

Studies on Porphyry edited by George Karamanolis & Anne Sheppard, Institute of Classical Studies, University of London, 2007. 183pp.

This edited volume was prepared from papers on Porphyry presented at a conference held at the Institute of Classical Studies, London, in July 2004. The past forty years have seen substantial changes in Porphyry studies and the contributors to this volume include some of the most prominent scholars in the field today. The contributions vary greatly in style, scope, and strategy but are uniformly excellent in content. All show a high degree of historical sophistication in tracing Porphyry's influence on later ancient and early medieval philosophy, physics, psychology, and religion. George Karamanolis and Andrew Smith offer overviews of the *Stand der Forschung* on these topics [1-16]. Karamanolis notes that the study of Porphyry's metaphysics was initially motivated by interest in Plotinus but that Porphyrian studies have since moved beyond this singular focus [1-5] while Smith offers horizons for a reassessment of Porphyry's significance [7-16]. Both examine areas in which Porphyry's importance cannot be denied and each offer suggestions as to how we can assess anew his philosophical achievements and historical significance.

Steven Strange opens the volume with a traditional and singular Plotinian focus. The *Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes*, he notes, raise the issue of Porphyry's relation to Plotinus, particularly whether Porphyry endorsed Plotinus' metaphysical views on first principles [17-34]. Strange shows that Porphyry largely followed Plotinus' theory of hypostases and that the only differences between the two philosophers occur when Porphyry attempts to explicate and expand Plotinus' first principles. Thus, in Strange's view, Porphyry's identification of the second hypostasis with the demiurge rather than with *Nous* echoes Plotinus' own sentence '*Nous* is the demiurge for Plato' [*Enn.* 5.1.8.6]. Strange goes as far as claiming that Porphyry's identification of the world soul of the *Timaeus* with Plotinus' third hypostasis: "as a whole is Plotinian and taken from a Plotinian text and it endorses Plotinus' theory of Hypostases as a reading of Plato's metaphysics" [26].

Riccardo Chiaradonna sees Porphyry's views on transcendent incorporeals and inseparable bodiless entities as paralleling Plotinus [35-49]. In this groundbreaking study, he argues against attempts to reduce Plotinus' and Porphyry's respective ontologies to their doctrines of first principles and Soul alone.

John Dillon's essay tacks in a different direction. He claims that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in the Cappadocian Fathers, particularly Gregory of Nazianzus, is largely inspired by the metaphysics of Porphyry [51-59]. Porphyry's formulation of the First Principle manifesting itself as a triad, Dillon argues, offered a basis for putting the Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit on a secure

philosophical footing, thereby obviating the threat of Arian subordinationism. Since it is possible for Patristic scholars not to acquire any knowledge of ancient Neoplatonism and thus of the foundations of their own philosophical theology, Dillon should not be surprised that his Christian theological colleagues have yet to acknowledge his thesis. Even within the limited context of Porphyrian studies, as Mark Edwards [111-126] and Gillian Clark [127-140] show, Porphyry contributed to Christian self-definition. If Edwards and Clark are correct, Dillon's thesis is obliged consideration by Patristic scholars.

Richard Sorabji argues that Porphyry is the first philosopher to have claimed that the soul is present to itself [61-69], on the basis of his identification of the true self with intellect and his presentation of the soul as essentially rational. If Sorabji is correct, Porphyry's *Sententiae*, as well as his interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*, are pivotal in the history of the philosophy of mind. The claim that the soul is present to itself anticipates not only Augustine's view that the soul knows itself, but also Descartes' claim that in knowing itself the mind acquires truth and certainty about its own nature. Sorabji notes that on the subject of the individual as an unshareable bundle [*athroisma*] of qualities, Porphyry's treatment of the Aristotelian treatise could hardly have furthered the cause of Aristotle. His simplified treatment of individuals is one whose influence he likely would have regretted in view of later developments (Cartesian, Lockean, Humean etc.) in the history of the problem.

Anne Sheppard examines Porphyry's views on imagination [*phantasia*] noting that he does not share the views of other Neoplatonic philosophers about the higher power of imagination [70-76]. Unlike Plotinus, he does not view imagination as 'double', and does not distinguish between a higher imagination which reflects the intelligible world and a lower one which receives images from perception. Also absent from Porphyry is the theory, found in Proclus and going back to Iamblichus, that imagination plays a role in mathematical studies, making possible the projection of images of the intelligible onto *phantasia* as if it were a screen or mirror. Sheppard's point is that Porphyry combines Platonic and Aristotelian psychology in a conventional non-Neoplatonic way by associating imagination with the astral body.

In a chapter that should be read in conjunction with Sorabji's and Sheppard's pieces, Peter Lautner offers a study on perception and self-knowledge in Porphyry [77-90]. He claims that for Porphyry visual perception is tied to a certain kind of self-knowledge. In encountering visible objects the soul recognizes itself as being the visible objects. Lautner concludes that Porphyry's intention was not to explain visual perception *per se*, but to give the aetiology of self-knowledge, as elucidated at the level of seeing. To regain knowledge of the ideas, the first step must be the use of the senses since sensible forms correspond to thoughts, to names and words,

to mental images, and to forms. Lautner boldly claims that for Porphyry seeing or sense-perception can be called a form of self-knowledge, and that self-knowledge is not therefore the privilege of intellect alone.

George Karamanolis examines the notion of *empsychia* in Epicurean and Stoic sources before analysing Porphyry's use of the concept [91-109]. The term means animation or animate living state, a feature humans share with god. The underlying idea is that the animate state consists of both soul and body, though in different ways. Porphyry revived the notion and, with qualifications, maintained the monistic implications of earlier Epicurean, Stoic, and Peripatetic usage. He built on Plotinus' position on the soul. Porphyry suggested that *empsychia* is a quality of the animate body distinct, though not separable, from the soul. In *On the faculties of the Soul*, he distinguished between the soul as transcendent intellect and the relationship that it has with the body as embodied soul. The *empsychia* is an immanent incorporeal which does not exist separately from the transcendent soul but through this soul. The activities of the human soul are similar to God's in so far as man is an ensouled intellect whose activities include willing, desiring, rational desires, and thinking. These activities show that man is similar to the divine, and that the human soul, like the divine soul, is immortal. Significantly, Porphyry takes soul to amount to reason since all its functions are rational or close to those of intellect. The embodied soul, therefore, does not perish at death, but returns to the transcendent soul from which it is originally emanated. Karamanolis notes that Porphyry's doctrine of the soul was disapproved of by Iamblichus but approved of by Philoponus and Olympiodorus. This study usefully complements those of Sorabji, Sheppard, and Lautner.

Mark Edwards and Gillian Clark respectively examine Porphyry and the Christians [111-126] and Augustine's Porphyry [127-140]. Edwards offers a survey of the *Philosophy from Oracles*, pagan and Christian sources for the discourses against the Christians, and of various problems associated with the Eusebius, Macarius Magnes, Lactantius, and Arnobius fragments for any reconstruction of Porphyry's *contra Christianos*. He concludes that Porphyry's fifteen discourses against the Christians, rather than constituting a single work, were a small library of discrete works which attack the Christians obliquely or in passing. Eusebius, Lactantius, and Arnobius, he claims, had knowledge of a hostile tract but none on the scale of that of Celsus or Julian. They do not cite Porphyry's discourses against the Christians. Edwards concludes that whatever the Christian sources may insinuate, it is not reasonable to cite Porphyry's project as evidence of hostility to the Church. Edward's caution concerning a massive work by Porphyry "against the Christians" is helpful and constructive. However, two of his conclusions are problematic. Firstly, whatever the state of Porphyry's writings on the subject, 'against the Christians' influenced later pagan and Christian apologetics.

Secondly, if Eusebius and Augustine are taken as reliable sources, Porphyry was hostile to Christianity.

Concerning the relation of Roman religion to Christianity, Gillian Clark examines what Augustine made of Porphyry and how he tried to persuade others to think of him [127-140]. Her interest is not in which works of Porphyry Augustine read, or which fragments of Porphyry are embedded in his works, or which of the *libri Platoniorum* Augustine read, or his use of the Latin translations of Marius Victorinus, or even his knowledge of Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*. Clark is keen to uncover how Augustine reworked and presented Porphyry to suit his purpose in the *City of God*. It is in this work that Augustine takes on the authorities on Roman religion such as Virgil, Varro, and Cicero, as well as Porphyry as the representative of Platonist philosophy. It is here that he defends the city of God against those who, like Porphyry 'the most learned of the philosophers', prefer their own gods. Clark argues that, as he is presented in book X of the *City of God*, Porphyry is an opponent who suited Augustine's particular purposes. Augustine's Porphyry is a notorious anti-Christian who yet, as a philosopher, comes close to being a Christian. His teachings about God, the soul, and the need for grace as a condition for salvation, as well as Augustine's own claim that there is a universal way of salvation, actually do dove-tail. To legitimize his project, Clark argues, Augustine created his own Porphyry. To test this thesis, she suggests that the context of Porphyry's fragments be examined in the light of Augustine's highly intelligent and rhetorically skilled manipulation of them. The Porphyry of the *City of God* was Augustine's attempt to convince Platonists that Christianity was a universal way of salvation, open to anyone who cared to come.

In the final essay of the volume, Peter Adamson explores the influence of Porphyry or *Furfurius* in the Arabic tradition [141-163]. He argues that although the direct impact of Porphyry on the Arabic tradition was slight, since he was chiefly known as the author of the *Isagoge*, his indirect influence was significant. Arabic philosophy, Adamson claims, is thoroughly 'Porphyrian' in a broad sense; philosophers up to Avicenna followed Porphyry's commitment to the project of integrating Platonism and Aristotelianism. Adamson, whose focus is *Porphyrius Arabus* on Nature and Art, guides his readers through a vast array of Arabic texts beginning with the Fihrist, and continuing with Averroes, al-Shahrastani, al-Tawhidi, Miskawayh, al-Razi, Ibn al-Nadim, al-Farabi, and IbnAdi and his school. He shows how the notions of *physis* and *technè* in Book II of Aristotle's *Physics* are reworked by Alexander of Aphrodisias, Galen, and John Philoponus. He then adduces a fragment from Porphyry's commentary on the *Physics* and shows how it surfaces in an anti-Aristotelian polemical work ascribed to Abu Bakr ibn Zakariyya'al Razi, who received his information from Ibn al-Nadim, one of the Baghdad Peripatetics. The passage [463F Smith] comes in the midst of a sustained

polemic against what al-Razi takes to be a contradiction in the Aristotelian teleological account of nature previously noted by Porphyry. Adamson notes the extent to which Porphyry anticipated the teleological understanding of nature that we find in the Baghdad Peripatetics. Two appendices conclude the chapter: Avicenna's Yahya ibn 'Adi and Porphyry's theory of intellect, and Porphyry in Miskawayh's *al-Fawz al-Asghar*.

There is, as already noted by Andrew Smith, an urgent need to re-examine the historical and philosophical significance of Porphyry of Tyre. This volume signals the beginning of an attempt to organize around this singularly rich source not only the vast philological and historical erudition amassed in the past century on the philosophical ideas and religious practices of Late Antiquity. It also attempts to integrate Porphyrian views within wider issues in the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of religion, and the philosophy of culture. This latter approach opens up the possibility of new developments in Porphyrian and Neoplatonic studies. Readers who associate Porphyry exclusively with Plotinus and Neoplatonism will find in this volume rich philological and textual sources to mine. They will also encounter a wider philosophical context in which to situate the study of Neoplatonism in general and Porphyry in particular.

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