

reference to the detailed refutation in Chapter X. Of points of detail, scholars will want to note the following: p. 68, supporting the view of Fränkel that 4.49.2–5 are a quotation from Epictetus; p. 111, criticizing the interpretation of Epict. *Ench.* 1.5 by Goldschmidt; p. 137, criticism of an influential section in Dodds's *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety* (Cambridge, 1965); p. 337 n. 90, deleting 'of Phaleron' in 9.29, after Schenkl.

The translation, by Michael Chase, has been very well done: only occasionally is one aware of awkwardness (but on p. 58, 'anthropomorphic' should be 'anthropocentric'; p. 132, 6 up for 'present' read 'future'; 'disaccord', p. 234, is infelicitous; 'complacently' seems wrong on p. 159.1 ['compliantly?']; and on p. 280 'like wild, androgynous beasts' misrepresents the Greek of 3.16).

The power and vigour of H.'s interpretation derive partly from his belief in the importance and continuing value of Stoic philosophy, at least broadly interpreted in terms of a Stoic outlook on life (see esp. pp. 307–12). His assertion of this value rests not on facile acceptance of an etiolated doctrine, but on a lifetime's labour to understand ancient philosophy historically and sympathetically. In this book, as in his work as a whole, he sets a demanding standard, and an example which we can all applaud.

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## GENESIS ELUCIDATED

L. FLADERER: *Johannes Philoponos. De opificio mundi. Spätantikes Sprachdenken und christliche Exegese*. Pp. 419. Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1999. Cased, DM 158. ISBN: 3-519-07684-5.

Late in his career John Philoponus (490–570 A.D.) wrote an intriguing commentary on the first book of Genesis, *De opificio mundi* (*Opif.*). By content the work belongs to the hexaemeron commentary tradition on which he freely draws, esp. Gregory of Nyssa and Basil. However, the format and argument of the work are unusual because they owe much to philosophy and the genre of the philosophical commentary. Given the fact that Philoponus wrote important and innovative commentaries on a number of Aristotle's works, this need not be surprising. Ludwig Fladerer has now produced a learned study of the 'literary universe' (p. 17) of *Opif.* A prominent position is given to sixth-century Alexandrian philosophy of language as providing the hermeneutical type on which Philoponus modelled his commentary on Genesis. F. is much indebted to the work of Clemens Scholten (*Antike Naturphilosophie und christliche Kosmologie in der Schrift De Opificio Mundi des Johannes Philoponos* [Berlin and New York, 1996]), from whom he has also adopted a very idiosyncratic set of abbreviations of ancient works. The book has a rich bibliography on the intersection of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy of language in antiquity, and closes with brief indices of names and topics. In a work that brings together such a remarkable variety of theological, philosophical, and literary sources, the lack of an index of passages is to be deplored—together with the low quality of the printing.

In the third part of the book, which contains systematic and detailed interpretations of selected passages of *Opif.*, F. is at his best. He analyses how Philoponus employs exegetical, grammatical-rhetorical, and philosophical strategies in order to present the text of Genesis as a meaningful whole, and to attack the positions of Theodore of

Mopsuestia and Cosmas Indicopleustes, who are his main opponents (cf. pp. 283–5). F. discusses interesting passages on, for example, the nature of light (pp. 342–8 on *Opif.* 4.13) and the Greek translation of Hebrew terms (*passim*).

In the second part of the book the reader will find a careful and detailed analysis of the prooemium of *Opif.*, which contains a number of topics familiar from philosophical prolegomena, and invites a comparison between Philoponus and Gregory of Nyssa. Most illuminating are the rhetorical and philosophical implications that F. draws from Philoponus' qualification of Moses' style as 'more sublime than Plato' (*Opif.* 5.20).

In the first part of the book (pp. 19–164) F. provides useful critical surveys of recent scholarship on issues in the interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories* and *De interpretatione*, and in the Neoplatonic philosophy of language. Although these surveys discuss important issues with which Ammonius and Philoponus were no doubt familiar, one wonders whether we really need all of it to understand *Opif.* Surely, it is most interesting to see how Philoponus employs the notions of homonymy and analogy to turn the reader from too literal an interpretation of the text to proper insight into God and His attributes which transcend the boundaries of ordinary human discourse. Surely, similar attempts to bridge the gap between the sensible and intelligible realms in Neoplatonism readily come to mind. But did Philoponus really put this extensive philosophical apparatus to work anywhere in his hexaameron commentary? Of course, F.'s answer is affirmative, but I suspect that the passages he discusses may well boil down to straightforward cases of homonymy (e.g. *Opif.* 20,11–14; 42,2–22; 110,24–5 'as many have already shown' (!); pp. 149,22–153,23) and literary analogy (e.g. *Opif.* 47,1–48,10; 154,15), or mathematical proportion (e.g. *Opif.* 146,27; 147,28; 191,7; 285,22). Even a full check of all uses of (cognates of) 'analogy' and 'homonymy' in *Opif.* shows little that goes beyond the competence of a pious grammarian who has grasped the extent of the gulf that separates the Creator from His Creation. Even F. seems unable to cite a text in which Philoponus explicitly relates his method of interpretation to the philosophical issues F. sets out in so much detail. When F. admits that Gregory of Nyssa had a similar interest in philosophy of language (p. 285), we know that perhaps we need look no further.

Moreover, F. claims that already *from the beginning of his career* Philoponus entertained the critical attitude towards pagan philosophy we know from his work from 529 A.D. onwards (pp. 64–5). On the basis of the prooemium, F. even argues that Philoponus consciously planned first to comment on Aristotle's logic and physics 'as a Christian Aristotle in order to create the scientific foundations which then enabled the understanding of Moses, the Christian Plato' in *Opif.* (p. 205, see pp. 175–87). A balanced judgement of F.'s striking argument would require more research into the much-debated issue of the chronology of Philoponus' works. However, the first part of F.'s argument seems to rest almost entirely on the polemical tone we find in Philoponus' account of his predecessors in his *Categories* commentary. But this need not be taken as a clear indication of an early devotion to Christianity (pp. 64–5, 67), since neither Porphyry, Iamblichus, or Philoponus' pagan successors in Alexandria left any doubt that they believed previous interpretations of the *Categories* to be wrong. Rather, the total harmony of the history of philosophy we find in Simplicius, and to which F. refers us more than once, is unique to Simplicius, and not necessarily the model for all Neoplatonists alike. Moreover, in this context F. does not take account of the fact that the commentaries on the *Categories* handed down under the names of Ammonius and Philoponus are both reports of the same lectures by Ammonius. So, if the first does not clearly oppose different views on the *Categories* (cf. p. 57), this may well be due to its

brevity, not to Philoponus' attitude to the tradition. A minor point: the crucial link between Iamblichus and Simplicius is missing from the diagram on p. 59; in p. 57 n. 72 read 'Luna S. 127–146'.

By way of conclusion, I should note that this book displays impressive scholarship in the disciplines of the history of literary and biblical exegesis, as well as the history of philosophy. Even if the connection between 'spätantikes Sprachdenken' and 'christliche Exegese' may be more tenuous than F. believes, he has certainly shown himself to be as competent an exegete as Philoponus could have wished for.

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## SIGNS & PORTENTS

M. FRANZ: *Von Gorgias bis Lukrez. Antike Ästhetik und Poetik als vergleichende Zeichentheorie* (LiteraturForschung). Pp. xvi + 680, ills. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999. Cased. ISBN: 3-05-00327-8.

Michael Franz's book is the first in a trilogy on comparative semiotics. The other two are concerned with the eighteenth and twentieth centuries.

Giving the first general account of ancient approaches to comparative semiotics and aesthetics, F. deals with all the arts relevant to forming Greek aesthetics, in both literature and art history, from the Presocratics to the Stoa, namely poetry, sculpture, painting, and music. F.'s intended audiences of classicists and semioticians will both encounter difficulties. For non-classicists he presupposes too much knowledge of his discussed authors. Classicists curious about ancient approaches to semiotics will find the book difficult, because the lack of an *index rerum*, of definitions of technical terms, of cross-references between chapters, and of a summarizing conclusion presupposes linear reading of the 680 pages.

F. rightly stresses the necessity for cultural semiotics, which combines semantics of aestheticism, and literary and art theory in an interdisciplinary approach. Accordingly, he provides exemplary analyses of a few works of art with respect to their semiotic value (e.g. the Terme Boxer, pp. 545–79), but mainly concentrates on philosophers' approaches to poetics. In Chapter I, F. introduces his topic by showing the uses of different signs in the disciplines he is dealing with. The Presocratics introduced the *tekmeria*-method, using the visible (evident) as a sign to indicate the invisible (non-evident). Then F. links this philosophy with the political, judicial, and economic systems of Anaximander's times, and finds functional analogues in similar thought-patterns. Anaximander, F. argues, transfers his observations of the contemporary judiciary system into his philosophy, which employs exactly this ability to abstract from empirical observation and construct paradigms.

F. continues to find similar procedures in contemporary arts, e.g. in medicine (diagnosis from the observation of the body's ingestion and excretions), historiography (Thucydides uses medical terms and methods to describe the pathology of war), and legal and rhetorical distinctions between *semeia* and *tekmeria*. These textual analyses are long and unwieldy; much space is used to summarize the texts F. is dealing with or to discuss topics irrelevant to their use of semiotics.

An interesting approach is the comparison between two disparate systems of art or culture and the finding of structural similarities between them, e.g. between sculptures and the political system, with the sculptures actually working as signs for the latter (e.g.