

RESEÑAS DE LIBROS/*BOOK REVIEWS*

Alexandre d'Aphrodise, *Les principes du tout selon la doctrine d'Aristote, Introduction, texte arabe, traduction et commentaire par Charles Genequand*, Paris, Vrin, 2017, 160 pp. ISBN: 9782711627356. Cloth €21

Reseñado por GRÉGORI CLESSE
UCLouvain – INCAL, BE
gregory.clesse@uclouvain.be

This volume provides a French translation, accompanied by an introduction and an annotated commentary, of the *Treatise on the Principles of the Universe* attributed to Alexander of Aphrodisias, under the French title *Les principes du tout*. This opuscle is a rare case of an Arabic translation made from a Greek text of which no trace has been preserved in its original language or in the later Greek philosophical tradition. Based on Aristotle's *Physics* and on other texts of the Aristotelian corpus, this treatise is of particular interest in proposing a synthesis of Aristotelian cosmology which tries to solve the divergences and to find harmony among the different parts of the corpus.

In his introduction to the translation, Charles Genequand examines the manuscript tradition of the treatise. Chronologically, the first known witness is a Syriac adaptation by Sergius of Rešaynā, which introduces substantial modifications in order to correspond with the philosophical and Christian environment of his time. In Arabic, both a long and a short version are preserved. The unfinished short version, attributed to the translator Abū 'Uṭmān, seems to be earlier and covers only one-third of the long version. After these chronological considerations, Genequand investigates the status of the text. In this section, he deals with issues related to the manuscript tradition, drawing on his long experience with the treatise. It is patent that this synthesis is the culmination of long-term work devoted to this text.

After shedding light on these philological matters, Genequand highlights several philosophical questions. The analysis of the philosophical content is discussed around three themes: movement, intellect and divine power. In particular, Genequand analyses the solutions by Alexander of Aphrodisias to the question of the plurality of celestial motors. Based on specific cases, Genequand shows how Alexander tries to solve obscure passages in Aristotle's texts. However, this approach sometimes leads to the introduction of further difficulties of interpretation. Genequand gives a clear example by exploring the issue of the intellect of the first mover-intellect. In relation to the issue of Providence, which is attributed to the soul of the spheres, Alexander's position leads to serious philosophical problems, which he tries to solve in a manner which Genequand shows is unsatisfactory.

Genequand concludes the introduction with a few pages devoted to the posterity and influence of the treatise in Arabic philosophy, particularly on Avicenna and Averroes. On

this point, one may expect a more developed and detailed survey, based on a straight comparison with later passages in the tradition in order to measure more precisely the contribution of this opusculum on further philosophical developments. As the ambition of the volume consists in providing a synthetic view on the treatise, one can understand that choices had to be made, but the whole is very condensed. Nevertheless, such a synthesis offers the advantage of gathering in one volume the main points of discussion and answers suggested by recent investigations, leading to a better understanding of the treatise. Within this perspective, Genequand shares his long experience of Alexander's texts and philosophical conceptions. For further details on Alexander's work and thought, readers are invited to consult other studies by Genequand, whose references can be found in the footnotes.

After this substantial introduction, Genequand provides a French translation of the text, with the Arabic text presented in parallel and with a philosophical commentary at the end of the book. One main purpose of the volume is to give easy access to the text for non-Arabists. The French translation faithfully respects the meaning of the text and the lexicon employed by Alexander, while remaining elegant and fluid. It would have been helpful if the methodological choices supporting this translation had been explained more explicitly in the introduction of the volume, but this absence does not detract from the quality of the translation as such. Furthermore, the commentary enables the reader to enter deeper into the analysis of the philosophical issues by situating Alexander's text in relation with Aristotle's thought and by providing references to the philosophical tradition. These notes will be precious to guide any reader who is less familiar with the topic.

Genequand offers a fine synthesis based on previous deep investigation and research on the *Treatise on the Principles of the Universe*. The result is very successful. The volume will benefit both informed readers, who will find in it new interpretations of the text and good insight into the main philosophical issues of the text, and readers less familiar with this philosophical tradition, who will profit from this effort of synthesis and from this annotated French translation of the treatise.