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Luc Brisson, Jean-François Pradeau, *Plotin Traités 38-41*. Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2007. Pp. 417. ISBN 978-2-0812-0075-3. €12.00 (pb).

Reviewed by José Baracat, Jr., Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil (baracatjr@hotmail.com)

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This is the sixth volume of an on-going translation of Plotinus' writings, under the direction of Luc Brisson and Jean-François Pradeau, who have recruited a notable team of young scholars to translate, introduce, and annotate each treatise of the Neoplatonic philosopher, following the chronological order of composition, as indicated in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, chapters 4-6.

The works comprising this volume are treatises 38 (*How the Multitude of Ideas Came into Being, and on the Good*), 39 (*On the Voluntary and the Will of the One*), 40 (*On Heaven, also called On World*), and 41 (*On Sensation and Memory*) -- Enneads VI. 7, VI. 8, II. 1, and IV. 6, respectively, in Porphyry's arrangement of his master's writings (*Life of Plotinus*, chapters 24-26). Previous volumes published are treatises 1-6, in 2002; 7-21, in 2003; 22-26, in 2004; 27-29, in 2005; and 30-37, in 2006. Thirteen treatises are yet to be published. Each translation is preceded by an introductory study that presents the treatise's main themes and development and by a detailed outline of its subjects. Exhaustive philological, philosophical, and bibliographical notes follow each treatise, and the end of each volume contains a selected bibliography, a chronology, and indexes.

Treatises 38 (VI. 7) and 39 (VI. 8) are often regarded as the most valuable inheritance we have from Plotinus, since they contain rich, complex, vigorous, and beautiful thinking. Francesco Fronterotta is in charge of first treatise, Laurent Lavaud of the second, and they have contributed an impressive effort: the first translation includes around twenty pages of introductory material and sixty pages of notes, and the other more than twenty of introduction and over eighty pages of notes. It must be said that the translations could stand as separate editions and that they need not much to rival the great annotated translation of Pierre Hadot to treatise 38 (Paris: Cerf, 1988), and that of George Leroux to treatise 39 (Paris: Vrin, 1990), whom the translators always seem to have in mind.

Fronterotta rightly recognizes in his introduction the three parts of treatise 38, which he concisely and precisely describes. First, from chapter 1 to 14, the relation of sensible and intelligible domains is analyzed: the genesis of the sensible world and the paradigmatic status of the intelligible; then, in chapters 15 to 30, the Good is considered from the standpoint of its products, being their source and the object of their desire; finally, chapters 31 to 42 deal

with the Good in itself, struggling to circumscribe, through negation, its proper reality and function. No point of this dense work is passed through without at least a word from the translator, though one may feel he could say a little more about Plotinus' mysticism, a theme for which this treatise is of fundamental importance.

Because of Plotinus' constant emphasis on the limits of language concerning the absolute simplicity and transcendence of the One and because of the enormous importance of the discussion of liberty in the Western tradition, treatise 39 is, in my opinion, even richer than treatise 38. Treatise 39 may be described as one of Plotinus' most audacious and original works; its main question is the most radical question of Metaphysics: the liberty for the One of creating itself. Lavaud's introduction sets the ground for a secure reading of this difficult work by calling attention to its metaphorical language and to its debate with Alexander of Aphrodisias' *Treatise on Destiny*. Furthermore, Lavaud explains Plotinus' employment of traditional liberty vocabulary, as well as the context in which the philosopher states the liberty of the First Principle. He also explains how Plotinus is moved by a sentiment of rigor and of persuasion when he here describes the One more positively than elsewhere. The introduction includes a lucid section on liberty and causality, in which the translator firmly warns readers to be constantly aware of the treatise's central intuition -- the absolute liberty of the principle -- when trying to understand how its causality works. There is, finally, a small section about the philosophical posterity of the treatise, centered on Marius Victorinus.

Richard Dufour is the translator of treatise 40 (II. 1). The introduction is short and precise, but the notes are abundant. Dufour stresses the dissonance between Plotinus and Plato regarding the composition of celestial bodies. Bréhier, in the introductory study of his translation to this treatise, had already noted Plotinus' difficult search in the *Timaeus* for a thesis that is not there; but Dufour sees treatise 40 as Plotinus' major direct attack against Plato. The work of Dufour deserves praise: he has recently published an annotated translation of II. 1 [40] (Paris: Vrin, 2003), in which he makes of this somewhat arid treatise a really useful book on ancient cosmology. Praise also must be addressed to Dufour for his magnificent bibliography on Plotinus (*Plotinus: a Bibliography: 1950-2000*, Leiden: Brill, 2002), another fresh work of the scholar.

Treatise 41 (IV. 6) is presented and translated by Pierre-Marie Morel. It deals with memory in its particular relation to sense perception. In Porphyry's arrangement this short book stood as appendix to the great treatise *On the Difficulties about the Soul* (IV. 3, IV. 4, and IV. 5). Morel's presentation and notes justly call attention to this brief but not unimportant work.

Overall, the translations in this volume, as well as in the previous ones, are reliable. Non-specialist readers will have here a satisfactory introduction to Plotinus' philosophy. Specialists will find the recent developments in the interpretation of Plotinus applied to a competent translation. The harmony that characterizes all volumes is remarkable, especially when we have in mind the number of scholars involved in producing them. They perform like a well conducted orchestra.

There are however some problems concerning translation I might point out. Since the translators succeed as an orchestra, they also fail as one. One point that puzzles me is the translation of the Greek term *ousía* as *réalité* (reality), instead of the traditional rendering as "essence" or "substance." Not that this word may not be thus translated, but sometimes the choice makes the text quite confusing for readers who do not know Greek -- and they are the ones who most need a translation--, and even for Greek knowers, if we do not have the

original text at hand. Let us take an example: in the introduction (p. 15), Fronterotta writes: "Un qui est le premier principe de la réalité" (the One that is the first principle of reality); and in the translation (p. 45, VI. 7. 3. 16): "cette partie assure la sauvegarde de cette réalité" (this part assures the safeguard of this reality). In the first quotation, "reality" means the totality of existent things, what may be but is not necessarily the totality of essences or substances; in the second, the word "reality" is a translation of the Greek word *ousia*. If this confusion is not enough, he translates (p. 57, VI. 7. 10. 10) a simple *pán súntheton* as "toute réalité composée" (every composite reality): it seems to me questionable to suppose the notion of *ousia* here where a mere "thing" would suffice. This problem occurs in the other translations, too. Anyway, whether the choice is right or wrong, there seems to be some negligence in use of such a complex word as "reality".

Another confusion: many times *nóesis* and *diánoia* are translated by the same word, *pensée*. They have different meanings in Plotinus, *nóesis* being generally applied to the direct kind of knowledge of Intellect and the higher part of Soul and *diánoia* to the discursive thought proper to Soul in Body. This happens, for instance, on page 55 (VI. 7. 9. 14, *diánoia*) and on page 105 (VI. 7. 39. 23, *nóesis*). I wonder why "intellection" was not preserved as the normal rendering of *nóesis*.

I would like to make note of two more problems, regarding style. First, I for myself think that translating Plotinus' treatises as if they were dialogues is somewhat annoying and unfair for people who cannot read or cannot consult the Greek text. I am not sure who started it, but it has been happening since at least 1982 (I think of Jesus Igal's superb Spanish translation). This practice leads the reader to think that the text has a literary form it does not have and is also very confusing, for the reader cannot always be sure about when it is and when it is not Plotinus who is talking, since there are no *dramatis personae*. Second, perhaps because I am not a native speaker of French, I feel a monotonous homogeneity in all French translations of Greek and Latin authors. It seems not to matter who is translating and who is being translated, the final result is much the same. In the particular case of Plotinus, the translated text always exhibits a clarity, a profusion, a balance, that the original does not. Much of the tenseness and the elliptical character of Plotinus' difficult prose are lost in every French translation I have examined. And this one is no exception.

Briefly, this translation is indeed a solid bridge to Plotinus' philosophy, but it does not keep any fragrance of his writing.

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