

## PSEUDO-ELIAS AND THE ISAGOGE COMMENTARIES AGAIN<sup>1)</sup>

In a recent note in the *American Journal of Philology*<sup>2)</sup>, Professor M. Marcovich has thrown further light on the relations between the commentaries on Porphyry's *Isagoge* by Ammonius, Elias, David, and the author called by his editor, L. G. Westerink, *Pseudo-Elias* (*Pseudo-David*)<sup>3)</sup>. By an instructive deployment of the reasons these writers give for young men's reluctance to study the ancients<sup>4)</sup>, Marcovich confirms Westerink's view that the author of Ps-ED is neither Elias nor David<sup>5)</sup>. The purpose of this note is to endorse Marcovich's conclusions on the non-identity of Ps-ED with the real Elias or David<sup>6)</sup>, a useful supplement to Westerink's work, but to take issue with his views about the relation of Ps-ED to the other two works and some of the differences between them.

Marcovich argues that the different arrangement of reasons, and the different choice of examples, in the four writers, shows that while Elias depends on Ammonius<sup>7)</sup>, and David on both of these authorities, Ps-ED, being other than either Elias or David,

1) All references to the Aristotelian commentators are to page and line of the Berlin Academy edition unless otherwise specified.

2) *Pseudo-Elias* on Heraclitus, *AJPh* 96, 1975, 31-34 (hereafter Marcovich).

3) L. G. Westerink, *Pseudo-Elias* (*Pseudo-David*). Lectures on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, Amsterdam 1967. Marcovich calls this author Anonymous: to avoid confusion with the Anonymous *Prolegomena* to Platonic Philosophy, ed. Westerink, Amsterdam 1962, I refer to both author and edition as Ps-ED.

4) This seems to be a loose generalization of a point, often made in the *Categories* commentaries, that Aristotle produced *ἀσάφεια* as a test to separate keen, or genuine, students from the idle, cf. Ammonius in *Cat.* 7. 10-14, Philoponus in *Cat.* 6.22-26, Olympiodorus in *Cat.* 11.24-29. To discover the reason for Aristotle's *ἀσάφεια* in certain works was part of the lecture programme, cf. Ammonius in *Cat.* 1.10, Simplicius in *Cat.* 3.26 and 6.30ff.

5) Ps-ED XV f.

6) Marcovich 33 f.

7) The extent of Elias' dependence on Olympiodorus elsewhere suggests that perhaps it was he who made the changes which are first attested in Elias, or at least some of them. On Elias and Olympiodorus see R. Vancourt, *Les derniers Commentateurs Alexandrins d'Aristote*, Lille 1941, 6-7, and Westerink, *Anon. Prolog.* XX-XXII.

depends on both of them, but on neither exclusively<sup>8</sup>). While Marcovich does point out that Ps-ED improvised, which would allow room for divergences, the last item in this set of filiations is much less convincing than the rest. It is based on:

1) The appearance in both David and Ps-ED of the amalgamation of difficulties arising from the λέξεις, which Ammonius and Elias split into those arising from μήκος and those from ἀσάφεια, into a single group due to ἀσάφεια; this single group is itself subdivided into difficulties arising κατὰ τὸ ποσόν and κατὰ τὸ ποιόν.

2) The addition by Elias and Ps-ED, though not David, of Proclus to Ammonius' Galen as an example of lengthiness.

3) Ps-ED's transfer of Heraclitus from the heading 'depth of thought', where he appears in Elias and David, to that of obscurity κατὰ τὸ ποιόν.

Several points here are debatable. With the addition of some further considerations we shall argue that Marcovich's texts could equally well show that David depends on Ps-ED rather than *vice-versa*, and, indeed, that the first of these alternatives is more likely than the second. Another possibility is that the two are independent, and merely offer variants of the approach exemplified by Elias. To take Marcovich's points in turn:

1) David does not in fact split his obscurity classification into κατὰ τὸ ποσόν and κατὰ τὸ ποιόν, but gives his two reasons for unclarity arising from λέξεις as διὰ τὸ μήκος and διὰ τὴν ποιότητα τῆς λέξεως. It can, of course, be argued that Ps-ED has taken David's ποιότης as a cue for introducing the division by categories. It is also possible, though less simple, that Ps-ED, often more precise than David<sup>9</sup>), invented it, while David, finding it too formal, returned to the μήκος used by Ammonius<sup>10</sup>), and substituted the less philosophical διὰ τὴν ποιότητα for the technical κατὰ τὸ ποιόν.

2) There are more economical explanations of the facts than Marcovich's, which is that David dropped Proclus, whom Elias had added to Ammonius' Galen as an example of verbosity, and that Ps-DE then re-instated him. Thus David may have simply omitted Proclus from Elias' pair while Ps-ED, following his

8) The passages in question are Ammon. in Isag. 38.14-17, Elias in Isag. 41.30-42.5, David in Isag. 105.10-22, Ps-ED 28.26-9 = pp. 61f. Westerink. They may also be found set out by Marcovich (with the omission of some irrelevant matter). To save space I do not print them here.

9) Cf. Ps-ED XVI.

10) Elias uses τὸ ἐξηλωμένον.

model, namely Elias and not David, duly kept him. If there is a single line of descent Ps-ED would come between Elias and David: unexplained reversal of a change, a necessary assumption on the hypothesis that Ps-ED followed David, is always suspect. One should not, however, dismiss the possibility that Proclus occurred to more than one writer independently as an example of this trait: he was an important authority for all late philosophical writers, and indubitably prolix<sup>11</sup>). As for Ammonius, he was taught by Proclus<sup>12</sup>), and respect for his master will have been enough to prevent him from adducing Proclus as an example of an undesirable characteristic<sup>13</sup>).

3) Heraclitus is an even more obvious example of obscurity due to 'depth of thought' than Galen or Proclus for obscurity due to length. Once included under this heading, his removal must be accounted for. Marcovich duly offers an explanation. He suggests that Ps-ED transferred him to the category of obscurity arising *κατὰ τὸ ποιὸν τῆς λέξεως* to comply with distinctions he had already drawn: *φυσιολόγοι* use grandiose language to convey simple thought, while writers engaged in *θεολογία* use the low (*ταπεινός*) style (27.24-25). Heraclitus, *quia physicus*, exemplifies the point that *φυσιολογία* employs the grand (*ἄδρός*) style, and accordingly the *θεολογικοὶ λόγοι* are substituted for Heraclitus as an example of material obscurity<sup>14</sup>). Now if David, who probably depends on Elias<sup>15</sup>), followed Ps-ED chronologically, he would not have done anything very surprising in not following him in this detail since the obscurity of Heraclitus was a long-

11) Marinus, in praise of Proclus, tells us that he generally wrote some 700 lines a day, *Vita Procli* 22.

12) Cf. Damascius *Vita Isidori* fr. 127 Zintzen (= *Suda*, s.v. *Aidesia*).

13) For Ammonius' attitude to Proclus cf. in *de Interp.* 181.30f.

14) It is not clear whose, or what, the *θεολογικοὶ λόγοι* are. They could be Aristotle's, if Ps-ED – incorrectly – understood Porphyry's reference to deeper enquiries in the opening lines of the *Isagoge* as being to the *Metaphysics*. Later, at 29.37, Ps-ED does say that Plato in the *Parmenides* and Aristotle in the *Metaphysics* *θεολογοῦσι*, and quotes Porphyry, *περὶ ἧς* (sc. *λογικῆς*) *καὶ νῦν διαλέγομαι, παριὼν τὰ πρότα καὶ βαθύτερα*. David, on the other hand, writes that Aristotle's thought was simple while his words were not, in *Isag.* 105.21f.

15) Cf. Marcovich 34; so already A. Busse, *Davidi Prolegomena et in Porphyrii Isagogen*, CAG XVIII. ii, 1904, VI, revising an earlier view expressed in the preface to his edition of the *Isagoge* itself, CAG IV. i, 1887, XLV. Otherwise R. Beutler, *Olympiodorus, Pauly-Wissowa XVIII*, 1939, 220, and C. W. Müller, *Die neuplatonischen Aristoteleskommentatoren über die Ursachen der Pseudepigraphie*, *Rhein. Mus. n.F.* 112, 1969, 124f.

standing tradition. But yet again independence may be the correct explanation.

We still have to consider the adjectives used to describe Heraclitus' obscurity. Their distribution may provide further evidence in favour of the view that Ps-ED depended on Elias but not on David. One could point to the fact that Ps-ED uses only *σκοτεινός*. Elias too uses *σκοτεινός*, but also has *βάθος*, though not as a direct description (see below), while David has *βαθύς* only. If *σκοτεινός* is any more than a stock epithet, its distribution links Ps-ED with Elias and not with David. At the same time the presence of *βάθος/-ύς* in David, and its absence in Ps-ED, further weakens the case for Ps-ED's dependence on David. But one should allow the possibility that there is no significance in the use of *σκοτεινός*, already attested by Strabo<sup>16</sup>), by any one individual. The case of *βαθύς* is a little more complex. Elias uses it only in the tag *βαθέος δεῖσθαι κολυμβητοῦ*, which may be found in Diogenes Laertius in the form *Δηλίου τινός δεῖσθαι κολυμβητοῦ*<sup>17</sup>). David too gives the tag, (in Elias' form) and, presumably on that basis, uses *βαθύς* as a simple adjective for Heraclitus which David had not done, a procedure characteristic of imprecise use of sources. Here there is no evidence for Ps-ED depending on David, nor, for that matter, for the reverse relationship.

A further reason why Ps-ED did not use the word *βαθύς* for Heraclitus may lie in more precise attention to the text of Porphyry. In Isagoge 1.8–9, which Ps-ED cites at the end of the section we are considering (28.60), Porphyry says he will avoid *τὰ βαθύτερα ζητήματα*: given Ps-ED's contention that the thoughts of *φυσιολόγοι* were not deep, that would make the word unsuitable for Heraclitus. This same passage of Porphyry suggests a further point on Elias' introduction of Heraclitus. Marcovich thinks it was suggested to him by Ammonius' words *βάθος τῶν νοημάτων*<sup>18</sup>). Certainly Elias repeats these very words, but we should not forget that Porphyry himself used *βαθύς* of *ζητήματα*, and also the superlative a few lines below, both referring to Aristotle, in the very text which all four are expounding<sup>19</sup>). Heraclitus, moreover, might have come to mind more

16) Strabo XIV. 1.25 (= DK<sup>6</sup> 22 A 3a). *σκοτεινός* is applied to his works as early as Demetrius Eloc. 192 (= DK<sup>6</sup> 22 A 4).

17) D.L. II.22, IX.12: in the first of these passages Diogenes attributes it to Socrates.

18) Marcovich 32.

19) Isag. 1.3–14.

readily because he was sometimes mentioned in the opening sections of the Categories commentaries in connection with the river image<sup>20</sup>).

It is also, incidentally, possible to explain why Elias adds Hippocrates to Aristotle as an example of *ἀσάφεια*. It is simply that Elias, perhaps following Olympiodorus in this too, was interested in medicine<sup>21</sup>). David's substitution of one Aristogenes may be put down to an attempt at originality<sup>22</sup>).

To conclude. Marcovich has clearly strengthened the case for Elias' dependence on Ammonius, either directly, or, as I suggest, mediately<sup>23</sup>), and David's on Elias. His conclusions about the place of Ps-ED in relation to Elias and David are not equally convincing. It seems more likely that Ps-ED depends only on Elias, while David depends in part on PsED, perhaps more likely still that the last two were independent of each other. Thus on the basis of this block of evidence, and we must thank Marcovich for drawing our attention to it, we must never the less retain Westerink's cautious view that a common source for David and Ps-ED would offer the simplest explanation, but that matters may have been more complicated<sup>24</sup>). Ps-ED's priority, if not perhaps a complication, should now be added as a serious possibility, in the sense that he, as well as Elias, could have been a source for David<sup>25</sup>). If we had Olympiodorus on the Isagoge, a course on which all three probably drew, things might well be clearer.

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20) So at Philop. in Cat. 2.15f., and, unnamed, in the Ammonius version, 2.25f.

21) Cf. the CAG indices to Olympiodorus, esp. in Meteor., and Westerink, Philosophy and medicine in late antiquity, Janus 51, 1964, 172f.

22) Marcovich, 32 and n. 7, identifies him with a Thasian physician listed in the Suda (ed. Adler, no. 3910). Busse, in app., simply refers to the Suda, without specifying the Aristogenes. M. Wellmann, Aristogenes (5), Pauly-Wissowa II. i, 1895, 932, thinks this Thasian is the same as a Hellenistic doctor from Cnidus (Adler's no. 3911) who attended Antigonus Gonatas. Though a physician would make a suitable substitute for Hippocrates, there is no other reason for identifying David's Aristogenes with either of these individuals separately, or with both conjointly. The words attributed to him by David *καὶ ἡδὲν πόνον καὶ ἐνσασαγμένον*, 105.16f., look like a dismembered iambic verse – the *καὶ* s should perhaps not be in the citation. A v.l. *ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΝΕΙΑ* could conceal some other name: the context forbids that it should be a mistake for *ΑΡΙΣΤΟΤΕΛΕΙΑ*.

23) See n. 7 above.

24) Ps-ED XVI.

25) Westerink, *ibid.*, admitted the possibility that Ps-ED was not later than David.