

A. F. NATOLI, *The Letter of Speusippus to Philip II*. Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary (Historia Einzelschriften 176), Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004, 196 pp., ISBN 3-515-08396-0.

With this volume N. intends to build upon rather than replace the edition with commentary of Bickermann and Sykutris¹, offering a new interpretation on several significant points, as well as taking into account the historical scholarship produced in the intervening seventy years. The introductory material and commentary provide significantly more material than the previous editors' primarily historical commentary. N.'s interpretation disagrees with that of the previous editors concerning the form of the letter, its rhetorical structure and its purpose; the introduction sets out the arguments, including a detailed analysis of Speusippus' rhetoric, with the commentary providing further support through rhetorical and historical notes. There are three appendices, two arguing for the Platonic authorship of one of the 'Socratic epistles' addressed to Philip which provides additional evidence for N.'s interpretation of the historical context of Philip's relations with the academy. The volume thus constitutes an important contribution to scholarship on Philip's reign, his relations with Isocrates, the early academy, and the 'Platonic' and 'Socratic' epistles, as well as on this letter in particular.

N.'s text is not a new edition: the text and apparatus criticus are those of Bickermann and Sykutris, with only five fairly minor changes (all of which have been suggested by earlier editors or scholars), which are argued for in the commentary. Only two of these affect the sense at all: §3 $\pi\lambda\eta\sigma\iota\alpha\zeta\acute{o}\nu\tau\omega\upsilon\upsilon$ instead of $\sigma\tau\alpha\tau\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\acute{\alpha}\nu\tau\omega\upsilon\upsilon$,

¹ E. Bickermann-J. Sykutris, *Speusippus Brief an König Philipp*. Text, Übersetzung, Untersuchungen, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Leipzig. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Bd. 80 (3), Leipzig 1928.

and §13 ἐμνήστειεν for ἐμνήστεισεν. (The others are all rejections of Sykutris' corrections which removed the later orthography γιν- in forms of γίγνομαι, twice in §5 and once in §12). A translation on facing pages is provided, which is first and foremost an accurate guide to the Greek; ambiguities which affect the interpretation are discussed in the commentary rather than resolved in translation, where possible, which is as it should be.

As for the interpretation of the text, N.'s main points (or the points at which he differs most with the previous editors and other interpreters) are the following: that it is a private, not a public letter; that it is authentic (accepted by many following Bickermann and Sykutris, but for different reasons); that it was written after a period of severed communications between Plato's academy and Philip, and was an attempt to 'test the waters' to see if relations could be re-established; that its rhetoric is subtler and more sophisticated than has often been thought, and exploits (and therefore provides evidence for) Plato's part in settling a dispute between Philip and his brother Perdicas by a partition of the kingdom, thus allowing Philip the opportunity to establish his power-base and ultimately to gain control of all Macedon; and that the supposedly missing argument concerning Isocrates' slander of Plato (advertised in §2), is in fact supplied by his treatment of Theopompus' attack on Plato (§12), which in turn is only a means of subtly introducing Philip's indebtedness to Plato. This is a lot to fit into a relatively brief introduction (and there is much more than I have mentioned), but although it is complex and at times dense, the argument nevertheless remains clear and persuasive throughout. Indeed, the range of approaches and arguments brought to bear, and the way N. brings them together, constitute a very powerful piece of rhetoric (with none of the negative connotations often latent in that word) of his own, of which all the elements support each other. It is impossible here to summarise satisfactorily any of the arguments for N.'s individual theses, especially since they are so thoroughly interconnected; therefore I shall restrict myself to a few particular comments, after recommending this book as essential reading for anyone interested in the historical period and figures with which it is concerned.

N. argues for the letter's authenticity (pp. 23-31) mainly on the grounds that the writer's language, knowledge and skill are consistent with someone contemporary and *au fait* with its supposed context and date of sending, thus ruling out a later forger. This is also consistent with an alternative hypothesis: that someone writing not too much later, having first- or perhaps good second-hand knowledge, wrote it in defence and promotion of the academy (and Speusippus) and an attack on its rivals. This could be someone within the academy itself. Such attribution of a letter or other writings to an earlier (and often more important) member of a school, in order to ensure it was read—as distinct from the kind of outright forgery N. argues against—was common enough in antiquity (cf. the body of writings attributed to Pythagoras and his followers and family, almost all spurious and many probably Hellenistic; and the many pseudonymous works which became attached to the Platonic corpus). The balance of probability, however, seems to lie with the letter's authenticity; but it is a question of probability rather than proof, as N. acknowledges (see especially p. 21 for a disclaimer to that effect for his whole introduction), and therefore possible alternatives to oppose to the dichotomy authenticity *vs.* late forgery should be considered.

While most of what N. has to say about Isocrates is sound, it might benefit from being slightly more nuanced and making a distinction between his self-presentation and his actual state of mind: N. draws inferences about Isocrates' intentions from the fact that in the *Philip* he "*presented himself* as an independent adviser to the Macedonian king and as the representative of the best interests of Athens and the other Greek states," (p. 52; my emphasis), without taking into account this aspect of self-presentation. To what extent did he really *intend* (a word which implies belief in the possibility of achieving something attempted) "to influence... Macedonian policy... [and] influential individuals in Athens and... the rest of Greece"? This seems rather ambitious; presenting himself as having such ambitions, however, was surely designed to secure Isocrates' own posthumous reputation—a far more attainable goal. Compare the statement that "In 345... royal patronage can have meant little to the wealthy nonagenarian who genuinely wanted Philip to implement his plan for benefitting his fellow Greeks. It was influence and fame that he sought, not

patronage.” (pp. 51-2) But that patronage was part of and a means of securing influence and fame. Of course, the philanthropic and personal ambitions presented explicitly and implicitly in Isocrates’ writings are not mutually exclusive, and it is a matter of taste to decide in what proportions they were actually in play. But (uncharacteristically for this introduction) the different levels on which the *Philip* can provide evidence about Isocrates are not teased out here.

In commenting on τὰς ὑπὸ σοῦ νεωστὶ διαγωνισθείσας (§9, p. 140), N. notes “the reference here is to Philip’s recent settlement of the Sacred War... As Philip had not intervened in the Sacred War when Isocrates published the *Philip*... it is not surprising that Isocrates knew nothing of these events.” N. does not give much space to this point here or in the introduction—perhaps because it does not sit well with his general line as an apologist for Speusippus’ rhetoric. But even bearing in mind the ancient rhetorical conventions (including the misrepresentation of Isocrates’ arguments in attacking the *Philip*) to which N. rightly draws attention, and the possibility of Philip missing some of the subtleties of Isocrates’ rhetoric, surely this blatant anachronism would not pass unnoticed?

Finally, a few more minor comments. On οὐκ ἐν ἐπιστολῇ πρὸς σὲ μηκυντέον (§5, p. 124), N. states that the type of arguments referred to by Speusippus were inappropriate to a private letter; Speusippus may also have been invoking an epistolary convention that going on at length was in itself undesirable in a letter (cf. e.g. Demetrius *de elocutione* 228). On p. 24, N. writes “The letters of Isocrates and Demosthenes cannot boast even this early [2nd century BC] a reference...” before referring in n. 35 to the “exception” that Isocrates refers to his own letter to Dionysius at *Philip* 81. This is quite some exception—it is nothing less than a negation of the point made in the main text at least insofar as it concerns Isocrates’ letters. (This is, however, a minor point, since N. is here only pointing out the scarcity, in general, of such early references to historical letters). On p. 117 the word ‘foreigners’ is used presumably to mean ‘non-Athenian Greeks’ (others allowed to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries), which might cause some confusion; ‘non-Athenians’ would be clearer.

The first two appendices compare some obviously spurious letters attributed to Plato in the corpus of Socratic epistles to *Ep.* 31 Orelli-Hercher, 29 Allazzis-Köhler (texts and translation printed), arguing that the latter is genuine. This argument is as convincing as such arguments can be: that is, it rests on comparisons of style and other such methods which will not convince the sceptics; in particular, it often compares the style of Plato in the Thrasyllean letters in order to prove Platonic authorship, which will not wash with those who reject all letters attributed to Plato. In that this letter is found in MSS next to that of Speusippus, and is addressed to Philip, if authentic it provides an interesting if short addition to the material of the rest of the volume; but it is rightly an appendix, as its acceptance is not essential to N.'s arguments concerning the main text. A third appendix concerns the expulsion of Amyntas III. The volume is completed by an index locorum and a general index. There are unfortunately numerous errors, most doubtless the fault of the press rather than of N.: in particular, the use of possessive apostrophes is haphazard, sometimes in the wrong place, often missing.

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