

The final contribution, Gellar-Goad's 'Lucretius on the Size of the Sun', deals with the Epicurean theory of the dimensions of the sun. If from a thematic point of view it seems to deviate from the other contributions, the way in which the topic is treated makes it consistent with the rest of the volume. Gellar-Goad does not merely analyse the theory, but also examines the way in which this theory is expounded and understood by non-Epicureans. His thesis is that this theory (more than the others? this aspect is less clear) represents Epicurean doctrine as a kind of badge and that its understanding functions as a discriminator between Epicureans and non-Epicureans.

This volume is part of a rich tradition of debates on the presence and essence of Greek philosophy in Rome and in particular on the relationship between Epicureanism and *Romanitas*. It does so in an original and interesting way, and where it does not provide certain answers, it suggests new questions or questions to be discovered anew.

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## CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION

BROUWER (R.), VIMERCATI (E.) (edd.) *Fate, Providence and Free Will: Philosophy and Religion in Dialogue in the Early Imperial Age*. (Ancient Philosophy & Religion 4.) Pp. viii + 335. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2020. Cased, €134, US\$161. ISBN: 978-90-04-43566-7.

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The sixteen essays collected in this volume derive from two conferences, organised by Vimercati and M.L. Gatti, which took place in 2017 at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome and at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. The book contributes to the scholarly debate on topics that have been the subject of a good number of studies and miscellanies in recent years, which the editors mention in the introduction.

The specific point of view and the original contribution this volume intends to offer to scholars are indicated in its subtitle: it aims to show how – between the end of the first century BCE and the third century CE – the philosophical debate on the themes of divine providence, fate and human freedom intertwined with the reflection produced in the religious sphere, creating the conceptual premises and language that in the following centuries determined the discussion on these topics.

Although it was not conceived as a textbook, one can see in the roughly chronological arrangement of the chapters and in the choice of topics of the contributions an effort to offer a sufficiently complete and orderly overview of the problems addressed and the positions taken by the main authors and movements of thought (although an explicit treatment of Epicurean theses is lacking).

The contributions each have their own autonomy, but a continuous reading of the volume is not only possible, but opportune. It is facilitated by the fact that in the introduction the editors draw a historical summary of the development of reflection on providence, fate and human freedom, which offers a unified perspective, while in the

first chapter, 'Fate, Providence, and Free Will: Why Bother?', J. Rist raises the question of the philosophical sense and interest that the theories developed in antiquity and examined in the volume may possibly have for people today.

About half of the contributions are devoted to the great schools and the main protagonists of the philosophical debate: Stoicism (Brouwer: 'Divine and Human Will in Imperial Stoicism'; R. Salles: 'Epictetus on What Is in Our Power: Modal versus Epistemic Conceptions'), Platonism (Vimercati: 'Middle Platonists on Fate and Providence. God, Creation, and the Governance of the World'; E. Peroli: 'Divine Causality. Demiurge and Providence in Plotinus'; Gatti: '*Lithoi Pheromenoi*. Fate, Soul and Self-Determination in *Enneads* 3.1'; P. De Simone: "'Both Sun and Night Are Servants for Mortals'": Providence in Celsus' *True Account*') and Alexander of Aphrodisias for the Peripatetic Tradition (C. Natali: 'Determinism and Deliberation in Alexander of Aphrodisias'; P. Lautner: 'Alexander of Aphrodisias on Fate as a Problem in Epistemology and Moral Psychology').

The other contributions highlight how philosophical theories were received and rethought in the Hellenised Judaism of Philo of Alexandria (L. De Luca: 'Providence and Cosmology in Philo of Alexandria'; R. Radice: 'Providence and Responsibility in Philo of Alexandria. An Analysis of Genesis 2.9'), in the Christian tradition (T. Engberg-Pedersen: 'Stoic Freedom in Paul's Letter to the Romans 6.1–8.30 and Epictetus, *Dissertation* 4.1: from Being under an Obligation to Wanting'; G. Karamanolis: 'Early Christian Philosophers on Free Will'; M. Edwards: 'Providence, Free Will and Predestination in Origen'), in Gnosticism (A. Magris: 'Free Will According to the Gnostics') and in Hermeticism (C. Moreschini: 'Providence, Fate and Freedom of the Hermetic Sage').

From all the contributions collected in the volume emerge – along with a wealth of historical information, analyses of texts, theoretical insights and bibliographical indications – two observations that are rather simple, but to which we do not always pay the necessary attention; both have to do with the distance that separates us from the way of living and thinking of ancient people. The first observation is that the discourse about the divine governance of the world and the space given in it to human freedom/responsibility is present in religious discourse before it is in philosophical discourse, but with different concerns and modalities that do not immediately overlap with those found in philosophers.

The religious communities and traditions considered in the book all refer to a revelation delivered in written texts, in which it is not perceived as incoherent or in need of explanation to affirm that divine reality orders cosmic reality and determines its unfolding, and, at the same time, that human beings – albeit subject to numerous and fatal constraints – are capable of a choice fraught with consequences for their salvation or perdition.

The authors who recognised themselves in these traditions and had a good philosophical culture (e.g. Philo, Valentinus and his school, Origen, the authors of part of the *corpus Hermeticum*) felt the need to bring them into dialogue with philosophical reflection on these themes, devising interpretative strategies of the texts that would give them (or make manifest their) doctrinal coherence, but also seeking answers to questions that the philosophers had not been asked and that arose from a conception of God/divine that was profoundly different from the theology of the philosophers (e.g. an omnipotent, omniscient God who reveals, elects, bestows his grace etc.). Therefore, when one approaches writings produced to meet these kinds of religious needs from a philosophical perspective, particular methodological caution is required (explained well in the essays by Engberg-Pedersen and Magris).

The other observation is that not only has the way in which the vast majority of people today are prepared to think about the action of a providence or divine order in the cosmos profoundly changed; even the current way of conceiving freedom – as the ability of the

subject to initiate something from itself, in an absolute and unconditional way – would have seemed rather strange and unhelpful to ancient philosophers and wise men.

As Rist writes: ‘For most ancients (and medievals) to be free is to be able to pursue only the right course, by the right means, for a good end; “to be freed” (*liberatus*) from unruly desires which get in the way of doing the right thing in pursuit of that good end’ (p. 16). This different way of conceiving freedom explains why the Stoic tradition was able to affirm that a whole series of actions are ‘up to us’ (*epi’ hēmin*) in a world where everything is causally determined by fate, or why the Platonists of the imperial age were able to hold that the rational soul is all the more free and autonomous in its actions, the more it removes itself from the conditioning of the sensible world and turns to the intelligible realities, to which it belongs.

Together with the notion of freedom, the vocabulary concerning will, desire, choice and the relationship that these dimensions of human action have with knowledge also underwent a great wealth of analysis in the debate of the imperial age as well as important transformations, to which the studies collected in this book pay attention, showing in how many different ways ancient thinkers defined what is ‘up to us’, what is properly an act of will, what a choice consists of and what it is exercised over.

One of the interesting and useful aspects of the book consists precisely in the careful analysis that the authors of the contributions offer of the lexicon and notions at play in the authors they deal with and in the numerous quotations of sources that are presented to readers. The result is a book that not only offers a solid introduction to ancient thinking on the subject of the relationship between providence, fate and human freedom, but also provides the stimulus to think about these issues today with open-mindedness, rigour and creativity.

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## EMOTIONS, PHILOSOPHY AND MEDICINE

KAZANTZIDIS (G.), SPATHARAS (D.) (edd.) *Medical Understandings of Emotions in Antiquity. Theory, Practice, Suffering. Ancient Emotions III. (Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 131.)* Pp. x + 298. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2022. Cased, £112.50, €123.95, US\$142.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-077189-3.

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The study of emotions involves not only medical statements, but also philosophical issues, denoting an interaction between body and soul and, consequently, between medicine and philosophy. The relationship of these two disciplines was the topic of the conference ‘Medical Understanding of Emotions’, held at the University of Patras in 2017, whose result is the volume under review. The papers intend to show the perception of feelings in ancient cultures, considering even their predominance in modern medical practice and their medical conceptualisation in order to shed fresh light on this area of research. As the editors note in the introduction, the contributions were conceived before the COVID-19 pandemic; and their authors may now have different conclusions based on