

**Marek Winiarczyk, *Utopie w Grecji hellenistycznej* [“Utopias in Hellenistic Greece”],** Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2010, 356 pp., ISBN 978-83-229-3140-0, PLN 31,50 (Antiquitas XXXII, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis No 3229)\*.

Marek Winiarczyk [= W.], an outstanding classical philologist as well as a religious studies expert and a historian of philosophy from Wrocław University assigned himself a difficult, albeit very interesting, research task in his *Utopias in Hellenistic Greece*. The book is a result of the need to analyse the phenomenon of Hellenistic utopian novel (in its various forms and genres), which has not been featured prominently and in fact has been largely neglected in terms of philological and historical research on the writing of the period. What is more, the author chose to interpret comprehensive source material related to this matter, not only literary and historiographical, but also epigraphical, numismatical, papyrological and archaeological, which has oftentimes been treated only perfunctorily by researchers of Greek writing. He declared his very ambitious intentions in the preface, saying he wanted to present a certain synthesis of the phenomenon of Hellenistic utopia, to organise and classify the extant utopian works or fragments of works, to look at them as a professional and to describe them in an original way, and to explore the authors’ objectives and their philosophical and ideological affiliations. W. has achieved his objective superbly not only because he devoted 25 years of research to this work, but also because, as one of the best-known researcher in the field, he approached the project with an academic, critical distance and philological perfection, reflected in the effort to look, in an innovative way, for the origin and sources of each ancient literary work concerned with utopian matters that he described. It should be emphasised that he did so with great methodological consistency and on the basis of comprehensive academic literature, going back to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and even earlier, presenting thorough, detailed polemics with arguments from studies on literature, religion and philosophy (see the extensive bibliography, pp. 254–310).

Following Chapter I (pp. 13–36), which attempts to define the phenomenon of ancient utopia and to provide its systematisation and meanings throughout the ages, the book’s pages give us very interesting pictures of intentional, utopian worlds created by more or less known writers and thinkers of the Hellenistic times. The starting point (Chapter II, pp. 37–49) is the story of Meropis – the great, mythical land situated beyond Europe, Asia and Libya – from Theopompus’ lost *Philippica* (see *Appendix I*, pp. 205 f.). The author emphasises the difficulty of categorising the myth, resulting both from the fact that the original text is lost (Aelian quoted the most extensive version) and from problems with classifying it in the ‘utopian’ typology. Using the figure of allegory to explain its literary and ideological connotations in Chapter III, W. turns to Hecataeus of Abdera and his work *On the Hyperboreans* (pp. 50–71), excerpts from which, included in Diodorus’ *Bibliotheca Historica* and Aelian’s *On the Nature of Animals*, he also quotes in Polish in *Appendix I* (pp. 206–208). Hecataeus describes the island of Helixoea, inhabited by the Hyperboreans, whose form of natural and social order is different from the ones known in other lands. It is a prosperous island, ruled justly on the basis of divine law and worship for Apollo; it is fertile, has a pleasant climate, is filled with inhabitants who always turn their souls towards the divine foundation of reality rather than towards secular idols; inhabitants who are friendly, particularly towards the Greeks. It seems that

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\* The book is now available in German: *Die hellenistischen Utopien*, Berlin–New York: W. de Gruyter, 2011 (Beiträge zur Altertumskunde 293).

C. MÜLLER and E. ROHDE, mentioned critically by W., were right after all when they interpreted Hecataeus' utopia as a religious one and saw it as a reflection of dreams and longing for a world of religious reverence, a community of people and gods, giving people spiritual perfection and joy of life in its deepest dimension.

Similarly to the previous chapter, in Chapter IV (pp. 72–108) the factor of source discussion on utopia, described in the work *How Alexander Was Educated* by Onesicritus of Astypalaia, is highly important. In confrontation with the information from ancient writers and hypotheses of contemporary researchers with regard to the sources of this story and the time of its creation, the author argues that the fictitious land of king Musicanus in India depicted by Onesicritus, whose description has been preserved mostly in Strabo's *Geographica*, is not a utopia of the Cynic kind, which Onesicritus supposedly created; what is more it does not have the characteristic features and values of a real utopia. W. settles for stating that some utopian elements can be seen in the description, as well as paradoxographical ones (so typical for ancient accounts of curiosities and wonders of the Indian nature and the exceptional living conditions of the inhabitants of the land) and the idealisation of peoples in far-away lands, which have natural law. W. is right to successfully defend his solution to the matter of the character of Onesicritus' utopia. Following the reasoning of the researchers criticised by W., who saw a project of a utopian state in the depiction of Musicanus' land, we might conclude, turning to the so-called *Indica* in the literature of the late Hellenistic period, that e.g. the natural, ethnographic and geographic *thaumata* of the Indian world included in the third book of the aretalogical, romanticised biography *Vita Apollonii Tyanei* by Philostratus of Lemnos, together with the description of the ideal community of sages-Brahmans, long-haired, barefooted, wearing wool robes, having supernatural powers, living in a transcendently given state of material and spiritual wellbeing on a towering hill surrounded by rocks (*VA* III 13–15), should also be classified as literature containing utopian ideas. Even though the influence of authors writing about India, including Onesicritus (e.g. J. CHARPENTIER, *The Indian Travels of Apollonius of Tyana*, Uppsala 1934, pp. 59, 65), can be seen in this depiction, researchers of Philostratus' work, similarly to W. in reference to the description of Musicanus' land in Onesicritus' work, do not classify this passage of *VA* or the ones about a community of gymnosophists in Ethiopia (*VA* VI 10 f.) as a project of a social utopia showing a model, prosperous community of people resembling gods, which sages dream of.

In Chapter V (pp. 109–161) W., using his previous valuable research on Euhemerus of Messene, explicated in the works on *Sacred History (Hiera Anagraphe)* and Euhemerus' religious orientation (e.g. *Euhemerus von Messene. Leben, Werk und Nachwirkung*, München–Leipzig 2002), with his usual objectivity first presents faithful, but full of academic controversies, information about the life and writings of this religious thinker, geographer, historian and poet. Then, in a detailed discussion with researchers of Euhemerus, he analyses ambiguities related to the time the book was written and the contents of the few extant summaries of this fictitious novel in Diodorus' *Bibliotheca Historica* and in Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones*, from Ennius' *Euhemerus sive Sacra Historia* (*Appendix* I, pp. 210–216). In the academic debate about the subject matter and purpose of Euhemerus' utopian story (whose essence is the depiction, written in the convention of *locus amoenus*, of the community life on the islands of Hiera and Panchaea in the Indian Ocean with their autarkic, collective economy, all-encompassing *pietas* towards gods, with the special cult of Zeus Triphylaios), the author again emphasises his research stance. He accepts E. ROHDE's opinion that Euhemerus' book should be considered a utopian travelogue, but with a clear narration including important and original theogonic theses and propagating *theologia dipertita*, not atheist theories which are usually ascribed to it. Also, he does not find in *Hiera Anagraphe* a utopian construction of an ideal earthly state and the idea of universal oneness and *philia* of people. It is unknown whether Euhemerus had instances of doubt as to the existence of gods, but certainly, W. argues, he explored the origin of religion and the cult of rulers. Also in Chapter V (pp. 162–181), the author enters into polemics about Iambulos' work of unknown title, containing the description of the idealised *Island of the Sun* (summary in Diodorus' *Bibliotheca Historica*; here in *Appendix* I, pp. 216–220) and organises

the previously known information about this work. This includes hypotheses about the authorship of the work, the author's journey to the East, the content and philosophical message of the mysterious description and an attempt to reconstruct the work. Using structural analysis, W. comes to the conclusion that, contrary to what some scholars claim, Iambulos' Island of the Sun (and a number of other identical islands), situated on the Equator in the Indian Ocean, cannot be classified as a political utopia of e.g. Stoic type which aims to create an ideal polis, but rather, like Euhemerus' work, the story is a romantic travelogue; its imagery uses the convention of *locus amoenus*, its metaphor is taken from the myth of golden age and from writings glorifying the natural perfection of existence of peoples unsullied by the corruption of civilisation. The author disagrees with the supposition that Aristonicus of Pergamon (Eumenes III) was inspired by Iambulos' ideas when he called his people and supporters, referred to as *Heliopolitai*, to rise against Rome in 133 BC. He does not deny, however, that Iambulos' utopian story had an impact on the shape of political utopia in modern times (Thomas More, Tommaso Campanella).

The book ends with Chapter VII (pp. 182–194), interesting in terms of strictly historical research, written with professional discipline, devoted to the city of Uranopolis founded by Alexarchus on the peninsula of Athos ca. 316. Winiarczyk agrees with O. WEINREICH's opinion that there is no evidence to support the thesis, put forward by some scholars, about an attempt to create an ideal polis in this city, based on theosophical foundations, closely integrated with the cult of Helios and other heavenly gods. Since there is no literary text that talks about the social structure or institutions of such a political entity or about the introduction of a higher principle of government, based on a utopian model, deliberations on this topic are in effect purely speculative and by definition do not lead to any final conclusions.

As has been mentioned, the work has great academic value and the author approached the already established opinions on utopia in the literature of the Hellenistic period in an innovative and bold way. However, there is a certain disharmony between the title and the research stance which the author assumes with regard to the texts analysed in his heuristic analyses. It raises the question whether the book should not be titled *Utopian Novels in Hellenistic Greece* or *Utopian Motifs in the Literature of the Hellenistic Period*, since W. argues with full conviction that none of the presented works is a utopia in the strict sense. After all, utopia in its actual meaning, i.e. a project of a new, politically perfect system, as described in the writings of the Hellenistic Stoics Zeno of Citium and Chrysippus of Soli (as well as the Cynics), is not the subject of his monograph and is only briefly mentioned (p. 28, 195). As the author stated in the preface, he intends to explore this issue in future and complete his previous valuable studies on ancient utopias in another work.

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