rather than considered in his own right, and other Epicureans are completely ignored. Perhaps, as I have suggested, the title of the book is misleading to a classicist, but it is still unfair to criticise the work for not dealing with what it never intended to discuss: as it stands there is yet a great deal we can learn from it.

Susan Hope


Many will be familiar with some of the works of Plutarch of Chaeronea, Galen the medical writer, and Apuleius of Madaura, without having the slightest clue that they could all be grouped with a large number of other known thinkers under the heading 'Middle Platonists'. This title is generally given to those who professed the Platonist (or in some cases Pythagorean) faith in the 1st century B.C. and the first two centuries A.D. during which period Platonism gradually became the dominant philosophy, having important influences on popular religion and early Christianity.

Philosophically the Middle Platonists — or rather the scant remains which they have left us — are not of great importance, but one's assessment of them is vital for determining one's attitude to problems in both Plato and Plotinus. Historically they should be studied by all who are interested in the cultural life of the early Roman Empire as well as by all students of early Christian history and doctrine.

Up to this point we have had no thorough account of Middle Platonism in the English language, indeed no adequate account at all, and for this reason alone Dillon's book must be welcomed. Its uniqueness has also presented the author with a serious problem, since the book must fulfil the role of a 'specialist contribution' as well as being a readable account of the thought of the period which will serve as an introduction to the non-specialist. It is perhaps more satisfactory in the former role, which is in part the result of the nature of Dillon's subject matter and partly a consequence of his approach.

Dillon has decided to depart from the theory of two major schools within Middle Platonism, concentrating on individuals rather than on 'movements' or common attitudes. Indeed, by abandoning the slightly unsatisfactory term 'eclectic' as applied to Middle Platonists, he has excused himself from discussing a feature which forms a key link in the understanding of both Platonists and other philosophers of the time. There was a compelling trend towards reconciling the philosophers of the past with each other, explaining their differences as ones of terminology or context, and so uniting philosophy (or two
or more of its schools) against the uneducated and the atheistic (including Epicureans). One wanted to link as many of the great names of the past as possible with one's own views, appealing to the authority of a 'golden age' of philosophy to establish one's orthodoxy.

By concentrating on individual differences rather than on the similarity between thinkers Dillon has committed himself to producing a work that is fragmented:- into sections on 34 different thinkers (or sources), many of whom are known to us from meagre fragments covering only two or three aspects of their doctrine. Consequently the majority of these sections cannot paint a full enough picture of the thinker concerned to be interesting in their own right. There is also a temptation to use the work as a source-book for the doctrines of required individuals rather than as a unity. This is a pity, for it is well worth while trying to see Middle Platonism as a unity in spite of the developments and internal disputes which Dillon shows so well.

The book begins with a study of Plato's unwritten doctrines and those of his immediate successors. The 43 pages do not constitute a contribution in their own right, and I believe that a more direct introduction to the issues of Middle Platonism would have sufficed. Pages 25-32 (on Xenocrates) contain much that is unconvincing, and too great a desire for speculation (a rare fault in this book, but least appropriate where a firm base is needed from which one's history can commence).

My next criticism is one of omission. Dillon proceeds to a challenging account of Antiochus of Ascalon (a great influence on Cicero and often considered Father of Middle Platonism) without any proper discussion of Philo of Larissa, head of the Academy at that time, and an antagonist of Antiochus. The neglect seems to imply that Philo was a mere sceptic, but his division of moral philosophy shows that he considered positive teaching to be of great importance. He was respected at the very time when Alexandrian Platonism was at its most important (the real beginning of Middle Platonism according to Dillon); and his efforts to link traditional Platonic doctrine with scepticism, seeing a place for both elenchus and doctrine in philosophical education, are needed to explain the presence of sceptical elements in Philo Judaeus, Plutarch, Maximus Tyrius, and the anonymous Theaetetus-Commentary as well as a general neglect of epistemology in Middle Platonism.

On Antiochus himself Dillon gives a full and interesting account, rightly belittling the question of whether he was the first to make the Forms the thoughts of God, and rightly rejecting him as the supreme founder of Middle Platonism:- though perhaps not going far enough in this direction if one bears in mind that Plutarch only mentions the man, with no apparent devotion, in the Lives rather than in the extensive Moralia. In fact no philosophers except Cicero and Sextus Empiricus show any interest in him. Sadly Dillon does not take into account the important theory of R.E. Witt, subsequently developed by S. Lilla (Clement of Alexandria, a Study of Christian Platonism and Gnosticism), that
Clement of Alexandria is using, perhaps indirectly. Antiochus' theory of knowledge: his only truly original contribution to the history of philosophy.

The section on Posidonius, although it may be substantially correct, dismisses too easily the claims of that scholar to have influenced Middle Platonism significantly. It is not enough to give a summary of Posidonian philosophy and to see sharp differences there from basic Middle Platonism, for one has to make the distinction between Posidonius as a Stoic and Posidonius as a commentator on Plato. We see clearly from Plutarch (De Proc. 1023cd) that the two must have been very different, and since Posidonius used Old Academic doctrine in his notes on the Timaeus, he may have been partly responsible for a revived interest in Old Academic thought among the Middle Platonists. Again, Dillon points out that a strong Pythagorean element is characteristic of the revived Platonism at Alexandria, where Eudorus and others seemed to use Plato as a source for Pythagoras. Posidonius is the first known thinker to have linked Plato closely with Pythagoras after being misled by Hellenistic Pythagorean writings, and his possible influence ought to be considered here. Apart from this we know of Posidonius' attitude to particular passages of the Timaeus, Republic, Phaedrus, and Laws, showing that he, at least, had read Plato's works with a keen interest, which is more than we can prove for Antiochus.

The Middle Platonists are most studied for their metaphysics, and Dillon is often in danger of proving misleading in this field. He speaks of logos-doctrine as being something which Middle Platonists could be expected to have, but such a theory is nowhere prominent in Middle Platonism outside Philo Judaeus and early Christianity. De Iside 373ab is poor evidence for such a concept in Plutarch's regular system, and does not warrant the extended discussion given at 200-1; further needless speculation about logos-doctrine occurs in relation to Atticus (252) and others. Dillon likewise makes too much of the One and Indefinite Dyad in Plutarch, neglecting the common and very Plutarchian 'limit' and 'unlimited'. A strangely simple view of Albinus' metaphysics is given on p.284.

There is an odd misrepresentation of Plato Laws I 63lb-d on p.125, and two serious misprints occur: 'having produced' for 'having been produced' (132) and 'classes of God' for 'classes of Good' (148). Translations twice ignore probable lacunae (25, 200) which could seriously affect interpretation.

The usefulness of Dillon's work, however, remains unquestioned, and he has achieved two notable successes. The Middle Platonists have at last been freed from the shadow of Plotinus, in relation to whom they have been previously studied: and Apuleius has been freed from 'the school of Gaius' to which he had been long thought to be indebted. The latter success has also brought us closer to identifying the author of Ps. — Plutarch On Fate. The book will be a primary work of reference for the study of Middle Platonism for some time.