Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, *Plotinus on Number*, Oxford (Oxford University Press) 2009. ISBN13: 9780195377194; ISBN10: 0195377192

This book is a commentary on *Enn.* VI 6 [34], entitled *On Numbers*. It consists of six chapters that are perfectly well interconnected, and is based on this axiom: "...Plotinus' conception of number is the fundamental framework on which his entire philosophical system is built" (p. 11).

In the first chapter, entitled "Platonic cosmology on Plotinian terms", Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, (hereafter SSG) who has published several articles on number in Plotinus, shows how, unlike Plato, for whom the universe is the result of a composition (*sustasis*) by the demiurge, Plotinus considers the universe as a multiplicity resulting from a separation from the One. Plato and Plotinus can explain the constitution of the universe from number, but in an inverse sense: Plato goes from bottom to top, and Plotinus from top to bottom. The missing link between the *Timaeus* and *Ennead* VI 6, according to SSG, is Numenius' doctrine of the three gods, with the paradoxical figure of the first god enabling the association of rest and motion. Thus, multiplicity enables a definitive measurement of the universe's distance from the One.

In the second chapter, entitled "Multiplicity as Number", SSG tries to determine where the Neopythagorean influence appears which, as Porphyry remarks in the *Life of Plotinus*, did not fail to influence Plotinus. The association of rest and motion at the origin of multiplicity, which SSG had already pointed out in Numenius, and which she finds in Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus' teacher, as well as in Moderatus, enables an answer to this question. Number is what prevents multiplicity from falling into not-being, as long as one follows Plato in making a distinction, rejected by Aristotle, between ideal number and the number used for counting.

In the following chapter, entitled "Number of infinity", SSG explains the nature of Plotinus' refutation of Aristotle's position. Plotinus insists on Aristotle's inability to understand the opposition between the One and the indefinite dyad. Plotinus demonstrates the need to take intelligible number into account, and describes the relations it maintains with the number that is used to count in the sensible.

In the fourth chapter, "Number and substance", SSG tries to describe the relations between number and reality. On the basis of a distinction between reality (*ousia*) as the actualization of beings, and quantity (*posotes*) as the number of these beings, Plotinus establishes a distinction between substantial number (*ousiodes arithmos*), corresponding to the activity (*energeia*) of reality and to the power (*dunamis*) of being, and monadic number (*monadikos arithmos*), which merely counts beings. Substantial number plays the part of a paradigm with regard to the number (*monadikos arithmos*) whose domain is mathematics, and which is used to count. Considered from an ontological viewpoint, Being or the intelligible is uni-

fied number (*arithmos henomenos*), while Intellect is the number that moves in itself (*arithmos en heautoi kinoumenos*), each being is deployed number (*arithmos exeligmenos*), and Being-in-Itself, that is, the Form of the universe, is enveloping number (*arithmos periechon*).

The fifth chapter, "Number and the Universe", brings out the very close relations uniting this analysis of number to that of the five great kinds. For SSR, the four viewpoints adopted on substantial number correspond to the kinds of Rest, Motion, Same, Other, with Being as their common denominator. These viewpoints also enable an explanation of the relations between Soul and Intellect.

In the sixth and final chapter, entitled "Unity of Thought and Writing", SSG seeks relate this analysis of multiplicity to Porphyry's organization of the *Enneads*.

The book ends with a bibliography and two indices: of names and subjects, and locorum.

As one can see, this book is very well structured, and its argumentation is very clear. It should be emphasized that it takes into account works published in languages other than English, in particular French and Russian. It contains numerous references to the French translation with commentary of *Enn.* VI 3 [34] published by a CNRS team under the direction of Jean Pépin in 1982; it also mentions the works of Aleksei Fedorovich Losev (1893-1988), one of the most famous Russian philosophers and classicists of the twentieth century, the teacher of those who still work on Neoplatonism in Russia (his house at Arbat street 33 in Moscow can still be visited). This openness to the outside world probably explains the originality of this book's theme. The question of number, and of its role in Neoplatonic cosmology, has never fascinated Anglophone specialists (as one may observe by consulting R. Dufour, "Plotinus. A bibliography 1930-2000", *Phronesis* XLVI, 3, 2001, followed by *Bibliographie plotinienne* (2000-2009) at the following address: <http://rdufour.free.fr/BibPlotin/Plotin-Biblio.html>). Nevertheless, this is an essential problem, not only for Antiquity, but also, in a certain sense, for our time, when the models that have been proposed of the universe are all mathematicized.

The most interesting chapters are the central ones, from three to five. The first two chapters are a bit too theoretical, and above all are based on such authors as Speusippus, Moderatus, Numenius and Ammonius Saccas, about whom we know too little that is certain. The doctrine of the three gods in Numenius is in itself very interesting, but opinions diverge concerning its interpretation. The fragment of Moderatus is also very interesting, but who can say what derives from Porphyry and what is by Moderatus in these few lines? In addition, the last chapter, interesting as such, seems to me a bit too speculative. The references to the Neopythagoreans are also highly problematic.

As I wrote at the end of the *Notice* to my translation of this treatise (coll. GF 1228, Paris, 2006), Plotinus responds to two demands in this Treatise *On*

Numbers. The first one corresponds to a will to detach number from the sensible world, in order to relate it back to the intelligible. The second one consists, by making number the yardstick of the deployment of beings, in guaranteeing for the sensible, without entering into contradiction with the unlimited power of the One, a limit that accrues to it from the intelligible. By respecting this second demand, Plotinus shows himself to be faithful, in his own way—which is not that of Plato—to the lesson of the *Timaeus*: it is by the limit that comes to it from the intelligible that the sensible is accessible to human beings, who can think of it, talk about it, and act upon it.

This is why, according to Plotinus, the Gnostics are wrong to despise the world in which we live. The polemic with the Gnostics is obvious, although I do not think that the four previous treatises (30, 31, 32 and 33) are part of a great treatise *Against the Gnostics* (see Annexe 1 by R. Dufour in Plotin, *Traité 3-37*, Paris (Flammarion), 2006, coll. GF 1228, pp. 299-406). What is important to retain, and SSG insists on this point, is the cosmological orientation of this treatise, which shows the extent to which Plotinus was interested in our insertion in this world in which we live. The point is not to engulf oneself in this world, but it constitutes the environment in which the soul must live as long as it is attached to a body, so that it may begin to rise back up toward its principle once it has freed itself from the body. Exceptionally, this may occur for philosophers, Plotinus and Porphyry for example (*Life of Plotinus* 23, 12-18), at certain privileged moments of their life on earth.

This book should be recommended, owing to the originality of its theme, its historical perspectives, and its openness to interpretative traditions that have been little explored until now.

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