

ORATION VII

INTRODUCTION TO ORATION VII

THE Seventh Oration is directed against the Cynic Heracleios, who had ventured to recite before an audience when Julian was present a myth or allegory in which the gods were irreverently handled. Julian raises the question whether fables and myths are suitable for a Cynic discourse. He names the regular divisions of philosophy and decides that the use of myths may properly be allowed only to ethical philosophers and writers on theology: that myth is intended always as a means of religious teaching and should be addressed to children and those whose intellect does not allow them to envisage the truth without some such assistance. In Sallust's treatise *On the Gods and the World* he gives much the same account of the proper function of myths and divides them into five species, giving examples of each. "To wish to teach the whole truth about the gods to all produces contempt in the foolish, because they cannot understand, and lack of zeal in the good; whereas to conceal the truth by myths prevents the contempt of the foolish and compels the good to practise philosophy."¹ This is precisely the opinion of Julian as expressed

¹ Murray's translation of Sallust in *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, New York, 1912.

INTRODUCTION TO ORATION VII

in the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Orations. Though both Julian and Sallust explain the myths away they are never rationalistic, and never offer the least excuse for scepticism. Julian's explanation of the Semele myth,¹ which makes Semele an inspired prophetess and not the mother of Dionysus, tends to the greater glory of the god. The conclusion is that Heracleios should not have used myth at all, but in any case he used the wrong sort and wrote in the wrong spirit. He should have used such a myth as that composed by Prodicus the sophist on the Choice of Heracles at the Crossroads, an allegory which is more than once cited by Julian and was a favourite illustration in later Greek literature.²

To show Heraclius what he might have written with propriety Julian adds a parable of his own modelled on that of Prodicus. In this he himself plays the part of a second Heracles, and takes the opportunity to vilify Constantius and point out his own mission of reformer and restorer of order and religion to the Empire. Throughout the parable there are striking resemblances with the First Oration of Dio Chrysostom, and Asmus³ has made a detailed comparison of the two writers to prove that Julian wrote with Dio before him. In many of these parallels both Julian and Dio can be traced to a common classical source, usually Plato, but there is no doubt that Julian was thoroughly familiar

¹ *Oration 7*, 219.

² Cf. Vol. I, *Oration 2*. 56 D.

³ Asmus, *Julian und Dion Chrysostomus*, 1895; cf. Praechter, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 5. *Dion Chrysostomus als Quelle Julians*. Julian only once mentions Dio by name, *Oration 7*, 212 a.

INTRODUCTION TO ORATION VII

with the work of Dio and often used the same illustrations. Themistius¹ however uses the Prodicus myth in much the same words as Dio, and it is imitated also by Maximus of Tyre.²

In conclusion Julian praises the earlier Cynics and criticises the later, in much the same words as he had used in the Sixth Oration.

¹ Themistius, 280 A.

² Maximus of Tyre, *Dissertation* 20.

ΙΟΥΛΙΑΝΟΥ ΑΤΤΟΚΡΑΤΟΡΟΣ ΠΡΟΣ
 ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΟΝ ΚΤΝΙΚΟΝ

204

ΠΕΡΙ ΤΟΥ ΠΩΣ ΚΤΝΙΣΤΕΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΙ ΠΡΕΠΕΙ ΤΩΙ ΚΤΝΙ
 ΜΥΘΟΥΣ ΠΛΑΤΤΕΙΝ

Ἡ πολλὰ γίνεται ἐν μακρῷ χρόνῳ· τοῦτο ἐκ
 τῆς κωμωδίας ἀκηκοότι μοι πρῶτην ἐπήλθεν ἐκβοή-
 σαι, ὀπηνίκα παρακληθέντες ἠκροώμεθα κυνὸς
 οὔτι τορὸν οὐδὲ γενναίου ὑλακτοῦντος, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ
 αἱ τίτθαι μύθους ἄδοντας καὶ οὐδὲ τούτους ὑγιῶς
 διατιθεμένου. παραχρήμα μὲν οὖν ἐπήλθέ μοι
 διαναστάντι διαλύσαι τὸν σύλλογον· ἐπεὶ δὲ B
 ἐχρήν ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ κωμωδουμένων Ἡρακλέους
 καὶ Διονύσου παρὰ τῶν κωμωδῶν ἀκούειν, οὐ τοῦ
 λέγοντος, ἀλλὰ τῶν συνειλεγμένων χάριν ὑπέ-
 μεινα, μᾶλλον δέ, εἰ χρή τι καὶ νεανικώτερον
 εἰπεῖν, ἡμῶν αὐτῶν ἔνεκα καὶ τοῦ μὴ δοκεῖν ὑπὸ
 δεισιδαιμονίας μᾶλλον ἢ διανοίας εὐσεβοῦς καὶ C
 λελογισμένης, ὥσπερ αἱ πελειάδες, ὑπὸ τῶν ῥη-
 ματίων σοβηθεῖς ἀναπτῆναι. ἔμενον δὲ ἐκείνο
 πρὸς ἑμαυτὸν εἰπὼν

Τέτλαθι δὴ, κραδίη, καὶ κύντερον ἄλλο ποτ'
 ἔτλης,

ἀνάσχου καὶ κυνὸς ληροῦντος ὀλίγον ἡμέρας

TO THE CYNIC HERACLEIOS

HOW A CYNIC OUGHT TO BEHAVE, AND WHETHER
IT IS PROPER FOR HIM TO COMPOSE MYTHS

“TRULY with the lapse of time many things come to pass!”¹ This verse I have heard in a comedy and the other day I was tempted to proclaim it aloud, when by invitation we attended the lecture of a Cynic whose barking was neither distinct nor noble; but he was crooning myths as nurses do, and even these he did not compose in any profitable fashion. For a moment my impulse was to rise and break up the meeting. But though I had to listen as one does when Heracles and Dionysus are being caricatured in the theatre by comic poets,² I bore it to the end, not for the speaker's sake but for the sake of the audience, or rather, if I may presume to say so, it was still more for my own sake, so that I might not seem to be moved by superstition rather than by a pious and rational sentiment and to be scared into flight by his miserable words like a timid dove. So I stayed and repeated to myself the famous line “Bear it my heart: yea thou didst of yore endure things yet more shameful.”³ Endure for the brief fraction of a day even

¹ Eupolis *fr.* 4. ² Cf. *Misopogon* 366 c. ³ *Odyssey* 20. 18.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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