

KATHRYN A. MORGAN: *Myth and Philosophy from the Pre-Socratics to Plato*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2000. ISBN 0-521-62180-1. viii, 313 pp. GBP 40.

Morgan's monograph has a lot to recommend it. Although there has been much discussion about both *mythos* and *logos* in ancient Greece and about Platonic myths, a general and thorough, philosophically and philologically up-to-date discussion of myth inside Greek philosophy is very welcome. Morgan sets as her task to show that, after starting as the rejected 'other' of philosophy, myth takes its place at the heart of the philosophical works of thinkers from Xenophanes to Plato. She analyses myths as part of philosophical thought and demonstrates that they have an essential role to play there, which (once again) undermines the traditional views of birth of philosophy as a simple and enlightened journey from the irrationality of *mythos* to the rationality of *logos*.

The philosophical myths studied in this book are a subgenre of philosophical literature. The main point they make, and thus the general thread of Morgan's argumentation, centers around the limits of language. After the critique and appropriation of the myths of the poetic tradition, the first philosophers found in them a useful vehicle for importing their thoughts about nature and abilities of language. The myths did not access truth and reality, but the philosophers had serious doubts that language did not either. Thus the philosophical myth as a self-conscious but disquieting narrative was an appropriate method for problematising issues of language and communication. Morgan connects this development with the advent of literacy. Textualisation of the earlier poetic tradition made a continuous critical tradition possible, which meant loosening the bond between word and reality.

The book has one theoretical chapter concerned with literacy and the rise of philosophy on the one hand, and with deconstruction and other modern philosophical worries about language on the other hand. After this follows one chapter on the pre-Socratics, one on the sophists, and one transitional on (Plato's) Protagoras, and finally three chapters on Platonic myths.

The chapter on the pre-Socratics argues briefly that, in addition to ethical and epistemological doubts about the poetical tradition, Xenophanes and Herakleitos shared suspicions about language in general. The former reacted with a new theology and metaphysics which implied new criteria for truth and the latter with an oracular style that tried to express the cosmic *logos* and avoided too much and too little signification. Based on a unified reading of Empedokles' fragments, Morgan argues that, because of the privileged epistemological viewpoint of a prophet, singer, doctor and leader, he manages to incorporate the new philosophical outlook with the older poetic tradition. Parmenides receives the fullest treatment with an interesting interpretation through a careful reading of the proem. Morgan sees as the basic problem that in the world of *Aletheia* there is no room for language or the poem itself and interprets the traditional crux of Parmenides' philosophy, i.e. the relation between *Aletheia* and *Doxa*, as parallel to the relation between *Aletheia* and the proem. Although one feels some slight uneasiness about anachronism when the pre-Socratics are read linguistically, Morgan is aware of the dangers and reaches interesting interpretations with her approach.

Morgan takes allegory and rationalisation to be, in the first place, strategies to defend superior poetic wisdom in the face of philosophical critique. The sophists,

however, put these tools together with philological exegesis to work for their own ends. They see the myths as conventional and use them for rhetorical display. The great speech of *Protagoras* is analysed carefully as a transition from the sophistic to the Platonic use of myth. The argument is very deep and illuminating, and Morgan shows, among other things, that in the dialogue, in spite of his words to the contrary, Protagoras could only start his exposition concerning his ability to teach *arete* with the *mythos* because the logic of his argument is not adequate. Although Morgan considers the myth of the Protagoras' great speech to be essentially Protagorean in origin, she argues that Plato's understanding of it is deeper than Protagoras'. The many layers and the open-endedness of the Platonic use of myth suggest the interactive dialogue form while simultaneously demonstrating the limits of the sophistic mythological displays.

The diversity of Platonic myths is well known. After a careful analysis, Morgan ends up classifying the Platonic myths by context because both too stubborn a search for a unifying definition of them and a lexical approach based on the words *mythos/logos* do not seem to capture Plato's practice. Her classification is loose and non-exclusive. It contains traditional myths such as those related by poets, educational myths like the Noble Lie of the *Republic* and philosophical myths which are tied to logical analyses. Morgan treats the encouraging and edifying (*paramythic*) stories separately as they have no consistent connection with mythologising.

Morgan's treatment of Platonic myths, in line with most recent commentators, emphasises their philosophical meaning. The myths are not just a foil for the philosophical content but an essential part of the dialogues. Although the characteristic features of the myths are play and childishness and their main aim is often exhortation, they have an important philosophical content. Their function is often tied to questions concerning the limits of discourse. Morgan seems sometimes to take the risk of over-interpreting the philosophical function of the Platonic myths, but the risk is worth taking for a deeper understanding of them.

Morgan analyses what she calls Plato's synoptic or (re)collective use of myth via four myths of the soul. That the myth follows and supplements the logical argument is typical of the myths of *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, and *Republic*. In *Phaedrus*, the concentration on how we should speak and write makes the myth of the dialogue paradigmatic and central in a way that none of the other myths of the soul are. In her discussion of Socrates' second speech and the myth of the soul as a charioteer, Morgan manages to clarify and give important interpretations about many key issues in current Plato studies, including the questions of love, *anamnesis*/memory, image/resemblance and the method of division and collection. Her argument is that the myth systematises Socrates' intuitive grasp of truth which is a result of contemplation of the Forms and can hardly be expressed in language.

Morgan notes that, in the later dialogues, philosophical theories, like Protagoras' relativistic doctrine of man as measure in *Theaetetus*, are often called *mythos*. By doing this, Plato further blurs the boundaries between *mythos* and *logos* and ties myth firmly into the philosophical context. Thus he forces us to realise that all language is a story that interprets reality, with greater or lesser degrees of success. Taking Plato's point and interpreting it radically, and maybe without Plato's emphasis on the higher level of reality, Morgan ends the book with important advice for philosophers of any age:

"'Mythological' philosophy teaches the important lesson that philosophical knowledge cannot shine transparently through the medium in which it is expressed. *Mythos* is the condition of the world we inhabit".

*Eero Salmenkivi*

*Römische Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion.* Hg. von HUBERT CANCEK und JÖRG RÜPKE. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 1997. ISBN 3-16-146760-4. 318 S. mit Abbildungen und Fototafeln. EUR 69.

*Religion in den germanischen Provinzen Roms.* Hg. von WOLFGANG SPICKERMANN in Verbindung mit HUBERT CANCEK und JÖRG RÜPKE. Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen 2001. ISBN 3-16-147613-1. 447 S. mit Abbildungen und Fototafeln. EUR 84.

In den letzten Jahren lässt sich ein gesteigertes Interesse an der römischen Religion feststellen. Dies macht sich auch in neuen Titeln und Forschungsprojekten sowie Tagungen bemerkbar. Der Abgrenzung der Fragestellungen, Methoden und Begriffe war die Tagung "Reichsreligion und Provinzialreligion" gewidmet, deren Beiträge im ersten der hier zu rezensierenden Bücher zusammengetragen vorliegen. Als Anwendung der Ergebnisse der im ersten veröffentlichten Resultate versucht dann das zweite, hier nur kurz angeschnittene Buch diese anhand der germanischen Provinzen zu überprüfen.

Die bewusst interdisziplinär gehaltene und auf unterschiedlichen wissenschaftlichen Kulturen basierende Tagung hat sich zur Aufgabe gestellt, neue Grundlagen für die Forschung dieses komplexen Themenbereiches zu eröffnen. An den Anfang werden daher konsequent "systematische Versuche" gestellt: J. Rüpke stellt zunächst die "begriffsgeschichtlichen" Positionen von Hartung, Mommsen, Wissowa und in der kirchengeschichtlichen Diskussion vor und schlägt unter methodischem Aspekt eine Betrachtung von römischer Religion oder besser Regionalreligion als Kommunikation vor. G. Kehrer und A. Bendlin prüfen verschiedene sozialwissenschaftliche Ansätze auf ihre Tauglichkeit zur Behandlung römischer Religion. Während das "Civil religion"-Modell sich als nicht adäquat erweist (Kehrer) und auch das "core-periphery-model" sich zumindest in seiner Grundform zu stark auf sozioökonomische Aspekte beschränkt (Bendlin), scheint es sich eher um eine "additive extension of religious choices" als um religiöse Akkulturation zu handeln. Nach dem Versuch der Periodisierung wiederum unter dem Aspekt "Kommunikation" von provinzieller Seite, insbesondere als Konsequenz nicht-religiöser Interesseneinflüsse von seiten der provinziellen Oberschicht stellt Bendlin schließlich zur Diskussion, dass sowohl die scheinbare Homogenität der römischen Religion in den ersten Jahrhunderten als auch ihr Auseinanderfallen im dritten Jahrhundert vor allem mit dem Wettstreit der provinziellen Führungsschichten zusammenhängt und das Modell "additive extension" geeignet ist, die römische Religion im Imperium als Ganzes zu beschreiben. Sicher sind viele angesprochene Details diskutierbar, aber die hier aufgeworfenen Fragen sind in der Auseinandersetzung mit römischer Religion nicht mehr zu umgehen.

Im zweiten Teil werden sehr anregende "Querschnitte" dargeboten, und zwar von G. Woolf über die Polis-Religion, von Chr. Frateantonio über religiöse Autonomie in Kaiserzeit und Spätantike, von A. Blomart über das interessante Thema der *evocatio* und