

Brisson, L.; Pradeau, J.-F. (ed.). 2010. *Plotin. Traités 51-54. Porphyre Vie de Plotin*. Paris: GF Flammarion, 384 p., Paperback, ISBN 978-2-0812-3136-8.

Translating the *Enneads* has always been a challenging task. We know from Porphyry (*Vita Plotini* 8) that Plotinus was not concerned with calligraphy and correct spelling of his texts, while his spontaneous philosophical enquiry was expressed in a vivid, vigorous, albeit sometimes obscure, prose. Plotinus entrusted Porphyry with the editing and the arrangement of his writings; Porphyry gave titles to the treatises and offered in *Vita Plotini* a chronological (chapters 4-6) and a thematic list (chapters 24-26) of the *Enneads*.

This book is the ninth and last volume of the French translation of the *Enneads*, published under the direction of Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau. Brisson and Pradeau, along with an international group of scholars and researchers (from France, Italy and Quebec), offer the first complete translation of the *Enneads* based on the *editio minor* of Henry and Schwyzer (published by Oxford in 3 volumes: 1964, 1976 and 1982). This edition continues—in a more informative and detailed manner—the long tradition of French scholarship that began with E. Bréhier's translation of the *Enneads* in the Budé series (in 6 volumes, Paris, 1923-38).

Brisson and Pradeau follow Porphyry's chronological order of the *Enneads* (previous volumes: *Traités 1-6*, 2002; *Traités 7-21*, 2003; *Traités 22-26*, 2004; *Traités 27-29*, 2005; *Traités 30-37*, 2006; *Traités 38-41*, 2007; *Traités 42-44*, 2008; *Traités 45-50*, 2009). This volume includes the last four *Enneads*, numbers 51 to 54, in Porphyry's chronological order: *Ennead I.8 On What Are and Whence Come Evils* [*Traité 51*]; *Ennead II.3 On Whether the Stars are Causes* [*Traité 52*]; *Ennead I.1 What is the Living Being?* [*Traité 53*]; and *Ennead I.7 On the Primal Good and the Other Goods* [*Traité 54*]. It is noteworthy that the present volume also includes Luc Brisson's translation of Porphyry's *Vita Plotini*. As will be remembered, Luc Brisson was part of the team that prepared the monumental two volume edition of the *Vita Plotini*, an edition that was ten years in the making (Porphyre. *La Vie de Plotin*, Paris Vrin, 1982 and 1992).

Each treatise begins with an introductory note, a detailed outline and a synopsis of the treatise. The annotated translations are rich in references to current scholarship and textual or interpretative problems of the Enneadic passages. Moreover, a detailed bibliography, particularly related to the sources cited in the annotations, is included. An appendix on the basic principles of Greek astrology based on the classical work of A. Bouché-Leclercq *L'Astrologie grecque* is also offered. The appendix helps the non-expert to get a first impression of Plato's cosmology of the *Timaeus*, of the zodiac and of the planets illustrated by relevant figures. Finally, a chronological table of Plotinus' life is offered (AD 193-305) in relation to the

cultural, political and military events of the period. The volume ends with an index of terms and an index of proper names.

*Traité*s 51-54 mark the end of Plotinus' life and writings. Porphyry testifies that Plotinus sent his very last treatises while Porphyry was living in Sicily at the beginning of the second year of the reign of Claudius, that is shortly before Plotinus' death (*Vita Plotini* 6.15-25). Porphyry observes that Plotinus was already 'failing in writing' (6.35-37). The subjects of the treatises demonstrate Plotinus' interest in the problem of evil, the refutation of astral determination, the impassibility of the soul and the supremacy of the Good. The question of life and death are tentatively discussed.

Traité 51 (I.8) is translated and annotated by Laurent Lavaud. In this treatise, Plotinus deals with the nature of evil insofar as it is related to the imperfection of the material world and the metaphysical necessity for the soul's virtue and purification. *Ennead* I.8 has been part of a long controversy in Plotinian scholarship with regard to the problem of matter and evil: whereas *Enneads* I.8 along with II.4 [12] *On Matter*, present a negative view of matter as a source of evil, sterility and privation, *Enneads* II.9 [33] *Against the Gnostics* and IV.8 [6] *On the Descent of the Soul into the Bodies matter*, present a positive view of the material world as the best possible reflection of intelligible beauty and goodness. Lavaud is aware of this controversy. In his informative introduction and the notes accompanying the translation, Lavaud appropriately covers current interpretive tendencies in modern scholarship, the moral and metaphysical implications of the Plotinian problem of evil and later Neoplatonic accounts on matter such as Proclus' *De malorum subsistentia* (30-7).

Richard Dufour offers the translation of *Traité* 52 (II.3). This treatise (along with *Ennead* III.1 *On Destiny*) includes Plotinus' main criticism of the astrological doctrines of his time regarding the influence of the stars on human destiny. Dufour's introductory note and annotation guide the reader to the background of Plotinus' thought and other *Enneadic* passages on astrology. The translation renders accurately the argument of the philosopher in a vivid and rigorous manner. Studied along with the appendix (*On the Principles of Greek Astrology*), it will give the reader a clear understanding of the Plotinian refutation.

*Traité*s 53 (I.1) and 54 (I.7) are introduced, translated and annotated by Jean-François Pradeau. Whereas *Ennead* I.1 emphasizes the supremacy of our higher intelligible self over our animated bodies, *Ennead* I.7 focuses on the excellence of the Good and the supremacy of our intelligible life. Pradeau correctly observes that the impassibility of our higher soul has both an ethical and ontological value. For Plotinus, virtue and death, in other words, the separation of body and soul, guide our soul towards a better life: the life of *Nous* (I.7.3).

Overall, the ninth volume of Brisson-Pradeau edition—just like the previous volumes—is a comprehensive and precise translation of Plotinus' *Enneads*. Without distorting Plotinus' prose and argumentation, the text is clear and easy to read. The book is accessible to non-experts on Neoplatonism while being also useful to experts. As a result, this new rendering of the *Enneads* by the Brisson-Pradeau team firmly establishes the modern significance of Plotinus to French and international scholarship.

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