Marion BOURBON, *Penser l'individu. Genèse stoïcienne de la subjectivité*

Turnhout, Brepols, 2019 (Philosophie hellénistique et romaine IX), 424 p., ISBN 978-2-503-58443-0, E-ISBN 978-2-503-58444-7

Christopher Gill

Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/philosant/4210>

DOI: 10.4000/philosant.4210

ISSN: 2648-2789

Publisher

Éditions Vrin

Printed version

Date of publication: 15 December 2021

Number of pages: 291-293

ISBN: 978-2-7116-3036-3

ISSN: 1634-4561

Electronic reference

Christopher Gill, "Marion BOURBON, *Penser l'individu. Genèse stoïcienne de la subjectivité*", *Philosophie antique* [Online], 21 | 2021, Online since 30 April 2021, connection on 07 December 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/philosant/4210> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/philosant.4210>

Creative Commons - Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International - CC BY-NC-ND 4.0
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Les deux dernières études s'attachent à la diffusion des *Libri de animalibus* aristotéliens par les traductions latines du XIII^e siècle. P. Bassiano Rossi souligne la prééminence effective dans la tradition de la traduction arabo-latine de Michael Scott sur la traduction gréco-latine un peu postérieure (et pourtant bien meilleure et plus fidèle...) de Guillaume de Moerbeke, qui a l'avantage pourtant d'inclure *MA* et *LA*, omis par la tradition arabe. Il propose trois traductions de l'incipit complexe de *PA* (Scott, Moerbeke, Anonyme du ms. de Padoue), qui permet de mesurer l'élégance infidèle de Scott (utilisé par l'Anonyme et tant d'auteurs y compris Albert le Grand) et offre en appendice à son brefsai une transcription d'extraits de 5 prologues à des commentaires des *Libri de animalibus* (Petrus Hispanus, Gérard de Breuil et trois anonymes).

Enfin Albert vint ! L. Perfetti se propose d'étudier la candidature d'Albert le Grand comme rénovateur d'Aristote, et celui qui aurait mis un terme à la longue éclipse du Stagirite, renouant avec la science zoologique dans toute sa noblesse. Il partage en partie l'enthousiasme de M. Tkacz ("Albert the Great and the Revival of Aristotle's Zoological Research Program", *Vivarium*, 45/1, 2007, p. 30-68) qui voit dans Albert le seul aristotélien digne de ce nom. Proposant une analyse bienveillante de la somme populaire (comptant malgré son volume et ses 26 livres plus de 50 mss. du XIII^e au XV^e siècle...) qu'est le *De Animalibus* d'Albert –et qui reste essentiellement une paraphrase amplificatrice de la traduction de M. Scott– Perfetti insiste sur le programme *intégratif* d'Albert concernant le monde naturel et les animaux, mais lui refuse le titre que Tkacz lui avait accordé : Albert ne renoue pas avec la méthode et l'investigation aristotéliennes, même s'il est le premier à lire le biologiste comme il faut. Pour Perfetti, qui réitère les jugements classiques et navrés sur la décadence zoologique post-aristotélienne, la liberté de la *polis* a permis Aristote (p. 280), et les monarchies hellénistiques, d'abord, le christianisme ensuite, ont étouffé ce mouvement.

À l'issue de ce parcours historique et historiographique, le « mystère Lennox » qui en était la cible reste entier. Mais cette énigme est peut-être un malentendu obstiné. La science du vivant, savoir intermédiaire ou mixte, *trop* philosophique pour les naturalistes, *trop peu* philosophique pour les philosophes, ne disparaît pas avec Aristote, mais l'approche systématique qu'il développe, et qui nous ressemble tant mais n'est qu'une option du discours zoologique, s'évapore. Les philosophes modernes nous font croire qu'Aristote était *mal lu* et *mal compris* par les Anciens (« non sembra capirlo fino in fondo » p. 89), alors que sa méthode était peut-être perçue comme trop théorique, abstraite, encombrante. Rapidement on ne s'intéresse plus à la façon dont le Lycée *théorise* les animaux, mais seulement à ce qu'Aristote a *décrit*.

Arnaud ZUCKER
Université Côte d'Azur. CNRS, CEPAM
Arnaud.ZUCKER@univ-cotedazur.fr

Marion BOURBON, *Penser l'individu : Genèse stoïcienne de la subjectivité*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2019 (Philosophie hellénistique et romaine IX), 424 p., ISBN : 978-2-503-58443-0, E-ISBN : 978-2-503-58444-7.

This book has several very positive qualities; but its project raises certain important questions, which are not wholly addressed by the book itself. First, and most fundamentally: what is the subject? The title cites two notions: individuality and subjectivity, both of which are quite complex. The first idea, 'individuality', can denote

'unique personal identity' (as distinct from the identity of any other person); and Stoic versions of this idea play a prominent role at certain stages of this study. However, much of the book seems to have a broader, and rather different, concept in view, namely, 'individuation humaine', that is, the capacity or property that distinguishes human beings as such from other animals. Implicitly at least, this is a capacity belonging to human beings viewed as distinct entities or agents, rather than as members of groups or participants in relationships, though this point is not accentuated in the book. In fact, to judge from the main topics of discussion, this capacity is largely conceived as that of psychological agency, for decision, will and deliberate action. This capacity is closely linked with (though not exclusively defined by) subjectivity, understood in rather broad terms as self-reflexiveness, self-management, or self-relationship more generally. Thus, overall, the book's subject is that of Stoic ideas on this complex of ideas, though presented as an account of 'individu singulier qu'est le sujet humain' (on the back cover and often elsewhere).

A second question raised by the book is this. The ideas just noted, along with cognate ones such as 'self', 'person' (and their analogues in other languages) have figured prominently in modern European theory, with thinkers including Descartes, Kant, Nietzsche, Sartre, and Foucault, shaping the modern understanding of them. More recently, there has been active scholarly debate, involving, among others, Sorabji and myself, about how far these modern ideas have ancient equivalents. Bourbon refers, rather glancingly, to the modern history of these ideas and the scholarly debate about their relevance to antiquity. However, in general, she seems confident that these ideas can be applied, unproblematically, to Stoic thought, and, indeed that we can find there the 'genesis' of these ideas, though this last claim is not explained very fully, except by highlighting what she sees as the relevant Stoic ideas. I am less confident than she is on this point; but, in any case, I think the book would have benefited from fuller reflection on this question and its implications for critical interpretation of the evidence considered.

How is the argument organised? The book is subdivided into four parts, of which the first two, I think, carry the main weight of her case. The first part is directed at the 'physics' of Stoic thinking on individuality. Certainly, the Stoic conception of nature and their general physicalism are significant for making sense of their psychology and their distinctive ideas in this area. However, the main focus here is on an idea, that of something being 'uniquely' or 'distinctively' qualified (*idios poion*), that figures in Stoic logical analysis of categories, rather than physics. Our evidence on this topic derives mainly from reports of a debate between Stoics and Academic sceptics about identity and growth, which turns on what it means to say that something is 'the same' as itself or other things. Bourbon refers, quite often, to this idea throughout the book, and cites the prevalence of this idea to support her general claim that individuality, in the sense of unique personal identity, plays a particularly prominent role in Stoic thought. However, as far as I can tell, this theme plays an important role only in the rather localised ancient debate about growth and sameness. It does not acquire the prominent place that 'personal identity' has sometimes done in modern Western philosophy, with theorists of different kinds taking up competing positions.

The second part of the book, building on the first, argues that the Stoic concept of individuality is conceived in subjective terms. In maintaining this view, Bourbon focuses on the role of reflexive ideas (self-knowledge or self-perception) in the Stoic theory of development as 'appropriation' (*oikeiosis*). She also examines the idea of 'assent' to 'impressions' in Stoic psychology, presenting this notion as one which expresses the

concept of the individual as a distinctively subjective agent. A further major theme is Epictetus' usage (unusual in Stoic terms) of the notion of *prohairesis*. This too is taken as an indication of individual subjectivity; however, the dominant theme here is not so much self-awareness but that of a whole-hearted or unified response and the idea that one's choices also imply choice of a way of life, and commitment to that life. In these senses, it is claimed, the Epictetan conception of *prohairesis* constitutes a subjective expression of individuality. In addition, the Stoic (including Epictetan) use of the idea of *daimon* is presented as compatible with a focus on individual subjectivity in the sense that the *daimon* bridges human and divine spheres and is attached to people as individuals.

In the third part of the book, attention shifts to Stoic writings in Latin, especially Seneca, placed in the context of Roman thought more generally, particularly that of Cicero. However, the concepts explored, and the claims made, are similar to those in the second part. The key terms discussed are *conscientia* and *voluntas*. The main connotations underlined are (in the case of *conscientia*), self-awareness, inner (mental) space, and the treatment of another person as one's mirror or reflection. In the case of *voluntas*, in Seneca, as with *prohairesis* in Epictetus, the stress falls on the idea of 'willing' as expressing whole-hearted commitment.

In the fourth part, the topic is the significance of the terms *persona* and *prosopa*. Here, one might have expected a close study of the four-*personae* theory in Cicero, *De Officiis* Book 1, with special attention to the second (individual) *persona* (a topic briefly covered earlier in the book). However, Bourbon's interest is broader, falling on the deployment of these terms in general, in Cicero, Seneca and Epictetus. Also, the ideas reviewed are those of role-playing (including internal role-playing) and the idea of the mind as an inner theatre. These features are seen as indications of subjectivity (awareness of oneself in various guises) and also of self-creation (making yourself play this or that role).

How convincing, overall, is this study; I take the positive points first. The book brings together virtually all the evidence that is important for addressing the question of the relevance of the ideas of subjectivity and individuality to Stoic thought, as presented in Greek and Roman sources in different periods. It also discusses clearly and carefully the various topics that represent the strongest support for this project, including the idea of 'uniquely qualified' (*idios poion*), and terms for self-consciousness, willing and choosing, and roles. All the texts referred to are discussed lucidly, indeed elegantly, are well-documented, illustrated by French translations (with Greek and Latin as needed), and with up-to-date references especially to French and English scholarship. The layout and organisation are clear; the book is supported by a full bibliography and several indexes. The volume as a whole is attractively printed and its presentation reflects well on the author, series editors and publisher.

My main reservations are those stated at the start of this review. The key terms (individuality, subjectivity) are complex or ambiguous in meaning. However, Bourbon never acknowledges this point, and seems to assume that they are unproblematically self-evident in their significance. Also, she cites, at different stages, divergent features as indicators of these ideas: she combines ideas about unique individuality with expressions of psychological agency that are characteristic of human beings as such. Ideas about psychological cohesion and unified (whole-hearted) 'willing' are coupled with ideas about internal division and complex mental role-playing. Broadly put, the book contains most of the themes one might associate with psychological agency in Stoic theory, but presented as being about 'subjective individuality'.

There is also the problem, highlighted earlier, that the key terms are modern ones, and, indeed, ones that have played an important role in modern European thought and

are highly contested. Also, the question of their relevance to ancient, including Stoic, thought has been debated in previous scholarship. While not ignoring these points, she does not, on the other hand, incorporate an awareness of them into her analysis, although I think this could have enabled more acute critical reading of the texts. This point also has implications for her claim that Stoic psychology provided the context for the 'genesis' of the ideas of individuality and subjectivity – are the ancient and modern ideas really the same? Further, that claim is itself rather unexplored. What broader features of Stoicism (as distinct from other Hellenistic and Roman or earlier Greek thought) made this theory uniquely or especially suitable as the seedbed of these modern notions? And can such claims be adequately explained without at least some reference to the social and economic context of the philosophical ideas?

In short, my reservations centre on broader conceptual questions raised by the project rather than the detailed discussion, taken in its own terms. However, I hope that the author will explore such questions in future work, using this comprehensive and well-organised study as a basis for further reflection.

Christopher GILL
University of Exeter

Suzanne STERN-GILLET, Kevin CORRIGAN, José C. BARACAT Jr. (éd.), *A Text Worthy of Plotinus. The Lives and Correspondence of P. Henry S.J., H.-R. Schwyzer, A. H. Armstrong, J. Trouillard and J. Igal S.J.*, Leuven, Leuven University Press, 2021 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, De Wulf Mansion Centre, Series I, LIX), 396 p., ISBN : 978 94 6270 259 2.

L'édition critique des œuvres de Plotin par Paul Henry et Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer, parue en 1951, 1959 et 1973 en trois volumes de l'*editio maior* (Leuven, Museum Lessianum) et en 1964, 1977 et 1982 en trois volumes de l'*editio minor* (Oxford, Oxford Classical Texts), était certes un événement majeur pour la recherche sur la philosophie antique en général et pour les études plotiniennes en particulier. De 1492 à 1835, sous la forme imprimée, on avait accès aux *Ennéades* de Plotin dans la traduction latine de Marsile Ficin, accompagnée, depuis 1580, d'un texte grec établi pour son *editio princeps* chez Petrus Perna à Bâle. Le dix-neuvième siècle a produit quatre éditions nouvelles, celle de Friedrich Creuzer et Georg Heinrich Moser en 1835 (rééditée en 1855), celle d'Adolf Kirchhoff en 1856, celle de Friedrich Hermann Müller en 1878/1880 et celle de Richard Vollkmann en 1883/1884. La première moitié du vingtième siècle y a ajouté, entre 1924 et 1938, celle d'Émile Bréhier.

On aurait pu penser qu'un siècle d'activité éditoriale aurait dû aboutir à un texte fiable des *Ennéades* de Plotin. En fait, ce ne fut pas le cas. À l'époque même qui a vu naître trois excellentes traductions de Plotin en langues modernes, celle de Stephen MacKenna en anglais, celle d'Émile Bréhier en français et celle de Richard Harder en allemand, un jésuite de vingt-six ans, faisant ses études à Paris, s'étant aperçu, « grâce à l'édition de Creuzer de 1835, que l'édition Bréhier, dans la collection Guillaume Budé, n'était pas valable » (p. 35, cf. p. 37 et 42), s'est jeté dans une aventure extraordinaire qui devait aboutir aux deux éditions critiques des *Plotini Opera* par lui-même et par l'éminent helléniste suisse Hans-Rudolf Schwyzer.

C'est là le « texte digne de Plotin » auquel fait référence le titre du présent volume et auquel la plupart des documents qu'il réunit se rapportent d'une manière ou d'une autre. Le noyau de ces documents est constitué par les lettres trouvées parmi les papiers d'Arthur Hilary Armstrong, auteur d'une nouvelle traduction de Plotin en anglais,