New Work on Philosophical Papyri: the *Corpus dei papiri filosofici*

Though physically speaking these are two separately bound volumes, they are marketed as one, with the same ISBN and consecutive numbering. This is but a small part of a huge project aiming to collect together the disparate materials on papyrus that relate to Greek philosophy. There are, outside Italy at least, few specialists on ancient philosophy who are also papyrologists, and it has to be said that it is no easy task for the rest to keep up with the papyrus discoveries and publications of relevance to ancient philosophy. There has been a real need for one to be able to check quickly, for instance, whether there exist any papyri of Platonic dialogues at points where one would like to offer detailed comments on our text, or whether any papyri can fill in gaps in our knowledge of some very fragmentary authors. Of course nothing can ensure that one’s suggestions are not immediately rendered obsolete by new papyrus discoveries, but the scholarly world is better served if one ensures that one is as informed as possible before offering one’s views.

A good example of the need for those studying ancient philosophy to study papyri is offered by the Strasbourg Empedocles papyrus, which has been in a European collection now for nearly a century but which was only associated with that author in 1994. The unpromising collection of papyrus fragments is now the subject of a large volume,¹ and deservedly

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so, because it has enhanced our knowledge considerably. For one thing we now know what had often been doubted, that Empedocles had used the word *Philia* for his Love-Goddess (Emp. Stras. d3) as well as *Philotes*; for another the lines of a previously known fragment (B76) have appeared in different positions (Emp. Stras. b2 and b4 = B76.3 and 76.2), thus reminding us of the cavalier attitude to quotation sometimes adopted by late antique authors; finally, a fragment that had previously been allocated to the *Purifications* (B139DK) is present among fragments that otherwise belong to the poem *On Nature.* This enhances considerably the possibility that there had in fact been one poem only, and that the avoidance of the killing of animals had been a separate section of an otherwise cosmological poem. There is still room for discussion over the precise significance of the finds, but nobody can now afford to study Empedocles without taking due account of them.

I have come to papyrus texts not so much with the intention of working with them regularly, but rather because I came to the conclusion about twenty years ago that the much-despised anonymous commentary on Plato’s *Theaetetus* was a much more important text than had been allowed, documented a kind of ancient Platonism that would but for Plutarch be virtually lost, and offered us the earliest substantial surviving portion of a basic school commentary on Plato. Some might now claim that a near rival for this honour is to be found in the Turin commentary on the *Parmenides,* as nothing in it obliges us to regard it as having been influenced by Plotinus. Both of these commentaries have now been

great deal is explained in a very convenient form. The papyrus is *P. Strasb.gr. Inv. 1665-6.*

2 This does not exhaust the papyrus’s importance; light is thrown on several existing textual problems, and further light is shed on the nature of the cosmic cycle.

3 It is important that Martin and Primavesi consider the text to have been preserved by direct transmission (*L’Empédocle de Strasbourg* [as in n.1], 342), containing books I-II of the physical poem of Empedocles.

4 Because I believe that *Parmenides*-commentary was already well developed in Middle Platonist times (Harold Tarrant *Thrasylian Platonism*, [Ithaca, 1993], 148-
republished in the CPF series.\(^5\) The loss of the Turin palimpsest has limited the number of improvements that could be made in the text of the latter, but considerable improvements have been made to that of the former, the consequences of which I have yet to fully digest. Again, a series associated with the CPF series has seen David Sedley republishing fragment D of the *Theaetetus*-commentary, following a suggestion of mine about the lemma to which it relates.\(^6\) Because of the presence of polemic in this fragment it actually tells us something significant about the opponents of the commentator and about how he proposed to overthrow their views.

Needless to say, not all papyrus finds have had the same degree of influence on scholarship, but we cannot allow it to come about that those which seem to be of lesser importance remain largely unknown. A scrap of a second century papyrus of a Platonic work that contains no variants from our manuscript readings becomes significant when and if an emendation is proposed, giving one a date by which they would have had to be corrupted if any corruption exists. One would not, for example, be able to argue that our manuscripts have experienced a corruption that results from a Neoplatonic interpretation.

The necessary unevenness of any volumes purporting to publish or list all papyri (subject to constraints of date, location, and language), of ancient philosophical works or of testimonia about ancient philosophers, will not make for natural reading, nor can one sensibly hope to make many helpful suggestions about improvement to papyrus texts. Hence I have tried rather to scan through the volumes and make such use of them

\(^{77}\), this has been my own view for some time (though I certainly leave open the possibility of a later date); the case is now argued in detail by G. Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Plato’s Parmenides* (Bern-Stuttgart-Wien, 1999), which I have not seen at the point of writing.


\(^6\) 'A New Reading in the Anonymus “Theaetetus” Commentary (P Berol. 9782 Fragment D)’ in *Papiri Filosofici: Miscellanea di Studi* I (Firenze, 1997), 139-44.
as was natural for one with my interests. There is a considerable amount of prefatory material, giving basic information about the series, discussing the manuscript tradition of Plato (to whom a considerable proportion of these volumes relates; by S.M. Tempesta), listing various types of abbreviations and signs, naming the 28 contributors and establishing abbreviations for their names, listing the relevant papyri (with an indication of whether the original was used), making acknowledgements, and listing the six ancient lists or catalogues and the hundred plus philosophers and schools treated within Part I vol. 1 as a whole. Then comes the material relating to forty-one philosophers or groups. Their find-spots and current locations are given together with an extensive bibliographic history including editions, reproductions, and secondary literature.

One thing that I was struck by was the number of times the entries within this volume are drawn from comparatively few papyri, which just happen to preserve testimony relating to a variety of philosophers. Among these the *Theaetetus*-commentary mentioned above (PBerol inv. 9782) was prominent as it is vital to Socrates and Protagoras as well as to Plato; to a lesser extent so too were the *Parmenides*-commentary (Cod. Taur. F VI 1), the Anonymous Londiniensis *latrica* (PBrLibr inv. 137), Didymus the Blind’s Commentary on Ecclesiastes (PTura III; also on Psalms, PTura V), and some of the lists published in the first section of Parte I, Vol. 1.

Because of this repetition I felt pleasantly surprised by the amount of material with which I was reasonably familiar, and it was easy to ask whether this is the most economical way to be familiarising oneself with what is said of certain authors in a few important texts. Except in the case of Plato’s *Theaetetus*, the present volume does give a text of the parts of the *Theaetetus*-commentary relevant to dialogues of Plato and to other philosophers, even though CPF has recently reedited it fully; but it does so in a relatively economical manner by not publishing each line of

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7 Here it would be worth stating, given the lack of editors’ names in the ordinary sense, that the *comitato scientifico e redazionale* is under the presidency of F. Adorno, while the compilation of the volume seems to have been the primary responsibility of Maria Serena Funghi and Fernanda Decleva Caizzi (vi).
papyrus on a new line, and avoiding a full apparatus. It does include a translation (in Italian of course). Some of these economies are also used in comparable cases where texts have received sufficient recent attention. However, the references to Porphyry's attack on Christianity in PTura III, V, and VII, have attracted a full apparatus and extensive comments from Linguiti, with a typically exhaustive bibliography relevant to the extracts, and Manetti's treatment of the Anon. Londiniensis on Plato's *Timaeus*, on Stoics, and (most importantly) on Philolaus, is impressive.

After his edition in CPF III, Linguiti's treatment of passages from the *Parmenides*-commentary could be relatively brief. Even so, I found his treatment of the fragment of Speusippus from col. I 17-24 too perfunctory, given its potential importance for understanding a disputed area of the work of an interesting but poorly documented figure. Moreover, though the consensus is that ΚΑΙΤΙΜΑΛΙΟΣ after the name of Speusippus masks the name of another philosopher, there is no entry in the volume for any Timaius, nor in fact for Timaius, whom I not unnaturally believe to be the name that should be restored; after an A, L is virtually just dittography. It is perhaps legitimate to offer some thoughts here on the restoration of this crux.

Linguiti prints the text, which deals with the One of the *Parmenides* as a name for a supreme divinity, as follows:

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8 The important fragments of Prodicus and Protagoras in Didymus are addressed fairly fully by Decleva Caizzi.

9 This possibility was discussed in my review of L. Tarán, *Speusippus of Athens*, in *CP* 80 (1985), 78-83 at 79.

10 While it is not conventional to mark doubtful letters of this text, which cannot be re-read, with a dot below them, it is annoying that no indication at all of doubtful letters is present in this volume. A full apparatus is of course present in *CPF* III.
The first thing that needs to be noticed is the verb καταφέροιτο, which suggests that a philosopher misled by the smallness of the One would be slipping downwards to something lower in the metaphysical hierarchy. The metaphor needs to be understood in the context of an upward path to the supreme god, which makes ἀναβάς a natural restoration at the end of the textual crux, and ἂν συντα γ’ likely enough before it, particularly in view of the three uses of συντα in the preceding lines (I 13-17). My restoration yields the sense ‘unless because of its smallness ..., having risen up to existent things at least, somebody were carried down, on account of its being very small and indivisible, to a thing quite alien to god on hearing the term “the One”.’ The notion would be that one could come close to one’s goal, to true being that was regularly at the next level down from the supreme divinity, and fail to make the final leap when the term ‘One’ was employed—because of its association with the minimum.

11 Instead of διαιρετὸν one should consider διαστατὸν.

12 I presume the influence, common in later Platonism, of the picture of the soul’s upward journey and fall from Phaedrus 246c-248b.

13 This is a good Platonic word, found three times, once in exactly this form, in the Divided Line episode of the Republic 517a3, 519d1 x 2

14 The elision of dissyllabic prepositions occurs at I 6, 11, 15, 27, 33, 35 etc; final epsilon is elided in such words as δὲ and μηδὲ (I 16, 28); γε itself is not uncommon in this text (II 3, III 3, IX 9, XII 8), and one must suppose that it would be elided when placed before a vowel.
Two figures are used as examples of those who had done this, Speusippus and the mysterious Timalios, if the reading is broadly correct.\textsuperscript{15} We have Damascius' somewhat non-committal evidence on the subject of Speusippus’ having treated the One as a minimum (Pr. 1.3.9-10 = fr. 49 Tarán, 60 Isnarde-Parente), and this should at least explain how this report of him can appear in another late Platonist text. However, we do not know of any Timalius, nor of any other thinker who could be regarded as a partner in Speusippus’ alleged mistake. One might be best advised to assume that the reference is to Timaeus, but this could scarcely be a direct reference to Plato’s dialogue; whoever this is, he would have to be disagreeing with Plato in the author’s Platonist eyes. Presumably it cannot be a reference to the extant work attributed to Timaeus Locrus either. What is possible is that Speusippus had appealed in some way to a passage of Plato’s Timaeus as a precedent for the view that the One is a minimum. The passage setting out the division of the world soul at 35b, starts with a portion of magnitude one, and then goes on to postulate portions of magnitudes 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, and 27. It may be a difficulty that this passage involves fractions (albeit of magnitudes greater than one), but all that is necessary to explain the current reference is the assumption that Speusippus found here something comparable with his own view of the One as a principle qua minimal unit.

This reconstruction is perhaps unexciting, and does not pretend to add anything to the history of ancient philosophy. However, the author was not trying to make any such contribution, but to dismiss a possible interpretation of the One.

Sometimes quite unexpected possibilities first occur to one when examining papyrus texts. Here it is intriguing to consider one of the testimonia for Socrates (7T, p. 762). It is Didymus the Blind who in his

\textsuperscript{15} The name is based on Kroll’s reading, in ‘Ein Neuplatonischer Parmenidescommentar in einem Turiner Palimpsest’, \textit{RhM} 47 (1892), 599-627 at 602, but Kroll was doubtful about the first four letters, the τ being doubtful, the ι very doubtful, the μ perhaps being δι and the α perhaps λ. The word was first read as τι διαλισε by B. Peyron, ‘Notizia d’un antico evangeliario bobbiese che in alcuni fogli palimpsesti contiene frammenti d’un greco trattato di filosofia’, \textit{RFIC} 1 (1873), 53-71.
Commentary on Ecclesiastes 3.13 is giving explaining of how the same word, ‘love’, can mean two different things. He chooses to contrast the view of Socrates, which he says involves the heavens, god, and intelligible being, with the view of ‘the so-called Leucippus who write love-stories’, whose love is said to be uncurbed love (περί έρωτος ... ἀκολάστου). It is difficult to trust Didymus, who here indicates that Socrates wrote about love, confusing the speaker within a work with its author. What if he were doing the same with the other work too? Whereas there is no known erotic writer by the name of Leucippus, there may be a relationship with the least idealistic of the extant Greek romances and the most honest in its portrayal of desires, that of Achilles Tatius. His Leucippe and Clitophon is actually related by the hero Clitophon, but there seems a chance that either hero and heroine or author and heroine have been muddled. Didymus is presumably not enamoured of this work, may have remembered that the name sounded like a nom-de-plume, and then given the author a masculine termination of the heroine’s name. An alternative, suggested to me by Ms. Kay Hayes, is that Achilles’ novel is a parody as often suspected, and that it is itself parodying the work of Leucippus, and choosing the heroine’s name so as to deliberately call Leucippus to mind. Whatever the case, the extract can tell us nothing about Socrates, but any independent reference to a Greek novel, or to a source that it parodies, would be an important find.

Sometimes papyrological problems can become addictive, and one feels that one is self-indulgently wasting time on unsolvable crossword puzzles. One has to drag oneself away, and keep all things in perspective, carefully remembering how dangerous it can be to try to fill the gaps in our knowledge—often commensurate with the gaps in the papyrus. Sometimes, however, it is critical that informed scholars wrestle with these problems and try to carry our knowledge one step further. The volumes that have emerged from this project undertake that task, and they ensure that others will continue to do so thereafter. It would be desirable if all serious collections of classical texts in our libraries contained the complete set of CPF volumes, though in the present funding climate this is

\[16\] It is likely that Didymus ultimately has a dim recollection of the Phaedrus in mind.
unlikely to occur in Australasia unless Departments have access to special purchase funds.

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