

Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens IV

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The publication was sponsored by:
The Danish Research Council for the Humanities
Generalkonsul Gösta Enboms Fond.

Proceedings of the Danish Institute at Athens

General Editors: Jonas Eiring and Jørgen Mejer.
Graphic design and production: George Geroulis, Press Line.

Printed in Greece on permanent paper.

ISBN: 87 7288 724 9

Distributed by:
AARHUS UNIVERSITY PRESS
Langelandsgade 177
DK-8200 Århus N
Fax (+45) 8942 5380

73 Lime Walk
Headington, Oxford OX3 7AD
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Cover illustration: Finds from the Hellenistic grave at Chalkis, Aetolia.
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The Platonic Corpus in Antiquity

Jørgen Mejer

Plato is the one and only philosopher from Antiquity whose writings have been preserved in their entirety. And not only have they been preserved, they have been transmitted as a single collection of texts. Our Medieval manuscripts seem to go back to one particular edition, an archetypus in two volumes, as appears from the subscript to the dialogue *Menexenus*, which is the last dialogue in the seventh tetralogy: τέλος τοῦ πρώτου διβλίου. Even though the order in which the dialogues appear in the manuscripts to some extent varies, there can be no doubt that this two-volume edition presented the dialogues in groups of four, in tetralogies. Unless it is claimed that Plato himself had arranged his writings in this way,¹ and this is most unlikely (we know that the *Laws* had not been published when Plato died), all the Medieval manuscripts must go back to this particular edition of Plato's works.

In his book *Thrasyllan Platonism* (1993), Harold Tarrant argued that this

particular edition which has determined not only the Medieval tradition but also our modern knowledge of Platonic dialogues, goes back to the Roman Emperor Tiberius' court-astrologer, Thrasyllus.² Tarrant demonstrates rather convincingly that there is little basis for assuming that the tetralogical arrangement existed before Thrasyllus, that it is possible to identify a philosophical position which explains the tetralogies, that this philosophical position agrees with what we know about Thrasyllus, and finally, that all the ancient sources dealing with Plato's dialogues from the second and third centuries AD have been under the influence of Thrasyllus' work.³ Consequently, we are probably entitled to speak about a *Corpus Platonicum* beginning with Thrasyllus.

Probably, because we have to be clear what we mean by a *Corpus Platonicum*.⁴ In the modern world, the *Corpus Platonicum* consists of texts published as a collection in the Oxford, Budé or Teubner editions, including

¹ Indeed, this appears to be what Thrasyllus said (Diogenes Laertius 3 56), though it is unclear what the term ἐκδίδομι means, cf. below note 6. Since Diogenes' text seems garbled, it is problematical to draw further conclusions from Thrasyllus' analogy, though it seems likely that Thrasyllus took issue with Aristophanes of Byzantium's trilogies.

² The following year J. Mansfeld published *Prolegomena, Questions to be Settled Before the Study of an Author, or a Text*, in which he on pp. 58-107 deals with many of the problems discussed by Tarrant and in this paper. Both works have copious references to the earlier literature.

³ On one further argument that the tetralogies transmitted in the medieval mss. of Plato goes back to Thrasyllus, cf. below p. 36.

⁴ Recent literature on the transmission of Plato's dialogues in Antiquity is listed in J. Mejer,

some works recognized as being spurious in the sense that they were not written by Plato, though they may be Platonic in a philosophical sense. In that case, the Corpus must be a post-Platonic collection of texts. But what about Plato's genuine works, were they ever published as 'The Collected Works of Plato'? And who was responsible for the addition of spurious dialogues to any 'original collection'?

An important question to ask is: Were there at all editions of any author's collected works as long as literary works were transmitted on papyrus rolls: even if these rolls were contained in a book case (bucket), it cannot have been possible to keep them in any particular order, and it must have been impossible to be certain that whatever you had in your possession would be the complete works of any author. The Thrasyllan tetralogies of course imply that the works of Plato and Democritus were available, why else would Thrasyllus have written a book called τὰ πρὸ τῆς ἀναγνώσεως τῶν Δημοκρίτου διβλίων = *Introduction to the reading of Democritus' works*, but this book and the tetralogies do not necessarily imply that Thrasyllus made an edition of Plato's and Democritus' collected works. If we assume that there was an edition of Plato's collected works prior to Thrasyllus, according to which principle was it organized? Alphabetical (as Euripides, perhaps), chronological (assuming that the chronology of Plato's works was known), according to the indications given by Plato himself in his

dialogues about sequence, or systematic (as the classification of the dialogues by means of 'characteristic' adjectives might suggest)?

The earliest indication of an attempt to list or organize the Platonic dialogues seems to be the five trilogies attributed to the great Alexandrian librarian Aristophanes of Byzantium in the third century BC.⁵ Would this conscientious organizer have chosen to present, not to say edit, Platonic dialogues in a way that did not correspond to an earlier edition published under the supervision of the Academy? And if there already existed a 'Collected Works of Plato', why did Aristophanes only edit fifteen dialogues, and why did he include some dialogues among these fifteen which certainly are dubious - unless of course we assume that the Academy's *editio princeps* of Plato already included such works? In fact, however, there is no reason to assume that Aristophanes published any Platonic dialogues at all: Diogenes Laertius informs us that Aristophanes arranged fifteen dialogues in trilogies but that he arranged the rest of the dialogues individually and ἀτάκτως. It seems to me that this expression implies that Aristophanes only tried to offer an *arrangement* of some of the dialogues.

Indeed, it makes no sense to make an edition in which the majority of the Platonic dialogues appear individually and in no particular order. So, even though Aristophanes' list does prove

Überlieferung der Philosophie im Altertum. Eine Einführung, *Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser* 80 (Copenhagen 2000) pp. 127-28.

⁵ Diogenes Laertius 3.61-62.

that Plato's dialogues were available in Alexandria a century after the death of Plato, it gives little indication about the situation before Aristophanes.

Scholars who assume the existence of an edition of Plato's works by the early Academy often refer to a passage in Diogenes Laertius' *Life of Plato* (3.66): "Antigonus of Carystus in his biography of Zeno tells that people who wanted to go through⁶ Plato's recently⁷ published works paid a salary to those who owned them."⁸

It is wrongly assumed that those who owned Plato's works were members of the Academy: this is in fact not said in the text.⁹ It is important to notice that this remark occurred in Antigonus' biography of the Stoic philosopher Zeno and thus does not necessarily have anything to do with the Academy as such. It is far more likely that Antigonus wanted to explain how it came about that Zeno from Citium in Cyprus came to know Plato's dialogues. There was a

rumor that Zeno's father brought Plato's dialogues back to Cyprus and that Zeno came to Athens because he had read the *Apology*.¹⁰

There are some anecdotes which imply that Plato must have left his manuscripts in the Academy. The *Laws* was said to have been left unfinished on writing tablets at his death though it is difficult to imagine such a long manuscript on writing tablets (which can only have contained a page or two per tablet), and according to some reliable sources (Euphorion, who was a student at the Academy around 250 BC, and Panaetius) the introduction to the *Republic* existed in several versions.¹¹

The evidence indicating that the dialogues were freely available in the Hellenistic period is overwhelming. The earliest papyri of Platonic dialogues are radically different from the Medieval manuscript tradition,¹² thus indicating that different copies of indi-

⁶ = διαναγῶναι. It is impossible to say whether this verb implies reading through the complete works of an author. The latter meaning is only found in Damon fr. 2 = Athen. 3, 102B.

⁷ νεωστὶ needs not mean that Plato's works were published shortly before Antigonus wrote his biography, it can also refer to Zeno's life, i.e. late fourth century BC, and can in any case refer to a longer period of time, cf. e.g. Plato *Gorgias* 523 b, Ast *ad loc.* and Latin *nuper*. 'published' should be taken in a very general sense since it is far from clear what the term ἐκδίδωμι and related words imply, cf. Mansfeld 1994, 61.

⁸ = Antigonus fr. 39 Dorandi. On this passage, cf. H. Alline, *Histoire du texte du Platon* (Paris 1915) 46-50.

⁹ Cf. a similar expression about Protagoras' works Diog. Laert. 9. 52.

¹⁰ Cf. Demetrius Magnes apud Diog. Laert. 7.31 and Themistius *Or.* 23.295 D. Diog. Laert. 7.2-3 has another story about Zeno's introduction to philosophy. In any case, ancient sources had no problem in imagining that Plato's works were accessible to a general public, cf. further L. Brisson in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II 36.5, 3720 with refs.

¹¹ Diog. Laert. 3.37.

¹² The *Phaedo* (1388 Pack, III BC.), the *Sophist* (1395 Pack, ca. 270-230 BC.) and *Laches* (1409 Pack, III BC.). It is also worth noticing two papyri from the third century BC, discussing parts of the *Phaedo*, another sign that Plato's works were found in Egypt in this period: PHeidelb. G.Inv. 28, s. A. Carlini, *Papiri letterari greci* (Pisa 1978) 201-209, and Pgraec. mon. 91, s. A. Carlini, *Papiri letterari greci della Bayerische Staatsbibliothek di monarco di Baviera* (Stuttgart 1986) 10-14; cf. *CPF*

vidual dialogues existed, and the fact that somebody took the trouble to provide the Platonic texts with diacritical signs different from, but similar to, the ones designed by Aristarchus for the Homeric poems,¹³ points in the same direction. Some of these signs refer to passages which ought to be deleted from the text, yet another one to corrections made by previous scholars. Such signs make sense only if we assume that the text of the Platonic dialogues existed in many different copies.¹⁴

We have next to no information about how Plato made his dialogues known. Only a few late sources claim that Plato's dialogues were available in his own life time, even though some anecdotes imply the same.¹⁵ It is very difficult to imagine that e.g. the introduction to the *Phaedo* was written for anybody but a non-Athenian audience and thus may have been known outside

Athens. It can come as no surprise that Aristotle knew the Platonic dialogues well, but it is significant that *his* students, who did not, as far as we know, attend lectures in the Academy, also knew the dialogues. Theophrastus wrote a synopsis of the *Republic*, while Clearchus dealt with mathematical statements in the same dialogue.¹⁶ The Stoic Zeno and the Cynic Diogenes must have known the *Republic* well enough to take issue with Plato in their own *Republics*,¹⁷ and in the next generation the Epicureans Metrodorus and Colotes wrote on at least four different Platonic dialogues. The Stoic Persaeus wrote a book on Plato's *Laws*¹⁸ and Chrysippus, who had studied in the Academy, seems to have been familiar with the *Clitopho* which, even if not genuine, must have been part of the Platonic corpus already in the third century BC.¹⁹ Theopompus' remark in his *Against Plato and his School* that most of Plato's dialogues are "useless and

III 203-220. The two texts are too short to decide if they were in fact real commentaries on the dialogue. But Callimachus epigr. 23 confirms that the *Phaedo* was known in Alexandria.

¹³ Cf. Diog. Laert. 3.65-66.

¹⁴ Unfortunately, these diacritical signs are only known from Diogenes Laertius and from a second century AD papyrus of a text which may very well have been one of Diogenes' sources, though he claims that there were copies of the Platonic texts with such signs, cf. V. Bartoletti, *Diogene Laerzio III 65-66 e un papiro della raccolta fiorentina, Mélanges Eugène Tisserant I* (Città del Vaticano 1964) 25-30 [Studi e testi 231]. There are no diacritical signs in the Medieval manuscripts.

¹⁵ According to Philodemus *IndAcad VI* 6-10 Dorandi = Hermodorus fr. 1 Isnardi Parente, cf. also fr. 2-3, Hermodorus was the first to bring Platonic dialogues to Sicily; cf. also Themistius as quoted above note 10. As for the anecdotal evidence, cf. A. S. Riginos, *Platonica* (Leiden 1976) nos. 132, 134-35.

¹⁶ On Aristotle and Plato, cf. H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus, Aristotelis Opera* vol. V, 598ff, E. Zeller *Geschichte der gr. Philosophie* 2.1, 447-470, or W.K.C. Guthrie *History of Gr. Philosophy* 4, 41. As for Theophrastus, cf. Diog. Laert. 5.43, as for Clearchus, cf. Athenaeus 393a (= fr. 3 Wehrli).

¹⁷ See Crönert 1906, 162-72.

¹⁸ Metrodorus on the *Gorgias* and *Euthyphro*, Colotes on *Lysis* and *Euthydemus*, cf. Crönert 1906 5-12 and 162-72. On Persaeus, cf. Diog. Laert. 7.36.

¹⁹ *SVF* 3.761, and cf. S.R. Slings, *Plato Clitophon (Cambr. Classical Texts and Commentaries 37, Cambr. 1999) 217-20.*

false, and the greater number of them are stolen”, also presupposes that the public at large knew the Platonic dialogues.²⁰

In the second century BC both the Stoic philosopher Panaetius and the critic Herodicus of Babylon had an intimate knowledge of the Platonic dialogues,²¹ and Cicero reports that the orator Crassus studied the *Gorgias* under the Academic Charmadas around 110 BC. Cicero himself translated the *Protagoras* and the *Timaeus* and was well acquainted with Plato’s *Republic* and the *Laws*.

Although there may have been other sources of knowledge about Plato’s views - Speusippus, Xenophanes, Aristotle, and other students wrote on Plato - and even though we do not know the implications of the information that Arcesilaus bought the works of Plato in the middle of the third century BC,²² there is ample evidence that the Platonic dialogues were readily available to the public throughout the Hellenistic period, in sharp contrast to the *Corpus Aristotelicum*.

If there was no authorized edition of the Platonic dialogues, there is no reason to

be surprised that Aristophanes among his trilogies could include two dialogues which nowadays are considered not to have been written by Plato (*Epinomis*, *Minos*), nor that he only listed a small number of dialogues - few of which were Socratic - and left some important ones unmentioned. Nor should it surprise that Thrasyllus’ tetralogies a couple of hundred years later included the same two dialogues in addition to two other disputed dialogues (*Hipparchus*, *Amatores* = *Anterastai*) while even more spurious dialogues were transmitted with Plato’s works in some of the Medieval manuscripts. As we know from Diogenes Laertius (Book 2) there were many Socratic dialogues written by many authors in the first half of the fourth century BC; at least the title of one dialogue which is called ‘spurious’ by Diogenes, also appears in the list of the works of the Socratic Cebes (Diog. Laert. 2.124).²³ If the Academy had produced an edition of the dialogues shortly after Plato’s death, it seems inexplicable that there could have been much doubt about the number of genuine dialogues.

Let us now take a closer look at the way Aristophanes and Thrasyllus organized their arrangements.

²⁰ *FGrHist* 115 F259.

²¹ According to some late sources, Panaetius considered the *Phaedo* not to be by Plato because he himself believed in the immortality of the soul, cf. fr. 127-129 van Straaten. Even if this is incorrect, it proves that the idea of an authorized edition of Plato was not prevalent; Panaetius discussed the value and genuineness of Socratic dialogues, cf. fr. 123-130 van Straaten. As for Herodicus, see I. Düring, *Herodicus the Crateteian, A Study in Anti-Platonic Tradition* (Stockholm 1941).

²² Cf. Diog. Laert. 3.32. According to Philodemus *IndAcad* XIX 15 Dorandi, Arcesilaus acquired Plato’s dialogues when he was young, but we have no idea whether he did so before or after he became a member of the Academy. It is, however, tempting to see his radical skepticism as a result of renewed interest in the aporetic dialogues which cannot have been the main interest of the generation following Plato’s death.

²³ If the strange ἀκέφαλοι in DL 3.62 in fact refers to a *Kephalos*, compare the dialogues by that name mentioned in the Lives of Glauco and Speusippus (DL 2. 124 and 4. 4). For another explanation, cf. below p. 44.

Trilogies / Tetralogies

Aristophanes Thrasyllos

Republic	Euthyphron	peirastikos	περὶ ὀσίου
Timaios	Apologia	ethikos	-----
Kritias	Kriton	ethikos	περὶ πρακτέου
	Phaidon	ethikos	περὶ ψυχῆς
Sophist	Kratylos	Logikos	περὶ ὀρθότητος ὀνομάτων
Politikos	Theaitetos	peirastikos	περὶ ἐπιστήμης
Kratylos	Sophist	logikos	περὶ τοῦ ὄντος
	Politikos	logikos	περὶ βασιλείας
Laws	Parmenides	logikos	περὶ ἰδεῶν
Minos	Philebos	ethikos	περὶ ἡδονῆς
Epinomis	Symposion	ethikos	περὶ αγαθοῦ
	Phaidros	ethikos	περὶ ἔρωτος
Theaitetos	Alkibiades I	maieutikos	περὶ ἀνθρώπου φύσεως
Euthyphron	Alkibiades II	maieutikos	περὶ εὐχῆς
Apologia	Hipparchos	ethicos	φιλοκερδῆς
	Anterastai	ethikos	περὶ φιλοσοφίας
Kriton	Theages	maieutikos	περὶ φιλοσοφίας
Phaidon	Charmides	peirastikos	περὶ σωφροσύνης
Letters	Laches	maieutikos	περὶ ἀνδρείας
	Lysias	maieutikos	περὶ φιλίας
	Euthydemos	anatreptikos	ἐριστικός
	Protagoras	endeiktikos	σοφισταί
	Gorgias	anatreptikos	περὶ ὀητορικῆς
	Menon	peirastikos	περὶ ἀρετῆς
	Hippias I	anatreptikos	περὶ τοῦ καλοῦ
	Hippias II	anatreptikos	περὶ τοῦ ψεύδους
	Ion	peirastikos	περὶ Ἰλιάδος
	Menexenos	ethikos	ἐπιτάφιος
	Kleitophon	ethikos	προτρεπτικός
	Politeia	politikos	περὶ δικαίου
	Timaios	physikos	περὶ φύσεως
	Kritias	ethikos	Ἀτλαντικός
	Minos	politikos	περὶ νόμου
	Lovene	politikos	περὶ νομοθεσίας
	Epinomis	politkos	νυκτερινὸς σύλλογος ἢ
	Letters	ethikai	φιλόσοφος

We only have the bare list of trilogies from Aristophanes, and we have no way of knowing why he selected only the fifteen texts included in his trilogies. It seems clear that he organized his trilogies mainly from the point of view of the ‘dramatic’ relationship between the dialogues. The first trilogy consists of three dialogues that are explicitly interconnected through their introductory remarks. The fourth trilogy contains three texts which describe the period in Socrates’ life leading up to and including the trial against him: at the end of the *Theaetetus* Socrates is on his way to the Stoa Basileios to accept Meletus’ indictment, i.e. to the place where we find Socrates at the beginning of the *Euthyphro*, followed by Socrates’ *Apology* at the actual trial. The fifth trilogy is the continuation of the fourth and deals with the period after the trial: Socrates in prison (*Crito*), Socrates’ death (the *Phaedo*), followed by the Platonic letters, which have nothing to do with Socrates as such and therefore with some justification can be placed after his death. In the second trilogy the *Sophist* and the *Politicus* are explicitly tied together by their introductions while it is hard to explain the position of the *Cratylus* in this trilogy.

None of the dialogues in the third trilogy has any introduction to indicate their interconnections, but the *Laws* and the *Epinomis* are the only dialogues in which a character by the name of Clinias appears, and in which Socrates is absent from the conversation. The title of the *Epinomis* clearly places it as a successor to the *Laws*, while the text of the *Minos* offers no information that can explain its position between the *Laws* and the *Epinomis*.²⁴

When we turn to Thrasyllus’ tetralogies, it is important to make clear what this way of organizing the Platonic dialogues involved. According to Diogenes 3.56, Thrasyllus claimed that “Plato made his dialogues public by following the example of the tragic tetralogy. The tragic poets competed with four plays...²⁵ of which the fourth was the satyr play. The four plays together were called a tetralogy.” We do not know why Thrasyllus wanted to impose the tetralogical arrangement on Plato himself: did he do so to indicate that he knew of a previous arrangement of this kind, or did he do it because he had to invent a good reason for his own tetralogical scheme, and one which was better than Aristophanes’ for his trilogies?

Diogenes says (3.57): “Thrasyllus uses double titles for each of Plato’s books,

²⁴ For what it is worth, we should notice that the dialogues in Aristophanes’ third and fourth trilogies are also kept together in Thrasyllus’ tetralogies, even though it is impossible to explain why Aristophanes does not list *Theaetetus* that so obviously belongs with the *Sophist* and the *Politicus*, rather than the *Cratylus*.

²⁵ I leave out the names of four festivals which appear here, partly because they seem out of place, partly because the manuscript readings are uncertain, and finally because nowhere else in ancient literature is it stated that the tragic poets competed with four plays at all these festivals. The abrupt way the names are inserted into the sentence makes it quite possible that it is an addition by Diogenes himself. In any case, it is unwise to use the text as foundation for further speculations.

one taken from the name (of the interlocutor?), the other from the subject matter.” This statement seems to be so emphatic that it is impossible to attribute the characterizing adjectives (in the last column of the table) to yet another element in Thrasyllus’ presentation.²⁶ The notion that they were not is supported by the fact that the characterizing adjectives are introduced by Diogenes before he seems to have turned his attention to Thrasyllus, viz. in §§ 50-51 where it is obvious that these adjectives serve the purpose of setting up a systematic approach to the Platonic dialogues by means of dichotomous diairesis and have nothing to do with the tetralogies.²⁷ Indeed, it is hard to make sense of these adjectives unless they are seen as part of the scheme presented by Diogenes. They all represent the last level of the diairesis: two of the categories are represented by only one dialogue each (physical

= *Timaeus*, endeictic = *Protagoras*), and the distinctions between endeictic and anatreptic and between maieutic and peirastic seem somewhat artificial and serve more to maintain the diairesis than clarify the nature of the dialogues so characterized.²⁸

When we look at Thrasyllus’ tetralogical list, it is tempting to recognize the first tetralogy as being the story about Socrates’ indictment, trial and death, but it is important to notice why Thrasyllus placed these dialogues as the first tetralogy: “As the first tetralogy he places the one which has a common theme,²⁹ for he wishes to demonstrate which character a philosopher’s life should have” (Diog. Laert. 3.57). This means that Thrasyllus had no intention to maintain a chronological order nor to present a dramatic sequence as such, but to describe how the ideal philosopher is. Diogenes’ about Thra-

²⁶ The most recent discussion of the double titles and the characterizing adjectives is found in Mansfeld 1994, 71-97.

²⁷ Tarrant 1993, 91ff has a rather fantastic theory about Thrasyllus’ use of the characterizing adjectives: he is supposed to have meant them as indicating dramatic tetralogies, 3 tragedies + 1 satyr play, but Tarrant can only establish this theory by changing some of the adjectives which appear in the text of Diogenes.

²⁸ It can also be argued that the diairetic scheme presupposes a *Corpus Platonicum* - of which we have no trace before Thrasyllus. It is difficult to compare Diogenes’ scheme with that in Albinus’ *Prologos* §3 since the text of Albinus obviously has been mutilated, and attempts to emend it are based on a comparison with Diogenes’ text, so that any comparison between the two will be a case of *petitio principii*. Notice in particular that the common substitution of ‘endeictic’ for ‘elentic’ in § 3 as the adjective characterizing the *Protagoras* is very dubious since it is clear from §6 that the term ‘elentic’ is needed in Albinus’ scheme. Further discussion of *Prologos* § 3 in B. Reis: ‘The Circle Simile in the Platonic Curriculum of Albinus,’ in J.J. Cleary (ed.), *The Perennial Tradition of Neoplatonism* (Leuven 1997), 237-68, esp. 239-42.

²⁹ I translate thus because it seems to me strange to assume that Thrasyllus should have suggested that all the Platonic dialogues had one common theme, as done by M. Dunn: ‘Iamblichus, Thrasyllus and the Reading Order of the Platonic Dialogues,’ in R.B. Harrison (ed.), *The Significance of Neoplatonism* (Norfolk VA 1976) 59-80. esp. 63. If so, why did Thrasyllus list all the second titles which apparently show that the dialogues deal with very different matters?

syllus' intention differs from what Albinus in the second century AD has to say about Thrasyllus' first tetralogy:

"Some people divide the dialogues into tetralogies and place as the first tetralogy the one which contains the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology*, the *Crito* and the *Phaedo*, the *Euthyphro* because Socrates receives the indictment, the *Apology* because it was necessary for him to defend himself, the *Crito* because of the time he spent in prison, and the *Phaedo* because Socrates' life ends in this dialogue. Dercyllides³⁰ and Thrasyllus support this view, for they apparently want to organize according to the characters and the circumstances of their life. This may be useful for a different purpose, but not to mine, for I want to determine how to begin and how to organize the teaching of philosophy" (Albinus *Prologos* 4).

It is impossible to determine whether Albinus is paraphrasing Thrasyllus or just drawing his own conclusions from the tetralogical table. If the parallel between Thrasyllus' first tetralogy of Plato and that of Democritus (cf. below) is any indication, Diogenes' statement is more credible.

We can see that Thrasyllus did pay some attention to the dramatic frames of the Platonic dialogues: in tetralogy 2 the *Theaetetus*, the *Sophist* and the *Politicus* appear in correct order according to the framing dialogues, while the *Cratylus* has nothing to do with these dialogues but mentions Euthyphro, who also appears in the first dialogue in the first tetralogy, and only in these two dialogues. In tetralogy 8, the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* follow one another as they should, in tetralogy 9 *Minos* is placed

before the *Laws* and the *Epinomis*, not between the two dialogues as in Aristophanes' list, perhaps because Socrates is one of the speakers in *Minos*, but not in the other two dialogues; another reason might be that *Minos* deals with the concept of law and presents us with the 'true' version of the mythical hero Minos, which seems to be presupposed as being right at the beginning of the *Laws*.

This sequence has little to do with characters and circumstances, and most of the remaining dialogues cannot be organized by applying any single criterion. Some of Thrasyllus' sequences are similar to sequences in Aristophanes' trilogies, but the sequence of the *Theaetetus*, the *Euthyphro*, the *Apology* in Aristophanes' third trilogy, followed by the *Crito* and the *Phaedo* in the next, obviously indicates that there was more than one way of organizing the dialogues. It is clear that different organizing principles intersect in Thrasyllus' tetralogies. This also makes it unlikely that Thrasyllus' tetralogies were meant as a teaching program, and there is no indication that Thrasyllus ever was a teacher of philosophy.

It seems to me that neither Aristophanes nor Thrasyllus felt obliged to follow any predisposed order, nor to accept pre-existing evidence as to the order of the Platonic dialogues. Aristotle knew that the *Laws* was a later dialogue than the *Republic* (*Pol.* 1264 b 26), and some sources pri-

³⁰ Tarrant 1993, 72-96 argues convincingly that there is not enough evidence to date Dercyllides' or any other tetralogical arrangement earlier than the work of Thrasyllus.

or to Diogenes Laertius claimed that the *Laws* was incomplete by Plato's death and copied or edited by Philip of Opus who by some unknown sources also was listed as the author of the *Epinomis* (Diog. Laert. 3.37).³¹

Nevertheless, Aristophanes placed the *Laws* and the *Epinomis* in the third trilogy. Neither he nor Thrasyllus paid any attention to Plato's remarks on the narrative style in the beginning of the *Theaetetus* (which have been so important in modern scholarship) and placed dialogues, which maintain the indirect narrative later in their lists. Finally, it seems significant that both the trilogies and the tetralogies contain dialogues which already in Antiquity were considered not to have been written by Plato. While Aristophanes in his selection was free to do as he pleased, Thrasyllus perhaps needed 36 dialogues to obtain a good Pythagorean number of dialogues ($36 = 9 \times 4$, i. e. the product of the first two squares which were so important to the Pythagoreans).³² Since there were several other dialogues which were called spurious in Antiquity (cf. Diog. Laert. 3.62), and since a few more appear in the Medieval manuscripts of Plato, it seems clear that

Thrasyllus felt entitled to make his own selection and that there was no fixed canon of Platonic dialogues at least up to the Roman period³³ - which is also the period when we meet the first clear indications of a Platonic Corpus.

One of the important signs that the Platonic texts began to take on a new life is the emergence of commentaries on the dialogues, commentaries in the sense of separate books: *hypomnemata*. Even though some philosophers made comments on the Platonic dialogues, there is no trace of real commentaries in the Hellenistic period.³⁴ Real commentaries on Platonic dialogues do not emerge before the first century AD with Plutarch and Onasandros,³⁵ and possibly the Anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus*. In the second century AD we find many commentators: Calvenus Taurus (*Timaeus*), Atticus (*Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*), Harpocration from Argos (24 books of commentaries on Plato and a Platonic Lexicon), Severus (*Timaeus*), Numenius (on Er in the *Republic*, perhaps also *Timaeus*), Theon from Smyrna (on the *Republic*, and cf. *Mathematical Topics that are useful when reading Plato*), Adrastus from Aphrodisias (*Timaeus*), Galen (*Ti-*

³¹ On the transmission of the *Epinomis* in Antiquity, cf. Tarán 1975, especially 3-13 and 128-33. It is difficult to evaluate the reference to Plato *Laws* book 13 (= *Epinomis* 991e-92b) in Nicomachus *Introductio Arithmetica* 1.3,5, except that it proves that the *Epinomis* must have followed the *Laws*.

³² Note that Thrasyllus does not doubt that the *Amatores* is genuine, but rather insists on it in DL 9.73, cf. Mansfeld 1994, 100. If he had doubts about the authenticity of this dialogue, he would not have included it in his tetralogies.

³³ This may also explain why Aristophanes could avoid ordering dialogues which were and are considered 'important' Platonic dialogues.

³⁴ Books with the title Πρὸς... do not necessarily represent commentaries but may also be books attacking Plato and his philosophy.

³⁵ Cf. the *Suda* s.v. Ονόσανδρος 386, 3.541 Adler.

maeus) and a commentary on the *Alcibiades* (CPF III no. 5). If these commentaries were written and used in the same way as other commentaries in Antiquity, they require that the reader/student have both the commentary and the Platonic text at his disposal. In the third century AD Plotinus had commentaries by Severus, Cronius, Numenius, Gaius, Atticus and others read to his students in his seminars before he gave his own interpretation of the Platonic text. This activity was called *συνανάγνωσις* = reading together, a word we first encounter in Plutarch (*Symp.* 7.2, 700C). To judge from the fragments of the Anonymous commentary on the *Theaetetus* and Galen on the *Timaeus* these commentaries were indeed running commentaries and thus required a copy of the Platonic text along with the commentary.

In the second century AD Theon from Smyrna wrote a book on the order in which the Platonic dialogues should be read,³⁶ a topic which is also discussed in Albinus' *Prologos* that, as mentioned above, criticizes Thra-

syllus and Dercyllides in this context, and in Diogenes Laertius' Life of Plato (3.62): "Some begin, as I said before, from the *Republic*,³⁷ others from the *Alcibiades Maior*,³⁸ some begin with the *Theages*,³⁹ some with the *Euthyphro*,⁴⁰ while others begin with the *Clitopho*, the *Timaeus* or with *Phaedrus*.⁴¹ Some begin with the *Theaetetus* while many begin with the *Apology*."⁴² In general, both Diogenes' and Albinus' discussions of Plato's dialogues demonstrate that they assumed their readers to have access to all the Platonic dialogues. Finally, two papyri from the second century AD on Platonic dialogues⁴³ and probably Dercyllides' work on Plato, in eleven books, seem to offer good evidence that all the dialogues were available to serious readers in this period.⁴⁴

Let us now return to Thrasyllus and his tetralogies. From Diogenes' Life of Plato we can see that Thrasyllus' arrangement was supplemented by some bio-graphical and literary observations. In particular, Thrasyllus men-

³⁶ Cf. Tarrant 1993, 58ff.

³⁷ Viz. Aristophanes.

³⁸ Albinus, as later Iamblichus, Proclus and Plutarch from Athens.

³⁹ Theon. Notice that also Plutarch wrote a commentary on this dialogue.

⁴⁰ Thrasyllus.

⁴¹ We do not know who did this, but the Platonic philosopher Taurus criticized some 'unqualified' students for wanting to begin with the *Phaedrus* "because of Lysias' speech" while others insisted on reading the *Symposium* first "because of Alcibiades' revelry", Aulus Gellius 1.9.8-10. Obviously, this was not part of the usual teaching program. – Diog. Laert. 3.38 says that some claimed that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first dialogue "and in fact, the subject of this dialogue is rather juvenile. Dicaearchus criticizes its style as being vulgar" (= fr. 42 Wehrli with a good commentary). About the view of the Neoplatonics, see later.

⁴² Albinus *Prologos* 4 adds Plato's letters as introductory reading!

⁴³ POxy 3219 and the papyrus in Florence mentioned above note 14.

⁴⁴ Possibly also *Timaeus' Platonic Lexicon* belongs to this century.

tioned Plato's forefathers and his relationship to Pythagoras (T 19 + 21 Tarrant). Similar information and a tetralogical bibliography are given by Diogenes in connection with Thrasyllus' work on Democritus (T 18a-c Tarrant) and here we find the title of Thrasyllus' book, the one I have already mentioned, *Introduction to the Reading of Democritus' works*. What was the purpose of Thrasyllus' works on these two philosophers?⁴⁵ It is natural to think of Andronicus as Thrasyllus' predecessor: just as Andronicus worked on Aristotelian texts and created the *Corpus Aristotelicum* in the sense of establishing a comprehensive collection of texts combined with a long introduction to Aristotle, so Thrasyllus may have been involved in a similar project with Plato and Democritus. When we observe the intense literary activity concerning the Platonic dialogues in the following century and the use of, virtually, all the Platonic dialogues which were listed in Thrasyllus' tetralogies,⁴⁶ and when we further notice that the majority of quotations from Democritus appear in texts from the end of the first to the middle of the third century AD, it is tempting to conclude that the texts of these two

philosophers had become available in new editions.

It is important to be aware that Thrasyllus places Democritus' ethical works in the first two tetralogies, even though Democritus in Antiquity otherwise was considered a philosopher with interests in physics and cosmogony. Diog. Laert. 9.46:

“Thrasyllus made a catalogue of Democritus' books arranged in tetralogies, just as he did with Plato's:

Ethical writings:

I

Pythagoras

On the Disposition of the Wise Man

About those in Hades

Tritogeneia (so called because three things on which all mortal life depends, come from her)

II

On Manly Excellence or On arete

Amalthea's Horn

On Mental Tranquillity

Ethical Commentaries.

Indeed, the work *On Well-being* cannot be found.⁴⁷

An arrangement beginning with *Pythagoras* corresponds with Thrasyllus' Pythagorean interests (cf. Diog. Laert. 9.38) and points, just like the explanatory remark on the *Tritogeneia*, towards a philosophical program. Indeed, the first tetralogy can

⁴⁵ There is a useful discussion of Thrasyllus' list and other ancient lists in H. Gregory Snyder, *Teachers and Texts in the Ancient World, Philosophers, Jews, and Christians* (London 2000), 93-121. Snyder presents a synoptic table of the various systems of organizing Plato's works, and gives an interesting overview of the teaching methods of the Platonists in the Imperial period.

⁴⁶ Cf. e.g. the brief survey in Ph. De Lacy: Plato and the Intellectual Life of the Second Century AD, in G. W. Bowersock (ed.), *Approaches to the Second Sophistic* (University Park PA 1974) 4-10.

⁴⁷ Title no. 2 looks suspiciously Hellenistic but must have been accepted by Thrasyllus. The final remark seems to indicate that Thrasyllus felt that he tried to find more ethical books by Democritus, i.e. he must have had access to those books he includes in his tetralogies. Both Tarrant 1993 and Mansfeld 1994 have good discussions of Thrasyllus' catalogue of Democritus' writings.

be said to describe the qualities of a philosophical life like the first Platonic tetralogy. It is in any case obvious that in neither case did Thrasyllus attempt to determine a biographically or chronologically correct sequence of the two philosophers' works.

Since it is difficult to imagine the 'Collected Works of Plato' or any other author in the neat volumes like the Oxford or the Budé editions, it seems probable that the main purpose of the tetralogies was to provide a tool with which it was possible to make sure that one was in possession of all the Platonic dialogues and could arrange the large number of papyrus rolls required to contain these texts, and perhaps get some indication of the order in which to read them. However, since we have little information about other editions of Plato, since it makes no sense to establish tetralogical arrangements of the Platonic dialogues unless they were available to the reading public, and since it is obvious from the Medieval manuscripts of the Platonic dialogues that Thrasyllus did have a decisive impact on the transmission of the dialogues, the principle of Occam's razor forces us to conclude that the Platonic dialogues must have been edited by Thrasyllus.⁴⁸ This edition of the *Corpus Platonicum*, as we may now call it, did not become the authoritative edition immediately. We know from Galen in the second century AD that there was an edition of at

least some Platonic dialogues called ἄπτικιανά, or something like that.⁴⁹ We do not know what this name refers to - there are references to similar editions of Demosthenes and Aischines - and it seems most unlikely that the name should refer to either Cicero's friend Atticus or to the Platonic philosopher Atticus (second century AD). Galen's information comes from his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* (77 C), in which he approves of that version of the text which was found in this edition, a reading which is also found in the Medieval manuscripts. Galen knew another version of the text from other copies of the *Timaeus*, but we do not know what the text of Thrasyllus' edition looked like. *Timaeus* was all through Antiquity one of the most quoted dialogues, and John Dillon has demonstrated that beginning in the second century AD there was a lively discussion of various readings of the text of the *Timaeus*, in some cases based on ideological differences.⁵⁰ Although it is risky to assume that these textual variants in fact did exist in different copies of the text, and although it is wrong to draw any conclusions as to an edition of all of Plato on the basis of a single dialogue, at least it demonstrates that there was no single edition of Plato which was considered authoritative until later in the Roman Imperial period.

When we reach the Neoplatonic school, and in particular Iamblichus, the situa-

⁴⁸ Though it cannot be excluded that somebody unknown to us in the first century AD made an edition according to Thrasyllus' tetralogical scheme.

⁴⁹ There is a good discussion in *PW* s.v. ἄπτικιανά.

⁵⁰ J. Dillon: 'Tampering with the *Timaeus*: Ideological Emendations in Plato, with special Reference to the *Timaeus*', *American Journal of Philology* 110 (1989) 50-72.

tion is radically different, as is clear from the *Anonymous Prolegomena to Plato* from the sixth century AD.⁵¹ The last of the ten introductory topics to the Neoplatonic study of Plato was the order of the dialogues (chapters 24-26). We are told that there are two different ways of determining the order, *either* the chronological - i.e. the chronology of Plato's biography or the dramatic chronology of the persons appearing in the dialogues - *or* the tetralogical arrangement. The Anonymous deals briefly with the chronological order of Plato's oeuvre; the *Phaedrus* is considered the earliest dialogue because Plato in that dialogue discusses whether or not one ought to publish books: "How could he have written any book before this when he is in doubt as to whether or not to write books? Furthermore, because he in this dialogue uses a dithyrambic style as if he had not given up his dithyrambic poetry." The *Laws* are considered the last dialogue because Plato died before he finished editing the text - the existing edition having been prepared by Speusippus. The chronology of the dramatic characters is discussed even more briefly: *Parmenides* is the first dialogue because Socrates in that dialogue is younger than anywhere else while the *Theaetetus* is the last because it takes place after Socrates' death.

The major part of the discussion of order is devoted to the tetralogical arrange-

ment. The Anonymous does not mention his source but since he refers to the parallel with the tetralogies of Athenian drama and since he claims that those who used the tetralogical scheme declared that Plato in fact made them public in groups of four (cf. Diog. Laert. 3.56), there can be little doubt that his discussion is based on Thrasyllus' tetralogies. The Anonymous mentions the number 36 and points out that this figure requires that the *Epinomis* is considered to be by Plato, even though Proclus had given two reasons why this is impossible: no work can follow the *Laws* which were unfinished at Plato's death, and the *Epinomis* describes another type of astronomy than the other Platonic dialogues.⁵² The Anonymous goes on to list the dialogues of the first tetralogy and explains them as containing the sequence of events from Socrates' indictment to his death, i.e. differently than Thrasyllus. He claims that those who begin with the *Euthyphro* end with the *Letters* because the *Euthyphro* deals with Socrates' life while the *Letters* deal with Plato's own life, that is, Plato begins and ends with similar topics.⁵³ Anonymous then criticizes the tetralogical arrangement because the dramatic tetralogy consists of three tragedies followed by one hilarious satyr play while the first tetralogy ends on the somber note of Socrates' death, and because the four dialogues in the first tetralogy each has different purposes.

⁵¹ Cf. *Prologomènes à la Philosophie De Platon*. Texte établi par L. G. Westerink et traduit par J. Trouillard avec la collaboration de A. Ph. Segonds (Paris 1990), esp. LXVII-LXXIV on these two chapters.

⁵² On Proclus' two arguments, cf. Tarán 1975, 8-12.

⁵³ This reminds us of Albinus comparing the reading program of Platonic dialogues with a circle, *Prologos* 4.

Anonymous goes on to discuss the true order, and to do so he must first determine which dialogues are genuine. He first lists those dialogues “which are considered spurious by all”: *Sisyphus*, *Demodocus*, *Alcyon*, *Eryxias* and the *Definitions*. Only the *Definitions* were not listed by Diogenes.

The Anonymous ends up with the same 36 genuine dialogues as Thrasyllus did, but he quickly goes on to discuss Proclus’ views of the number of dialogues. We are told that Proclus considered the *Epinomis* spurious, and separated, or rejected⁵⁴ the *Republic*, the *Laws* and the *Letters* from the rest so that he only accepted 32 dialogues.⁵⁵ The Anonymous appears to take issue with Proclus’ view and he adds the twelve books of the *Laws* and the ten books of the *Republic* to the 32. We now expect a discussion of the true order, but the Anonymous gives up and repeats what Iamblichus had to say about his program of ten plus two dialogues as suitable for the study of Plato. The Anonymous must have misunderstood what Proclus said, for we know that the latter used the *Laws* to prove that the *Epinomis* was spurious and we have a series of essays on the *Republic* written by Proclus. Perhaps the Anonymous knew that the *Republic* and the *Laws* were not part of the usual Neoplatonic study program, or perhaps he wanted to demonstrate that

Plato and Plotinus had written the same number of dialogues, viz. 54.

The important point, however, is that the whole discussion seems to be based on Thrasyllus’ catalogue of the Platonic texts, even though the Anonymous is critical of the tetralogical arrangement.

The so-called ‘spurious’ dialogues present a special problem in the history of the *Corpus Platonicum*: how did they become part of the Medieval collection of Platonic dialogues? The various spuria can be seen from the table.⁵⁶

The *Definitions* listed by the Anonymous alone is not a problem, for he goes on to say that it is attributed to Speusippus, as indeed it is in Diogenes Laertius’ list of books in his *Life of Speusippus* (3.5); it is not mentioned at all in connection with Plato before the Anonymous and therefore is not likely to have been included in the *Corpus Platonicum* until late Antiquity.

The *Alcyon* must have been part of the Platonic tradition since Diogenes mentions it as being spurious, i.e. it must have been transmitted with the Platonic dialogues. The identity of the author was discussed already before Diogenes: Diogenes informs us that Favorinus (fr. 15 Mensing = 45 Barigazzi) claimed that it had been

⁵⁴ ἐκβάλλει, on which cf. Tarán 1975, 8 note 27.

⁵⁵ The *Republic* and the *Laws* are rejected because they contain several *logoi*, and are not written διαλογικῶς, whatever these expressions mean, while the *Letters* are rejected because of their simple style.

⁵⁶ I list the spurious dialogue in the order given by Diogenes (3.62). - Only one more dialogue is mentioned in Antiquity, the *Cimon* in Athenaeus 505 d, but the text here seems to be corrupt.

Diogenes	Anonymous	Corp. Plat.	Scholia	Double
Eryxias	x	x	x	x
Alcyon	x	x	x	x
Akephaloi				
sisyphus	x	x	x	x
Axiochus		x	x	x
Phaiakes				
Demodocus	x	x	x	x
Chelidon				
Ebdome				
Epimenides				
		On the Just	x	
		On Virtue	x	
	Definitions	x	x	

written by a certain Leo, as did Nicias of Nicaea according to Athenaeus (506c). Obviously it had been attached to the *Corpus Platonium* by the second century AD even though its authenticity had been questioned by some scholars,⁵⁷ and it must have remained in the Corpus to the end of Antiquity. It has been transmitted with the dialogues of Plato in many Medieval manuscripts, but also with the works of Lucian.⁵⁸ How it got to join the Lucianic corpus, we don't know.

At least four of the spurious dialogues mentioned by Diogenes have disappeared without a trace: *Phaiakes*, *Chelidon*, *Ebdome* and *Epimenides*. *Eryxias*, *Sisyphus* and *Demodocus* were listed by both Diogenes and the Anonymous and have been transmitted with the *Corpus Platonium*; they have double titles⁵⁹ and all three have scholia, i.e. they must at some point have been part of a teaching program. Why the *Axiochus* is not mentioned by the Anonymous is inexplicable, for it is part of the Medieval *Corpus Platon-*

⁵⁷ Notice that POxy 3683, from the late second century AD, has a subscription identifying the author of the *Alcyon* as Plato. The *Themistocles* mentioned in *Rhet. Gr. II* 130 Waltz (Doxopater) appears in a text that seems to be Byzantine, and thus it has little significance for the history of the Platonic text in Antiquity.

⁵⁸ Consequently, it has two sets of scholia. On the mss. of the *Alcyon*, cf. the introductory note to the critical apparatus in McCleod's OCT edition of Lucian vol. 1, 90. It is modern prejudice that prevents it from being printed together with the other Platonic spuria. The best discussion of the transmission of the *Alcyon* is the introduction to POxy. 3683 (*Oxyrrhynchus Papyri* vol. 52 (1984), 113-15).

⁵⁹ It seems odd that Thrasyllus should have rejected the authenticity of these dialogues and yet provided them with another title, unless they already had been given one before his time. The date of the double titles is uncertain. That they are early was argued by R. G. Hoerber: Thrasyllus' Platonic Corpus and the Double Titles, *Phronesis* 2 (1957). Hoerber overlooked one significant fact: a number of dialogues written by students of Socrates and Plato in the IV. Cent. BC also carry double titles, cf. Diog. Laert. 2.57 (Xenophon), 2.121 (Crito = SSR VI B fr. 42), 5.22 Aristotle, cf. also fr. 37, 44, 46 Rose), 5. 44 (Theophrastus = 436 no. 15a FHS&G), and 5.88 (Herclides Ponticus = fr. 33 Wehrli).

icum and has both a double title and scholia, like the other three dialogues just mentioned.⁶⁰

Thus, we are left with two titles of spurious dialogues only mentioned in Diogenes (*Midon/Hippotrophus* and *Akephaloi*) and two spurious dialogues only transmitted with the *Corpus Platonicum* (*On the Just* and *On Virtue*). The *On Virtue* does have another title in one of the Platonic manuscripts (Vatic. gr. 1 = O), viz. *Hippotrophus*, thus possibly identifying it with the first of the spurious titles in Diogenes.⁶¹ This may of course just be a learned guess by a Medieval scribe, but if so, this scribe must have known his Diogenes very well, since the name Hippotrophus does not occur anywhere else in Greek literature.⁶² It seems to me more likely that there existed a spurious dialogue with a double title: *Hippotrophus/On Virtue*, like the other spurious dialogues.

If this identification is accepted, we may even find a solution to the strange title *Akephaloi*. No dialogue can have had this word as a title: although the same word is used to characterize a

group of dialogues by Aeschines (DL 2.60), it makes no sense here. But if *Hippotrophus* and *On Virtue* refer to the same text, *On the Just* will be the only spurious dialogue offering no indication of the name of the person with whom Socrates speaks, i.e. it cannot have had any heading, and thus it might be called ἀκέφαλος - this at least corresponds to one of the meanings of this word.⁶³

If these identifications are correct, it becomes evident that the spurious Platonic dialogues were mentioned in connection with Thrasyllus' tetralogies. They all have the same external marks as the other dialogues of the *Corpus Platonicum*, except for the four dialogues that have disappeared without a trace. It seems probable that they must have been transmitted with the *Corpus Platonicum* even though they were not part of the tetralogies. It is just possible that Thrasyllus included them as a group similar to the ἀσύντακτα in the bibliography of Democritus. The *Axiochus* was quoted by Clement of Alexandria as being by Plato;⁶⁴ the *Axiochus*, *Demodocus*, *On Justice* and *On Virtue* were quoted by

⁶⁰ Aeschines of Sphettus also wrote an *Axiochus*, and it is likely that Athenaeus (220c) confused the Pseudoplatonic dialogue of this name with Aeschines' *Axiochus*. Pollux 7.135 (= Aeschines fr. 14 Dittmar), however, refers to a word in Aeschines' dialogue which is not found in the Pseudoplatonic text; the content of Pseudoplatonic dialogue also seems to differ from Aeschines', cf. *SSR* VI A. fr. 56-58. Hence, there can be no doubt that the two dialogues indeed were not identical.

⁶¹ So also U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, *Platon* II (Berlin 1919) 325 note 3.

⁶² Since the text does not mention Hippotrophus, it must at some point have had some indication of the name of the speaker in the heading of the text.

⁶³ Cf. J. Mejer, 'A Note on the Word ἀκέφαλος' *Classica et Medievalia* 32 (1980) 127-31. The change of the sigma in the nom. sing. to the iota of the nom. plur. is not uncommon in minuscule manuscripts. The manuscript readings also vary in this passage, cf. the critical apparatus in Marcovich's Teubner edition of Diogenes.

⁶⁴ *Strom.* 6.2.17, p. 436 St.

Stobaeus as being Platonic.⁶⁵ We have no idea why four of the spurious dialogues disappeared without any trace, and we do not know why the Anonymous only mentioned four of them. Diogenes (3.62) claims that there was general agreement about the inauthenticity of the dialogues he lists, so they must have been part of the discussion before his time. Thus, they are likely to have been transmitted as part of the *Corpus Platonicum* since the time of Thrasyllus even though they were not mentioned by Albinus. In addition to the discussion of the *Alcyon* mentioned above Clement of Alexandria expresses doubt about the authenticity of *Demodocus*.⁶⁶

The history of the transmission of the Platonic dialogues in Antiquity can now be summarized as follows

1) Nobody in Antiquity seems to have known anything certain about Plato's oeuvre in the sense of Plato's Collected Works, and nobody knew anything about the chronology of the dialogues - except for the suggestion that the *Phaedrus* was Plato's first work.

2) From shortly after Plato's death both genuine and spurious Platonic dialogues were transmitted together, if we by 'spurious' mean 'not written by Plato'. There is no reason to deny that most of the 'spurious' dialogues originated in

the early Academy, even before Plato's death.

3) The preserved collection of dialogues, the *Corpus Platonicum* consisting of nine tetralogies, seems to have been a very useful tool in the study of Plato, but it has not the least to do with Plato. It is the creation of Thrasyllus in the first century AD, and his tetralogical arrangement is based on criteria which we would never accept in dealing with philosophical and literary texts.

4) Nobody in Antiquity seems to have made any attempt to find a development in Plato's oeuvre and hence not in his philosophy either.

Is this story important for our interpretation of Plato? Yes, because it demonstrates that when we assign Platonic dialogues to successive periods of his life: so-called Socratic dialogues to his youth, middle dialogues to his mature age, and the 'later' dialogues to his old age, we are in fact applying modern notions of style and development to the dialogues. Since the latter half of the nineteenth century much effort has been spent to find stylistic criteria for determining the relative chronology of the Platonic dialogues. It has, however, become increasingly evident that stylometry by itself cannot establish a continuous development of the style and

⁶⁵ Stobaeus i.49. 47 = 1.414W-H, 4.34.75 = 5.882W-H, 4.52.54 = 5.1096 W-H, 4.53.38 = 1111W-H (*Axiochus*); 3.1.204 = 3.159W-H (*On Virtue*); 3.12.25 = 3.451W-H (*On Justice*); 4.5.64 = 4.219W-H (*Demodocus*); 4.31.51 = 5.751, 4.31.117 = 5.774, 4.33.33 = 5.819 (*Eryxias*). There are also papyrus fragments of *On Justice*, *On Virtue*, *Eryxias* and *Demodocus*, cf. nos. 1427-29 Pack², and of *Alcyon* mentioned in note 57.

⁶⁶ *Strom.* 1.18.93, 59.22 St, though his quotations are in fact from *Amatores* 137 b.

thus of Plato's philosophy when external evidence is so scarce.⁶⁷ The obsession with Plato's development in fact originated in the Romantic period: by using the analogy of organic development on literary and artistic creations, it was assumed that these also were the result of a continuous development in the individual thinker or artist which prevented him from exploring different kinds of expression in the same period of his life, or the same kind of expression in different periods.

Hence the idea that Book One of the *Republic* must be earlier than the following nine books of this work since it looks like some of the Socratic dialogues which are assigned to Plato's youth.⁶⁸ Hence the notion that the statement in the beginning of the *Theaetetus* on narrative technique (avoiding indications of who is saying what), must separate such dialogues chronologically from the dialogues which are without such indications. And more seriously: the idea that the *Apology of Socrates* is one of the early Platonic dialogues, if not the earliest, is based on a very naive idea about Plato's relationship with Socrates and Socratic philosophy, and on the first

Thrasyllan tetralogy as being a true description of the end of Socrates' life.

We have seen that Thrasyllus' arrangement has nothing to do with Plato as such. It may very well be that the *Apology* describes Socrates in a way similar to his role in the so-called Socratic dialogues, but the similarity can also be explained by turning the relationship upside down: Plato made sure that his *Apology* corresponded to the picture he had already drawn in (some of) his Socratic dialogues. The scholarly preoccupation with chronology and development in the *Corpus Platonicum* can easily turn our attention away from what is really important in Plato: the philosophical problems.

Thus, it is my claim that the history of the transmission of the Platonic dialogues in Antiquity supports the view of one of the most important modern interpreters of Plato, Julia Annas, who has said: "We can readily find in Plato continuing preoccupation with certain themes; but to build a system of Platonic doctrines is to do what he never did. He never commits himself *in propria persona* to any of the doctrines

⁶⁷ Despite more recent studies on Platonic style and chronology, the careful review of this topic in H. Thesleff, *Studies in Platonic Chronology, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 70 (Helsinki 1982), pp. 18-96 is still the best discussion of the many problems, though pertinent evaluation of stylometrics is also offered by P. Kayser in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 2 (1991), 423-27 and 3 (1992) 58-74, and by N. Denyer in his edition of *Alcibiades, Cambridge Greek and Latin Classics* (Cambridge 2001), 17-24.

⁶⁸ Those who want to separate Book One from the rest of the *Republic*, rarely discuss what this separation entails for the *Clitopho*. It is only its position in tetralogy 9 (and perhaps the fact that *Clitopho* only appears here and in Book One of the *Republic*) that justify taking it as an introduction to the *Republic*. That Book One of the *Republic* is a true introduction to the whole work as we have it, and that it is unlikely to be an early dialogue, was shown by Ch. Kahn, 'Proleptic Composition in the *Republic*, or Why Book I was never a separate dialogue', *Classical Quarterly* 43 (1993) 131-43.

commonly thought of as Platonic; still less does he tell us which of the ideas he discusses are most basic for him and what their relationships are. There are

dangers also in trying to go behind the elusive dialogue form to a supposedly more solid historical development of Plato's thought and personality."⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Julia Annas in Boardman/Griffin/Murray, *Oxford History of the Classical World* (Oxford 1986), 239. – This paper originated in a lecture given at the Platonic Society of Scandinavia and at the Danish Institute at Athens. Preliminary versions have been published in the *Proceedings of Platonic Society of Scandinavia* (2000) and in the electronic journal *AIGIS* 1 (2001), Dept. of Greek and Latin, University of Copenhagen, both in Danish. I am grateful to my colleague, Professor Johnny Christensen, for correcting a number of errors in my manuscript.

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