

This is a self-archived – parallel-published version of an original article. This version may differ from the original in pagination and typographic details. When using please cite the original.

AUTHOR	Visa Helenius
TITLE	Review: Riccardo Chiaradonna: Ontology in Early Neoplatonism: Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina 9. De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2023
YEAR	2025
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.162395">https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.162395</a>
VERSION	Publisher's PDF
CITATION	Helenius Visa. Review: Riccardo Chiaradonna: Ontology in Early Neoplatonism: Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina 9. De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2023. Arctos, Vol. 58 (2024), p. 351-354. <a href="https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.162395">https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.162395</a>
LICENSE	CC-BY-NC

of catharsis of intense and mutually conflicting emotions between the litigants and their judge'. In the final essay of the volume, David Frankfurter discusses magical spells and ritual figurines as manifestations of women's feelings, e.g. anxiety, frustration and desperation. His analysis shows that the conventions of ritual serve to construct emotions, and that rituals offer safe circumstances for expressing them. Ritual also provides those in distress with both catharsis and a sense of control. By articulating their feelings and imagining a resolution people may gain a sense of agency. The expected or assumed outcome of the ritual thus aids in processing emotions, and the situation the person is in.

This diverse compilation of essays offers new and intriguing perspectives on emotions in Antiquity. There is some inconsistency in the transliteration of Greek names: while some writers use standardised English forms, others do not (e.g., Xanthou: Isocrates, but Giannopoulou: Polybios; Peebles: Dioskoros; Potter: Philostratos). As often in collective volumes, there is also a slight imbalance in the length and depth between the contributions, but they all provide insightful viewpoints. Together, the essays successfully examine and demonstrate how and why emotions were aroused, expressed, perceived, interpreted and manipulated in various social interaction contexts. The volume is a truly valuable contribution to the study of its subject.

Saara Kauppinen

<http://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.162395>

RICCARDO CHIARADONNA: *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism: Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus*. Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina 9. De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2023. ISBN 978-3-11-099751-4; ISBN (e-book/pdf) 978-3-11-098636-5; ISBN (e-book/epub) 978-3-11-098636-5. VII, 237 pp. EUR 144.95.

The situation in philosophy in the beginning of late antiquity was special: philosophers could draw their inspiration from the rich philosophical tradition of classical and Hellenistic antiquity including Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, and Stoicism. These are also central branches of early Western philosophy. However, as many philosophers of late antiquity were not content with the earlier philosophies, especially regarding Platonism and Aristotelianism, they consistently aimed at combining their main tenets, which resulted in interesting combinations and applications. Riccardo Chiaradonna's *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* is about the early evolution of Neoplatonic philosophy and is especially concerned with ontology and philosophical logic. It is a collection of revisited or expanded published essays by Chiaradonna, with some new parts. The book is also the ninth volume in De Gruyter's *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca et Byzantina* series.

*Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* includes the following parts: (i) Plotinus' ontology, (ii) an interpretation of Aristotle's categories – the categories that concern inter alia substance (e.g. Aristotle), continuous (e.g. time and place) and discrete (e.g. number) quantities, relatives (how things are in relation to something) and quality (e.g. disposition and form) are introduced in Aristotle's work *Categories* – and (iii) knowledge and ethics in Neoplatonism. Although Chiaradonna focuses on Plotinus' (204–270) readings of Aristotle, and Porphyry's (ca. 234–305), and Iamblichus' (ca. 242–325) in the third and fourth centuries, the book covers many other philosophers, such as Plato (ca. 429–347 BCE), Aristotle (384–322 BCE), Alexander of Aphrodisias (at the turn of the second and the third century), Boethus of Sidon (first century BCE), and Simplicius (ca. 480–560). The book also has an introduction, a note on the text and indexes of names and passages.

*Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* deals with primarily philosophical topics, such as Neoplatonic ontologies and ethics and Aristotelian logic. Its central philosophical themes concern substance, hylomorphism, causation, existence, essence and predication. In addition to this, Chiaradonna offers some contextual remarks. It is to be noted that due to the wide-ranging and complex subject area and Chiaradonna's broad commentaries, explanations and argumentation, *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* is a challenging book that includes many tricky and nuanced passages. For this reason, in what follows I am only able to describe its contents at a general level.

Concerning the title of the book and Chiaradonna's research frame, he explains in the introduction that despite the fact that 'ontology' is a modern term and 'Neoplatonism' a modern historical category, he uses the first "to designate the investigation of beings and their basic and fundamental structure" and the term 'early Neoplatonism' to refer to Platonic philosophies from Plotinus to Iamblichus (p. 1 and 2). Thus, he applies these two modern terms in the Neoplatonic context. To me, his approach is fully reasonable.

In the first part, Chiaradonna deals with Plotinus' and others' views about intelligible qualities (an attribute or a property), demiurgic causation (i.e. divine causation), Plato's *Timaeus* and its reading, and the ideas of motion and activity and their connections. Chiaradonna begins by discussing the nature of 'qualities' and their ontological statuses and connections with other things, such as οὐσία ('substance'), the nature of the Demiurge, gradualist or emanative causation, readings of the demiurgic causation in the second century and its background, and Plotinus' view of gradualism – a view that is an intermediate form of Platonic and Aristotelian views of causation. After that, Chiaradonna clarifies Plato's *Timaeus* and Plotinus' reading of it, which is original. Lastly, Chiaradonna concludes by examining Plotinus' account of motion and its tricky relations to mind, body, action, potentiality, incorporeal causes, stasis, activity and Aristotle's philosophy. This subject area is highly complex, as well as Plotinus' own compound account, which, however, is partly insufficient (see *passim*).

The second theme of Chiaradonna's book concerns Aristotle's *Categories* and its interpretations; this classical work is a cornerstone of Western philosophy and is about the highest kinds of things, i.e. categories of being. Chiaradonna begins by describing in detail Boethius of Sidon's reading of *Categories*. He focuses here especially on the connections between form and substance and matter and subject (a thing which underlies an existing thing) and Porphyry's views on substance and differentia. The latter term is a characteristic trait, which distinguishes a species (a concept, e.g. the human being, *Homo sapiens*) from other species (a concept, e.g. the horse, *Equus ferus caballus*) of the same genus (a broader concept, e.g. animals, *Animalia*). Chiaradonna also offers a broad scholarly discussion. Next, he proceeds to the subject of universals (a property that particular things have in common, such as redness) and secondary substances. Chiaradonna discusses Boethius of Sidon's view of particularism, according to which "primary substances are best understood as countable objects" (p. 110) and Alexander of Aphrodisias' views of physical essentialism, according to which "species and genera [are] definable items that exist in particulars without merging with them" (p. 115), and the nature of god. After this, Chiaradonna clarifies Plotinus' distinction between primary (e.g. a whole of something) and secondary substances (e.g. the parts of a whole), his similarities and differences with Aristotle's views, and his view of a genuine hierarchy of incorporeal principles and their subprinciples. In the appendix, Chiaradonna clarifies Clement of Alexandria's (ca. 150–215) views of genera (broader categories which define concepts) and definitions. Chapter seven is about Plotinus', Porphyry's, and Iamblichus' views of genera, predication, and the (philosophical) hierarchy of being. Chiaradonna also clarifies Porphyry's *Isagoge* – Porphyry discusses here "genus [γένος]; 'differentia [διαφορά]; species [εἶδος]; 'property [ἴδιον]; and 'accident [συμβεβηκός]" (p. 138) – and Iamblichus' *Reply to Porphyry* i.e. *De mysteriis*. Chiaradonna argues against the view according to which Greek Neoplatonist philosophers developed a metaphysical distinction between essence and existence, the distinction that has commonly been considered a medieval invention but that some scholars have claimed can already be found in Neoplatonist philosophers. He explains the origin of the distinction, namely that Plotinus' view that the One, which is the origin of everything and above essence and thought, is pure existence, an anonymous commentary on Plato's *Parmenides*, which is related to the same theme, and the nature of the concept of ὄνταξις ('existence', 'reality'; 'substance') in late Neoplatonism. His conclusion is that the distinction present in these works is closer to "what is real" (rather than existence), and determinate being or essence, rather than existence and essence.

In the last part of *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism*, which concerns knowledge and ethics, Chiaradonna discusses Plotinus' and Porphyry's philosophical methods and the relation between philosophy and "a kind of pre-philosophical awareness" (p. 187) of reality, which is based on common notions or conceptions. He starts with Plotinus' views of eternity and time, Galen's (129– c. 200) theory of knowledge and the possibility that he was Plotinus' source, Porphyry's view of knowledge,

the connection between common conceptions and philosophy, as well as the limits of human knowledge and information processing in the Neoplatonic context. In the last chapter of the book, Chiaradonna examines the ethical views of Plotinus, Porphyry, and Iamblichus and their connections. In general, these views are heavily metaphysical. Chiaradonna focuses on Plotinus' theory of virtue, the connection between the world soul and human souls, Porphyry's view of paradigmatic virtues, and Iamblichus' view of analogical hierarchy. These are the basis of Neoplatonic ethical theories.

Chiaradonna's *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* is a wide-ranging and compact study of the complex subject area in question. Chiaradonna, who obviously is an expert in this area, considers many aspects of ancient philosophy and Neoplatonism, especially regarding metaphysics, ancient logic, epistemology and ethics, and he thus elucidates the background and evolution of early Neoplatonism in various ways. Since the book covers many challenging and tricky subjects, I recommend it to advanced-level learners and scholars. As a non-expert in this area, I will confine my negative remarks to the following: the book does not have running footnotes or subchapters; some original passages (classical Greek) do not have translations (e.g. in p. 124 and 142) and transliterations; there are a few unclear or unnecessarily difficult sentences (e.g. at the end of p. 95); the book lacks a separate terminological part and a uniting summary; and some chapters do not have a concluding part. Overall, *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* has many positive features: it covers many interesting subjects and philosophers about the theme, including some less familiar philosophers, like Boethus of Sidon; it includes an extensive scholarly discussion, which is useful for both students and scholars; and it has a reflective attitude towards the most difficult subjects. Chiaradonna's *Ontology in Early Neoplatonism* shows an exemplary use of (philosophical) explication, problematisation and argumentation concerning the challenging subject of background and evolution of the early Neoplatonism.

*Visa Helenius*  
*University of Turku*

<https://doi.org/10.71390/arctos.161409>

*Corpus inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*. Vol. V: *Galilaea and Northern Regions*. Part 2: 6925–7818. Ediderunt WALTER AMELING – HANNAH M. COTTON – WERNER ECK – AVNER ECKER – JOHANNES HEINRICH – BENJAMIN ISAAC – ALLA KUSHNIR-STEIN (†) – JONATHAN PRICE – PETER WEISS – OHAD ABUDRAHAM – ADA YARDENI (†). De Gruyter, Berlin – Boston 2023. ISBN 978-3-11-071358-9; ISBN (e-book) 978-3-11-071574-3. X, 1056 pp. EUR 174.95.

The fifth volume of the ancient inscriptions found within the international borders of the present-day state of Israel and of the Palestinian Authority covers the regions north of Scythopolis and Legio,