

### Alexandra Michalewski

*La puissance de l'intelligible: la théorie plotinienne des Formes au miroir de l'héritage médioplatonicien. Ancient and medieval philosophy. Series 1, 51.* Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2014. Pp. vii, 264. ISBN 9789462700024. €82.50.

Plotinus' reestablishment of the Forms within Intellect as causal agents is the stated main concern of Alexandra Michalewski in this book, which originated as a 2008 doctoral thesis written under the supervision of Luc Brisson. She has organized her study however not as a true monograph concentrated on presenting from the outset how Plotinus altered the function of the Forms and contrasting his conception, point by point, with that of earlier Platonists. Rather her approach to explicating his theory of the Forms via the "miroir" of her title is rather to offer a detailed survey of their philosophical treatment across the period of Middle Platonism, which accounts for almost half her text, and then to devote an equal space to Plotinus himself, followed by a brief conclusion summarizing the main differences between Plotinus and the Middle Platonists.

At the outset, in her Introduction, Michalewski sets the problem that she intends mainly to address, of how Plotinus defines the Forms as not only interior to Intellect but identical with it:

Contrairement à la vision qui inscrit la théorie plotinienne de l'intelligible dans le prolongement des interprétations médioplatoniciennes qui incluaient les Formes dans l'Intellect, je pense que Plotin propose une lecture des rapports de l'Intellect à l'intelligible qui se situe en rupture par rapport aux platoniciens des siècles précédents. La lecture médioplatonicienne de l'inclusion des Formes dans l'intellect divin . . . se situe dans le cadre d'une cosmologie artificialiste: même intérieures à l'esprit du demiurge, les Formes restent de simples paradigmes dont la causalité ne peut s'exercer sans l'intervention de la cause fabricante. Mon propos est ici de montrer que le dépassement de l'ontologie médioplatonicienne visé par Plotin s'accompagne d'un dépassement de l'artificialisme médioplatonicien par lequel les Formes acquièrent une véritable puissance causale, en devant des intellects, des réalités vivantes et en acte. (p. 1)

Plotinus according to Michalewski is able to endow the Forms with this *puissance causale* within Intellect by adapting the "identification aristotélicienne de l'ousia et d'energeia", showing how they act as causes of individual sensibles, while still being the thoughts of a divine and unmoving intellect, and at the same time like to that conceived of by Aristotle, which merely by thinking

the Forms passes on to them from its implicit perfection *ousia* and causal *energeia*. Thus for Plotinus, Intellect has no need of creative artifice nor recourse to external paradigm. For it holds within itself the Forms and ultimately, from the innate power of the One, imparts to them their own causal power to project in turn, both paradigmatically and ontologically, into the realm of the sensible—organically, as it were, and not by any artisanal craft.

Michalewski divides her investigation of Middle Platonism into three sections, titled “Qu’est-ce que le médioplatonisme?”, “Causalité du dieu et des Formes”, and “les Formes, pensées de dieu”, of which the first gives an overview of the period addressing especially the history of the interpretation of the *Timaeus*, starting with the Stoic immanentist reaction and then proceeding to cover in detail the issues concerning Antiochus’ position regarding the Forms. She continues with a brief discussion of Eudorus as the first Platonist to make full use of Aristotle, especially “pour promouvoir la transcendance du dieu platonicien” (p. 31), starting the engagement with the Stagirite which will so typify the rest of Platonism in Antiquity, as well as the break with the materialism of Antiochus and the Stoics. The section concludes with remarks on the shift to the predominant practice of philosophy as commentary, and how the exegesis especially of the *Timaeus* will determine in large part the place and function of the Forms.

In the last two sections of the first part of her study, Michalewski gives her very detailed exposition of the development of the interpretation of the Forms themselves, especially how some Platonists came to conceive them as the thoughts of god, devoting many pages to focusing on each of Seneca, Philo of Alexandria, Apuleius, Plutarch, Alcinous, Atticus, Longinus, and Numenius. She first briefly touches on the well-known main concerns of the period, such as the dominance of the *Dreiprinzipienlehre*, within which god as artisan contemplates the Forms in order to infuse matter with creational order, and how within that framework the Forms function as paradigms, but in a causal role secondary to that of the Demiurge. Her thorough scholarship which is demonstrated throughout the book is exemplified here in her attention to the problem of the sources of Seneca’s Letter 58 and 65, and consistently, where necessary, she is meticulous about such issues, particularly when her argument turns on texts of which a consensus understanding has not been reached. Another such instance is her treatment of the troublesome passage in Apuleius *De Plat.*, 1, 5, in which she evaluates the scholarly attempts to render it properly (pp. 63-65). Differences among Middle Platonists receive her analytical attention as well, such as the question of the absence in Plutarch of a definition of the Forms as the thoughts of god. Alcinous receives a larger share of attention, as Michalewski examines the issue of how Alcinous conceives of the genesis