PLUTARCH'S IMAGES

R. HIRSCH-LUIPOLD: *Plutarchs Denken in Bildern. Studien zur literarischen, philosophischen und religiösen Funktion des Bildhaften*. (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 14.) Pp. xii + 324. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002. Paper, €59. ISBN: 3-16-147752-9.

In this book Rainer Hirsch-Luipold argues that (i) in Plutarch's ontology the material world presents a generally reliable image of a 'more real' noetic world which in itself is inaccessible by the human senses; and (ii) consonant with this ontology, Plutarch's literary use of images is not just an ornamental *accidens*, but contributes to the substance of his philosophical argumentation.

The structure of H.-L.'s argument reverses the logical relation between these two main points so that (i) is not explicitly argued for until Chapter 4 and its analysis of *De Iside* (pp. 159–224). Here the author shows in a stimulating and detailed analysis that Plutarch's main concern in this essay is to discuss how it is possible for humans to achieve knowledge about the gods and the truth contained in the noetic world embodied in them. Deriving this interpretation from the text's opening passage, H.-L. neither reduces the *De Iside* to a more or less reliable Egyptological compendium nor understands it as a discourse on how to interpret myths. Rather, a thorough dissection of the text's structure paves the way first for an analysis of how Plutarch himself uses Isis and Osiris producing Horus as imagery to present the material world as *ἀπορροή* or *σύμβολον* of the divine Nous, thus intertwining ontological and epistemological concepts. Secondly, H.-L. shows how animals come to be seen as images of the divine in *De Iside*. This reading is, by means of an 'Exkurs', set into the context of Gnosticism and Middle Platonism; footnotes contain both useful and convincing interpretations of details: so the meaning of *ἀπορροή* on p. 188 n. 95 or the analysis of 371A2–4 on p. 184 n. 82.

However, as H.-L. argues in Chapter 1, imagery in Plutarch exists not only as expression of an ontological relation, but as 'künstlerisches Artefakt' and as 'Produkt einer sprachlichen oder gedanklichen Operation' (p. 16). This prompts two questions: (1) Does the concept of imagery as set out in the analysis of *De Iside* account for the instances of linguistic imagery and imagery as displayed in works of art, which are analysed in Chapters 3 and 2 respectively? (2) Is it possible, more broadly, to pin down in a unifying approach something like a 'Denken' of Plutarch's which is instantiated in each of his (many) writings? As for (1), H.-L.'s analysis of the two other categories of imagery makes a preliminary point which enables him to argue for coherence: because Plutarch's 'Denken' regards material (and linguistic) phenomena as iconical representations of a true noetic world, H.-L. explicitly refrains from analysing the different forms in which imagery can be expressed (e.g. allegory, metaphor, simile), but insists that only the content of imagery is important, insofar as the content points to the hidden noetic world. Some of H.-L.'s observations in this context are sensible: e.g. when he notes in Chapter 2 that Plutarch's descriptions of statues are not ecphrastic since they do not aim at a full account of any detail of the work of art in question, as demanded by the ancient theory of ecphrasis; rather, they focus on single elements which establish the relation between the material and noetic world. But when, in Chapter 3, H.-L. analyses Plutarch's usage of terms like *μεταφορά*, *ὑπόνοια*, *ἀλληγορία*, or *αἴνιγμα* in order to legitimate his claim that there are no differences between them, and argues that these notions describe rather than define ('eher beschrieben als definitorisch bezeichnet', p. 144), he seems to employ too vague a

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/54.1.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press

formula to explain the differences that in fact do exist between them. This relates to question (2) above. Sometimes Plutarch himself seems to express doubts whether an image is a reliable representation of a noetic world, both in single passages (like *Cim.* 2.2–5 where Plutarch describes a linguistic image as more truthful than one expressed in a work of art) and in entire writings: *De glor. Ath.* as a whole makes a case for the inferiority of any representation. This is not to say that H.-L. is unaware of the ambiguous character of representation (cf. pp. 161–5 for the good discussion of Plato's influence on Plutarch's views in imagery); rather, his interpretations tend to gloss over rather than to explore such complexities, using phrases like 'man sollte nicht jedes Wort auf die Goldwaage legen' (p. 56)—but what else should a philological reading do? It is not accidental in this context that T. Duff's *Plutarch's Lives. Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford, 1999), which recently put forward a non-unifying reading of Plutarch, is absent from H.-L.'s bibliography.

But this should not conceal the fact that future discussions especially of *De Iside* will profit from H.-L.'s book, and that in general it will make its way into Plutarch bibliographies: H.-L.'s final analysis of *De sera* in Chapter 5, for instance, shows that the author's approach can be used fruitfully for bringing out the way imagery supplements argument over the course of an entire work. Thus he argues successfully for the literary qualities of Plutarch's writings—and it is for such arguments that Plutarcheans will enjoy this book.

The proofreading of this well-produced book (which betrays its origin as a German thesis in the 'Literaturzusammenfassung' and some other passages which do no more than summarize the state of scholarship) has been meticulous for the Greek (but ἄντικρυς instead of ἀντικρύς on p. 33), yet occasional mistakes have escaped in the German (one which makes it hard to catch the sense is to be found on p. 210, before n. 181). The style is good, though at times repetitive (e.g. 'von Anfang—zu Anfang', p. 33).

Corpus Christi College, Oxford/Princeton University CHRISTIAN KAESSER

ESSAYS ON DIO CHRYSOSTOM

L. Baldi, G. Caiazza, M. di Florio, A. Ricciardi, R. Scannapieco: *Ricerche su Dione di Prusa* (Introduzione di P. Volpe e F. Ferrari). Pp. 177. Naples: Luciano Editore, 2001. Paper, L. 12,480.

With its celebrated ('novelistic') account of the hospitality of a family of good-hearted rustics, its praises of poverty and of self-sufficient country life, and its biting disquisition on the corrupt activities from which the urban poor must be shielded, the *Euboean Oration* is one of Dio Chrysostom's richest and most intriguing, and at the same time one of the most difficult to be sure one has got right. So it is appropriate that the most substantial of the papers in this volume, by members of the Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità of the Università degli Studi di Salerno, should be devoted to it. Rosario Scannapieco's intelligent and well-informed analysis, though aiming to give an account of the spirit and purposes of the oration as a whole, in practice concentrates principally on its first half, which

The Classical Review vol. 54 no. 1 © The Classical Association 2004; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/cr/54.1.52 Published online by Cambridge University Press