

τοῦ Klaus Oehler θὰ ἀντιπροσωπεύει ἀσφαλῶς γιὰ πάρα πολλὰ χρόνια τὴ συνισταμένη τῆς ἔρευνας στὴν περιοχὴ τῶν ἀριστοτελικῶν *Κατηγοριῶν*.

(Μετάφραση: Λίνου Γ. Μπενάκη)

Dr. Karl Allgaier

Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1978, pp. xii+135.

The period known as Late Antiquity, spanning from the late second to the fourth century, was one of those ages of ideological transition whose understanding is critical for the comprehension of mutations in human culture. It was the period that witnessed the gradual retreat of an ancient pagan tradition and the rise of a transformed Christianity as the prevailing framework of thought. In this lucid and provocative essay one of the foremost authorities on the period attempts an interpretation of the spiritual content of this ideological transition. This book deserves the attention of students of political theory because it opens a new perspective on the foundations of Medieval political thought. It does so by pointing to the intense preoccupation with the character of supernatural power and its workings in the world, registered in a protracted «debate on the holy». The doubts of such critics of the mentality of the age as Marcus Aurelius and Lucian, were exceptions which only underlined the prevailing collective moods. The spiritual quests of late antique thought nurtured a conception of exceptional individuals, enjoying intimate ties with the divine and capable of mediating the relations of transcendental power with the world. In considering these problems, Peter Brown's greatest contribution is that he takes spiritual issues seriously and examines them on their own grounds so as to reveal their inner strength and their import in human life and thus in historical change. He consequently achieves a perception that is much more substantive and profound than earlier essentially reductionist interpretations of the period, either psychological such as E. R. Dodds' or structural like that proposed by M. Rostovtzeff.

The distinct social and psychological characteristics of the period contributed in their turn to the ferment of ideological transformation. The disintegration of control mechanisms over aristocratic ambition unleashed strong competitive urges in social behaviour. This is what made Late Antiquity an «age of ambition». To contain these disruptive tendencies and to nurture a cohesive culture, traditional collective cults were resurrected while an invocation of the older oracular tradition and an Atticizing revival gave a last flare-up to civic paganism. Julian's failure however dramatized the extent to



which the rediscovered symbolism of civic paganism instead of reviving the classical collective ethic, was in fact absorbed in the search of personal aggrandizement of state and local «potentes».

The triumph of Christianity was the outcome of a confluence of the two chief currents of thought and behaviour characteristic of the age. The Christians achieved prominence through their own radical contribution to the debate on the modes of human contact with the divine. The emergence of a Christian group of special «friends of God» who mediated those modes of contact and brought divine power to work wonders on earth, contributed to the consolidation of a parallel hierarchy besides that of local potentates. Representative of this alternative transcendental road to power was the rise of the Christian bishop in the third and of the holy man of the desert in the fourth century. Cyprian of Carthage typified the rise of the bishops while Anthony and Pachomius gained prominence for desert monasticism. Finally, the traditions of the «potents» and of the «friends of God» converged on the person of Constantine, who believed that the gifts of a friend of God could be applied to the governance of the world. With him the transformation of a spiritual tradition into political theory was complete.

The prominence of the friends of God contributed also to the consolidation of the Christian community. Prophecy nurtured the cohesion of the group. The Christian communities of evangelical neighbours, independent of other attachments and involvements, provided a new kind of fellowship to replace the disintegrating older forms of localism and kinship. But precisely because the Christian community of faithful rested on the individual's choice to join it, it confirmed the «basically egoistical quality of the age» (p. 78). The crisis in human relations to which the new Christian community was a response, motivated another form of individual assertion, the «anachoresis», retreat to the desert, which generated the wave of fourth century monasticism. Those who opted for this form of social disengagement, acted out before an oppressive society the role of the utterly autarkic individual. Asceticism involved a long process of self-discovery and a redirection of the era's pursuit of power (and ambition): the monks gained power by rejecting it. «Anachoresis» resolved definitively the long debate on the holy by foreclosing all spiritual alternatives and confirming the dominance of a spiritual elite who wielded power over late Roman society by reason of their exceptional relations with the supernatural. This provided the spiritual foundation to fledgling new hierarchies and legitimized the position of Christian leaders in late Roman society.

Thus, the tradition of classical politics was submerged by the spiritual force of the intense preoccupation with personal salvation. Concurrently



however the new spiritual dominance of the few cut Christianity equally from civic paganism and from its own past. The new constructs of spiritual hierarchies and corporate structures culminating in a supreme friend of God on earth, pieced together a matrix for Medieval political thought and practice.

Athens

Paschalis M. Kitromilides

Θ. Χ. Κεσσίδη, *Ὁ Σωκράτης*, ἔκδ. ΟΔΕΒ, Ἀθήνα 1984, 176 σελ.

Ἡ πρόσφατη ἔκδοση στὴ γλώσσα μας τῆς μελέτης τοῦ Θεοχάρη Χ. Κεσσίδη γιὰ τὸν Σωκράτη<sup>1</sup> εἶναι μιὰ ἀναμφισβήτητη συμβολὴ στὴ συζήτηση ποὺ μένει ἀνοιχτή, αἰῶνες τώρα, γύρω ἀπὸ τὸν ἀρχαῖο τοῦτο στοχαστὴ καὶ τὸν ρόλο του στὴν ἀνάπτυξη τῆς φιλοσοφικῆς σκέψης.

Δὲν νομίζω ἀπαραίτητο νὰ «παρουσιάσω» ἐδῶ τὸν συγγραφέα, τὸ κάνει ἄλλωστε ἑξοχα ὁ ἐκδότης στὸ ὀπισθόφυλλο. Θέλω νὰ πιστεύω ὅτι ὁ διακεκριμένος αὐτὸς Ἑλληνας τὴν καταγωγὴ ἐπιστήμονας, ποὺ γεννήθηκε (τὸ 1920) καὶ ζεῖ στὴ Σοβιετικὴ Ἑνωση, διδάκτορας τῆς φιλοσοφίας, ἄοκνος μελετητής, ἀπὸ 30 καὶ πάνω χρόνια, τῆς ἀρχαίας ἐλληνικῆς παιδείας, μὲ πλούσιο καὶ ἀξιόλογο ἔργο πίσω του, ποὺ ἔχει μεταφραστεῖ καὶ σὲ ξένες γλῶσσες, δὲν εἶναι ἄγνωστος στὴν Ἑλλάδα. Μερικὲς ἐργασίες του εἶχαν ἤδη δημοσιευτεῖ ἢ ἀναδημοσιευτεῖ στὸ θεωρητικὸ περιοδικὸ τοῦ ἐξωτερικοῦ *Νέος Κόσμος* κατὰ τὴ δεκαετία τοῦ '60 (ιδιαίτερα, *Ὁ ἀρχαῖος ἐλληνικὸς πολιτισμός, ἡ βασικὴ ἀρχὴ του καὶ τὸ νόημά του*, 1965). Γνωστὲς εἶναι ἐπίσης οἱ ἐργασίες του γιὰ τὸν Παρμενίδη, τὸν Πλάτωνα καὶ κυρίως γιὰ τὸν Ἡράκλειτο καὶ γενικότερα γιὰ τὴν ἀρχαία διαλεκτικὴ.

Ἡ παρούσα μελέτη γιὰ τὸν Σωκράτη εἶναι, καὶ κατὰ τὴν πρόθεση τοῦ συγγραφέα, ἐκλαϊκευτικὴ, μὲ τὴ διευκρίνιση ὥστόσο ὅτι, πέρα ἀπὸ τὴν αὐστηρὰ θεμελιωμένη ἀνάλυση, τὰ συμπεράσματα ποὺ ἀπορρέουν ἀπ' αὐτὴν δὲν ὑποτάσσονται σὲ κανένα κονφορμισμὸ σχολῆς ἢ ρεύματος. Πρόκειται, κοντολογίς, γιὰ μιὰν ἐργασία πού, παρὰ τὴ στέρεη μεθοδολογία της, δὲν πέφτει στὸν πειρασμὸ νὰ καταλήξει σὲ μιὰ κωδικοποιημένη ἄποψη καὶ δὲν κηλιδώνεται ἀπὸ κανένα σχολαστικισμὸ οὔτε ἀπὸ ὑπερβάλλοντα ἐρμηνευτικὸ ζῆλο ποὺ θὰ ἔτεινε νὰ πλάσει, μὲ κριτήρια τῶν μεταγενέστερων προόδων τῆς φιλοσοφίας, ἓνα Σωκράτη ἐλάχιστα ἢ καθόλου ἀνταποκρινόμενο στὸν Σωκράτη τῆς ἱστορίας. Γεγονὸς ποὺ κάνει ἀκόμα πιὸ καλόδεχτο τοῦτο τὸ βιβλίο, ἐπειδὴ μᾶς ἔρχεται ἀπὸ ἓνα μεγάλο γεωγραφικὸ καὶ πολιτισμικὸ

1. Ἡ πρωτότυπη ρωσικὴ ἔκδοση εἶναι τοῦ 1976.

