THEOPHRASTUS

R. W. SHARPLES: *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence. Commentary Volume 3.1. Sources on Physics (Texts 137–223)*. With contributions on the Arabic material by Dimitri Gutas. Pp. xvii + 302. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1998. Cased, $97. ISBN: 90-04-11130-1.

P. HUBY: *Theophrastus of Eresus. Sources for his Life, Writings, Thought and Influence. Commentary Volume 4. Psychology (Texts 265–327)*. With contributions on the Arabic material by Dimitri Gutas. Pp. xvii + 252. Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1999. Cased, $86. ISBN: 90-04-11317-7.

The dust jackets to the collection of sources for the life and philosophy of T[heophrastus], published in 1992 under the editorship of W. W. Fortenbaugh, H[uby], S[harples], G[utas] et al., announced a sequence of nine commentary volumes to follow. The first to arrive, however (S.'s 1994 volume on the sources for T.'s biology) was presumably the last to adhere to this scheme, which seems set for substantial expansion. S.'s latest contribution addresses T.'s physics—answering to Appendices 3 and 4 in the Sources volume as well as Texts 137–233, but leaving the fragments of physical doxography for another volume (3.2) and another commentator (Baltussen). H. meanwhile tackles T.'s psychology (texts 265–327, plus 342–4)—leaving his metaphysics, theology, and mathematics to an unspecified fate.

The texts addressed by S. cover an entertainingly disparate spread of topics, ranging from the principles of natural philosophy (including discussions of time, place, motion, and change), through increasingly specific discussions of the heavenly and sublunary regions, meteorology, earthquakes and volcanoes, to metals, stones, waters (the longest section, as it happens), and finally salt and soda: a range of material, he says, that 'might thus be loosely described as the Theophrastean counterpart to the Bekker pages of Aristotle 184–390' (p. vii). To describe this material in terms of Aristotle's work turns out to be particularly appropriate since, despite the literally universal scope of the topics covered, surprisingly little evidence for any philosophical originality on T.'s part emerges. Steering a measured and detailed, but clearly signposted discussion through the fragments and voluminous secondary literature, S. resists the temptation—which, in the context of this project must have been particularly strong—to force originality and influence on him; defending him, even, from that charge (as esp. p. 59 on place; and cf. the helpful and sobering afterword at pp. 227–30, which extends beyond the strict scope of the volume to salvage from more optimistic commentators a more or less Aristotelian notion of teleology for T.). S. concludes that T. probably dispensed with the services of Aristotle's unmoved mover, and possibly had no use for his quintessence (pp. 81–94); but only certainly differed in resisting Aristotle's tendency to economize on the number of explanatory causes adduced for the phenomena in the sublunary world. T. rejects, for example, the suggestion that the formation of stones and metals could be accounted for by 'exhalation-theory' (p. 169); suggests that condensation might be caused by compression as well as by cooling (pp. 194–5); and recognizes a multiplicity of causes for the movement of the winds (pp. 146, 150; this is the one topic for which S. considers T. 'greatly influential').

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The reorganization of the commentary schedule means that S. deals with just the spread of topics covered by T.'s systematic writings on physics, with the exception of *Physics* Books 4–5, which apparently dealt with the soul (cf. F307A). To this extent, then, S. is nicely complemented by H., who closes this gap. Like S., H. will not allow herself to be seduced into making rash claims for T.'s originality (cf. pp. 39–40 on his analysis of the sense of smell): once again, her discussion of T.'s psychology shows him engaging closely with Aristotle to relatively little effect, but worrying, none the less, at areas of Aristotelian interpretation which (significantly) remain of lively interest to modern commentators. Important examples include the mechanics of perception (how does a sense-organ 'become' its object?), and the origins and working of the intellect (how does the intellect 'receive' forms? What is the nature of the relationship between 'active' and 'passive' intellect?). Following the sub-headings in the Sources volume, H. includes a section on T.'s 'Epistemology' (pp. 93–113, answering to Texts 301–6) which involves a slight misnomer, describing more accurately a field in which later philosophers deployed material from T.'s psychological theory than a topic with which he was self-consciously engaging. (This, by the way, is the only sense I can see in which Sextus Empiricus is 'confused' in his reporting of T.: see p. 95 *ad* Text 301A.)

For all its similarities, H.'s commentary also differs in many ways from S.'s. For one thing, it deals with a narrower range of topics; but, perhaps more importantly, it relies on rather different source-material. For, whereas the 'physical' fragments mostly come from relatively familiar territory (primarily Simplicius), the 'psychological' fragments are more deeply embedded in a complex tradition of commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*. Priscian's *Paraphrase of Theophrastus' Discourse* On the Soul (as H. translates it) is the most reliable source of information, but it is not always as easy to distinguish Priscian from T. as the title might lead one to hope; and in any case the text breaks off a little way into the discussion of intellect. Further problems surrounding the use of the medieval material are thoroughly aired here: the value of evidence provided by the Latin 'schoolmen' is debated by H. and G. (see pp. xii–xvii); and, despite the painstaking erudition displayed here, no attempt is made to gloss over the fact that a final assessment of their value (and that of the Arabic tradition) awaits more work on the history of scholarship in this period. One slightly unnerving consequence of this attention to the texts as such is that, while the commentary lays significant groundwork for further study of T.'s reception as well as his own philosophy, his presence here is curiously diaphanous. Occasionally one is tempted into thinking one will catch a glimpse of him, but then the eyes refocus, and it is only the text there after all. (A striking example of this is the 'overview [of] doctrines' provided at the beginning of the long haul through the intellect at pp. 114–15.) T.'s spectral character here is not entirely the fault of the evidence, either: H. spots him in text 322A, whose seemingly eccentric claim that there is only agent intellect in the soul she asserts to be 'genuinely based on T.' (p. 196). But her sighting is not fleshed out by reference to text 314A (by the same author, Albert the Great), which explains what this claim actually means; nor by an account of how these texts, both of which she classifies as 'dubious reports', might cohere with our more reliable sources.

It is, however, inconceivable that anyone should try to make sense of the evidence for T.'s physics at large without consulting and relying heavily on these volumes, whose practical value goes beyond even the erudition of their authors. Both, for example, correct errors to be found in the original Sources volume (S. finds quite a few); both contain supplementary material and even, on occasion, newer and better texts (*passim* in H.). The 'Overviews' of sources and doctrines which head each section of

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discussion are particularly helpful in conception, as are the pointers to relevant secondary literature that go with them. The bibliographies themselves are good (though I am unconvinced of the need to make them selective, or of the elegance of citing secondary material in different ways according to whether they are selected or not); there are indexes for terms, persons, and places occurring in the fragments themselves, and further *indices locorum*, *nominum*, and *rerum* for the commentaries. These are extremely useful works of generous scholarship which, by not rising to the promise made in the introduction to the Sources volumes (at p. 14) that the commentaries would be bold to offer personal opinions and speculation on T.'s Hellenistic influence, provide their own demonstration of the strengths of Theophrastean inquiry.

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PLUTARCH REMADE

T. DUFF: *Plutarch's* Lives. *Exploring Virtue and Vice*. Pp. xx + 423. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999. Cased, £55. ISBN: 0-19-815058-X.

Exploring virtue and vice: not 'describing', 'teaching', or 'enforcing', but 'exploring' ethical properties. Tim Duff's stimulating book seeks to show that Plutarch has been wrongly saddled with the label of the worthy but intellectually banal 'moralist'. No longer the Nestor-like figure of yore, Plutarch emerges from D.'s account as a sophisticated and original thinker who fully deserves the reputation he won in the Renaissance. The *Parallel Lives* are presented as powerful exercises in engaging the reader's own participation: 'Plutarch's texts resist simplistic univocal presentations of the past . . . they invite the reader to challenge and ponder' (p. 309). Although D. (as a Plutarchan) is too civilized to engage in methodological argy-bargy, his adoption of a 'readerly' approach to the texts clearly constitutes an implicit snub to those who would view Plutarch as a unified literary personality whose every work must reflect a consistent moral programme (or be marked as a failure). The author is dead; long live Plutarch the agent of energetic and inventive textual play!

The book is divided into three sections: 'The Moralizing Programme'; 'The Case Studies'; and 'Writing in Parallel'. The first is devoted to analyses of the prefaces of various Lives, to a general account of Plutarch's moralizing practice in the *Lives* and to contextualizing the *Lives* in terms of statements made elsewhere in the *Moralia*. A firmer grip than D.'s on Plutarch's voluminous *oeuvre* would be hard to imagine (or envy), and the synthesis that emerges is learned and cogent. D. cautions wisely against the quick-fix extrication of Plutarchan 'programmatic statements' as though they had a general applicability. Anyone who has ever casually cited the distinction between βίος and ἱστορία at the beginning of the *Alexander* (1.2) will hang her or his head in shame at the demonstration here that this statement has only a localized applicability, and is 'not a universally valid definition of biography' (p. 21) The overall conclusion of this section is that Plutarch expects his readers to 'imitate' (μιμεῖσθαι) his characters. This is not in itself new, but D. proceeds to show in the following chapter how 'imitation', in the *Lives* proper, is not such a simple process: the assessment of ethical status is largely left to the reader. This chapter argues persuasively that Plutarch's character studies show more interest in ambivalent 'great natures' (cf. Pl. *Resp*. 419d–492a) than in morally unequivocal figures. The final chapter in this section considers Plutarch's psychology, arguing with cogency and detail that Plutarch

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