THERAPEUTAE

J. E. TAYLOR: *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria. Philo's 'Therapeutae' Reconsidered*. Pp. xvi + 417, map, ills. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003. Cased, £70. ISBN: 0-19-925961-5.

The present book is a superb study of the Therapeutae, a group of Jewish ascetics known only from Philo's account of them in his *De vita contemplativa* (= *DVC*). The life of these ascetics resembles that of later monastic groups to such a degree that Eusebius believed that they actually were Christian monks, present in Alexandria already in apostolic times (*HE* 2.16–17). Some nineteenth-century scholars also saw the resemblance, but concluded from it that *DVC* could not be an authentic work but must have been written and attributed to Philo shortly before the time of Eusebius (pp. 31–3). However, F. C. Conybeare, in his edition of *DVC* (Oxford, 1895), and P. Wendland, 'Die Therapeuten', *JCPhS* 22 (1896), 693–772, undertook extensive study of the language of the text and pronounced themselves in favour of Philonic authorship. Moreover, advances concerning the subject of *Sektenjudentum* both before and after the Dead Sea discoveries have confirmed the essential plausibility of Philo's account, even if many details may be the result of his own colouring. Accordingly, almost no one today would question the authenticity of *DVC*. An interesting feature of the life of the sect is the rôle accorded to the women. Thus, the issue of women and gender is the focus of the second part of this book.

In the first part of the book, on the other hand, Taylor provides an excellent account of the more general issues connected with *DVC*. She devotes chapters to the historical context of the work, the name 'Therapeutae', the location of their colony near Alexandria, the notion of Judaism as a philosophy, the allegorical interpretation practised by the sect, and its use of a solar calendar. With regard to context, she lays emphasis on the subtitle *περὶ ἀρετῶν τὸ δ΄*, and would therefore connect *DVC* to the work *Legatio ad Gaium*, which also has *On Virtues* as an alternative title. As T. would have it (pp. 31–46), both works were part of the greater five-book work *On Virtues*, which according to Eusebius was concerned with the history of the Jews in the time of Gaius (*HE* 2.5.1; cf. 2.6.3; 2.18.8). Although this idea of the two works as part of a five-book *On Virtues* was advocated by Conybeare (op. cit., pp. 281–5), whose reconstruction was recently taken over by P. Graffigna in her edition of *DVC* (Genova, 1992), p. 26, it does not especially allow for a greater understanding of the genres of the two works. The *Legatio* simply does not have human virtue as a primary theme, and the evidence that T. provides to the contrary (p. 40) is, frankly, weak. Rather, as S. Reiter, *Epitymbion H. Swoboda dargebracht* (Reichenberg, 1927), pp. 228–37, and others have noted, *aretai* in the case of the *Legatio* must refer to the *aretai theou*, that is, the expressions of divine power that resulted in the deliverance of the Jewish people. This theme of the *περὶ ἀρετῶν* is explained perfectly by H. Lewy in his appropriately titled edition of Philo, *Von den Machterweisen Gottes* (Berlin, 1935), pp. 7–8, 83. The subject of *DVC*, on the other hand, is better understood within the context of an ethnographic-style *Bios*, which may have been part of the work mentioned by Photius, *Bibl.*, cod. 104: *τῶν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις φιλοσοφησάντων βίοι*. That work also included a book about the *bios praktikos* of the Essenes (see B. Motzo, *Ricerche* [Rome, 1977], pp. 557–77).

In the chapter on allegorical interpretation, T. develops in a bold and engaging

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fashion the hypothesis (not new) that the Therapeutae belonged to the group called by scholars the 'extreme allegorizers'. These allegorizers, known to us from Philo's *De migratione* 89–93, thought that the laws of the *Torah* have symbolic value, but need not be literally observed, anticipating, as is often said, the Pauline view. Much as a representative from an institution such as my own is always pleased to find antecedents of non-halakhic or 'reform' Judaism in antiquity, it is a difficult case to make in regards to the Therapeutae. The parallel and perhaps related example of the Essenes leads one to believe that a withdrawal from society would be associated with a more stringent rather than a more lax observance. More significantly, T. simply ignores I. Heinemann's studies of the halakhic profile of the Therapeutae, published in *RE* II.5.2 (1934), coll. 2330–4, and in an important article, 'Die Sektenfrömmigkeit der Therapeuten', *MGWJ* 78 (1934), pp. 104–17. She also relies too heavily on arguments from silence (pp. 139–40, 143; also neglect of possible relevance of *eruv* and *shittuf*). The celebration of sabbath from sunrise to sunrise may also be put down to *Sektenfrömmigkeit* (see J. Z. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays* [Cincinnati, 1951], pp. 449–50). Finally, Eusebius himself, in his review of Philo's text in *HE* 2.17.2 (cf. 2.17.24), reports that the community observed Jewish practices. This passage is cited by T. (p. 341), but not fully appreciated, because Eusebius is clearly acknowledging what would be from his point of view an 'Ebionitic' tendency (cf. *HE* 6.17: *'Ιουδαϊκώτερον*).

The second part of the book is concerned with the position of the women among the Therapeutae. T. begins with an enlightening survey of the 'paradigms of women' present in ancient literature about philosophy. She comes up with a sevenfold categorization, playfully employing modern terminology like 'sexy babe' and 'one of the guys'. She then turns in Chapter 9 to *DVC* and the *therapeutrides*. Here Philo, not exactly famous for his egalitarian views, emerges as an important witness for the existence of Jewish women philosophers in first-century Alexandria. In T.'s opinion the *therapeutrides* represent the tip of the iceberg, and there are likely to have been many more women with philosophical training in Alexandria. The group that had retreated to the colony must have drawn on a larger pool for its members. The last two chapters are more specialized studies of the 'gendered space' in the settlement, and of the group's spirituality.

In general, the book is both well structured and very well written. It is filled with interest and is highly recommended, especially for the second part.

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THE EROTICS OF GREEK POLITICAL THEORY

P. W. Ludwig: *Eros and Polis. Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory*. Pp. xiii + 398. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. Cased, £47.50, US$65. ISBN: 0-521-81065-5.

Scholarship on the art and texts of Ancient Athens is experiencing an erotic moment as *erôs* is revealed to be a vital area of signification for Athenian politics and political theory. In the same year that L.'s study appeared, Victoria Wohl published a book on *The Erotics of Democracy in Classical Athens*, and both authors drew on Sara

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