

EDITORIAL NOTES ON PHILOSTRATUS' BIOGRAPHY

BOTER (G.) *Critical Notes on Philostratus' Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Pp. viii + 317. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. Cased, £109.50, €119.95, US\$131.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-124365-8.

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In 2022 B. published the long-awaited critical edition of Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana (VA)* with De Gruyter. Before the appearance of this admirable Teubner edition, it was the custom both for editors and for general readers to use C.L. Kayser's age-old *editio minor*, which was published in 1870 and therefore required overall improvement. B. lived up to our expectations by carefully making editorial choices, using a wide range of sources such as manuscripts, indirect traditions and preceding editions. The book under review, a companion to this new edition, brings together detailed accounts of B.'s choices, which give us the opportunity to delve into what Philostratus aimed for as the author of the idiosyncratic work.

Before the critical notes themselves, B. offers an overview of various sources available to establish the text (pp. 1–17) and a brief description of the characteristics of Philostratus' Greek (pp. 17–21). Especially worthy of attention is the latter because, as B. says, it has 'important consequences for the constitution of the text' (p. 1). As a useful guideline B. picks out the comments made by the Byzantine scholar Photius, who writes about the *VA* in the *Bibliotheca* (codex 241) thus: 'His [sc. Philostratus'] syntax ... is such as no other writer would ever have employed ... he used to satiate the phrases which some older authors used incidentally, making free use of them, not without motive, but for pleasure's sake' (p. 18). Therefore, establishing the text of the *VA* is a daunting task, which makes us feel all the more deeply that B.'s work is of great value. That said, as it is impossible to discuss all B.'s notes here, I limit myself to the two groups of notes that I think are strongly linked to essential elements of Philostratean biography.

One group is composed of the word σοφία and its cognates. It is commonly acknowledged that the word is one of the most important keys to understanding the *Corpus Philostrateum* and that especially in the *VA* it plays a vital role in the characterisation of Apollonius. Just before starting the journey, this protagonist tells his disciples that 'I must go where wisdom (σοφία) and daemon lead me' (1.18). When Domitian, the biggest enemy, asks him who is his saviour, Apollonius proudly responds that it is 'the love of wisdom' (σοφίας ἔρωζ) (7.34). Difficulty lies in the fact that, to borrow B.'s words, '[i]n *VA* ... φιλοσοφία and σοφία and their cognates are often confused in the transmission' (p. 30, at 1.2.1). This confusion is inevitable because Apollonius, who loves wisdom (σοφία), is automatically engaged in philosophy (φιλοσοφία). B. attempts to answer this 'σοφία / φιλοσοφία' question for specific passages, offering his own explanation from many angles. A clear example comes from 1.2.1, where Philostratus emphasises the superiority of Apollonius to Pythagoras in intellectual activity. While manuscripts of primary status (A, E, F and C) and *Suda* read Ἀπολλώνιον ... θεϊότερον ἢ ὁ Πυθαγόρας τῇ σοφίᾳ προσελθόντα, Eusebius, who cites quite a few passages from the *VA* in *Contra Hieroclem*, reads φιλοσοφία. B. accepts Eusebius' reading, giving two reasons. First, in other works we often find the phrase φιλοσοφία προσέρχεσθαι. Second, Pythagoras is said to have invented the word φιλοσοφία. A similar solution can be found at 1.7.2, where the narrator refers to Apollonius' exploration of Pythagorean doctrines. In A, E, F and C we see τοὺς δὲ γε Πυθαγορείους [sc. λόγους] ἀρρήτω τινὶ φιλοσοφία

ξυνέλαβε, but Eusebius offers σοφία. B., who calls this the ‘reverse situation of 1.2.1’, again takes Eusebius’ reading as the authentic one. He argues that the instrumental ἄρρητῶ τινὶ σοφίᾳ can be interpreted as ‘without the help of a competent teacher’, which fits the context well, and adds that we also find the collocation of ἄρρητος and σοφία in other places of the *VA* (6.11.3 and 6.11.5). The example of 4.38.2 is even more significant. The phrase discussed is from a speech by Apollonius to his followers, who are going to visit Rome with their leader. As the city is ruled by Nero, the anti-philosophy emperor, Apollonius tries to encourage his terrified disciples. The transmitted texts read μὴ ἐξεῖναι σοφοῖς εἶναι in the description of Nero’s Rome, but B. says that the authentic reading must have been <φιλο>σόφοις. His reason is that before and after this section can be found recurrent uses of the words φιλόσοφος and φιλοσοφία as the main targets of Nero’s persistent attacks. These solutions by B. should not be taken simply as matters of textual criticism; without doubt they will invite scholars of the *VA* to reconsider the question of what σοφία means in the work.

The other group deals with the verb φασί. One can find this verb numerous times in the work, but, as several critics keenly point out, some uses of the verb cause interpretative problems, making the reader wonder what Philostratus the narrator really wants to say. So, at 5.5.2, when he offers geographical accounts of Gadeira (modern Spain), Philostratus tells us: ‘they say’ (φασί) that the golden band of Teucer was exhibited, but ‘Damis says’ (ὁ Δάμις . . . φησιν) that he does not know how and why the warrior sailed to the Oceanus. This ‘they’ seems to mean the followers of Apollonius’ worldwide travel, but, if so, why does Philostratus introduce separately the record of Damis, one of Apollonius’ followers himself? Connected to this kind of riddle is B.’s treatment of 3.4.1, where he reads Ἐντεῦθεν φασιν ὑπερβαλεῖν τοῦ Καυκάσου τὸ κατατεῖνον. The reading φασιν is only given in F, while A and E read φησιν instead. B. explains that we often find the chapters which begin with φασιν without a subject and that φησιν always appears with Δάμις as its subject as in the example above. The same problem occurs at 7.26.3, which is one part of Apollonius’ long speeches given to prisoners at Rome. All the other editions offer οὐθ’ ὑπὲρ ὧν ἀφίχθε κινδυνεύων ἕκαστος, ἀληθῆ ταῦτα εἶναι φήσει, τί βούλεταί, φησίν, ὁ ὑπὲρ τῶν οὐκ ὄντων θρήνος οὗτος; B. is dubious about φησίν (found in F), saying that the verb, whose subject should be Apollonius, cannot have been inserted at this point because the sage’s speech started long before at 7.26.2 with the word εἶπεν. Following rather A, E and Q, he reads φασί, which he takes together with the idiomatic phrase τί βούλεταί (‘What is the meaning of X?’). While these two cases are about the confusion of φασί and φησίν, B.’s notes at 5.6, where we have the unanimous reading φασί, are concerned with syntax. Though one manuscript reads Φασί δὲ καὶ τὸν ποταμὸν ἀναπλῶσαι τὸν Βαίτιν, B. argues that the underlined part should be Φασί καί, which is found in A, E, F and Q. Acknowledging the fact that in Philostratus we cannot find a sentence that begins with Φασί καί, B. asks us not to adhere to such strict regularity in reading this author. It is highly likely that B.’s arguments will develop our investigations of φασί.

The book is an indispensable tool for all those who are interested in Philostratus’ *VA*. Needless to say, we can use it as a ready-to-hand reference when we want to know B.’s explanation about specific readings, but that is not all; browse at will, and you are sure to be overwhelmed by B.’s amazing erudition and reasonable judgements based on it.

Kyoto University, Japan

YASUHIRO KATSUMATA
y-katsumata@kfy.biglobe.ne.jp