

content", and that "[t]his propositional character makes memories candidate bearers of truth-value" (p. 145) would have required more detailed elaboration given that memory, according to Aristotle, is a function of the perceptual capacity. Roark makes no attempt to explain how the perceptual capacity is able to allow propositional contents, nor does he consider the possibility that a memory phantasm may be true without being a proper truth-bearer in the way in which an assertion or a denial is.

The concluding part IV discusses simultaneity and temporal passage. In Chapter 11, Roark argues against Ursula Coope and others that Aristotle does not take simultaneity as a primitive notion but instead explains it in terms of togetherness. In Chapter 12, he plausibly rebukes the arguments given by Sorabji and Miller that Aristotle is unable to give a consistent account of temporal passage. He also argues that Aristotle is not subject to Williams's and Dummett's objections to the possibility of temporal passage in the first place. In this way, he attempts to show that Aristotle's theory of time is more powerful than many alternative views. However, Roark reasonably confesses that the success of the theory ultimately depends on the plausibility of the account of motion, which Aristotle gives in teleological terms (i.e. in terms of potentiality and actuality). Since many later thinkers regard these as dubious or at least not sufficiently clear for explanatory purposes, Roark judges that further work should be done to clarify and strengthen the basis of the theory in terms of non-temporal causal relations, for example.

In conclusion, I recommend Roark's book to anyone who is interested in Aristotle's account of time. Despite the aforementioned shortcomings, the book is an important contribution to this area of study, and invites the reader to delve into a variety of intractable problems about time in Aristotle and others thinkers.

*Mika Perälä*

NIKETAS SINIOSSOGLOU: *Radical Platonism in Byzantium. Illumination and Utopia in Gemistos Plethon*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2011. ISBN 978-1-107-01303-2. XVI, 454 pp. GBP 70, USD 120.

Niketas Siniossoglou examines George Gemistos Plethon's (1355–1452) thoughts and actions in the context of the survival of pagan Platonism from the 6th to the 15th century. Siniossoglou's argument is that during the Byzantine period, the Hellenic or pagan worldview stayed as a hidden challenger and a continuous threat to Orthodoxy.

A very interesting point in Siniossoglou's work is his admirable criticism of the fashionable overkills of the constructivism and the relativism inspired by deconstruction and post-modern thought in the current studies of the intellectual history of the ancient and medieval world. Siniossoglou's call for a more realist perspective is very welcome: "it is time to abandon the anti-essentialist or anti-foundationalist (in reality relativist) methodological approaches that blur the boundaries between Hellenism and Christianity" (x–xi).

In 1451, thanks to the spies working for the main clerical leader of the day, Gennadios Scholarios (c. 1400 – c. 1473), the Byzantine authorities in the Peloponnese arrested a pagan agitator named Juvenalios. His hand, tongue and ears were cut off and he was executed by drowning. Scholarios, in his letter which made the episode known to posterity, congratulated

the soldiers of Christ for a job well done and assured the responsible officer and his men that they had no reason to feel any remorse because the deed certainly made God rejoice.

Juvenalios, a former monk converted to polytheism, was probably inspired by the circle of Plethon. Juvenalios' case was a warning to Plethon's remaining followers. The leader himself was out of the reach of his enemies, as he was being protected by the secular power in Constantinople and by the de facto independent ruler of the Peloponnese. Scholarios gained a victory of sorts after the death of Plethon, when in the 1460s, as a patriarch during the early years of Ottoman conquest, he was able to burn Plethon's last great work, the *Nomoi*, the *Treatise on the Laws*. The passages published by the patriarch in order to justify the destruction of the book indicate that it was an overt manifesto for the restoration of paganism.

According to Siniosoglou's interpretation, Plethon was a late Byzantine end in the chain of defiant Platonism. The names of the most famous representatives of this current are well known: Leo the Mathematician, Michael Psellus, John Italos, etc. I would like to add to Siniosoglou's list an obvious link, the enigmatic writer of the *Corpus Areopagiticum* because this author played a crucial role in the survival of the written legacy of Athenian Neoplatonism in a clearly hostile environment during the dark period prior to the so-called first Byzantine humanism. Psellus and Italos, at least, according to their own opinion, moved inside the Byzantine Christian framework, but more rigid defenders of Orthodoxy saw their endeavour as a threat. Plethon consciously broke free from this framework.

Siniosoglou convincingly places Plethon not only into a Byzantine past, but also contextualizes the contemporary conditions of his effort: the apocalyptic atmosphere in Late Byzantium beleaguered by the rise of the Ottoman power and the pressure from the Latin West and "the intellectual civil war" or the internal strife among the intellectuals concerning the best ways to cope with the crisis. The specific way in which Plethonian Platonism was formed by religious, political and philosophical issues becomes understandable only by taking into account the defeat of the previous humanist and intellectual Platonism in its antagonism with the party inspired by George Palamas in the so-called Hesychast controversy.

As for the relationship between late ancient Neoplatonism and Plethon, Siniosoglou quite rightly points out that Plethon's Platonism meant a return to the position of Middle Platonism. His highest God is Zeus the Demiurge of Plato's *Timaeus* and his gods are essentially Platonic ideas. His paganism is intellectual, not ritual, he has no need of theurgy. He rejects the existence of a supraessential level and identifies the highest cause (God) with Being itself. Plethon radically rejects transcendentalism and resacralizes the cosmos which he feels was denigrated by Byzantine Christianity which saw it only as a created thing.

One wonders to what extent Plethon's original ontological Platonism was a conscious rejection of the Neoplatonic model. Perhaps he did not even notice that he was in disagreement with Proclus. This calls for more research on the problem of Plethon's reception of his Platonic and Neoplatonic sources.

Siniosoglou also deftly points out the significance of Plethon's work in the general history of philosophy. Contrary to what is usually believed, Plethon is not a precursor of Renaissance Platonism, though of course, he influenced it and was one of its heroes. However, Renaissance Platonists rejected his antagonistic stand towards Christianity. For them, Platonism was a pure philosophy of perennial tradition in which the pagan and Christian past were reconciled under the hegemony of the latter. Plethon, by contrast, anticipates, according to Siniosoglou,

such early modern and Enlightenment currents which pursued the establishment of a rational and natural religion, and which finished with the birth of the modern idea of secularism. In addition to this, one can also read Plethon as one of the first representatives of Renaissance and modern utopianism.

Before reading Siniosoglou's book I imagined Plethon as a brave Greek Renaissance thinker who had strong pro-pagan tendencies but who did not get Proclus quite right. Now I have learned that Plethon was a major figure in Greek and European intellectual history. This stimulating book is to be recommended to anyone interested in the history of the Platonic tradition in the Byzantine context.

Tuomo Lankila

RICHARD FINN, OP: *Asceticism in the Graeco-Roman World*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge – New York 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-86281-3 (hb), 978-0-521-68154-4 (pb). XII, 182 pp. GBP 61 (hb), 19.99 (pb).

Le nouveau livre de Richard Finn traite de l'ascétisme dans le monde gréco-romain. Il appartient à la collection "Key Themes in Ancient History", dirigée par Paul Cartledge et Peter Garnsey. La définition qu'emploie Finn pour l'ascétisme est l'abstinence volontaire de nourriture, de boissons, de sommeil, de richesse ou d'activité sexuelle pour des raisons religieuses. Une telle abstinence peut être temporelle ou permanente. L'auteur admet que l'ascétisme a pris différentes formes et significations dans le monde gréco-romain, mais ce qui lui importe le plus est de savoir pourquoi les nouvelles formes d'ascétisme sont devenues populaires dans le Christianisme. Il souligne aussi la manque d'études sur l'ascétisme chrétien de le contexte des pratiques ascétiques païennes et judaïques, le Judaïsme étant le parent pauvre dans l'histoire des religions dans le monde gréco-romain qui s'occupe principalement des païens et des chrétiens ("Introduction", pp. 1–8).

L'étude est divisée en cinq chapitres: le Chapitre Premier (pp. 9–33) parle de l'ascétisme parmi les sectes philosophiques des premiers siècles de notre ère (cyniques, stoïciens, néoplatoniciens), le Chapitre II (pp. 34–57) fait le panorama de l'ascétisme dans le Judaïsme (Philon, les *Therapeutae*, *Mishnah*, *Talmud* et autres textes sacrés), le Chapitre III (pp. 58–99), le plus long de tous, examine l'ascétisme avant Origène (dans les Ecritures apocryphes et *Le Pasteur d'Herma*) et sa relation avec le deuil et analyse le rôle des pratiques comme le syneisaktisme, l'enkratisme ou la xérophagie, le remariage des veufs et la virginité chez les premiers chrétiens, tandis que le chapitre suivant (pp. 100–30) traite de l'ascétisme selon Origène et l'influence qu'il a exercée sur les auteurs ecclésiastiques (Méthode d'Olympe, Eusèbe d'Emèse, Basile d'Ancyre, Grégoire de Nysse, Jean Chrysostome, Ambrose de Milan, Jérôme et Augustin). Finn cherche aussi les traces que les écrits origéniens ont laissées dans la *Vie d'Antoine* d'Athanase d'Alexandrie, les *Règles* de Basile de Césarée, les œuvres d'Evagre de Pont et les *Institutions* de Jean Cassien. Le dernier chapitre (pp. 131–55) parle des deux grands courants du monachisme, le courant pachomien et le courant syrien et de l'importance croissante que les moines acquièrent dans les églises de l'Orient. Le livre se termine par deux pages de conclusions générales ("Final Thoughts", pp. 156–7), la Bibliographie (pp. 158–76) et un Index non exhaustif (pp. 177–82).