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Luc Brisson, Jean-François Pradeau (ed.), *Plotin. Traités 51-54; Porphyre. Vie de Plotin. GF 1444*. Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2010. Pp. 384. ISBN 9782081231368. €14.80 (pb).

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At this point, the ninth and final volume of the new French translation of Plotinus' works, under the captainship of Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau, requires no introduction.¹

Treatises comprised in this volume are 51 (I. 8): *What evils are and whence they come?*; 52 (II. 3): *Whether the stars are causes*; 53 (I. 1): *What is the living being?*; 54 (I. 7): *On the sovereign good and the other goods*; and Porphyry's biography of his master, *On the life of Plotinus and the order of his books*. Laurent Lavaud is in charge of treatise 51; Richard Dufour of 52; Jean-François Pradeau handles treatises 53 and 54; and Luc Brisson is the responsible for Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*.

Luc Brisson's contribution is particularly noteworthy: though he was a prominent figure in the standard collective work on Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*,² so that it would perhaps be easier for him to reprint that translation or make only superficial changes on it, he offers here a wholly new one, showing in his notes that he is aware of all major bibliographical contributions to Porphyry's work after 1992.

As in previous volumes, introductions to treatises are precise, and translations are as reliable as translations can be; however, the numerous notes are the real treasure for Plotinian scholars, providing us up-to-date philological, philosophical, and bibliographical discussions for each of the many difficulties of Plotinus' text. Non-specialists, nonetheless, will find it perfectly suitable for their needs.

Besides the annexes present in all volumes – a chronological table of Plotinus' life, cultural facts, and political and military events; an index of words, and another of proper names – this volume presents a further one: a short, yet very useful, précis of the principles of Greek astrology, demanded by Plotinus' many technical references to the astrology of his time in treatise 52, and essentially derived from A. Bouché-Leclercq's classic work *L'astrologie grecque* (Paris, Leroux, 1899).

I am not going to detail all typographic errors, disagreements concerning translation or notes and the like; but I would like to point out a few disagreements of different kinds:

i) On p. 355, the year of the publication of Porphyry, *La Vie de Plotin* II is misprinted: 1993 instead of 1992;

ii) On p. 64, n. 13, we read “être (*ousían*), vie (*psukhén*), pensée (*noûn*),” but the correct Greek term inside parentheses after “vie” should be *zoén*;

iii) On p. 253, n. 20, Pradeau writes that his translation preserves the ambiguity of the original text (treatise 54 [1. 7], chapter 2, line 8), in which Plotinus says that Soul must turn its vision “‘towards it’ [*vers lui*] (*pròs ekeîno*)”, since the pronoun can indicate both the Good and Intellect; Soul therefore possesses the Good mediately, by seeing Intellect, Soul sees the Good through it. Though Pradeau is absolutely right regarding the Plotinian doctrine, I am not sure if it may be affirmed that the pronoun *ekeîno* refers both to the Good and to Intellect here: the ambiguity of pronouns with this very purpose is constant throughout Plotinus’ writings – and the first chapter of treatise 11 (V. 2) is a remarkable example³ – but this does not seem to be the case for the text in question, for in the context Plotinus refers to Intellect with a masculine noun (*noûs*) and to the Good with a neuter one (*agathón*); so *ekeîno*, being neuter, would more easily be understood as referring to the Good;

iv) On p. 317, n. 2, Brisson explains that he renders (p. 275) the famous Porphyrian expression *ho kath’ hemàs gegonòs philósophos* (*Life of Plotinus*, 1, 1) as “our professor of philosophy”, instead of the habitual rendering “the philosopher of our times;” Brisson argues that he has chosen to do so just as H. D. Saffrey and L. G. Westerink did in their translation of Proclus’ *Platonic Theology* I, 1 (Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1978), and also sends the reader to Olympiodorus’ commentary on Plato’s *Phaedo* 6, 3, 3; the note is somewhat confusing for the reader, because what Saffrey and Westerink translate as “professor of philosophy” is only the term *philósophos*, not the expression *ho kath’ hemàs gegonòs philósophos*, that does not occur in Proclus’ passage; the expression *ho kath’ hemàs philósophos* does occur in Olympiodorus, meaning “our philosopher” or “the philosopher in question”, but without the participle *gegonós*, that seems to confer a temporal meaning to the text of Porphyry.

Problems such as these are not numerous nor grave enough to shade the group’s achievement. I am sure that insignificant errors will be corrected in future editions of this (another) great French translation of Plotinus’ work. One may wonder what a magnificent edition it would be if it also contained the Greek text.

Notes:

1. All volumes of the translation have been much reviewed worldwide; reviews available on BMCR are: vol. 1: treatises 1-6, vol. 2: treatises 7-21, and vol. 3: treatises 22-26, by Afonasin and Berestov (BMCR [2004.09.27](#)); vol. 4: treatises 27-29, by Afonasin and Berestov (BMCR [2006.01.09](#)); vol. 6: treatises 38-41, by Baracat (BMCR [2007.10.31](#)); vol. 7: treatises 42-44, by de Haas (BMCR [2010.07.06](#)); and vol. 8, by Shearin (BMCR [2010.07.43](#)).

2. i) Porphyre, *La Vie de Plotin*, I. Travaux préliminaires et index grec complet, par L. Brisson, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, R. Goulet et D. O’Brien, Paris, Vrin, 1982; ii) Porphyre, *La Vie de Plotin*, II. Études d’introduction, texte grec et traduction française, commentaire, notes complémentaires, bibliographie par L. Brisson, J.-L. Cherloneix, M.-O. Goulet-Cazé, R. Goulet, M.D. Grmek, J.-M. Flamand, S. Matton, D. O’Brien, J. Pépin, Paris, Vrin, 1992.

3. Cf. Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, Chicago, The Chicago

University Press, 1994, pp. 27-31.

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