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M. L. MORGAN. Platonic Piety: Philosophy and Ritual in Fourth-Century Athens. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990. Pp. x + 273. Cloth, $28.50.

Morgan has written a brief and unpersuasive account of the religious role played by Platonic philosophy. He claims that there was a traditional "Delphic Theology" which assumed an unbridgeable chasm between the mortal and the divine (18). At the heart of this "gap" stood the immortality of the gods. Yet during the years 415–399, when Athens found itself in the midst of a "religious crisis" (16–21, 42f.), there occurred a great influx of foreign, ecstatic cults (17–21, 221, n. 4). These cults (Orphic, Dionysian, Pythagorean) were all interrelated forms of a "non-Delphic theology of divine-human union" (29), which sought to provide for personal salvation and immortality through ecstatic rites.

Socrates and Plato were attracted to these cults by the centrality which they gave to the soul. But they were also repelled by their irrationality (30). Socrates, for his part, supposed that the "gap" could be bridged by "wisdom." But if this was to satisfy our aspirations to divinity, the soul would need to be immortal; and in the *Apology,* at least, Socrates has only a "high hope" but no clear commitment to the immortality of soul (9–15). It was only Plato who fully developed the notion of philosophy as a "rational revision of ecstatic ritual based on the conviction that human beings can attain divine status" (30), by insisting on the immortality of the soul, and substituting "cognitive virtue . . . for pious displacement" (22). But if philosophy is to play this exalted role, its objects must be adequate, i.e., they must be eternal and transcendent. In the *Meno* these objects are only "truths in the soul" (51ff.); they first become transcendent in the *Phaedo.* From all this, Morgan thinks that he has shown that the "discovery of the Forms . . . is the result in part of a deep religious need" (56; cf. 210, n. 3).

Morgan proposes a "historical" reading of the texts (4ff.), an approach which he has elsewhere sought to justify on theoretical grounds (*Rev. Met.* 40 [1987] 717–32). In practice, however, he simply operates on the assumption that the thought which one finds in the dialogues was developed largely in response to external stimuli (cf. Dodds. *The Greeks and the Irrational,* 208ff.). This approach leads him to offer such implausible claims as the following: that the simile of the cave is modeled upon the Greater Mysteries of Eleusis (138f.); that in order to understand the *Meno* we must first grasp the "bitter and despondent" mood in Athens at the time when the dialogue was *composed* (33ff.), since the dialogue is Plato's response to the Peace of Antalkidas (43ff.); and that the *Phaedrus* is a "record" of Plato's "mood" and of his "response" to the events leading up to the Battle of Leuctra (159ff.).

Such a methodological stance should at least demand a firm commitment to careful historical scholarship. But Morgan expressly disavows any attempt at firsthand research and is content to rely for his historical material on "the work of others" (6). The result is that he betrays at every turn an excessive reliance on handbooks, together with an almost total disregard for most of the specialized literature (9, n.8; 10, n. 10; 21, n. 66; 22, n. 75; 33, n. 5; 36, nn. 29–30; 40, n. 49; etc.). Consequently, complex issues of a broadly historical nature are dealt with in a wholly unsatisfactory manner (17, nn. 37–39; 19, nn. 54, 56; 21, n. 70; 28, nn. 106–8; 34, n. 18; 35, n. 24; 40, n. 44; 167, nn. 47–49; etc.), as are topics more purely philosophical (12, n. 19; 56, n. 2; 59, n. 16; 180, n. 85). Thus, despite the judicious warning which he received, *per litteras,* from R. Parker (194, n. 5), Morgan insists on depicting the "religious crisis" of this period in the most lurid terms and in claiming that this was the time which saw the great and dramatic increase in religious syncretism that encouraged the changes he sees in Platonic thought. In this he is following a well-known and often abused passage in Dodds (*The Greeks and the Irrational,* 193ff.; see Morgan, 199, n. 50, also 221, n. 4). But a more careful assessment of the evidence might have modified this

picture. (On the "religious crisis" of this period see B. Jordan, *TAPA* 116 [1986] 119–47; J. Mikalson, *Studies Presented to Sterling Dow* [Durham, 1984] 217–25; and, for a more balanced account of fifth-century syncretism, H. S. Versnel, *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion* I [Leiden, 1990] 102–23.)

Morgan may fairly be described as a modern pan-Orphicist. His conception of "Orphism" is largely taken over from Guthrie, but as modified by Burkert and West, according to whom "Orphism" is not so much an organized religion as one of a set of similar, overlapping phenomena. Morgan, however, is far less cautious than these authorities and continues to treat the whole nexus of ideas and practices as essentially "Orphic" (see 39f., 42f., 77, 172, 180, etc.)—the existence and wide dispersion of which he thinks has been confirmed by recent archeological finds (41ff.). Unfortunately his confidence is not so fully justified as he believes. The spread of Dionysian cults throughout the fourth century, especially in South Italy, has been carefully studied (see, e.g., *Orfismo in Magna Grecia: atti del quattuordicesimo Congreso di studi sulla Magna Graecia, Taranto, 6–10 ottobre 1974* [Naples, 1975]; also Cole, *GRBS* 21 [1980] 223–38). But Morgan's insistence (96f.) that Dionysian initiation was of a fully ecstatic type must be considered in the light of the various attempts of A. Henrichs to modify this view. The Derveni papyrus, on the other hand, raises just as many questions as it solves. First of all, the treatise is not so securely dated as Morgan believes (207, n. 56), for the absence of Platonic elements proves nothing. Furthermore, even if the poem itself is a fifth-century product, it is singularly disappointing. To be sure, the possession of so old an allegorical interpretation of a theogonic poem is certainly a great find. But the existence of such allegorizers could have been inferred on other grounds (cf. Dodds, 225, n. 5; Comm. ad Pl. *Gorg.* 492D1–493D4; also OF 33 Kern [= Epigenes]). This is a point of some importance, for as Guthrie long ago observed, the actual meaning of the myths themselves was probably undetermined (see *P. Derv.*, col. X, 5f. [West], with Rusten, *HSCP* 89 [1985] 133f.; also Linforth, *The Arts of Orpheus*, 316ff.); and the dry, scholastic interpretations of the papyrus do little to support the view that the poem itself contained anything that must be regarded as *essentially* "Orphic" doctrine. Indeed, most of the notions traditionally associated with Orphism (immortality, post-mortem rewards and punishments, eternal bliss for the initiates) have been shown time and time again to be traditional, while the more crucial ideas of the fall of the soul or the moral interpretation of sin have still not been proved to be "Orphic." The new finds, in other words, do little to controvert the skepticism of Linforth or to go beyond Plato's own description in *Rep.* 363a–366b (cf. *P. Derv.*, col. XVII [West], with Rusten ad loc.).

Nor are we told why any of this should be relevant to Plato. For while "Orphic" influence on Plato has had its defenders (Guthrie, Nilsson, Boyancé, Ziegler; cf. Procl. *In Plat. Tim.* II, 146, 20ff. Diehl [= OF 210 Kern]), there have also been many skeptics (Wilamowitz, Thomas, Linforth, even Dodds). Yet Morgan dispenses with the details of this debate (e.g., 216, n. 88). Consequently he carelessly speaks of "the Orphic doctrine that the soul is imprisoned in the

body" both in reference to *Phd.* 62b2–5 (64), and *Phdr.* 250c5–6 (172). But the doctrine *sōma–sēma,* and the doctrine that the soul is "imprisoned in the body" are not identical, as *Crat.* 400c proves; and if *sōma–sēma* is, in fact, the point of *Phdr.* 250c (as Thompson ad loc. supposed; but see R. Ferwerda, *Hermes* 113 [1985] 273), then the doctrine of the *Phaedrus* is not Orphic (see Dodds, 169, n. 87). None of this, finally, is likely to be relevant to *Phd.* 62b3–5, which should probably be understood as *vetat . . . de praesidio et statione vitae decedere* (Cic. *De Senect.* 20.73). Morgan, however, cites none of the literature devoted to these important passages.

On the other hand, Plato's use of the language of initiation has been noticed by many scholars (e.g., Louis, *Les métaphores de Platon* [Rennes, 1945] 221; Des Places, *Etudes platoniciennes,* 83–97; Hawtrey, *Antichthon* 10 [1976] 22–24). This usage is largely metaphorical (cf. A. D. Nock, *Essays on Ancient Religion* II, 796–801), a point which Morgan has failed to note. But despite his preoccupation with this vocabulary, he has missed a probable reference to the mysteries in *Apol.* 41c8–d5, where Socrates speaks of his "high hopes" (41c8 εὐέλπιδας; cf. 40c4) for a better afterlife (see Des Places, 97, n. 46; also Shorey, *Plato's Republic* I [Loeb] 18, n. a). And though Morgan takes the entire passage (40c4ff.) to be an expression of Socratic agnosticism (cf. Brickhouse and Smith, *Socrates on Trial* [Princeton 1988] 255, n. 54, 257ff.), it does not really differ, at least in this respect, from *Phd.* 63b–64a (esp. b9–c7; and [N.B.] b4–5, which expressly alludes to *Apol.* 40c–41d), which latter dialogue Morgan takes to be fully Platonic. In this case, however, the doctrine of the *Apology* may not be quite so agnostic as he thinks (cf. *Crito* 54b–c) and, so, the development from Socrates to Plato not nearly as neat as he would like. Finally, as regards Orpheus' presence in *Apol.* 41a6, which Morgan (21) finds so significant, see Paus. 10.30.6ff. (= Test. 69 Kern), with Linforth, 30f. In all these instances a greater attention to the scholarly literature might have saved the writer from his numerous errors and made this book more useful for those who agree with its conclusions as well as for those who do not.

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