

MARIE-LUISE LAKMANN, *Platonici minores: 1. Jh.v.Chr. - 2. Jh.n.Chr. Prosopographie. Fragmente und Testimonien mit deutscher Übersetzung*. *Philosophia antiqua*, 145, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017, xi+824 pp., \$236.00, ISBN 978-90-04-31533-4.

This is indeed a mighty work, an offshoot of a yet mightier one, the great project 'Der Platonismus in der Antike', initiated many years ago by Heinrich Dörrie, and continued, first by Matthias Baltes, and, most recently, by Christian Pietsch, who is currently bringing it at last to its conclusion with the eighth volume. What Professor Lakmann, who has been closely connected with this project, has set herself to do here is to make the fullest possible collection of minor figures involved in Platonist philosophizing over the period conventionally regarded as 'Middle Platonic', in order to give some attention to the persons behind the doctrines.

To this end, she has assembled data on some 88 individuals, including four Anonymi, and some very obscure figures indeed. The work is divided into two main sections: 'Prosopographie', in which she sets out and discusses what is known about the lives and doctrines of the figures concerned, and 'Texte und Übersetzungen', in which the relevant fragments and testimonia are presented and translated (the translations being undertaken by Erhard Pahnke and Henner Thoss). The only inadequacy I find with this arrangement is that there is no provision for discussing the contexts of the individual passages quoted, and the details of doctrine involved, as would sometimes be desirable – but one hesitates to suggest anything that would make a book of 835 pages even longer! She has, quite reasonably, chosen to exclude major figures, such as Antiochus of Ascalon, Eudorus, Plutarch, Atticus, Apuleius, Albinus, or Numenius, who either have major works surviving (as in the case of Plutarch, Apuleius or Albinus), or who have had their fragments adequately collected (though she does include here L. Calvenus Taurus, to whom she herself devoted a most valuable monograph back in 1994). These, after all, would be reckoned 'Platonici maiores', and are listed as such at the end!

Of those included, one may make a distinction between those of whom some doctrine or doctrines are known, and those who are mere names. By way of examples, we may take, first, the opening and closing entries in the collection, and then some further entries of special interest. It will not be possible to do justice to anything like the whole range of entries.

The collection opens with a certain Ailianos, known only from Porphyry's citations of him in his *Commentary on the Harmonics of Ptolemy*, who is

attested by Porphyry to have composed a commentary, in at least two books, on Plato's *Timaeus*, very probably confining himself to issues of music and harmonics – even as Theon of Smyrna dealt with the mathematics of the *Timaeus*, or indeed Galen with medical issues. From Porphyry we gather that he comes after Nero's court philosopher Thrasyllus, and so probably dates to the late first or early second century CE. He is quoted for his interest in the nature of harmony, and can be seen to be favourably disposed towards the Pythagorean tradition, but that is all we know of him.

At the other end of the collection, we are faced with an even more obscure figure, the Athenian philosopher Zosimos, son of Charopeinos, whose only claim to fame is that he is included, some time around the middle of the second century, on a rather significant inscription of Delphi, along with three other philosophers, Bacchios – whom Marcus Aurelius testifies (*Meditations* I 6) to having 'heard' – Klaudios Nikostratos (otherwise known, along with Loukios, as a critic of Aristotle's *Categories*), and M. Sextios Kornelianos of Mallos (otherwise, alas, quite unknown), in an award of honorary citizenship, with various privileges thereto attaining. Such awards are not given lightly, so we have here a reminder of the esteem in which Platonist philosophers were held at this time.

We should give a nod also in the direction of the only woman listed among the 88, a noble lady of Rome in the late second century named Arria, probably wife of the consul for 154 A.D. M. Nonius Macrinus, who was a good friend and patron of Galen, and describes herself as a Platonist on a surviving inscription. L. is prepared to entertain the possibility that she may also have been the Plato-loving patroness of Diogenes Laertius, and dedicatee of his *Lives of the Philosophers* – a conjecture that I find attractive, though unprovable.

Turning, however, from these very minor figures, we may survey briefly a number of the more prominent of the *minores*, on all of whom Lakmann has much of interest to contribute. Those that I would judge to be the most significant figures would include the following: M. Annius Ammonius, the teacher of Plutarch; Gaius (he of the now-exploded 'Gaios-Schule'); Harpokration of Argos; Cronius, the 'companion' of Numenius; the 'Neo-Pythagorean' Moderatus of Gades; Severus; and L. Calvenus Taurus – a mere seven out of the 88; and of these, I have already made a collection of the fragments of Harpokration (though admittedly only in a journal article)<sup>1</sup>, and Lakmann herself, as noted above, has dealt with Taurus. Let us look at them briefly in turn.

<sup>1</sup> "Harpokration's Commentary on Plato: Fragments of a Middle Platonic Commentary", *California Studies in Classical Antiquity* 4, 1971, 125-46 (repr. in Dillon, *The Golden Chain*, Ashgate: Aldershot, 1990).

Ammonius was undoubtedly a real person (which is more than can be said, for instance, for the philosopher Nigrinus, surely a satirical fantasy of Lucian's – L. is suitably sceptical), but he really only appears as a figure in the writings of his pupil Plutarch; it is not even suggested by Plutarch, as L. notes, that Ammonius wrote anything. Nonetheless, by virtue of Plutarch's artistry, he comes across as one of the more vivid characters in the collection, and one can form some views as to his philosophical position, tending as it does to Pythagoreanizing arithmology, metaphysical dualism, and a strong interest in theology.

Gaius, on the other hand, is a thinker of some importance with whom chance has dealt hardly. Like Ammonius, he may not have actually written anything, but his faithful pupil Albinus collected his philosophical doctrines in eleven books – all of which are lost! And his conjectured fathering of a 'Gaius-school' of second-century Platonism has not survived the denial of Albinus' authorship of the *Didaskalikos*, or 'Handbook of Platonism', in favour of the rather shadowy Alcinous. At any rate, he was honoured at Delphi, like the group of philosophers mentioned above, so he was not without honour in his own time.

In the case of Harpokration, L. has been able to add a few details to my treatment of him, but not anything very significant, I am glad to say.. We can observe his loyalty to his teacher Atticus on the creation of the world (Fr. 19), his affinity to Numenius in the matter of a sequence of three levels of divinity, for which he is duly mocked by Proclus (Fr. 20), and his rather gloomy views on the embodiment of the soul (Frs. 21-22).

Cronius is a man of whom we wish we knew more. He is frequently mentioned in the third century as one of the major figures of the Platonism of the second. His relationship to Numenius is intriguing – 'companion' rather than student, usually in agreement, but occasionally branching out on his own, as in the case of rejecting transmigration into animal bodies (Fr. 3). Porphyry attests in various contexts (Frs. 4, 5, 13) to his interest in the allegorical interpretation of Homer, which he finds useful in his exegesis of the Cave of the Nymphs..

Of Moderatus of Gades we know little, but we have a number of valuable testimonia, 12 passages in all, mostly through Porphyry, as to his views on first principles (an interesting three-level system), number, the soul, and the way that the Pythagorean tradition was hijacked and traduced by the Platonists – revealing him as quite a partisan Pythagorean, though he may still be included as part of the Platonist family!

As for Severus (probably of the late 2nd cent CE), he was a man of interesting views, some of them quite heterodox and Stoic-leaning, such as his postulation of the 'super-category' *ti* as a common element linking the intelligible and sensible realms, on the basis of a skewed interpretation of *Tim.* 27D (Fr. 5), and his position on the eternity of the world, viz.

that *this* cosmos indeed had a beginning, but that the universe as a whole does not: there are cycles of creation and dissolution (Fr. 7). His views on the composition and nature of the human soul are also of importance, as constituting, I think, an important influence on Plotinus (Frs. 1 – a verbatim quotation from his treatise *On the Soul*, preserved by Eusebius; and 11-14, his exegesis of *Tim.* 35AB).

In the case of Taurus, we know as much about his personal circumstances and style of teaching as we do about his doctrines, thanks to a very readable memoir by his pupil, the Roman lawyer Aulus Gellius, but we are also well informed, by John Philoponus, on his position on the eternity of the world, drawing on his *Commentary on the Timaeus*. L., as I say, has devoted a monograph to him already, and gives him a most thorough and judicious analysis here.

All in all, then, this is a mighty work, of which one can only touch on the highlights in such a context as this. It should stand for generations as the definitive collection of the Platonist philosophers of this period. The volume, beautifully produced by Brill, is completed by indices fontium and nominum.

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