PHILOSOPHIA TOGATA

M. MORFORD: *The Roman Philosophers from the Time of Cato the Censor to the Death of Marcus Aurelius*. Pp. xii + 292. London and New York: Routledge, 2002. Paper, £12.99. ISBN: 0-415-18852-0.

This book is not easy to assess. Its two distinctive features are that it intends to be a general introduction to Roman philosophy for a wider audience, and that it combines the historical with the philosophical perspective, with emphasis on the former, as the author himself stipulates (p. ix). It is lucidly written, and is a good read in general. The reader is offered many crucial passages in the author's own translation.

The book as a whole has a chronological sequence, starting with a general chapter on the Roman encounters with Greek philosophy and the development of Roman philosophy. The narrative picks up its thread in the second chapter with the embassy of the three Greek philosophers Carneades, Diogenes of Babylon, and Critolaus to Rome in 155 B.C., and ends with Marcus Aurelius. The longest chapter is devoted to Cicero and his contemporaries. Morford here does not limit his analysis to the strictly philosophical works of Cicero, and that is a plus. The next chapter is dedicated to Lucretius and the Epicureans. Then follows a chapter that focuses mostly on Virgil and Horace, with shorter treatments of Ovid and Manilius. What is missing in this chapter and subsequent ones is a good justification for including poets such as Horace, Virgil, and Ovid among 'Roman philosophers'. The mere fact that they betray an influence of contemporary philosophical thought and debates (which is in itself a controversial issue) does not put them automatically on the same level as the poet-philosopher Lucretius. In Chapter 6 Seneca is the main topic. In the seventh chapter the poets are once again prominent, with Persius and Lucan occupying centerstage. As a result M. leaves his treatment of Musonius Rufus dangling, almost as an afterthought, at the end of this chapter. The final chapter is framed by Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, with brief treatments of Plutarch and Apuleius in between, and some very brief remarks on a number of thinkers that give the book a rather rushed ending.

The range of this book is quite impressive; however, it is marred by unsettling mistakes. For instance, the revised formula for the purpose, *telos*, of the good life which M. attributes to Antipater of Tyre (pp. 48, 55) is usually attributed to an earlier Antipater, as in Long & Sedley, namely Antipater of Tarsus. The Antipater of Tyre who had an influence on Cato the Younger is hence in all likelihood not the author of this *telos* formula.

Something is also amiss with M.'s translation of a variation of the Stoic *telos* formula that is attributed to Posidonius, by Clement of Alexandria (p. 32):

> to love contemplating the truth and order of the whole [i.e. all things together], and *organizing it [namely, the truth] coherently* as far as possible . . . (emphasis mine)

In the Greek, the 'it' refers not merely to truth, but to order as entailing truth. The point of this version is not about a thinker organizing philosophical tenets 'into a coherent system'. It is rather about the good person contributing to the ordering of the universe, becoming a co-worker with the divine principle, in other words, and that is a much more profound and far-reaching claim, as recognized by Ian Kidd.

M. claims (p. 20) that Seneca was forbidden to teach Nero philosophy, and taught him rhetoric, but if one turns to the Suetonius passage in question (*Nero* 52), it says that Agrippina did not like having Nero study philosophy, and that Seneca himself did

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not want Nero to read earlier rhetoricians. Based on this bit of evidence, it would be a jump to conclude that Seneca 'was Nero's tutor in rhetoric and politics, but not in philosophy' (p. 162). This conclusion amounts to a paradoxical underestimation of the philosophers' rôle in Roman culture. After all, Seneca addressed and dedicated his *On Clemency* to the emperor, as M. acknowledges (p. 176).

A more general concern I have has to do with M.'s claims about Stoic influences in Roman authors such as Ovid, (pp. 153–7), Manilius (pp. 157–60) or Cornutus (pp. 193). It is not clear from the passages he cites what, if anything, is specifically Stoic in these accounts. To talk about the universe as a living being permeated by a rational soul, for instance, is a philosophical theme that is common to both Platonists and Stoics of the period, in the wake of Plato's *Timaeus*.

The most serious problem, however, occurs with the bibliography. The bibliography is where a book of this kind can point beyond itself, and direct the reader to further explorations. The Lapidge who has written on Stoicism is not Malcolm Lapidge (p. 193), but Michael. No seminal works, such as those of Bonhöffer and Pohlenz, are included. In general, M.'s bibliography relies too much on the entries in the volume of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* that is devoted to the imperial Stoa. Many works by prominent scholars in the field are missing. The absolutely indispensable work on the political aspects of Stoicism by Paul Vander Waerdt and Dirk Obbink is nowhere in sight. And the list could be extended.

For all its laudable intentions, and much of value, this book can provide a much needed general introduction in English only if it is combined with other accounts and used with caution.

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DEFINING DIDACTIC

K. VOLK: *The Poetics of Latin Didactic: Lucretius, Vergil, Ovid, Manilius*. Pp. xv + 288. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Cased, £45. ISBN: 0-19-924550-9.

This book offers a detailed and well-informed analysis of didactic poetry in four Latin authors: Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, and Manilius. Volk identifies the distinctiveness of the didactic form by applying four criteria (see her schematization at p. 40): '(1) explicit didactic intent; (2) teacher–student constellation; (3) poetic self-consciousness; (4) poetic simultaneity'. The four authors are counted as didactic poets on the basis of their meeting these four criteria (whereas Parmenides, for example, is excluded: pp. 49–51).

This choice of topic, quite understandably, gives the book a certain indeterminacy that could have actually been its strength. The definition of a 'didactic' poetic genre, in parallel with, for example, heroic epos or even bucolic poetry, was an extremely elusive issue for the ancients (as it still is for us today), as we can guess from of our scraps of ancient testimony (usefully discussed by V. herself). We can find a certain theoretical difficulty already in the fundamental passage of Aristotle, *Poet.* 1447b13–20 (aptly V. at p. 2; useful clarifications, p. 30). For example, an interesting point of departure could have been the Aristotelian exclusion of Empedocles from the category of the poets in the proper sense of the word (loc. cit.; but cf. fr. 70 Rose); Empedocles does, in fact, show up again in the definition given by Diomedes, *Ars gramm.* 3, *GL* 1.483.1–2 K. 'didascalice est qua conprehenditur philosophia Empedoclis et Lucreti, item

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