

Book notes

EDITED BY MARTIN STONE

Dominic O'Meara *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good: Essays on Ancient and Medieval Platonism*. (Aldershot: Ashgate, Variorum, 1998). £55.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 86078 765 6.

O'Meara's timely book of essays is in the Variorum series published by Ashgate. The aim of the series is to bring together important and influential papers by scholars of genuine repute. For many years, the work of Dominic O'Meara has been known to students of ancient philosophy in Europe and North America. Writing in English and French, O'Meara has been fortunate to capture for himself a respectful readership by virtue of his probing and exacting analysis of a wide variety of Platonic and Neoplatonic texts and arguments. The above volume collects several of his influential essays over a period of twenty years. Among the topics discussed are: the chain of being; man as a political animal; Aristotle's account of the soul; and being in Numenius and Plotinus. No less than eight essays consider the work of Plotinus. In these works many of O'Meara's talents as a scholar are on display. His reads the texts of Plotinus with sympathy and tact; he presents difficult ideas in such a way as to make them tractable; he combines philological rigour with philosophical sagacity; and he is minded to avoid anachronism. O'Meara is a distinctive and articulate voice in contemporary ancient philosophy. *The Structure of Being and the Search for the Good* does him justice, and helps to promote the field of Neoplatonist philosophy in interesting and imaginative ways.

[M. W. F. S.]

Johannes M. Van Ophuijsen *Plato and Platonism* (Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy, 33). (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1999). PP. vii + 365. £59.95 (Hbk). ISBN 0 8132 0910 2.

In this volume a distinguished group of philosophers offer many new insights into Plato and Platonism. Combining novel scholarship and innovative philosophical insights, the authors present fourteen essays on various dimensions of Plato's thought. Most of Plato's dialogues are examined from the early Socratic writings to late works like the *Sophist*, *Statesman* and *Laws*. Several essays explore specific philosophical problems in the texts, while others concern themselves with more general themes. The studies themselves reflect the varied backgrounds and allegiances of the authors. Both English-speaking and European traditions of Platonic scholarship are in evidence. Of particular interest to readers of this journal will be the essays by Thérèse-Anne Druart, Fred Miller and John Rist. The volume is well produced by Catholic University of America Press. It will no doubt make a solid contribution to Platonic scholarship.

[M. W. F. S.]

Sara Rappe *Reading Neoplatonism: Non-Discursive Thinking in the Texts of Plotinus, Proclus and Damascius*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Pp. xxi + 266. £35.00 (Hbk). ISBN 0 521 65158 1.

For most historians of philosophy 'Neoplatonism' is the term that designates the form of Platonic philosophy that developed in the Roman Empire from the third to the sixth century AD. Sara Rappe's study is among the first to analyse Neoplatonic texts by bring to bear contemporary philosophy of language. This controversial approach is brought to bear on the whole tradition of Neoplatonic writing, from Plotinus through to Proclus and Damascius. Addressing the strain of mysticism in these of many works, Rappe argues that Neoplatonic texts reflect actual meditational practices, practices that had as their aim the concentration of the mind, and the cultivation of a cognitive discipline. Unlike many English-speaking commentators, Rappe is very sensitive to the theological dimension of Neoplatonic philosophy. She is alive to its nuances and is able to set it in a broad intellectual context. Rappe's book is a welcome addition to the existing literature. Its controversial conclusions will no doubt help to provoke much discussion.

[M. W. F. S.]