

John F. Finamore and Sarah Klitenic Wear (ed.), *Defining Platonism. Essays in Honor of the 75th Birthday of John M. Dillon*. Steubenville, Ohio: Franciscan University Press, 2017. Pp. XXI + 342. \$54.34 Hardcover.

What has been loosely branded as “Platonism” is a variegated philosophical lineage. However, despite its non-uniformity, anyone who devotes herself or himself to the study of this complex tradition finds a few constants. For instance: one can be sure that intelligible has priority over sensible; that the soul is immaterial; and that one will always come across an important book or article written by John M. Dillon.

This anthology assembles seventeen essays by some of the most distinguished Platonic scholars of our times in order to offer Professor Dillon the homage he deserves. Essays are divided into three parts—Plato, ancient Platonism, and Modern Platonism—and cover a good deal of the subjects that Dillon has investigated. Since it would be impossible to critically review all the essays, and I would not be comfortable to select only a couple of them, neglecting other equally interesting essays, I will give just a brief, and probably unfair, description of the content of each one of them.

In the first part, John Bussanich’s “Platonic Eschatology” (p. 11-28) argues, through a comparative study of eschatological myths in Plato (e.g. in the *Phaedo*, *Republic*, and *Phaedrus*), that such myths are not only consistent with one another, but also with the dialectical passages in Plato’s dialogues. Kevin Corrigan, in “The Platonist Friend” (p. 29-43), makes good use of the *Lysis*, *Alcibiades I*, *Symposium*, and *Phaedrus* to defend the view that Platonic love and friendship, rather than being self-centered, address the good of another person. Later dialogues are studied by Alan Silverman and Christopher Rowe. The first, in “Plato’s *Timaeus*: What Is in the Paradigm?” (p. 44-63), claims that, although metaphysics and cosmology are central to the *Timaeus*, this dialogue is also about how the orderly cosmos uses reason to impose form on rational and non-rational materials. Rowe’s essay, “The Athenians against the Persians: Plato’s View (*Laws* III, 698a-700a)” (p. 64-81), examines this passage, along with the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, in order to sustain the view that, for Plato, there are different levels of courage, as there are of the other virtues, the philosopher being the one who possesses them most authentically among human beings.

The second part comprises eleven essays. “Numenius, Neopythagoreanism, and the Troublesome ‘King(s)’” (p. 85-95), by Harold Tarrant, argues that Numenius’ reading of the Platonic *Second Epistle* depends on his understanding of the *Statesman* myth (269d). In “Can One Speak of Mysticism in Plotinus?” (p. 96-116), Luc Brisson compares Plotinus and Christian writers, and warns that, given its characteristics, the Plotinian unitive experience of

the soul with the One should not be called “mysticism”. Gary Gurtler SJ, in “The Relentless Pursuit of Justice” (p. 117-129), reflects on the difficulties arising from the impassibility of soul in Plotinus: Plotinus does speak of justice as rectifying moral evil, but, if the soul is impassible, it seems that only a shadowy kind of lower expression of soul can be rectified by the workings of justice. Denis O’Brien’s essay, “Plotinus on Evil: Proclus and the Author of the *Divine Names*” (p. 130-161), explores a triple interpretation of Plato’s study of non-being in the *Sophist*, showing that Plotinus, Proclus, and “Dionysius” banish, each of them, evil to an ever-lower degree of non-being, that is, distancing evil further from being. In “Plotinus on Suicide” (p. 162-180), Suzanne Stern-Gillet investigates *Enn.* I.9, I.4, and VI.8. 5-6 to conclude that Plotinus accepts that the sage can commit suicide and, more than that, when the sage meets circumstances that test his virtue, suicide is the only open way to preserve the integrity of his soul.

Still in the second part, in “Self-Reflexive Ontogenesis in the *Tripartite Tractate* and Plotinus” (p. 181-197), John D. Turner examines this Gnostic work and Plotinus’ tractate VI.8, and finds echoes that allow him to claim that Plotinus and his school may have seen that work as a source of interest. With “The Metaphysics of Power, *Logos*, and Harmony in Porphyry” (p. 198-217), Stephen Gersh shows how Porphyry uses these immaterial principles to account for motions in the sensible world, from the ordering of the cosmos to the entrance of the soul into the newborn, the powers of the higher principles thus providing harmony to the lower levels of reality. Anne Sheppard, in “The Soul as a Writing Tablet, from Plato to Proclus” (p. 218-227), tracks the history of this image, starting from Plato’s *Theaetetus* and *Philebus*, and Aristotle’s *De Anima*, passing through the Stoics, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Plutarch of Athens, and Proclus. John F. Finamore’s essay, “Hermias and the Soul’s Pilot” (p. 228-237), relying on Hermias commentary on the *Phaedrus*, defends that Iamblichus, in his own reading of the dialogue, separated the One of the soul, the pilot at a higher level, from the intellect of the soul, the charioteer at a lower level; textual differences on the manuscripts used by Hermias and Proclus are used by Finamore to show that Iamblichus was basing his own reading of the *Phaedrus* on a manuscript that supported a theory that the highest aspect of the human soul allowed it to become united with the One. John Peter Kenney, “Plotinus and the Apophatic Augustine” (p. 238-252), refuses to label the Bishop of Hippo as a cataphatic philosopher, and shows that the apophatic side of his thought can be seen in his discussion of the soul’s contemplative ascension and of the Trinity, the higher level of transcendent reality, which can be said to be similar to Plotinus’ One in being our source and goal, and which is ineffable. Closing this part of the book, “The Figure of the *Diadochos*, from Socrates to the Late Antique Athenian School