

THE ACADEMIC AND THE ALEXANDRIAN EDITIONS OF PLATO'S WORKS

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In 1942 Günther Jachmann¹⁾ took fellow classicists to task for reconstructing the text history of Plato in antiquity without giving attention to a priceless testimony, the critical signs listed by Diogenes Laertius (III 65 f.) with the comment that they were found in the *biblia* of Plato. In Jachmann's view the use of these signs was evidence for a critical edition of Plato's works by one of the outstanding Alexandrian scholars. Jachmann's opinion has been challenged, notably by Hartmut Erbse and Rudolf Pfeiffer,²⁾ who emphasize that the signs recorded by Diogenes are not identical with those commonly employed by the Alexandrian critics. The tendency is to revert to the idea of a standard edition issued by the Academy at a time not too distant from Plato's death.

Our principal task may seem to be an examination of the "signs" in question. However, to approach them with an open mind we must first achieve clarity about the sentence in Diogenes which follows his description of the signs; for this sentence invites misunderstandings, and if misunderstood interferes not only with a correct appraisal of the signs themselves but with every serious attempt of reconstructing the early history of Plato's text. The sentence in III 66 reads: τὰ μὲν σημεῖα ταῦτα καὶ τὰ βιβλία τοσαῦτα· ἄπερ Ἀντίγονός φησιν ὁ Καρύστιος ἐν τῷ περὶ Ζήνωνος νεωστὶ ἐκδοθέντα εἶ τις ἤθελε διαναγνῶναι, μισθὸν ἐτέλει τοῖς κερτημένοις.

The beginning of the sentence (τὰ μὲν... τοσαῦτα), simple and straightforward as it looks, conceals a trap. Wilamowitz,³⁾ as one might expect, kept out of it. Others too may have stayed on safe ground and not a few may, like Henry Alline,⁴⁾ without clearly realizing the nature of the trouble, have sensed that Diogenes used a "gauche formule de transition." Still how

easily unwary readers are caught may be illustrated by the rendering of the sentence ἄπερ Ἀντίγονος... in the Loeb Diogenes: "As Antigonos of Carystus says..., when the writings were first edited with critical marks, those in possession charged a certain fee to anyone who wished to consult them."

A brief reflection will show why this understanding of the sentence is seriously misleading. A "recent edition" referred to by Antigonos of Carystus in his account of Zeno can hardly have appeared much later than 260 or 250 B.C.⁵⁾ The word διαναγνῶναι⁶⁾ suggests a complete edition, and the same word in combination with νεωστὶ ἐκδοθέντα indicates something in the order of a "complete first edition." But that such an edition produced around 250 B.C. should have carried the critical signs listed is on historical grounds most improbable.⁷⁾ Fortunately, it is unnecessary to assume so close a connection of σημεῖα and βιβλία in the sentence. As Antonio Carlini⁸⁾ has acutely observed, ἄπερ and the clause introduced by it refer only to the βιβλία, and τὰ βιβλία τοσαῦτα is for Diogenes a standard formula for the transition of the doctrines. A brief look at the topics treated by Diogenes prior to 65 f. will confirm Carlini's opinion and make it easy to understand how σημεῖα and βιβλία have come together in this strange sentence. After all, Diogenes' work is a compilation,⁹⁾ and if this brutal truth is often forgotten and research on his scissor-and-paste methods has practically ceased it may yet be resumed with increased vigor as soon as we have a well founded text. Here we only need to look at the sequence of topics in III 49 ff.

Roughly, the topics are these: The principal types of Plato's dialogues (49-51; in 50 f. the dialogues are enumerated); Plato's methods, scil. dogmatic, aporetic etc. (52-55); a comparison of dialogue and tragedy (56); a new listing of the dialogues, this time organized in tetralogies as they have reached us (57-61); Aristophanes' alternative grouping in trilogies (62) and related matters; comments on Plato's style and usage (63 f.); three types of exegesis practised on his works (65). Next follows the list and the definitions of the "signs" with which we are gradually getting ready to deal (65 f.).

We now realize that in the sentence which we decided to scrutinize the first four words (τὰ μὲν σημεῖα ταῦτα) are perfectly

in place but that the four immediately following cannot be accepted as the summary which they pretend to be; for the enumeration of Plato's works has come to an end some time ago -- strictly speaking in 61, though if we wish to be generous we may allow the subject to continue in 62. The reason why Diogenes in our sentence returns to the βιβλία is not far to seek. He wishes to work in the item of information derived from Antigonus. Whether he could have found a more appropriate place for it elsewhere is not for us to say; what matters is that the "signs" have nothing to do with the "recent" edition mentioned by Antigonus.

What, then, is this edition and where did it originate? Antigonus' knowledge of it provides the *terminus ante quem*. Beyond this point speculation has a large scope, but what may be maintained with a good scholarly conscience is little. Still some possibilities deserve consideration.

As the copies of the new edition seem not to have been numerous -- was it really, as Alline suggests, an "edition de luxe" or did the task of copying many works, some of them quite extensive, take so long?¹⁰⁾ -- do we know anyone of the happy few to whom Diogenes refers as κερτημένοι? Perhaps we do. Diogenes in IV 32, while introducing us to Arcesilaus, reports (in a rather hodge-podge chapter): 'Εφκει δὴ (δὲ ?) θαυμάζειν καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα καὶ τὰ βιβλία ἐκέκτητο αὐτοῦ.¹¹⁾ Even if Arcesilaus wavered for some time between different schools and in the end started a new brand of Academic philosophy (cf. D.L. IV 28), the acquisition (or possession) of Plato's works by a head of his school would hardly be noteworthy unless copies of the complete works were either a rarity or uncommonly expensive.

Our next question -- and indeed an inescapable one -- is whether this edition was produced by the Academy. We have indicated that this opinion enjoys considerable vogue. It is held by distinguished scholars particularly at home in questions of text history, and even someone anxious not to show unwarranted confidence must admit that no other single candidate has as strong a claim as Plato's school. Wilamowitz, the founder of systematic "Textgeschichte," suggested that the Academy produced this edition at the time of Arcesilaus or Lacydes "gerade weil der Plato der alten Akademie aufgegeben war."¹²⁾ We have just

by another road arrived at a date close to the time of Arcesilaus, although (if our reasoning is correct) the edition was not a task that fell to him as *scholarchos* but had been completed earlier, say, before 270. We may as well place it anywhere between 300 and 270.¹³⁾ Judging by the Flinders Petrie papyrus of *Phaedo*, corruption was rampant in the texts and the need for an "authoritative" edition correspondingly acute.¹⁴⁾ But it would be idle to deny the precarious quality of these conclusions. Anyone holding that we should place the authoritative Academic edition less far from the year of Plato's death¹⁵⁾ cannot be refuted.

Closely related to the question of Academic origin is the other whether or not Plato's autographs served as the basis of the edition. Surely if these autographs were in existence, no group (or individual) is as likely to have been in their possession as the Academy. But how long were autographs kept?¹⁶⁾ We cannot be sure, but as the idea that the autographs were available for the edition is far from absurd, it will be well to think about its implications. An edition made from autographs can hardly have contained any *spuria*. At the opposite end of the spectrum, an edition not based on autographs and produced about three generations after Plato's death may, as Wilamowitz argued, have included most or indeed almost all *spuria*.¹⁷⁾

Unfortunately, the problem of *spuria* is closely tied to the formation of the tetralogies. For while tetralogies I-III consists entirely of genuine dialogues, in IV three dialogues are certainly spurious and the fourth (the *Greater Alcibiades*) under grave suspicion. Tetralogies V-IX show little discrimination between true and false. Should editors in the Academy really have exercised so little care about keeping the authentic works apart? The origin of the tetralogies -- a topic on which I touch reluctantly -- remains shrouded in darkness. In the absence of testimonies bearing directly on the question, the agreement between the tetralogies in our Mss. with those recorded by Diogenes (and suggested by Albinus, *Isag.*4) provides the safest basis of operation. The agreement points to some authoritative edition; but regarding time, place and circumstances of this edition it provides no indication. It can hardly

have been the Academic edition. We must look for help elsewhere. On the once beloved 'Αττικ(ιαν)ᾶ ἀντίγραφα¹⁸⁾ no one will any longer construct an edifice of hypotheses. Varro's (*de L.L.* 7.37) *Plato in IV*, a citation of the *Phaedo* by its place in the tetralogy to which it belongs, furnishes a *terminus ante quem*-- although, strictly speaking, this does not extend to the entire scheme of nine tetralogies. The association of Dercyllidas' name with the tetralogical scheme¹⁹⁾ is a welcome confirmation of Varro's testimony. Dercyllidas may have lived one or several generations before Varro, but since all that we really know is that he lived before Thrasyllus, the astrologer of Tiberius, we had better not use his name and guesses about him to push the tetralogies farther back. Thrasyllus' own testimony adds nothing.²⁰⁾ Finally, to destroy one more illusion, Diogenes' testimony (III 61), "Ἐνιοὶ δέ, ὧν ἔστι καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης ὁ γραμματικὸς, εἰς τριλογίας ἔλκουσι τοὺς διαλόγους, must not be read as implying the existence of the tetralogical arrangement prior to Aristophanes.²¹⁾ It is hard to imagine why of all men just he, the great cataloguer, should depart from the standard grouping with the deplorable result of leaving a good number of the dialogues ἄτακτα, i.e. outside the groups he put together. In fact, his unfortunate experiment makes far more sense if there was no standard grouping yet.

It remains to offer our comments on the critical σημεῖα. We have detached them from the edition known to Antigonus; continuing our line of maximal caution, we may as well suggest that there is no need to postulate one or several editions, let alone a general editorial practice, of using all of these signs in every dialogue. Diogenes' phrasing leaves room for a rather sporadic employment of them. As for the signs as such, granted that they are not in every detail identical with those applied by the great Homeric critics, to deny any connection with their signs seems to me no less mistaken -- if not indeed a greater error -- than a sweeping assertion of identity between them.²²⁾ While there are instances of complete agreement, Diogenes' list as a whole is best understood as a development of the Alexandrian practice. More precisely, it shows an adaptation of this practice to the specific conditions of Plato's dialogues and to the interests of their readers and critics.

The use of the *obelos* πρὸς τὴν ἀθέτησιν (III 66) is surely as orthodox as anybody could wish, and if the ὀβελὸς περιεστιγμένος (*ibid.*), which is applied to "gratuitous atheteses" (scil. of earlier critics), is not familiar from Homeric criticism it yet presupposes the simple *obelos* and recalls the διπλῆ περιεστιγμένη, two signs that are used by Aristarchus.²³⁾ Again Diogenes lists *sigma* and *antisigma* as used πρὸς τὰς διττὰς χρήσεις καὶ μεταθέσεις τῶν γραφῶν, a description that may be understood in more ways than one but can hardly mean something altogether different from the dual versions that Aristarchus marked by these two signs.²⁴⁾ The *diple* was by Homeric critics used for various kinds of observations, but mostly with reference to peculiarities of language and style; in Plato it serves to indicate his *placita* (III 65). Here surely is a difference, but the application of the διπλῆ περιεστιγμένη in Platonic texts πρὸς τὰς ἐνίων διορθώσεις corresponds to Aristarchus' use of it in polemizing against his predecessor Zenodotus. It is curious that the complex sign has retained its function, whereas the simple one has been transferred to a new task -- but may we not reasonably regard the *placita* as the noteworthy items in a philosophical text? Two more examples will do: *chi* serves in Homeric criticism to indicate remarkable lines as well as words that are in need of explanation; in Plato too it refers to matters of language, more precisely to vocabulary (λέξεις), figures and usage in general. Finally,²⁵⁾ the asterisk, in Homeric texts a sign which marks recurrent lines, is in Platonic criticism given a more ambitious and intellectual purpose, scil. of drawing attention to the harmony (or intrinsic consistency) of his doctrines, again something different from but not totally alien to recurrence and repetition. However, in this case a comparison between the Homeric scholars and the information contained in Diogenes may not reveal the whole story. Alline has found fifteen instances of the asterisk in the margins of Venetus T.²⁶⁾ Most of them cluster around the myth of the *Phaedrus*, and the only common denominator of which I can think for these passages (245 c 2 f.; 246 b 5 f.; 248 a 1 f.; c 1 f.; 249 d 2-4; 250 c 7 f.; 253 c 7; 257 a 3) is that they announce or adumbrate significant topics.

New light has been shed on Diogenes' list by Vittorio Bartoletti's publication of a Florentine papyrus that contains a similar list of signs.²⁷⁾ The papyrus antedates Diogenes and the text is most easily understood as belonging to a treatise on the exegesis of Plato's dialogues. Compared with Diogenes, the list on the papyrus is incomplete; yet the reason why I call it similar rather than identical is, apart from small differences in content, that the Florentine piece presents the signs in a more rational sequence. While Diogenes introduces us to the ὄβελος περιεστιγμένος before defining the *obelos* itself,²⁸⁾ in the papyrus the *obelos* itself is explained first, the περιεστιγμένος later. Also the papyrus acquaints us with the use of *antisigma* as well as of ἀντίσιγμα περιεστιγμένον, whereas Diogenes' list includes only the latter (conceivably *antisigma* was originally in his text, and its loss is due to accidents in the course of transmission.)

We have called Diogenes a compiler and have seen how awkward -- and confusing -- he is when introducing an item derived from Antigonus. Thanks to Bartoletti we now know what kind of source he used for the σημεῖα. The short section preceding these, where he reports about the threefold exegesis of Plato, is most probably borrowed from still another source, and the source for the rather haphazard remarks on Plato's vocabulary (III 63 f.) is again more likely than not to be another one. This should now suffice; for we cannot undertake to separate the various strands of the compilation. Somehow Diogenes' book on Plato offers us a cross-section of the topics relating to Plato that were discussed at that time -- perhaps not so much by the pundits as by literati and popularizers.²⁹⁾ A papyrus recently published by Michael Haslam³⁰⁾ appears to deal with questions concerning the dialogues that may parallel, however remotely, Diogenes' exposé in III 50.

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NOTES

- 1) *Der Platotext* (Nachr. Gött. Akad., 1942, 7) 334.
- 2) See Erbse in H. Hunger, etc., *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung*, I (Zurich, 1960) 219 ff.; 258 ff.; 261 f.; Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship*, I (Oxford, 1968) 196 f.; see also 65 f. and n.3. Ernst Bickel too opposed Jachmann in a paper (*Rh. Mus.* 92, 1944) in which he reviewed the entire complex of questions.
- 3) *Antigonos von Karystos* (Berlin, 1881 and 1966) 122.
- 4) *Histoire du texte de Platon* (Paris, 1915) 46.
- 5) Zeno died in 264/63. References in his *bios* to events later than that year are of course not impossible, but considerations of intrinsic probability point the other way.
- 6) I gather from H.S. Long's edition (Oxford, 1964) that this word is unanimously transmitted. As long as διαγνώσαι was thought to be in the Mss., Casaubonus' conjecture ἀναγνώσαι enjoyed undeserved favor.
- 7) This will appear from the discussion below. Here I merely remark that some of the signs (notably the *diple periestigmene* and the *obelos periestigmenos* as defined in III 66) presuppose previous critical work on the text.
- 8) *Studi sulla tradizione antica e medievale del Fedone* (Rome, 1972) 18 ff. Having arrived independently at the same conclusions as Carlini, I confine myself to arguments that may supplement his.
- 9) For Diogenes' compilation see Eduard Schwartz, *R. E.*, s.v. 740 ff., or Wilamowitz, *Platon* II (1919) 1 ff.; 5 ff., where he refers to Diels' handling of Diogenes in the *Vorsokratiker*. He might have added Diels' *Poetarum philosophorum fragmenta* (Berlin, 1901), where the compilation is brought out more dramatically (e.g., pp. 74 ff.), or *Doxographi Graeci* (Berlin, 1879 and 1929) 161 ff., if he did not wish to refer to the elaborate analyses of his own *Antigonos* 27 ff. See further P. Moraux, *R.E.G.* 53 (1955) 124 ff. and I. Düring, *Aristotle in the ancient biographical tradition* (Göteborg, 1957) 77 f.
- 10) *Op. cit.*, 47. The price to be paid for Plato's *opera omnia* was certainly considerably higher than the drachme for which Anaxagoras' treatise could be bought (*Pl. Apol.* 26). It is easy to imagine that many could not afford it, while others, though interested enough to read some or all of the works, were not so wholeheartedly devoted that they felt the need of possessing them. E.G. Turner, *Athenian books in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.* (London, 1952, 20 f., and passim) shows how little we know about the mechanics of book trade prior to the third century. Are we much better off for the third century? Mention may be made of the story (vouched for by Favorinus, D.L. IV 5 = *FGrH* 561 T 3b) that Aristotle acquired Speusippus' *biblia* (i.e. the published one) for three *talanta*.
- 11) I mention without attaching undue importance to it that for Wilamowitz (*op. cit.*, 57 f.) Antigonos is the source of this item. The *Acad. Philos. Index Hercul.* col.19.14-16 contains the same information.

12) *Platon* II 224 f.

13) Bickel tended to associate Arcesilaus himself with the Academic edition; see esp. *Rh. Mus.* 92 (1944) 130 f. and passim. In *Archiv f. Gesch. d. Philosophie* 17 (1904) 474 ff. he placed it after Arcesilaus.

14) See John P. Mahaffy (ed.), *On the Flinders Petrie papyri with transcriptions*, etc. (Dublin, 1891) 68 ff. For important critical discussions see H. Usener, *Kl. Schr.*, 3, 104 ff., and Jachmann, *op. cit.*, 225 ff. It stands to reason that of particularly famous dialogues (such as the *Phaedo*) "wild" copies were always available in sufficient numbers. A complete edition, including the *Laws* and some rather technical dialogues, could not count on a large demand. -- Copies of the "authentic" edition cannot in the long run have been immune to an invasion by readings of the "wild" texts. I do not share Erbse's optimism (*op. cit.*, 220) that the Academy continued a watchful and effective control of editions. Some discrepancies between the mediaeval Mss. of Plato appear to go back to a very early stage (G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*, 2nd ed., Florence, 1952, 247 ff.; 255).

15) See Alline, *op. cit.*, 46.

16) The fate of the unpublished treatises, like e.g. Aristotle's in the possession of Neleus, is a different subject. Theophrastus left to Neleus in his last will "all" βιβλία (D.L. V 52), Strato to his successor Lyco τὰ βιβλία πάντα, πλὴν ὧν αὐτοῖ γεγράφαμεν (V 62), for once an unambiguous reference to autographs, but not very helpful.

17) *Platon* II, 324 f. How far one should go with him remains a question. The content of Tetralogia IV is in any case most astonishing. Bickel (129 ff.) has argued strenuously for an Academic edition of nine tetralogies including the *spuria*. He is more convincing where he defines the difference between Academic and Alexandrian endeavors (113 ff.).

18) The emendation Ἀπτικ(ιαν)ῶν for Ἀπτικῶν (ἀντιγράφων) is recommended by the larger role attested for Ἀπτικιαναὶ ἐκδόσεις in the transmission of the orators (see esp. Usener, *op. cit.*, 143 ff.; 154 f.). For Plato the only item of evidence is found in Galen's *Commentaire sur le Timée* ed. Ch. Daremberg (Paris, 1848) 12 (of which I have been unable to see a copy).

19) Alb. *Isag.* 4; cf. Wilamowitz, *Platon*, II, 323.

20) Pace A.H. Chroust, *Hermes* 93 (1965) 38. Generally scholars have recognized the force of the arguments by which Wilamowitz (l. c.) disposed of Thrasyllus' alleged influence in the formation of tetralogies. Usener 157 had made essentially the same points.

21) ἔλιουσι reflects the perspective of the second century, when tetralogies were the normal arrangement. What follows in D.L. III 62 does not refer to a number of different editions, each of them beginning with another dialogue; rather ἀρχεσθαι which Chroust (36) thus understands, relates to the pedagogical question which dialogue should be studied first as the best introduction into Plato's thought. (See Alb. *Isag.* 4 for a testimony and a critical reaction to this question.)

22) Alline 84 was so convinced of this identity that he regarded the Ὀμηρεῖα as proving an edition of the dialogues by Aristophanes of Byzantium. Although this opinion has been discarded, much in his well informed discussion remains of interest.

23) Aristarchus used the *diple periestigmene* to indicate his disagreements from Zenodotus. For a convenient account of Aristarchus and the signs employed by him see Erbse, *op. cit.*, 226 f., or Pfeiffer, *op. cit.*, 218. Both scholars deal also with the practice of Aristarchus' predecessors. Another "development" and expansion of Aristarchus' system is to be found in the so-called *Anecdotum Parisinum* (= *Gramm. Lat.* VII 533 Keil), which is said to represent the practice of Roman editors; cf. K. Büchner in *Gesch. der Textüberlieferung* (above, n.2) 329 f. It presents an increased list of *notae*. The *diple* with and without dots, the *obelos* and the dotted *antisigma* are defined in ways basically identical with their use in Homeric and Platonic texts.

24) In the Florentine papyrus presently to be discussed *antisigma* appears to be associated with *dissographiai*, only *antisigma periestigmenon* with the purpose which Diogenes records for *antisigma* as such. This removes the last difference from Alexandrian habits. For *sigma* no definition is preserved in the papyrus.

25) I refrain from comments on the *chi periestigmenon* and the *keravunion*. Although it is tempting to connect the former (said to serve for *ekloge* and *kalligraphia*) with the interest taken by literary critics in Plato and the latter ("for philosophical" *agoge*) with the concerns of early Platonic commentators, our basis is too small for inferences of this kind.

26) *Op. cit.*, 186 ff., esp. 187 n.2; see *ibid.* comments about the *diple* and other "signs" that seem to be present in Byzantine Mss.

27) See *Studi e Testi* 231 (1964) 25 ff.

28) See Bartoletti, *op. cit.*, 29.

29) Wilamowitz (*Platon* II,1) compares the material in D.L. with the summaries of Plato's doctrines and the "introductions" to his works that were current in the imperial age. Even in a work as late as the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Plato's Philosophy* (ed. G.L. Westerink, Amsterdam, 1962), we find comments on the various methods employed by Plato, on the question which dialogue should be studied first, etc. In some respects the interest has remained the same, in others it has shifted.

30) *P. Oxy.* 45 (1977) 29 ff. Haslam assigns the papyrus to the latter half of the second century.

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