LATER EPICUREANS

M. ERLER (ed.): *Epikureismus in der späten Republik und Kaiserzeit. Akten der 2. Tagung der Karl und Gertrud Abel Stiftung vom. 30 September–3 Oktober 1998 im Würzburg*. Pp. 316. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000. Cased, DM 136. ISBN: 3-515-07494-5.

What happened to Epicureanism after the first generations of the Hellenistic Garden? We have some brief but apparently discrete flashes of activity, of course, notably Lucretius' poem, Philodemus and his friends in Herculaneum, and Diogenes' inscription at Oinoanda. But what became more generally of a philosophy of materialism and hedonism in the Roman world? This collection of seventeen new essays, mostly the proceedings of a conference, attempts to shed some light on these questions by offering a number of pieces to be fitted into a much larger jigsaw. As ever with such collections, different contributions will interest different sorts of readers. Many of the pieces will be of use to those who want to see what a particular author had to say about Epicureanism, but these sometimes lapse into the genre of a survey of citations and allusions in an often extensive *oeuvre*. More successful are those which concentrate on a particular and manageable stretch of text, or look at a particular aspect of Epicurean life during the Roman period.

A large proportion of the volume is taken up by studies of the reception of Epicureanism, mainly through the discussion of the works of non-Epicurean writers in this period (Seneca, Philo, Plutarch, Cleomedes, Origen, Lactantius, Augustine, Simplicius). Two further contributions, from Clemens Zintzen and Michael Erler, look ahead much further into the Renaissance, stretching the chronological range of topics covered far beyond what is promised in the collection's title.

Although these pieces individually have something to offer for our understanding of the afterlife of Epicureanism and for the practice of the respective authors they discuss, the vision they produce as a whole is remarkably lacking in signs of Epicureanism as a philosophical 'going concern'. (This need not be a criticism; perhaps that is indeed the conception we should have of this subject.) For the most part, the picture which emerges is of Epicureanism as a more or less fossilized philosophical stance being discussed and attacked in various ways by later writers who encountered it through reading much earlier texts, mainly from the early Hellenistic period. Lactantius is something of an exception here, since we know that he read and was impressed by the style if not the content of Lucretius' poem. Kany-Tupin's well-argued piece explores his relationship with Lucretius, a relationship which is nicely characterized as *concordia discors* (p. 229). But even in this case, Lactantius is reaching back some 300 years to find an Epicurean to disagree with.

Without evidence of even this kind of engagement with Epicurean authors and ideas, there are two major problems for such studies. First, we do not have all of the Epicurean works available even to the latest of these writers, so it is not at all easy to be sure what they were reading and thinking about. Secondly, beyond obvious cases of citation, detecting lines of influence can become a rather subjective practice, and some of those proposed here strike me at least as a little strained. For example, Marcello Gigante's attempts to show that Seneca's works display a knowledge of Philodemus' treatises ('Seneca, ein Nachfolger Philodems?') must remain speculative, especially given that we do not have much of the earlier Hellenistic Epicurean sources with which Seneca may also have been familiar. Similarly, although Mauro Tulli is certainly correct to draw attention to parallels between Epicurean recommendations of

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memorization and epitomization and later Platonist practice, it would be very difficult to show any direct Epicurean influence ('L'epitome di Epicuro e la trasmissione del sapere nel Medioplatonismo').

The richer and more interesting pieces in this collection attempt to place what we know about practising Epicureans in this period into the general context of the times, and move away from the 'single author'-centred approach. Tiziano Dorandi's essay, 'Plotina, Adriano, e gli Epicurei di Atene', carefully pieces together mainly epigraphic evidence to shed light on the dealings between the Imperial family and the Athenian Garden. Similarly, Diskin Clay makes use of some newly uncovered fragments of Diogenes to look at the religious life of second-century Lycia, and place the Epicurean inscription within a cultural and religious debate ('Diogenes and his Gods'; for a related approach, see P. Gordon, *Epicurus in Lycia* [Ann Arbor, 1996]). These new fragments (especially NF 126 and 127) are also discussed by M. F. Smith in his contribution, 'Digging up Diogenes'. Unfortunately, however, Smith does not include the texts in question, and the reader will therefore need to have at hand his article in *AS* 48 to make much of this companion piece. For those interested in philosophy more narrowly defined, Franco Ferrari offers a reading of Boethus the Epicurean's view reported in Plut. *Pyth. Orac.* 10, which illuminates the Epicurean stance on the truth values of future-tensed propositions. He not only makes clear the relevance of this stance for their attitude to divination and logical determinism, but also gives some explanation of the otherwise perplexing Epicurean doctrine that the disjunction 'X will Φ or will not Φ' is true, but neither of the disjuncts, 'X will Φ' and 'X will not Φ', is true (pp. 154–61).

Dieter Timpe offers perhaps the most ambitious contribution, 'Der Epikureismus in der römischen Gesellschaft der Kaiserzeit', which takes a broad sweeping approach to the general question of the reception of Epicureanism in Roman culture from the Republic until the reign of Julian. In contrast to the other essays, Timpe deliberately moves away from the author-centred view (p. 42), and tries to offer a more sociological approach to the diffusion and reception of Epicureanism in the Roman world at large, not just in particular authors. Timpe is appropriately aware of the methodological problems involved in any such attempt to write a social history of philosophy, but rather than shy away from the project makes these difficulties themselves an important area of discussion. Such work is necessarily speculative to an extent, but this essay is a refreshing and provocative addition to the volume as a whole.

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PLAUTINE SLAVES

K. McCarthy: *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy.* Pp. xi + 231. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000. Cased, £28.50. ISBN: 0-691-04888-6.

In what is sure to be an influential study, M. examines the social impact of Plautine comedy by analyzing the plays as a kind of dialectic between naturalism and farce that is played out in (esp.) master–slave relations. M.'s goal is to provide 'a way of grappling with the question of elite investment in popular literature by finding a middle path between augmenting the ideological power of the elite . . . and giving way to a romantic impulse to see subversion where none existed' (p. 6). In a theoretical first chapter M. argues that Plautine farce offered audience members a limited

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