Jean-Michel Charrue: *De l'être et du monde Ammonius, Plotin, Proclus*, Paris: Klincksieck, pp. 287, ISBN 978-2-252-03666-2.

This volume presents a collection of essays by Jean-Michel Charrue originally appearing from the years 2001 to 2006, and whose focus is mostly on different aspects of Plotinus, as well as studies of his teacher, Ammonius, and the Christian Origen, and one dealing with Proclus. The thirteen essays are not however totally disparate in subject matter, and can be grouped, most of them, thematically. The first three articles deal with Ammonius and his influence on Plotinus and Origen or on Origen himself, and to some extent providence seen in the context of those philosophers, and the next two articles focus exclusively on providence, across Neoplatonism, and then the fifth in order in the book centers on Proclus' view of providence only. Several other essays are concerned with Plotinus in relation to other, earlier thinkers, and finally to one later and in fact modern philosopher, while the remainder deal with specific issues of Plotinian scholarship. Some of the essays were presented at various conferences, and others in scholarly journals.

In "Ammonius et Plotin" Charrue endeavors to examine the influence of Ammonius upon Plotinus, and build as much of a depiction of his philosophy as the meager extant evidence will allow, also working from previous scholarship, and he is quite thorough and convincing in his presentation of this difficult subject, as much as the sparseness of primary knowledge allows to anyone. His discussion of why Ammonius' disciples, Herennius, Origen, and Plotinus chose to keep his doctrines secret, as we are told in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, is most intriguing in that he would at least in part attribute this to an adherence by Ammonius to the notion, put forward by Plato in the Seventh Letter, that written doctrine is inferior and that oral teaching is superior. Charrue examines also the possibilities concerning his origin arising from his name, Ammonius Saccas, and comes down more on the side of Ammianus' testimony that he originated from the Brucheion quarter, and that the name might reflect an Indian or Persian origin, but as nevertheless someone long integrated into the city of Alexandria, and he discounts Theoderet's view that he was merely a porter. As to known doctrines of Ammonius, few though they are, Charrue concentrates on the citation in Nemesius' *On the Nature of Man*, reporting Ammonius taught that it is the soul that keeps together the otherwise changing constituents and being of man, and on what is related in Hierocles' *On Providence*, that he was convinced of the agreement of Aristotle and Plato. But Charrue is more concerned with what he sees, from a passage in Hierocles, concerning not so much Ammonius' particular doctrines, rather his method of philosophizing, that would have an effect on Plotinus and later Neoplatonists because of what Hierocles claims was his purifying

approach, to return to Plato and Aristotle, and to simplify, especially as when compared to the contemporary Gnostics, working hard also at the time in Alexandria, and their complex schemes with many intermediaries in the chain of being. The second essay, "Ammonius et les chrétiens", continues his study of Ammonius. Charrue holds the position that the Ammonius who was the teacher of the Christian Origen was indeed also the teacher of Plotinus, though he grants the question is not completely settled, and also that he was originally a Christian. An attempt is then made to show how like the early Christian philosophers of that same period he claimed the transcendence of God, unlike many pagan philosophers, and that Ammonius, working from those Middle Platonists, who did so take that view of God, could have imparted that view to Plotinus, and how it works together with the view attributed to Ammonius by Nemesius in, again, *On the Nature of Man* (III.129, 16-20), that the intelligibles within man can exist there without being corrupted by the sensible through *henosis* (Nemesius' term) can be seen as evidence at the level of the soul that Ammonius also taught a sort of transcendence of the highest principle, or God, but not completely remote, with a sort of immanence much like that ascribed to him by Nemesius regarding this *henosis* in the soul, and that Hierocles' view of a providence still allowing for free will that he would trace back also to Ammonius, is also not purely transcendental.

The third article, "Origène élève d'Ammonius, attempts again to demonstrate the influence Ammonius, in this instance on the Christian Origen, primarily in his *Peri Archon*, concentrating on four subject areas, transcendence, free will, man, and providence; the latter is of concern once more, and will have appeared as a major theme in this collection. As regards transcendence, Charrue again evokes the passages in Nemesius that go back to Ammonius; as the Trinity transcends humanity (as opposed to the Father transcending the Son) via its higher nature as a unitary principle (*Peri Archon* I.1.6.189-193), because man must be composite in nature in order to live on the earth, so Charrue infers this approach from the similar nature of the unity of the soul in man holding the intelligibles along with the sensible (*On the Nature of Man*, II.69-70). Charrue sees parallels between Origen's *On Free Will* (III.1) and Plotinus VI.8 and III.1 that could point back, in both, to Ammonius. In the creation of the soul in the inanimate body that Origen claims for humanity, Charrue finds similar to, again, the view of Nemesius of the separateness of soul and body, intelligible and sensible held in union by *henosis*. As for providence, the main comparison is made between a passage in Hierocles' *On Providence* (Photius, *Biblio. Cod.* 214, 172b1-4) on the unity of all existences, corporeal and incorporeal, held by the paternal royalty of a single, unitary providence, which again he would trace back to Ammonius, and Origen in *Peri Archon* (III.6.6) on the power of God to hold all being together.

Providence is given full focus in the next two essays, "Providence et liberté dans le néoplatonisme" and "Providence et liberté dans la pensée de Proclus". The first of these ties together nicely many of the themes Charrue has been concerned with in the previous essays regarding providence, in a concise survey of the subject divided into relevant discussion in four sections, on providence in again Ammonius, Plotinus, again Origen, and Proclus as well. The second of these essays is an in-depth and excellent survey and analysis of providence and free will in Proclus, starting with a look first at the pertinent material in the *Platonic Theology* and then going on to an detailed analysis of the *Tria opuscula*, *Ten Problems Concerning Providence*, *On Providence*, *Fate and What Depends on Us*, and *On the Existence of Evils*. This study is done with an eye also to the relevant works of Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On Fate*, and the Arabic remnants of *On Providence*, as well as very recent modern scholarship, including some of the work of R.W. Sharples, and of Carlos Steel and Jan Opsomer in their translation of *On the Existence of Evils* (Proclus: *On the Existence of Evils*, London: Duckworth, 2003).

Three essays in the collection are comparisons of certain aspects of Plotinus with earlier philosophers, Parmenides and Epicurus, as well as the Stoics and Gnostics, in "Plotin et Parménide", "Plotin et Épicure", and "Plotin, le stoïcisme et la gnose. Deux formes d'illusion". The article on Parmenides starts with a nicely evocative and personal description of the ancient ruins at Elea, and continues then to demonstrate well how Plotinus sees in the continuum of being proposed by Parmenides, especially in Fragment 8, a similar continuity, both in space and time, for the One, and then shows how Parmenides' dictum that thinking and being are the same, referred to by Plotinus on several occasions, gives support to his conception of the hypostasis of Nous, and that the intelligibles are truly real, as studied in V.8, for instance. "Plotin et Épicure" is an attempt to delineate an encounter between the two philosophers, concentrating on the subject areas of the gods, the sage and his wisdom, matter, and sensation. The short essay on the Stoics and Gnostics, compares the Stoic notion of sympathy with the harmony of nature that Plotinus sees also as in some ways a sort of beautiful illusion, and the illusory nature of the Gnostics' view of world as evil enmattered, citing frequently II.9, Plotinus treatise against the Gnostics.

Several other essays deal with specific points regarding Plotinus' philosophy, "Plotin et Socrate", "Plotin et l'image", "Plotin et le désir", and "Note sur Plotin et la mystique". The first of these excellent investigations catalogues the 18 appearances of Socrates in the *Enneads*, and groups them into four categories, "Socrate comme modèle par rapport à l'image", "Socrate comme exemple", "Socrate comme âme", and "Socrate individu". In the essay on Plotinus' use of imagery, Charrue begins, strikingly: "L'image est un discours qui réfléchit peut-être le mieux la pensée, mais qui l'arrête et suspend"; one is reminded thus of James Joyce's theory of

aesthetic arrest. Then follows a beautifully written study of Plotinus' use of images, beyond the normal means of persuasion, as in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, as a method to effect non-discursive understanding of the intelligible world, taking into account Plotinus V.8, and including a fascinating investigation of Plotinus' reference to hieroglyphs and how he himself might have visited the ancient temples of the Egyptians. The essay on desire in Plotinus moves from Plotinus' view of desire first as it manifests at the lowest, corporeal level, then to the desire of all being, next to desire at the level of the soul, and finally the desire for the Good, and how all are contrasted to the One, which desires nothing, as opposed to the lower levels all typified by some sort of desire. The "Note" delves into the efficacy of Plotinus' mysticism and how illusory or not it is in his presentation.

The final essay in this fine collection, "Albert Camus et Plotin", is of significance personally to the author, as he tells us in his preface, most interestingly, that it was in the study of Albert Camus that Charrue himself first encountered Plotinus, and that he had intended, were he ever published himself, some day to write on the subject of Camus and Plotinus. So then, indeed, he has now, to the reader's great benefit, starting with Camus' thesis for his diplôme for the University of Algiers, whose subject was in part Plotinus, and continuing on to show the influence of the Neoplatonist upon the Absurdist, across his career, and highlighting particularly, from early on, the appeal of Plotinus' central concern for unity in his philosophy to Camus' own views as a pacifist. This essay appears for the first time in this collection, and offers an excellent conclusion to the span of analysis offered here of Plotinus and his contemporaries, ranging up to the 20th century in this last effort.

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