THE PLATONIC CORPUS

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AT SOME TIME before the beginning of our era Plato's dialogues were collected and ordered in a corpus having canonical character. The sequence of the dialogues as established in this corpus has persisted through the Hellenistic and Byzantine manuscript tradition down to our day. Its tetralogical order, which has been ascribed to Thrasyllus, cannot be his work. Our problem is, to whom to ascribe it. Alline, Wilamowitz, and Pasquali among others have argued for an "edition" or authoritative collection of manuscripts preserved in the Early Academy. Of the two most recent studies, the first has concluded that the Academic edition is a myth, and the second that our corpus was organized in the first century B.C. by Tyrannion, as had been suggested earlier by Usener. I propose to survey again the principal evidence, and to consider what conclusions it justifies.[1]

Our inquiry must begin not with the putative edition but with the sequence of the dialogues. No scholar or commentator of antiquity suggests that their sequence is sanctioned by the authority of Plato or of the Early Academy. Differing sequences were proposed simply on paedagogical grounds. It was argued that the study of Plato should begin with a certain dialogue or group of dialogues, as providing the best introduction to his thought. The order of Thrasyllus is a partial exception to this rule in that it appears to follow where possible an order discoverable in the dialogues themselves. The first tetralogy presents the trial and death of Socrates, the second includes four dialogues Plato himself had linked, and the remainder of the tetralogies are groups of dialogues

[1]The problem of the corpus is touched on by Zeller, *Die Philosophie der Griechen*[4] (Berlin 1888) 443–447, and by Ueberweg-Praechter, *Grundriss* (Berlin 1926) 194–196; in greater detail, with bibliography, by H. Erbse in *Geschichte der Textüberlieferung* (Zürich 1961) 219–221, 258–260. It is discussed by H. Alline, *Histoire du Texte de Platon* (Paris 1915); U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* (Berlin 1919) 2.323–325; G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*[2] (Florence 1952) 260–266. The first of two recent special discussions to which reference is made is G. Jachmann, *Der Platontext*, in *NAkG* (1941) 225–389. Jachmann (299–301) rightly rejects Usener's constructions (*Kl. Schr.* 2 [1913] 307), and the notion of Tyrannion as editor. The second is the article of A. H. Chroust, "The organization of the Corpus Platonicum in Antiquity," (*Hermes* 93 [1965] 34–46), where Usener is used. I shall refer to these authors by name and page number. References to Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* ed. H. S. Long (Oxford 1964), are by book and chapter number; to Albinus, as found in *Platonis Dialogi* ed. C. F. Hermann (Leipzig 1858) vol. 6, 147–189, by chapter and page number. Erbse and R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968), in the summary discussions referred to reach much the same conclusions as I do.

where hints of association or of allied themes are present. None of the sequences, not even that of Thrasyllus, is explicitly associated with an "edition." If, however, we find grounds for believing that the order of Thrasyllus originated in the Early Academy, it seems reasonable to assume a connection with a collection of manuscripts, whatever form that collection may have taken.

It may be objected that not all our Byzantine codices observe the order of Thrasyllus. This is true especially for manuscripts of the W family, which follow an order of their own. But they begin with the first four Thrasyllus tetralogies, and there is no ground for believing that these or other deviations mark a real and intended departure from the traditional order or conform to any other order.

Our evidence permits of only hypothetical reconstructions of the history of the transmission through the twelve centuries from the death of Plato to the first extant Byzantine manuscripts, but we are concerned here only with the pre-Christian centuries and in particular with the third century B.C. For that period we have a considerable body of evidence. More than half of the *Life* of Plato in Diogenes Laertius is devoted to his works. They are also discussed at length by Albinus in his *Eisagoge*. I shall be concerned chiefly with the evidence of these two authors.

The *Life* of Plato conforms roughly to Diogenes' usual pattern in its first part (3.1–47). That part ends with apophthegmata, the will, epigrams for the tomb, and a list of disciples. If it were not for the fact that the customary list of writings has been omitted we would take it that the *Life* ends here. It is clear that Diogenes has deliberately omitted to insert a list of the writings in the place usual in other *Lives*, for he dedicates the remainder of the *Life* (3.47–109) to the writings, *placita*, and divisions. His reason for doing so must have been that he intended to excerpt a disquisition that covered the writings and the philosophy. That he is excerpting, as if with scissors and paste, is to be seen from the exordium to the new section. It begins, without introduction or explanation, as follows (3.47):

As you are a true admirer of Plato and eagerly inquire of all sources as to his opinions I thought it necessary to outline the nature of his themes, the order of the dialogues, and the approach to his method; in so far as possible keeping to principal elements, in order that the account of his life should not be without some account of doctrine. I need not go into detail for you. That would be to "bring owls to Athens."[3]

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[3] A scholiast concludes that the *Lives* are dedicated to a woman, but does not attempt to identify her. Such dedications (or commissions) may not have been uncommon. Julia Domna commissioned Philostratus to write the *Life* of Apollonius of Tyana on the basis of the memoirs of Damis. The *Manual of Harmony* of Nicomachus of Gerasa is dedicated to "an unknown lady, apparently of high degree, having been written at her request" (*Nicomachus of Gerasa: Introduction to Arithmetic.* Tr. M. L. D'Ooge [New York 1926] 76). The *Introduction* (2.24.11) suggests that Nicomachus was the author of

This exordium, not at all in the character of Diogenes, is addressed to a lady whose name he does not give. It describes in general lines the chapters that follow. They are a compendium or summary of doctrines of the type current in Hellenistic times, the characteristics of which are familiar to us from Diels' *Doxographi Graeci*. The compendium begins (48–51) with a definition of "dialogue" and a diaeretical classification of Platonic dialogues into kinds, under which the several dialogues are subsumed by name-title. (This *diaeresis* is discussed below.) It continues by asking if Plato is a dogmatic philosopher, and remarks that this question is very controversial (it was in fact controversial only about the end of the fourth century B.C.). The answer given is the answer of the Middle Academy, that "true doctrines are expounded, false doctrines are confuted, and judgment is reserved on matters that are uncertain."

There follows (53–57) a discussion of logical method under the single aspect of *epagoge* or induction through question and answer; inference being either from similars or from an opposition or dilemma. Instances of the latter kind are inspired by the *Euthydemus* (297e–298e). Inference from similars is said to be either from a coordinate (the rhetorical kind) or from a subordinate to a superordinate universal (the dialectical kind), as in the *Phaedo* (70d–72a). Here the language is academic-peripatetic. The treatment we may surmise to be that of the Middle Academy and Arcesilaus.

On this summary discussion of logical method there follows (56–62) a discussion of the ordering of the dialogues which is of major importance for our purpose and will be discussed in detail below. Next (63–65) the epitomizer discusses Plato's language, emphasizing especially its ambiguities, or the use of one word in many senses, and the principles we are to apply in exegesis. A list of critical signs is appended. Finally we have a section on *placita* (67–80) and one on *diaereseis* or divisions (80–109). The *placita* begins with a summary of the doctrines of the *Timaeus* (67–77),[3] and ends (77–80) with a brief sketch of ethical teachings.

The language and content of this epitome suggest an origin about 300 B.C., when the dogmatism of the Early Academy and Xenocrates had begun to pall. It shows little or no trace of Stoic contamination. The few "footnotes" by Diogenes himself are obvious borrowings from Favorinus (48, 57, 62). There is, however, one passage in the excerpt which cannot

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a treatise (or readings) on Platonism. He refers to Thrasyllus in *Man. Harm.* 1.24. He might even be the author of the excerpt of Diogenes, who quotes him frequently.

    [3]The summary of the *Timaeus* is competent and conservative, and would merit further discussion not to our purpose here. It is not a pastiche of doctrines like the excerpt from Alexander Polyhistor in the *Life of Pythagoras* (8. 24–35). See the testimonia in D. L. *ad loc.*

be interpreted as bearing out, or indeed as reconcilable with, the suggestion that it is based on a treatise originating about 300 B.C., viz. the chapters on critical signs (65–66).[4] Jachmann (334–346) has argued that these critical signs are in themselves proof of an Alexandrian edition; but, as Erbse has pointed out (221), the signs differ substantially from those of the school of Aristarchus, and there is no evidence for Alexandrian critical editions of the philosophers. The signs referred to must have been inspired by those of Alexandria but must have been devised later. But they do point to a critical edition of Plato in the hands of Diogenes, or of the epitomizer, or of the author of the treatise epitomized. The somewhat awkward introduction to these chapters and their irrelevant conclusion makes it likely that they have been inserted by Diogenes.[5]

Let us then turn to the section dealing with the published works (49–52 and 56–62). At the outset we observe that in the case of Plato we have a discussion of the nature and organization of the corpus in the course of which the dialogues are enumerated. In the case of other philosophers we are given simply a list of their published works, baldly enumerating the titles and the number of books of which each work consists. The origin of these lists is uncertain. Attempts have been made to trace them to the *Pinakes* of Callimachus, but without success.[6] They must, however, derive from bibliographical inquiry, and so eventually from a library's catalogues. It may be that there was in this general bibliography of the philosophers, on which Diogenes usually draws, a list of Plato's works which he ignored; or it may be that the difficulties of classing Plato's works under such headings as physics, metaphysics, and ethics induced the compiler of the bibliography to use the order of Thrasyllus, which Diogenes would then naturally adopt.

Thrasyllus claims for the tetralogical ordering which he has adopted the authority of Plato. "Thrasyllus states that he (Plato) published the

[4]These are discussed by V. Gardthausen, *Griechische Palaeographie* 1. 410–415, who refers to *Anec. Osann.* (Giessen 1851) 3.

[5]The chapter comes between the literary and philosophical sections, and is allied to neither. The introductory φέρε . . . εἴπομεν smacks of interpolation. The final sentence, adding as it does βιβλία and the ἅπερ clause, is interesting but has nothing to do with critical signs.

[6]For *Pinakes* see R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968) 127–128; and *ibid.* 196–197 for the tetralogical order. For methods of classification at Alexandria see P. Moraux, *Les Listes anciennes des ouvrages d'Aristote* (Louvain 1951) and I. Düring *Aristotle in the ancient biographical tradition* (Göteberg 1957). Pasquali (265) argues that the tetralogical order cannot be shown to have preceded an ordering by trilogies. Arguments for the precedence of the tetralogical order are (*i*) the ἕλκουσι of 3.61, which suggests violence done on a preceding order and (*ii*) the reasons adduced by Wilamowitz (324) for thinking that Aristophanes' order betrays rearrangement of a preceding order. There is no justification for Chroust's statement (34) that Aristophanes was the first scholar to organize the corpus, and he is not said to have "collated" (?) dialogues.

dialogues after the pattern of the tetralogy of tragedy, as the tragedians used to compete with four dramas" (3.56). It may be an inference of Thrasyllus that Plato followed the tragedians' pattern, and indeed it has been suggested that Alexandrian scholarship borrowed for tragedy the term "tetralogy" from the Academy.[7] But clearly Thrasyllus is indebted to his tradition for the tetralogical order, and perhaps to Dercyllides (Albinus *Eisagoge* 149), who in his turn may be citing Hermodorus, a colleague of Plato in the Academy. But Diogenes is aware (3.50) that other orderings have been suggested. He cites (3.61–62) especially that of Aristophanes of Byzantium, who proposed an ordering by trilogies. Aristophanes is not said to have edited any part of the corpus. In classifying by trilogies he appears to be disagreeing (ἕλκουσι 3.61) with an existing order, probably the tetralogical (Wilamowitz, *Platon* 2.324). That order would then be earlier than Aristophanes, who was Librarian at Alexandria about 195 B.C. If he was reacting against an order reflected in the *Pinakes* of Callimachus (ca. 310–235 B.C.) the tetralogical order must be as early as the first half of the third century. This seems probable also on the grounds alleged below.

Diogenes enumerates (3.57) nine tetralogies in the order in which they appear in our editions. This order is commonly known as the order of Thrasyllus. Why the name of Thrasyllus should attach to it we can only guess. He was a Neoplatonist, or perhaps better a Neopythagorean, astrologer at the court of Tiberius (Tac. *Ann.* 6.20). Porphyry (*Plot.* 20) tells us that he wrote a book on Plato's philosophy. In discussing the order of the dialogues Thrasyllus states that they are arranged in fours after the pattern of the tragic tetralogy (D.L. 3.56). In this he seems to have followed Dercyllides (Albinus *Eisagoge* 149, see Praechter 530), a first century B.C. Platonist of repute. Both these scholars attempt to explain the tetralogical order. Neither can have invented it.[8]

The tetralogical order does not include the *Spuria* usually printed by modern editors after the ninth tetralogy, viz. the *Definitiones* and seven dialogues generally conceded to be, though platonizing, not the work of

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[7]It could also derive from the contemporary Peripatos. Some of the technical language could derive from a Peripatetic source. It is unthinkable that Aristotle did not have his own copy of the Platonic dialogues. It will have been a careful copy and may have been edited in part. It might be the principal source of our tradition. But I can see no means of adjudicating between Academy and Peripatos, and the Academy seems a likelier source. They were not distinct and isolated corporate bodies in the fourth century.

[8]Erbse (220) suggests that the tetralogical order may be inspired by Plato himself (cf. Chroust 43) who twice planned a series of four dialogues: *Tht. Soph. Polit. (Philosopher)* and *Resp. Ti. Cri. (Hermocrates)*. He further suggests that the term "tetralogy" was coined by the Academy and then borrowed by Alexandrian scholars. They were the first to apply it to tragedy.

Plato himself. These and other *Spuria* are mentioned by Diogenes (3.62) as *Spuria* in connection with another ordering of the dialogues. This alternative ordering implies, as Wilamowitz (2.324) has pointed out, not another edition but a criticism of a pre-existing order.

The "order of Thrasyllus" begins with a natural tetralogy having a dramatic and indeed a tragic character, viz. *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Phaedo*. Albinus plausibly regards this natural group of four dialogues as having imposed its number on the whole corpus. "They (the editors) seem to me," he writes, "to have wished to impose an order determined by persons appearing in the dialogues and by the (philosophical) posture depicted." The first tetralogy is followed by another having a natural unity, viz. *Cratylus*, *Theaetetus*, *Sophistes*, *Politicus*, but thereafter the groupings are somewhat arbitrary.

In criticizing this order Aristophanes of Byzantium proposes to begin with the trilogy *Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Critias* (D.L. 3.61), in order to present at the outset the major themes of Plato's philosophy. Others wished to begin with *Alcibiades I*, and a predilection for this dialogue persisted among neoplatonists (*The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy* [Cambridge 1967] 116). Yet others chose the *Phaedrus*, as being the first dialogue Plato wrote (D.L. 3.37). They were clearly seeking the dialogue which would best serve as an introduction to Plato's thought. Systematic or teaching considerations of this sort are likely to have arisen at a later stage in the history of Platonism. It seems probable that the original ordering of the corpus was by tetralogies, and that it was edited or published (if we may use these terms) not by Plato himself, as Thrasyllus held (D.L. 3.56), but by the Early or the Middle Academy.
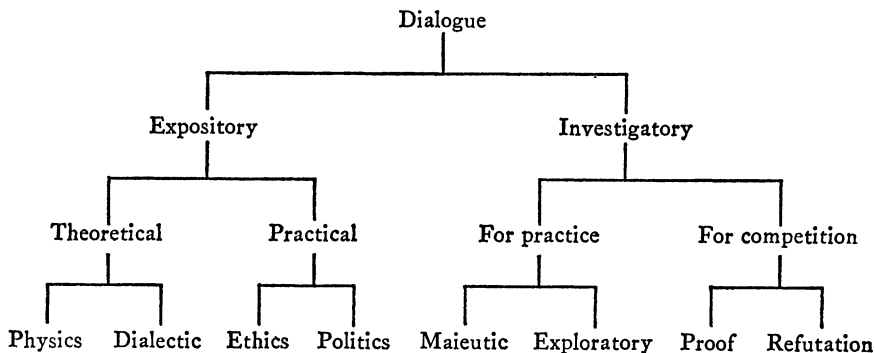
So far we have adduced two general arguments which make it plausible that the tetralogical order points to an early and probably a pre-*Pinakes* or fourth-century editing of the Platonic corpus: first, the nature of the list of published works appearing in Diogenes Laertius and, second, the fact that criticisms of the tetralogy ordering are subsequent to that order. A third argument appears largely to have escaped the attention of critics.

The dialogues have come down to us with a title according to person, such as *Euthyphro*, a title according to theme, such as *On Holiness*, and a classificatory sub-title, such as "exploratory" ($\pi\epsilon\iota\rho\alpha\sigma\tau\iota\kappa\acute{o}s$) (D.L. 3.58). The theme title appears after the name title in all our manuscripts, always at the beginning of the dialogue and sometimes also as colophon. Name title and theme title, as we learn from Diogenes, are associated with tetralogical order. Quoting Thrasyllus he writes: "He (Plato) uses a twofold title for each of his works, a name title and a theme title. The

first dialogue of the first tetralogy is (entitled) *Euthyphro*, or *On Holiness*. The dialogue is exploratory." (We note that "exploratory" is not regarded as a title.)

The classificatory sub-title "exploratory" and the sub-titles attached to each dialogue as it is mentioned by Diogenes have reference to a classification of the dialogues which he describes (3.49).[9] We may reasonably assume that these sub-titles come from the same source as name titles and theme titles, though Diogenes does not specifically state this. In any case we may attribute the sub-titles to the late fourth century because (*i*) the classification is obtained by *diaeresis*, a method characteristic of the Early Academy and still used by Aristotle (A. von Fragstein, *Die Diaeresis bei Aristoteles* [Amsterdam 1967]) but not by his school; (*ii*) the diaeretical method no longer characterized the Academy under Arcesilaus, i.e., after the end of the fourth century; (*iii*) the classification, like the tetralogical order, is quadripartite; (*iv*) the classification does not lend itself to an ordering of the dialogues such as would serve for an edition. It serves to establish *characteres* (3.49). So we may regard the classificatory sub-titles either as allied in origin with the other titles or as arising at about the same time.

The classification by *diaeresis* is as follows:

Dialogue

Expository — Investigatory

Theoretical — Practical   For practice — For competition

Physics Dialectic   Ethics Politics   Maieutic Exploratory   Proof Refutation

Diogenes mentions in passing (3.50) another tripartite division of the dialogues—dramatic, narrative, and mixed—but he then proceeds to list the dialogues according to the diaeretical classification exhibited above. From what source does this classification derive? Albinus in the *Eisagoge* is using the same source as Diogenes and has much the same diaeretical

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[9]The classificatory sub-titles suggest the *Sophistes* and the *Topics*, and could be derived from either by adding -*ikos* endings. But Bonitz' *Index* and Diès' *Lexique* show that ζητητικός, γυμναστικός, and ἀγωνιστικός were used by both Plato and Aristotle (infrequently), the rest by neither with the exception of πειραστικός by Aristotle (see P. Moraux in *Aristotle on Dialectic* ed. G. E. L. Owen [Oxford 1968] 288, n. 3).

scheme. He ascribes the tetralogical order, and so probably also the classification, to Thrasyllus and Dercyllides. The latter belongs to an earlier generation than Thrasyllus, probably to the last half of the first century B.C. We know that he wrote a major work, in at least eleven books, entitled *On Platonic Philosophy*. Simplicius (*in Phys.* Diels 247.31, 256.32) tells us: "Porphyry states that Dercyllides, in the eleventh book of his *On Platonic Philosophy*, where he discusses *hyle*, quotes a statement of Hermodorus, a colleague of Plato's, from his treatise on Plato . . ." and "that *hyle* ought not to be said to be a primary cause is shown by Hermodorus, Plato's colleague, in his book on Plato in which he gives Plato's opinions on *hyle* and other matters." Simplicius goes on to quote verbatim Dercyllides. Dercyllides must have had access to the works of Hermodorus, and have used them as a principal source.

In the *Didascalicus* Albinus gives us a Middle Platonist account of Platonic doctrine in which, characteristically, Aristotle is treated as a Platonist and Stoic contaminations are obvious. The *Eisagoge* derives from another source and maintains the diaeretical scheme throughout (150–151). In it Albinus cites the common source at greater length than does the epitomizer of Diogenes, but either he or an intermediary has modified the original scheme more than does the epitomizer.

The *Eisagoge* begins with a definition of dialogue that is word for word that of Diogenes (3.48): "Dialogue is a discourse (*logos*) consisting of questions and answers, on philosophical or social themes, having appropriate characterization of the participants and of their manner of speech." But whereas the epitomizer merely offers the definition, Albinus shows how the first part is obtained by definitory *diaeresis*, and then explicates the latter part after the manner of Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. His next step is to ask what are the *characteres* of the Platonic dialogue. These are obtained by a classificatory *diaeresis* that moves from *summa genera* (οἱ ἀνωτάτω)[10] to *infimae species* (ἀτόμους). The primary dichotomy, as in Diogenes, is expository/investigatory. It is followed not, as in Diogenes, by further dichotomies but by two tripartite divisions: on the one hand teaching/practice/demonstration of truth, on the other hand exercise/competition/demonstration of error. Albinus then, having abandoned the model *diaeresis* of Diogenes in the second stage, returns to it for the third stage, thereby revealing that he has modified a pre-existing diaeretical scheme, the pattern of which he did not grasp. The *infimae species* are for both the same, but Albinus assigns the dialogues to these classes differently. The classes, however, he main-

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[10]The definition is quoted, with only minor change, by Suidas. He adds that there are two *characteres* of the Platonic dialogue οἱ ἀνωτάτω . . . . Here the text breaks off but the words reveal that he was quoting either from Albinus or from an author using the same source.

tains even in another context (150, cap. 6), and here he quotes the *Sophist* (230c–d) verbatim.

We conclude that Albinus, syncretist though the *Didascalicus* reveals him to be, has used for the *Eisagoge* the same source (though perhaps through another intermediary) as is used by Diogenes. We further conclude that as Diogenes preserves the diaeretical pattern more faithfully he follows his source more closely. What is the source? Not Thrasyllus nor Dercyllides, because in their time we would expect extensive Stoic contamination and no all-pervading *diaeresis*. It is only in the milieu of Academy and Peripatos at the end of the fourth century that we would expect to find a systematic, scholarly, somewhat pedantic treatment of the dialogue theme.

If we accept the hypothesis of a fourth-century edition of the corpus, how are we to account for the diversity of readings in our manuscripts and in earlier tradition? In particular how are we to account for obviously "good" readings that are given us not by the manuscripts but by papyri, lemmata, and Stobaeus? This thorny problem cannot be solved incidentally, in the discussion of another theme. If the evidence for a fourth-century edition is accepted, and no textual evidence is binding, our conclusion must be taken as a datum. A critic who, like Jachmann, attempts to force historical data into conformity with reconstructions based on textual evidence, is doomed to failure. It is true that the papyri of the *Phaedo* and the *Laches* (ca. 300–250 B.C.) give us some insight into texts of the third century. But they offer more error than good readings. This Jachmann explains by the hypothesis of an Alexandrian edition that created order in the chaos that the papyri suggest. But if there are good grounds for believing that an Academic edition did exist we need not invent a critical edition of Aristophanes for which there is no evidence.[11] Further, the value of evidence from lemmata or Stobaeus is diminished by the fact that their texts were subject to correction from a Plato manuscript by a conscientious scribe; and scribes, like editors, were often prone to emendation.

Must we then give up hope of knowing how our manuscripts came down to us, or at least how they were transmitted through a millennium, to the Academy of Proclus? Our evidence permits only of hypothesis. The manner of transmission, as it seems to me, may have been as follows (I omit the necessary reservations and qualifications). Plato wrote his

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[11]See R. Pfeiffer, *History of Classical Scholarship* (Oxford 1968), with references to Düring and Moraux for their investigations of the Aristotelian list, as also to O. Regenbogen for the lists of Theophrastus. Regenbogen affirms that an editing of the philosophers is not to be ascribed to the earlier Alexandrian critics. We have ample evidence for an editing of the text of Homer by the Alexandrians, none for an Alexandrian edition of Plato or the philosophers. It was the special circumstances of the Aristotelian tradition that rendered necessary the edition of Andronicus.

dialogues, and in particular the middle and later dialogues, not so much with an eye on posterity as for the restricted public of the Academy and other like-minded persons. His aim was to throw light on some problem that at the time engaged the interest of his public, but chiefly to teach *how* to philosophize. The dialogues were meant to be read aloud. Plato, who, though he may have been impatient of the pains involved (*Phdr.* 278d–e) was a literary artist as well as a philosopher, revised and corrected continually. If the tale is true that just before his death he had begun to revise the *Republic* (Dion. Hal. *Comp.* 208 Reiske), we may expect that the manuscripts he left were manuscripts with additions, deletions, alternative readings, and word variants.

What was the manner of "publication"? It has frequently been pointed out, most recently and very effectively by B. van Groningen and F. Dirlmeier,[12] that "publication" and "edition" are terms having misleading connotations if applied to the ancient world, and in particular to the Academy. The dialogues were in a sense "published" as soon as Plato chose to read them or to have them read, as the *Theaetetus* (143b–c) was read. They were given the status of "edition" as soon as he entrusted a finished manuscript to friends or colleagues to whom it was permitted to copy it or have it copied, in whole or part. That copies were systematically multiplied "im Verlag der Akademie," as Wilamowitz assumes (*Antigonos von Karystos* [Berlin 1881] 286), seems improbable for the fourth century. But certainly the earlier dialogues were meant for a wider public. The *Apology* was written in defence of Socrates, and provoked both imitation and attack. The manner in which Aristotle refers to the dialogues by name implies that they were accessible to the philosophically interested reader. Though we need not assume reproduction on any larger scale, somehow the dialogue reached its public.

Diogenes Laertius (3.66) has preserved for us a curious piece of information deriving from Antigonus of Carystus, and reading as follows: (τὰ βιβλία) εἴ τις ἤθελε διαναγνῶναι μισθὸν ἐτέλει τοῖς κεκτημένοις.[13] Anyone who possessed a copy of the dialogues had acquired it either by the long and painful process of making a copy, or at the expense of a copyist.

[12]B. A. van Groningen, Ἔκδοσις, in *Mnem.* 4.16 (1963) 1–17. See also F. Dirlmeier, "*Merkwürdige Zitate in der Eudemischen Ethik des Aristoteles, SBHeid.* (1962), esp. 1–24.

[13]For the reading διαγνῶναι see *Diogenis Laertii Vita Platonis* ed. H. Breitenbach *et alii* (Basel 1907) *ad loc.* Van Groningen (8–10) interprets the passage as referring to a practice introduced by Polemo, because Antigonus is writing a life of Zeno. But nothing suggests or obliges us to make a connection with Zeno. νεωστί is more naturally understood as referring to Plato's lifetime and the imperfect ἐτέλει to continuing practice. Van Groningen's further suggestion (9) that the Academy was a "congregation fermée" jealously guarding from the uninitiate Plato's manuscripts rests on no evidence and runs contrary to everything we know of Plato and the Academy. Certainly the earlier dialogues are written not for adepts but as protreptic to philosophy.

That *some* members of the Academy should ask a fee of readers need
not surprise us. Few of them were Athenians and probably few of them
were as affluent as Aristotle or Heraclides Ponticus. Apparently
Hermodorus (Wilamowitz 286, van Groningen 10) sold copies of the
dialogues in Sicily. He also wrote treatises on the Platonic philosophy.
He may have had to make his living by teaching and copying.

We must then imagine as the original source of our tradition papyrus
manuscripts either in Plato's hand or executed under his eye by a scribe.
These manuscripts, even if deposited and available in the Academy, may
have been subject to further revision by Plato himself. We may assume
that they will have been read, copied, and excerpted by the members of
the Academy and by other interested persons. It seems unlikely that
Aristotle, "the Reader," will not have had copies made. The whole,
because of its bulk (van Groningen [13] calculates 50 *volumina*, each
7 m. long) is likely to have remained on deposit in the Academy itself,
while copies spawned copies, some of them made by conscientious
copyists with a respect for the text, some made simply for quick gain.

How then do we explain that our texts are relatively free from corrup-
tion? A. Dain (*Les Manuscrits* [Paris 1964] 46) has calculated that even
a good scribe makes on the average one error of transcription per manu-
script page. There are two possible hypotheses, one that of an Alexandrian
edition, the other that of a more or less canonical Academy text. If, as
has been suggested above, there is no evidence for the editing at
Alexandria of the texts of the philosophers, then we must have recourse
to some form of the hypothesis that the Academy preserved an authorita-
tive text of a corpus formed soon after Plato's death. Only some such
hypothesis will account for the fact that the text of Plato has been so
much better transmitted than that, for instance, of Aristotle or the
historians. We need not assume in the Academy an attitude to the
holograph and the sanctity of the original document that is peculiar to
the modern world. But we may assume that members of the Academy
who expounded the Platonic texts would be concerned to preserve them
from omissions, additions, and distortions. By what means they achieved
this end we can only guess.

If we accept the hypothesis of a fourth-century collection of Plato's
works into a corpus of manuscripts having authority within the Academy
two major problems remain. Both are of importance for the history of
our tradition. To neither can we give entirely satisfactory answers.

We may assume that the Academy text was the direct progenitor of
the text deposited in the Alexandrian Library. Diogenes Laertius (3.66)
tells us that there was extant in his time or at the time of the writer
excerpted, and in any case probably at Alexandria, a copy provided with
critical signs which are certainly post-Aristarchean but give no other

indication of epoch. These critical signs are not reflected in our tradition (Jachmann 334–342). Are we to suppose that despite the eminence of Alexandrian Platonists Alexandrian scholarship had no influence on our tradition—that on the dissolution of the Academy its text or texts (that Proclus could quote variants suggests that he had more than one text available) passed to Byzantium and are the source of our textual tradition? Even though we are rarely provided with an aetiological tale, like that of Neleus' well, to account for confusion, we must always accept an element of chance. But Alexandria remained an intellectual centre of the Greek world until the Musulman conquest of Egypt. Philo and Plotinus had good texts—texts that are more likely to have been subjected to textual criticism than those of the Academy. It is strange that our tradition should have bypassed them.

Our second problem is the non-authentic dialogues incorporated in the tetralogies. (The *Spuria* appended to the corpus present a different and less difficult problem.) Van Groningen writes (14): "le fait que le corpus platonicien définitif comporte des parties non-authentiques (par exemple toute la quatrième tétralogie de Thrasylle) montre en suffisance que la théorie d'une Gesamtausgabe venant peu après la mort du philosophe est inacceptable." Prima facie there are strong arguments for this position. If a member or members of the Early Academy who had known Plato took a decision to conserve his writings either as holograph or as authoritative copy surely they would have had no trouble in knowing what should be included in the collection? Surely they would not have mistakenly included writings that were not Plato's but those of an imitator, as the dialogues of the fourth tetralogy certainly are?

Here again we may be misled by modern attitudes. If, as seems probable, Plato and his colleagues regarded the dialogues as written to enlist students for the study of philosophy, and to incite them to pursue those studies which prepared for philosophy, then, though they may have regarded Plato's works as performing these functions better than all others, they may have felt that the *First Alcibiades*, for instance, also performed it excellently and was worthy of a place in any collection. But how are we to conceive this collection? Hardly as a physical entity, so many volumina shelved in certain groupings. As van Groningen has remarked (14.1) it is easy to constitute a corpus only when it can take the form of a codex. So it seems probable instead that the tetralogies, which, as we have seen, ante-date the age of the codex, are the product of some authoritative excursus on the writings of Plato that ordered and classed them, and that enjoyed such authority as to determine the conservation of the manuscripts it named. But surely the authors of non-authentic dialogues were known, even though they wrote essays in the manner of Plato? Why were these essays not ascribed to their authors?

Why were these, and these only (for we must assume the production of other such essays) preserved? These are questions which can be answered only by vague surmise. But even though we cannot trace transmission through the centuries, we have a school tradition that is not subject to a wide range of error. We have as controls the thread of the thought and the characteristics of style. We cannot affirm that we have everywhere the *ipsissima verba*. What we have is something very close to what Plato wrote.

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