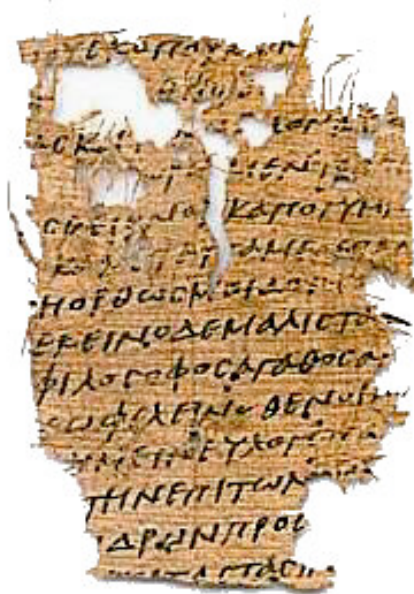


THE GREAT IDEAS ONLINE

Apr '09

Nº 516

Whether living successfully consists in enjoyment, or in having virtue, or in wisdom, we should do philosophy, for these things come to us most of all, and in a pure way, through doing philosophy



ARISTOTLE'S LOST *PROTREPTICUS*

“If it is in future accorded its proper recognition by Aristotelian scholars, as they have shown it deserves,” says David Sedley of Christ’s College, Cambridge, “it will make a real difference to our understanding of Aristotle’s ethics, his philosophy of nature and his metaphysics.”

Provisional Reconstruction (2009 January)

D. S. Hutchinson and Monte Ransome Johnson

Part 1 of 3

Notes to the reader

<This document consists of translations from the ancient Greek texts, which transmit evidence of Aristotle's lost dialogue *Protrepticus*, together with editorial comments by DSH and MRJ.>

<Our editorial comments are within pointy brackets, and are centred on the page, in 10-point font size, whereas the ancient texts are unbracketed, justified and in 12-point font size.>

<Words translated from ancient texts are **set in boldface** if we believe they are the very words that stood in Aristotle's text; when they are not boldface this means that we do not know which words stood in Aristotle's text, of which this passage may have been a paraphrase, not a citation. To each paragraph or comparable division of text a reference is given, at the end of that paragraph. If it is necessary to give a reference to an individual sentence, its line reference can be inferred by using the paragraph reference together with the internal sentence references.>

<We believe that the work was a dialogue in which at least three characters debated with each other in front of an audience of youngsters about the worth and true nature of philosophy. One of these characters was 'Isocrates', who stands for Isocrates of Athens, a teacher of what he called 'philosophy', but of which he had a more limited conception. Another character was 'Heraclides', who stands for Heraclides of Pontus, a student of Plato with distinctly Pythagorean enthusiasms; and the third main character is, we think, 'Aristotle', who articulates the particular views of Aristotle himself.>

<Aristotle's *Protrepticus* is a text with very many gaps, even in its relatively advanced state of reconstruction. We have no way of knowing how large these gaps are, or how extensive the work originally was, nor can we be sure what the dialogue did not contain.>

<The beginning is particularly damaged, and we have no evidence of how it gets going, except that it was dedicated to a certain Themison, who apparently enjoyed a good reputation together with wealth.>

<evidence: Stobaeus, *Anthology* IV.32.21 (attributing it to "Teles' *Epitome*")>

Zeno said that Crates, while sitting in a shoemaker's workshop, read the *Protrepticus* of Aristotle, which he wrote to Themison (the king of Cyprus), saying that no one has more good things going for him to help him do philosophy, since, as he has great wealth, he can spend it on these things, and he has a reputation as well.

<We have no firm information about how the narrative of the dialogue began, but it is possible that at an early point there was this hostile challenge to philosophy, uttered by a critic almost spluttering with indignation, preserved in an Oxyrhynchus papyrus. It may be that he is responding to a book by Antisthenes the Socratic, conceivably his *Protrepticus*.>

<evidence: POxy3659, column I, lines 2-32>

... but they don't agree at all on that; no, even silver – and yet what could be whiter than silver?! – no, despite this, Thrasyalkes says it's black [8 |9]. So then, when even the whiteness of silver is on the doubtful side, why be amazed if people who are deliberating have their disagreements over war and peace, over alliance and revenues and disbursements and the like? [16| 17]

And what about the philosophers themselves? If you confined them together in the same house and an equal number of madmen in another house next door, you would get much, much, greater howls from the philosophers than from the madmen! [25] In fact, this one, this Antisthenes here, says he would rather feel madness than pleasure; and Aristippus, what ... is mad ... and what about Plato ... and what ... [I.2-32]

<Oxyrhynchus papyrus # 666 is our main source of evidence for the next passage, which is rich with allusions to classic Socratic and Platonic protreptic argument. The speaker seems to be 'Socrates', who liberally sprinkles his speech with sayings and slogans to argue that wisdom is worth far more than external goods. He seems to be making reference to the text from which a different papyrus, POxy3699, is a fragment (possibly the *Protrepticus* of Antisthenes), especially at Fragment D, column I, lines 2-14:" ... reputation, strength, beauty ... are unprofitable to such a person. It's pretty much just like 'a knife to a child' how any of such things turns out for an uneducated human, for where he owns the possessions he has the initial impulse for weak self-control, leading to self-indulgence and even gambling and women and other...">

<evidence: POxy666; column I lines 51-55, II.1-57, III.1-56. The same passage is also quoted in the *Anthology* of Stobaeus at III.3.25; Stobaeus refers to it as coming from "Aristotle". The version in Stobaeus' *Anthology* is slightly abridged: it consists of the material which the papyrus presents at lines II.4-III.41, with the omission of II.52-III.5.>

... since ... 'dog in the manger' ... whenever ... prevent <them> from <both saying> and doing something they decide they need to do [I.51-55 + II.1-4].

This is why those who observe their misfortune should avoid it, and consider success in life as in fact not consisting in the possession of lots of things as much as in the condition of the soul [II.15]. For one would not say that even a body is happy by being adorned with splendid clothing, but rather by being healthy and in a good condition, even if none of the things just mentioned is present in it; rather, and in the same way, a soul, too, if it has been educated, such a soul and such a man must be hailed as being successful, not if he is splendidly furnished with the externals but is himself worth nothing [II.39]. For nor

is a horse, if it has a golden bit and an expensive harness but is itself bad, the sort of horse that we consider to be worth something; but it's any one that's in a good condition that we praise instead [II.51|52]. Apart from what's been said, what happens to those who are worth nothing, when they do happen across wealth and the goods that come by fortune, is that their possessions are worth more than they are, which is the most disgraceful thing of all [III.5|6]. For just as somebody, if he were inferior to his own servants, would be a laughing - stock, in the same way it happens that those for whom their possessions are more important than their own nature should be considered pathetic [II.4-III.17].

And this is truly how it is: for, as the proverb says, 'satisfaction begets insolence, and ignorance with power beget madness,' since for those whose condition is bad in those respects that concern the soul, neither wealth nor strength nor beauty is anything good; but rather, the more these bad conditions obtain to an excessive degree, the more greatly and the more often those things harm the man who possesses them, if he comes by them without wisdom [41].

For the saying 'no knife for a child' means 'don't put power into the hands of the bad' [46|47]. But everyone would agree that wisdom comes from learning or from searching, the capacities for which are comprehended within philosophy [53]. Hence surely we should do philosophy without reservation, and ... [III.18- 56]

<Iamblichus begins chapter VI of his own *Protrepticus* by quoting and paraphrasing some conclusions from Aristotle's *Protrepticus*; these considerations in favour of philosophy as the overarching executive ability of life seem to be spoken by the character 'Isocrates', continuing the line of argument developed, probably by him, in POxy666 (above).>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* chapter VI page 37 lines 3-22>

The things that are supports for our way of life, e.g. a body and what's around it, support it in the manner of certain tools, the use of which is dangerous, and rather the contrary is accomplished by those who use them in ways they shouldn't [7]. Well then, one should desire both to acquire this knowledge and to use it appropriately, this knowledge through which we will put all these things to good use [9]. Hence we should do philosophy, if we are going to engage in politics correctly and conduct our own way of life in a beneficial way. [VI 37.3-11]

Furthermore, there is a difference between the kinds of knowledge that produce each of the things of which we want to have more and more in our way of life, and the kinds of knowledge that make use of these kinds of knowledge, and the ones that give service are different from the others that issue orders; and in these as it were more commanding kinds of knowledge exists what is good in the strict sense [16]. If, then, only that kind of knowledge which does have correctness of judgment, and does use reason, and observes the good as a whole -- that is to say, philosophy -- is naturally capable of using all of them and issuing orders, by all means one ought to do philosophy, since only philosophy includes within itself this correct judgment and this intelligence to issue orders without errors [VI 37.11-22].

<After 'Isocrates' had argued in favour of philosophy in general, he apparently attacked the Academic conception of philosophy as worse than useless. Iamblichus quotes from Isocrates' attack in chapter xxvi of his book *De Communi Mathematica Scientia*.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* chapter xxvi page 79 lines 5-24>

If their end result is useless, the end for which the philosophers say they should be learned, it will necessarily be much more pointless to invest effort in them [8]. And on what their ends are, there is pretty much agreement among those who have been most accurate about it [10]. For some of them say that it is knowledge of what is unjust and just and bad and good, a knowledge similar to geometry and the other sciences, while others say it is intelligence about both nature and that sort of truth, the sort of knowledge introduced by those around both Anaxagoras and Parmenides [xxvi 79.5-15].

So it should not be overlooked by someone who is going to scrutinize these subjects that everything that is good and beneficial for the life of a human consists in being used and put into action, and not in the mere knowledge, for nor are we healthy by being acquainted with what produces health, but rather by applying it to our bodies, and nor are we wealthy by knowing about wealth, but by possessing much substance, and, most important of all, we do not live well by knowing certain beings, but by acting well, for this it truly is to be successful [xxvi 79.15-24].

<After a gap, Iamblichus carries on quoting from Isocrates' attack on Academic philosophy.><evidence: Iamblichus, *De Communi Mathematica Scientia* xxvi 80.5-81.4>

For we have the greatest example in the sciences that are similar to it, and the opinions that fall under them, for we see none of the things which the geometers are able to observe by means of proofs as being themselves able to act, but the land-surveyors are capable, by experience, to divide an estate and all other experiences of both sizes and places, whereas those who know about the mathematical subjects and the discourses about them know how they should act, but are not capable of acting [xxvi 80.5-13].

The case is similar with music and the other sciences in which there is a division separating the cognitive aspect from the empirical [80.15]. For those who determine the proofs and the arguments about harmony and other suchlike things, just as in philosophy, are accustomed to enquiring, but take no part in activities [80.19]. In fact, even if they happen to be capable of crafting any of them, when they learn the proofs, they immediately do them worse, as if on purpose, whereas those who have no knowledge of the speeches, if they are trained and have correct opinions, are altogether superior for practical purposes [80.23]. So too with the subject matter of astronomy, such as sun and moon and the other stars: those who have practiced knowledge of the causes and speeches have no knowledge of what is useful for humans, whereas those who have what is called navigational knowledge about them are capable of predicting for us storms and winds and many of these phenomena [81.1]. Hence for practical activities such sciences will be entirely useless, and, if they miss out on the correct activities, the love of learning misses out on the greatest of goods [xxvi 80.13-81.4].

<The above passage that Iamblichus had quoted was evidently under the eyes of Proclus as well, who, in his *Euclid commentary*, paraphrased not only its criticisms but also the beginnings of Aristotle's response to them, as follows.>

<evidence: Proclus, *Commentary on Euclid's Elements I*, chapter 9, 26.10-15>

To those who say these things we can reply by exhibiting the beauty of mathematics from the arguments by which Aristotle attempted to persuade us [13]. For he says that three things are especially conducive to beauty of body or soul: organization, symmetry, and determinacy [ch. 9, 26.10-15].

<When Iamblichus resumes citing from Aristotle in *Protrepticus* VI and *Comm. Math.* xxvi, the speaker has changed, and is now 'Aristotle', who is defending the Academic conception of philosophy from the preceding attack on it by 'Isocrates'. In the following speech, 'Aristotle' is concerned to show Academic philosophy to be a feasible subject and a beneficial one, more beneficial than

laborious; philosophy has made great progress despite coming late in history. At this point he is discussing Academic theory of virtue and ethics.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 37.26-38.22. Of these four sentences, the first and third (p. 38 lines 3-7 and 10-14) are the same as in a passage in Iamblichus, *De Communis Mathematica Scientia*, chapter xxvi, page 81, lines 9-11 and 12-16. Iamblichus apparently made use of Aristotle's *Protrepticus* also for this third work in his Pythagorean series; sometimes he cited from it directly (as above, *Comm. Math.* xxvi 79.5-24), but at other times (such as here) he further condensed the version he had already made in his own *Protrepticus*, the second work in his series.>

Now then, that we are capable of acquiring the kinds of knowledge about the just and the expedient and also the ones about nature and the rest of truth, it is easy to demonstrate [38.3]. **For prior things are always more familiar than posterior things, and what is better in nature than what is worse, for there is more knowledge of what is determinate and orderly than of their opposites, and again of the causes than of the effects [7]. And good things are more determinate and organized than bad things, just as a fair person is more determinate and organized than a foul person; for they necessarily have the same mutual difference [10]. And prior things are causes more than posterior things, for if they are taken away, then so are the things that take their being from them (if numbers <are taken away>, then so are lines, if lines then surfaces, and if surfaces then solids), and elementary letters are causes more than what are named 'syllables' [14]. Hence since soul is better than body (being more authoritative in nature), and the kinds of skill and intelligence concerned with the body are medical science and athletic training (for we regard these as being kinds of knowledge and say that some people possess them), clearly for the soul too and the virtues of the soul there is a certain discipline and skill, and we are capable of acquiring it, since surely we are also capable of acquiring knowledge of things of which our ignorance is greater and cognition is harder to come by [VI 37.26-38.22].**

<Iamblichus continues in his *Protrepticus* to cite from the speech of 'Aristotle', who is now defending the feasibility of Academic natural philosophy.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 38.22-39.8; 38.22-39.4 overlaps with *Comm.Math.* xxvi 81.20-24; see above, on VI 37.26 -38.14>

Similarly too for the natural sciences; for intelligence about the causes and the elements is necessarily about the things that are posterior; for these are not among the highest, nor do the first principles naturally grow from them; rather it's from those that all other things come into being and are evidently constituted [39.4]. For whether it is fire or air or number or any

other natures that are the causes and first principles of other things, it would be impossible to be ignorant of these things and to recognize any of the other things; for how could anyone either be familiar with speech who was ignorant of syllables, or have knowledge of these who understands nothing of the letters? [VI 38.22-39.8]

<The gap in our evidence of the text at this point is partly filled by a few sentences from an Egyptian papyrus, now conserved in Vienna. It seems that ‘Aristotle’ is making the point that the procedure of the philosophers of nature is a scientific and numerate one, against criticisms leveled against it by Isocrates (above).>

<evidence: PVindobG26008, column B lines 1-30>

... for such a <science> ... differs not at all in this regard from the (?) them, but is a science in just the same way [4|5]. And so about beings and the nature of the universe they show that what things are composed of is not infinite, but the one says one, another two, another three, another four [13]. Hence they all try to declare this, out of what things everything else is derived, and from infinite things to arrive at limited ones, and from numberless things to number [19 ... 25] investigating nature, cutting off for themselves some one part from beings, they declare the substances with regard to these ... [B.1-30].

<Iamblichus continues by paraphrasing from the speech of ‘Aristotle’, who has finished defending the feasibility of Academic philosophy, and is now starting to argue that it is highly beneficial.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 39.9-16>

Now then, that there is a kind of knowledge of the truth and of the virtue of the soul, and how we are capable of acquiring them, this is what we have said about those topics; and that it is the greatest of goods and the most beneficial of all will be clear from what follows [13]. For we all agree that the most worthy and the most naturally authoritative should rule, and that only the law should rule and have authority; but the law is a kind of intelligence, i.e. a discourse based on intelligence [VI 39.9 -16].

<Iamblichus continues by quoting from the speech of ‘Aristotle’, who argues that the intelligent man will choose to be intelligent as the greatest good; and his decision is authoritative.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 39.16-40.1; overlaps with *Comm.Math.* xxvi 82.1-11; see above, on VI 37.26-38.14>

And again, what norm do we have or what more precise standard of good things, than the wise man [39.18]? For all things

that this man will choose, if the choice is based on his knowledge, are good things and their contraries are bad [39.20]. And since everybody chooses most of all what conforms to their own proper dispositions (a just man choosing to live justly, a man with bravery to live bravely, likewise a self-controlled man to live with self-control), it is clear that the intelligent man will choose most of all to be intelligent; for this is the function of that capacity [39.25]. Hence it's clear that, according to the most authoritative judgment, intelligence is supreme among goods [VI 39.16-40.1].

<Iamblichus continues, in his *Protrepticus*, to quote from the speech of 'Aristotle', giving a rhetorically charged conclusion that is evidently directed against Isocrates.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 40.1-11>

So one ought not to flee from philosophy, since philosophy is, as we think, both a possession and a use of wisdom, and wisdom is among the greatest goods; nor should one sail to the Pillars of Heracles and run many risks for the sake of property, while for the sake of intelligence devoting neither effort nor expense [6]. It would surely be slave-like to crave living rather than living well, for one to follow the opinions of the majority rather than evaluating the worth of the majority in terms of one's own opinions, and to seek out property but for what is noble to take no trouble whatsoever [VI 40.1-11].

<Iamblichus continues to quote from the speech of 'Aristotle', who moves forward to argue that philosophy is actually much easier to acquire than other good things.>

<evidence: Iamblichus, *Protrepticus* VI 40.15-41.2; overlaps with *Comm.Math.* xxvi 82.17-83.2; see above, on VI 37.26-38.14>

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THE GREAT IDEAS ONLINE

published weekly for its members by the

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF THE GREAT IDEAS

Founded in 1990 by Mortimer J. Adler & Max Weismann

Max Weismann, Publisher and Editor

Ken Dzugan, Senior Fellow and Archivist

A not-for-profit (501)(c)(3) educational organization.

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