Euree SONG (éd.), *Demiurge: The World-Maker in the Platonic Tradition*

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Euree SONG (éd.), *Demiurge: The World-Maker in the Platonic Tradition*, Special Issue of *Horizons: Seoul Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 3, no. 1-2, Seoul, Seoul National University Press, 2012.

In just the last decade, many conference proceedings have been published on Plato's *Timaeus* and its influence on the history of philosophy¹. The present volume, which is the result of a symposium held at Seoul National University in September 2011, testifies to the enduring and widespread interest the Platonic dialogue is able to elicit. The nine studies here collected by Euree Song center on the figure of the demiurge as maker of the world and they all deal with authors who, while having different religious and philosophical beliefs, are either Platonists or indebted to the Platonic tradition. Apart from a chapter on Plato, the book contains three chapters on Middle Platonic thinkers, two on Neoplatonism, and the last three on Medieval, Renaissance, and early Islamic philosophers, respectively. As may be expected, the topics under scrutiny include: the notion of demiurgy as a description of divine causal agency; the opposition between a metaphorical understanding of the demiurge, favoured by the majority of pagan thinkers, and the Judeo-Christian and Islamic conception of God as a principle endowed with personality who sets off a deliberate creative process; the divergent views on the nature of the demiurgic god's activity which follow from conceiving of matter as either created or uncreated; and the question as to whether the demiurge is to be identified with the highest deity or with lower levels of reality.

In the first paper ('Who Is the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*?', p. 3-18) Dominic O'Meara argues that the audience of *Timaeus*' speech would have easily identified the demiurge with Zeus, as the demiurge shares many familiar features with the Greek conception of Zeus. And yet there are significant divergences between the two, insofar as *Timaeus*' emphasis on the demiurge's goodness dissociates him from the often immoral image of Zeus that emerges from the poets' stories. In line with the educational project of *Republic* II, Plato offers in the *Timaeus* a reformed image of divinity, "morally and metaphysically perfect" (p. 14). Finally, O'Meara explains that Plato chooses the notion of demiurgy to describe divine causality, since this notion best represents the action of the reformed god, but it is a pity that the chapter ends rather abruptly and that such an interesting argument is not pursued in further detail.

In the next paper ('The Middle Platonist Demiurge and Stoic Cosmobiology', p. 19-39) Carl S. O'Brien contends that the figure of the demiurge disappears from view with Plato's successors, it survives in the Stoic concept of *logos* (although combined with influences derived from Aristotle's biology), only to re-emerge in the Platonic camp in the first century CE. The author then considers the influence

1. See, for instance, T. Leinkauf and C. Steel (eds.), *Platons Timaios als Grundtext der Kosmologie in Spätantike, Mittelalter und Renaissance/Plato's Timaeus and the Foundations of Cosmology in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2005; R. D. Mohr and B. M. Sattler (eds.), *One Book, The Whole Universe: Plato's Timaeus Today*, Las Vegas/Zurich/Athens: Parmenides Publishing, 2010; F. Celia and A. Ulacco (eds.), *Il Timeo. Egesi greche, arabe, latine*, Pisa: Edizioni Plus/Pisa University Press, 2012.

of the Stoic *logos* on Philo of Alexandria's and Plutarch's conceptions of the demiurge. Unfortunately, only three brief pages are devoted to these two thinkers. For a more accurate description of Philo's account of the demiurge the reader must turn to the following chapter by David T. Runia ('God the Creator as Demiurge in Philo of Alexandria', p. 41-59). In his article, Runia first provides a clear overview of the main features of Philo's interpretation of God as demiurge, focusing on his presentation of the biblical account of creation in *De opificio mundi*. Next he shows that Philo's faithfulness to his Greek models and the dominant presence of the demiurgic metaphor in his exposition do not allow him to capture all the elements of the biblical text: the emphasis on God's making overshadows God's other activities, such as speaking and seeing, while the introduction of the concept of matter – vital for the demiurgic image, but foreign to the biblical narrative – gets Philo into trouble because he is unable to think through its consequences in a monotheistic context.

In the fourth essay ('Plato's World-Maker in Origen's *Contra Celsum*', p. 61-80) Cinzia Arruzza successfully illustrates the similarities and dissimilarities between Plato's demiurge and Origen of Alexandria's Creator. On the basis of an insightful analysis of the strategy adopted by Origen in his critique of Celsus' Platonic theology, Arruzza concludes that Origen is ready to make use of all the elements of Plato's *Timaeus* which are not incompatible with the Christian doctrine, but rejects the others. Thus, in contrast to Plato's and Celsus' demiurge, Origen's God is directly responsible for all creation (including matter) and maintains a personal relationship with the human being, which guarantees all men the possibility of knowing God.

The following paper by Euree Song ('Plotinus on the World-Maker', p. 81-102) examines Plotinus' metaphorical understanding of demiurgy, according to which the artisanal model of generation is replaced by a process of contemplative derivation in which the demiurge becomes an almost superfluous entity. The demiurge, however, makes his appearance throughout the *Enneads*: as scholars have recognized, Plotinus equates him with Intellect, but transfers many of his functions to the World Soul and to Nature¹. Song's original contribution consists in the claim that these three levels of reality are characterized by three different kinds of 'demiurgic' activities, which are *theoria*, *praxis*, and *poiesis*, respectively. Now, I would suggest that this view might be partial, if not misleading, because it does not do justice to the several passages where Plotinus uses, at the same time, *theoria* and *poiesis* to describe the causal activities of Intellect, Soul, and Nature, while *praxis* is confined to the description of an inferior form of practical activity, which is not self-contained, but directed outward and opposed to contemplation². The systematic reconstruction of Plotinus' complex doctrines is a difficult enter-

1. Cf. J. Opsomer, 'A Craftsman and his Handmaiden. Demiurgy According to Plotinus', in T. Leinkauf and C. Steel (eds.), *Platons Timaios*, cit., p. 67-102, to which Song's article is much indebted.

2. A list and a discussion of the relevant texts can be found in the too often neglected study by R. Arnou, *ΠΡΑΞΙΣ et ΘΕΩΡΙΑ, Étude de détail sur le vocabulaire et la pensée des Ennéades de Plotin*, Paris: Alcan, 1921.

prise, all the more so if one takes into account that traditional philosophical terms are often used by Plotinus in an unconventional way, as is the case here. It seems that Song's interpretation places too much weight upon a few particular passages, and one wishes she had turned her attention to other significant passages as well.

Gregory Shaw's essay ('The *Chora* of the *Timaues* and Iamblichean Theurgy', p. 103-129) seeks to investigate the role played by the *chora* in the theurgist's identification with the demiurgic god according to Iamblichus. The theurgists, true incarnations of the demiurge, are able through their rituals to discover the *chora* that is innate in them, to become receptacles for the divine influx, and finally to establish their identity with the god. The tone of the essay is rather inspired, but the author might have used a little more caution in his opening attack on a purely rationalist reading of Plato and later Platonists. Nobody nowadays would deny the extensive presence in the Platonic tradition of what can be labelled as 'irrationalism', and to suggest the contrary is something of a straw-man.

The paper by Lenka Karfíková ('The Christian World-Maker according to Augustine, John Eriugena, and Thierry of Chartres', p. 131-172), by far the longest in the collection, is a study over the presence of three different sources – namely, Plato's *Timaues*, the double account of creation in *Genesis*, and the doctrine of the Trinity – in the reflections on the creator of the world in Augustine, Eriugena, and Thierry of Chartres. Karfíková shows that the *Timaues* is virtually absent from Augustine's description of creation, and the same holds for Eriugena. Moreover, in Eriugena's doctrine (which is heavily indebted to Neoplatonic speculations), the account of *Genesis* also does not play a relevant role. The situation is quite different with Thierry, who, among these authors, "is the one who makes the most explicit attempt at linking the biblical account of creation with Plato's *Timaues*, making also the tightest connection between cosmogony and the teaching on the Trinity" (p. 162).

Filip Karfik's essay ('Marsilio Ficino on the Maker of the Universe', p. 173-193) is a rewarding study of two rival doctrines of world-making that emerge throughout Ficino's works. The one "constitutes a sort of compromise between Neoplatonic and Christian views" (p. 178); the other represents "its specifically Christian variant" (p. 173). Both doctrines share the Christian belief that God is the immediate creator of unformed matter at all levels of the universe. The main difference, however, lies in the understanding of the divine mind or intellect: according to the ancient Platonists it is a demiurgic god inferior to the first deity, whereas for Christian Platonists it is God the Son, who is the same in substance with God the Father, though different in person. The latter view represents in Ficino's eyes a more developed stage in the progressive revelation of truth, and allows the Christians to maintain that there is only one maker of the universe, who does not distribute some of his functions to lower agents.

In the final article of the collection ('The Early Ismā'īlī Notion of the World-Maker: The Intellect, the Soul, and the Lord of Creation and Revelation', p. 195-220) Shin Nomoto discusses the views of al-Nasafī, al-Rāzī, and al-Sijistānī, three Ismaili thinkers of the tenth century CE, strongly influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy. Despite some points of disagreement, they all identify the demiurge with

the Intellect and with the Soul, but ascribe a proper demiurgic role only to the latter.

The book is generally well edited, although it contains a few typos and other mistakes: see, *e.g.*, the use of italics on p. 6: "the speech *Timaeus* gives in the *Timaeus*"; 'Enn. IV 6 [8]' instead of 'Enn. IV 8 [6]' on p. 95, n. 63; and 'conditio' for 'creatio' on p. 136.

All in all, the volume succeeds in providing a rather unified series of papers, each of which contributes to illustrate the different approaches that have been taken in the Platonic tradition to understand the figure of the world-maker.

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Maddalena BONELLI (éd.), *Physique et métaphysique chez Aristote*, Paris, Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 2012 (Bibliothèque d'histoire de la philosophie), 308 pages, ISBN 978-2-7116-2455-3

Les études recueillies dans cet ouvrage collectif sont issues, dans leur grande majorité, de communications et de débats dans le cadre du séminaire du « Centre Léon Robin de Recherches sur la Pensée Antique » (UMR 8061, Université de Paris IV-Sorbonne, CNRS et ENS), consacré, pendant les années 2005-2007, à la Physique et la Métaphysique chez Aristote.

Les contributions, rédigées ou traduites en français, sont soigneusement structurées et caractérisées par une argumentation claire et approfondie. Elles portent presque toutes sur ces deux questions importantes : 1) quel est le contenu de la science ou discipline qui sera appelée plus tard « métaphysique » ? On pourrait ajouter : est-il possible d'établir un lien entre les sujets métaphysiques à première vue disparates abordés dans le livre d'Aristote qui porte ce nom ? 2) Quel est plus exactement le rapport entre physique et métaphysique chez Aristote ?

Ainsi, après la préface de Maddalena Bonelli, les études sont présentées selon un ordre qui prend son point de départ dans l'*Organon*, en passant par la *Métaphysique* (qui constitue l'objet de la plus grande partie d'entre elles) pour arriver à la *Physique*, au *De anima* et aux ouvrages biologiques, tandis que la dernière contribution porte sur Alexandre d'Aphrodise. L'ouvrage se clôt par une bibliographie et trois index très utiles : sources, noms et notions.

Au tout début, la contribution de Curzio Chiesa (p. 19-37), intitulée « Le problème de l'être dans le *De interpretatione* (chapitre 11) », qui offre une analyse détaillée du traitement aristotélicien de la question du passage de « Homère est un poète » à « Homère est » ; plus précisément, Aristote bloque ce genre d'inférence. Cela pose le problème de la différence entre « est » prédiqué « par accident » et « est » prédiqué « par soi ».

Stephen Menn, dans l'article suivant, intitulé « La sagesse comme science des quatre causes ? » (p. 39-68), se concentre sur la définition de la *σοφία* au livre A de la *Métaphysique* dont la leçon serait plutôt négative, à savoir que les prédécesseurs d'Aristote ont jusqu'à maintenant échoué à découvrir la sagesse, surtout parce qu'ils ont échoué à découvrir la bonne *ἀρχή* et à y reconduire les choses comme à leur cause finale. Quant à la sagesse aristotélicienne, le livre A ne nous donne aucune raison de croire qu'elle sera une science de l'ensemble des quatre causes. En