

*Erik Iversen: Egyptian and Hermetic Doctrine.* Opuscula Graecolatina 27. Museum Tusulanum Press, Copenhagen 1984. 71 p. Dcr. 180.—.

The egyptologist Erik Iversen has produced a contribution to the discussion of the Egyptian background of Greek thought, which I would not hesitate to call positively provocative. The main part of his argument focuses on proving that many of the basic cosmological and metaphysical ideas of the Hermetic texts have close parallels in ancient Egyptian teaching and, consequently, that the Hermetic Corpus really reflects Egyptian conceptions much more extensively than is usually believed today. The current belief, in spite of considerable uncertainty in details, is that Hermetic teaching was a product of Hellenistic syncretism where the Orphic, Pythagorean, etc., and notably the Platonistic and 'Gnostic' trends are to be emphasized alongside with the Egyptian ones; and it is also believed that the information given by Greek authors such as Plutarch and Iamblichus about Egyptian religious philosophy is coloured by the well-known tendency to deduce Greek thought from Oriental wisdom.

If Iversen is right, a new strange light falls not only on the Hermetic Corpus. The Egyptian foundations of such pillars of Greek thought as Plato's *Timaeus* would then be worth a serious reconsideration — because there seem to have existed secret Egyptian traditions (cf. *Tim.* 22a) about e.g. cosmic Intelligence as the ultimate ratio of the universe, a Demiurge considered as the son of the intelligible creator, a differentiation between the intelligible and the sensible world, man's unique position in the centre of All, soul as the principle of life, etc. And what is more serious still, we seem to be facing the task of disentangling possibly Egyptian influences from the supposedly well-known Iranian and Mesopotamian traits in Pre-Socratic thinking.

But is Iversen right? Has he perhaps given us an over-interpretation of such generally 'Oriental' ideas as the dualistic two-world model, the priority of god to man, the belief in man's intellectual capacity, etc.? How far can the early Egyptian evidence be pressed? These are questions that urgently demand a renewed debate between egyptologists and classical scholars.

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In 1981 the first colloquium on Latin linguistics was held at Amsterdam. Since then meetings have been arranged regularly every second year (in 1983 at Aix-en-Provence and in 1985 at Bologna). The colloquia have established for themselves an important place among scholars throughout the world who are interested in various aspects of Latin linguistics. They have also shown that Latin still has a central position in linguistic discussions and that Latinists have not been left behind in developing general linguistic theories.

The present volume consists of papers read at the Second Colloquium and subsequently