being' of sensible

things are totally different, the latter representing only a shadow of the former. However, if looked at from the point of view of the sensible world, the lower categories are in a hierarchical relationship of analogy with the upper categories.

B. shows how Plotinus here tries to answer the Platonic problem of the participation of the sensible in the intelligible word (by means of the theory of the *logos/logoi*), establishing the productive character of the genera as principles who produce and organize the sensible word. The discussion about the categories, which Aristotle conducted on both a linguistic and an ontological level, becomes in Plotinus wholly ontological and even cosmological.

The translation is based on the *editio minor* of Henry and Schwyzer, with the variations listed. Lines 2-5 and 11-14 in treatise 43, chapter 14, which are usually expunged by editors as glosses, on the ground that they can be found verbatim in Simplicius' *Commentary on Aristotle's Categories*, are here maintained. The same decision had also been made by Bréhier and Faggin. Armstrong, Radice and Casaglia/Guidelli/Linguiti/Moriani, on the contrary, follow Henry and Schwyzer in expunging the lines.

If translation is always a challenging task, translating Plotinus seems to be even more challenging than usual, due to the density of his thought and, on occasion, the extreme concision of his prose. The present rendering succeeds in being both close to the text and idiomatic. Yet, in spite of the precision and fluency of the translation, the reader will still miss having the Greek text printed alongside. Not only would it have made it easier to detect the textual choices and to appreciate the nuances of the translation, but it would also have acted as a valuable reassertion, especially for new generations of students, of the importance of reading ancient philosophical texts in the original.

A significant choice on the part of the translator was to have *réalité* in preference to the technical *substance* (as in Bréhier's translation) to render *ousia* (which Armstrong renders by *substance*, Radice by *sostanza*, Faggin by *essenza*, and Casaglia/Guidelli/Linguiti/Moriani sometimes by *sostanza* and sometimes by *essenza*). The choice of the present translators was motivated by the Scholastic associations of the term *substance*.

The volume also provides *ad loc.* notes, which are very helpful in pointing out all the sources to which Plotinus refers and with which he often disagrees (as well as all the references to the other tractates of the *Enneads*). In the notes, B. and his team unfold the most problematical passages, give an account of the textual options, and justify their choice of translation.

A detailed bibliography of the texts mentioned in the introduction and the notes is appended to the volume, as well as a chronological outline of the life of Plotinus in its cultural, political and historical context.

This volume will be read with great interest by both scholars and graduate/undergraduate students. For the latter it could both be a key to the challenging and fascinating world of Plotinus as well as a general introduction to the problem of the categories in ancient philosophy.

Enrica Ruaro
University of Genoa
ruaro.enrica@libero.it