

DID THE DOXOGRAPHER AETIUS EVER EXIST?

[Published in: Philosophie et culture. XVIIe Congrès mondial de philosophie. Actes/Proceedings. Montréal 1983 (Éditions Montmorency, 1988), vol. III, p. 813-817 (microfilm). The original 1988 text is slightly edited stylistically, some misprints have been corrected. The term “PS-Placita” of the original has been everywhere replaced with “SP-Placita” because some readers have misunderstood “PS-Placita” as “Pseudo-Placita”. We use the term “SP-Placita”, i.e. the common source of Stobaeus and Plutarch, as alternative to Diels’ “Aetios”. Some explanatory remarks and the 2013 *Postscript* that are not part of the original publication, are placed in square brackets].

The doxographical compendium *De placitis philosophorum* extant under Plutarchus’ name is often *verbatim* paralleled by Stobaeus’ *Florilegium* (ca. the beginning of 5th century A.D.). Since Pseudo-Plutarchus’ (P) and Stobaeus’ (S) versions complement each other, it is generally supposed that both derive from a common source (which we shall call «SP-Placita»). The ecclesiastical writer of the 5th century Theodoretus of Cyrrhus in his *Curatio graecarum affectionum* cites similar doxographical excerpts that seem sometimes to «supplement» both (P) and (S). Among other sources Theodoretus three times mentions a certain doxographer Aetios (Αέτιος) who is otherwise unknown. On the basis of these references Hermann Diels, in his monumental *Doxographi Graeci* (Berolini, 1879), identified the author of the *SP-Placita* as “Aetios” and published under this name the texts of Pseudo-Plutarchus and Stobaeus in two columns with parallels from Theodoretus and other writers dating “Aetios” about 100 A.D. Diels’ attribution has been generally accepted, his work (awarded by the Prussian Academy of Sciences) has been considered as a classic of doxographical *Quellenforschung*. Unknown before 1879, the doxographer Aetios suddenly became our

main source for the Greek physical doxography to retain this position up to the present time.

Yet a thorough examination of Diels' theory shows it to be an entirely untrustworthy construction. First, it is strange that such an important author is not mentioned anywhere else either before (during more than 300 years!) or after Theodoretus. There is no trace of him in the *Suda*. According to Diels, "Aetios" had been directly excerpted by Nemesius of Emessa in his *De natura hominis*, but there is no mention of "Aetios" in Nemesius, either. As a matter of fact, Theodoretus was by no means a man of learning comparable with Origenes or Eusebius. He owes most of his quotations from pagan writers to Clement's *Stromata* and Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*¹. What is more, he is well known for his inaccuracy in quoting: he confuses and distorts pagan names repeatedly. Thus in *Cur.* V,16 (one of the passages on which Diels' attribution is based) he turns Alcmaeo (Ἀλκμαίων) into "Alcman" (Ἀλκμάν), Timon (Τίμων) of Phleious into «Timaeus» (Τίμαιος), Diacaearchus the Peripatetic (Δικαίαρχος) into "Clearchus" (Κλέαρχος) (!) and falsely ascribes two quotations from Arius Didymus to Numenius. Theodoretus never cites "Aetios" separately. In all passages that mention his name (*Curatio* II,95; IV,31; V,16) we are faced with the triad Plutarchus (*Placita philosophorum*) – "Aetios" (Συναγωγή ἀρεσκόντων) – Porphyrius (*Philosophos historia*). Diels's attribution is based on the following presuppositions:

- 1) Theodoretus knew Plutarchus' *Placita* (P) from Eusebius' *Praeparatio* only.
- 2) Porphyrius' *Philosophos Historia* was a purely biographical work containing no doxography.
- 3) Theodoretus mentioned Plutarchus and Porphyrius only to impress his pagan readers with his feigned learning ; in fact his only real source was "Aetios".

All these presuppositions are wrong.

¹ E.Roos, *De Theodoro Clementis et Eusebii compilatore*, Halle, 1883; H.Raeder, *De Theodreti Graecarum affectionum curatione*, Hauniae 1900; P.Canivet, *Histoire d'une Entreprise apologétique au Ve siècle*, Paris 1957; Н.Н. Глубоковский, *Блаженный Феодорит, Епископ Киррский. Его жизнь и литературная деятельность*, т.1-2, Москва 1890.

- 1) *Curatio* II,112 Διαγόρου τοῦ Μιλησίου is Theodoretus' own mistake, not to be found in the best MSS. of Eusebius ² . In a number of passages the text of Theodoretus's alleged excerpts from "Aetios" (i.e. from SP-Placita) coincides with (P) and differs from (S) ³ , though Stobaeus as a rule keeps closer to the original.
- 2) Today nobody contests the fact that Porphyrius' *Philosophos historia* contained doxography as well as biography ⁴ . Theodoretus' own testimony is quite unambiguous: *Curat.* II,95 Πορφύριος... τὸν ἐκάστου βίον ταῖς δόξαις προστεθεικώς.
- 3) Diels interpreted the combination καὶ μέντοι καί in *Curat.* V,16 as emphatic thus trying to confirm the importance of "Aetios" for Theodoretus [as his primary source]. Now, the combination καὶ μέντοι καί, as far as I can see, occurs in the *Curatio* 72 times and no instance bears witness to the alleged meaning «and especially...», «and last but not least...». The usual meaning of καὶ μέντοι καί in Theodoretus (as elsewhere) is «and also...», «and besides that...», «as well as» etc. More than once καὶ μέντοι καί in Theodoretus introduces details and additions of secondary importance that could easily have been omitted ⁵.

Since *Curat.* V,16 sq. contains more *lapsus* than any other passage in the «*Curatio*» and since after having promised to cite from the works of «Plutarchus, Porphyrius as well as Aetios (καὶ μέντοι καὶ Ἀετίου)», Theodoretus in fact cites Plutarchus, Porphyrius and Arius Didymus (from Eusebius: *Cur.* V,26 = Euseb. PE XV, 20,6 = Arius Did. Fr. 39, 6 Diels; *Curat.* V,25 = Euseb. PE XV, 20,1 = Arius Did. Fr. 39,1 Diels), it seems almost certain that Theodoretus' AETIOΣ is nothing but *lapsus calami* (or rather *lapsus memoriae*) for Eusebius' APEIOΣ. This does not mean that we should immediately ascribe the *SP-Placita* to Arius Didymus whose work Theodoretus certainly had never seen. Theodoretus' *lapsus* is perhaps due to a

² Théodoret de Cyr, *Thérapeutique de malades Helléniques*, vol. 1, ed. P.Canivet, Paris 1958, p. 169, n. 1.

³ *Placita philosophorum* I,18,5; I,29,2; II,20,6; II,20,12.

⁴ R.Beutler, "Porphyrios", in: *PWRE*, Bd. 22, col. 287; Fr. Althelm und R.Stiehl, *Porphyrios und Empedocles*, Tübingen 1954, S. 21 ff.

⁵ cf. J.D.Denniston, *The Greek Particles*, Oxford, 1966, p. 413 ff.

mnemonic association of the names APEIOΣ and AETIOS – the two most conspicuous heresiarchs of the 4th century with cognate doctrines [often cited together in ecclesiastical texts]. There is a similar mistake in the same passage: the confusion of the Peripatetic ΔΙΚΑΙΑΡΧΟΣ with the Peripatetic ΚΛΕΑΡΧΟΣ ⁶.

Theodoretus owes his «additional doxography» [i.e. absent from both P and S] , ascribed by Diels to «Aetios», to Porphyrius. This is most probable since we find the same additional *placita* in Nemesius who explicitly refers to Porphyrius as his source.

Who is then the author of the SP-Placita? Let us consider two possibilities taking them as working hypotheses.

I. ARIUS DIDYMUS

We may return to the old theory of Meineke according to which most of the doxographical excerpts in Stobaeus (relating not only to Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, but also to the Pre-Socratics), ascribed by Diels to “Aetios”, go back to the conspicuous doxographer of the 1st century B.C. Arius Didymus, the teacher of Augustus ⁷.

Diels’s reconstruction of the composition of Arius’ compendium, allegedly containing only *placita* of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics, is *a priori* incredible. See the works of Howald who claims to have proved that Arius’ Περί αἰρέσεων included all Greek philosophers ⁸. Diels’s attempts to dissect one-piece *placita* into “Aetios” and “Arius Didymus” cannot stand against criticism; cf. Diels’ own doubts in *Placit.* I,7,31; 18,6; 23,2; III,1,7; 2,3;7,4. Compare, e.g., *Placita* I,12,1 and Arius Didymus fr. 5 Diels: I wonder what else could be written in Arius’ preceding context if not the very definition of body which we find in the *Placita*?

⁶ On Theodoretus’ mnemonics and mnemonic errors see P.Canivet, *Thérapeutique des malades Helléniques*, vol. 1, p. 58.

⁷ On Arius Didymus see P.Morau, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen*, Bd.1, Berlin, 1973, S. 259-443; cf. M.Giusta, *I dossografi di etica*, vol. I, Torino 1964, p. 201 ff.

⁸ E.Howald, *Das philosophiegeschichtliches Compendium des Areios Didymos*, *Hermes* Bd. 55 (1920), p. 68 ff.

In order to identify the author of the *SP-Placita* one must identify the author of the *proems* and of the anonymous definitions which precede the *placita* of different philosophers (e.g. Placit. I,9,1; 10,1; 11, 1; 12,1; 14,1; 15,1 etc.). In the beginning of the chapter Περὶ ἀνάγκης (I,25), between Srobaeus' § 1 and § 2 we read: ἀνάγκη ἐστὶ κρῖσις βεβαία καὶ ἀμετάτρεπτος δύναμις προνοίας. Diels has excluded this text from the *SP-Placita*, Wachsmuth has ascribed it to "Hermes" (ad loc.). Both solutions are unacceptable:

- 1) this definition of necessity strikingly resembles other definitions that we can safely ascribe to the author of the *SP-Placita*, but
- 2) It has little in common with the Hermetic texts. Moreover "Hermes" is cited *infra* in § 8 of the same chapter (p. 73,2 Wachsmuth-Hense).

Among the disordered *lemmata* on the margin, F has Εὐριπιδ. Διδύμω, P has Εὐριπιδ. Διδυμ. ⁹ If we read Διδύμου with Heeren, this lemma can be attached only to the definition of necessity cited above.

And if so, Arius Didymus must be credited with all other "author's definitions" in the *SP-Placita*, and thus considered as the compiler of the compendium. H. Dörrie's independent conclusion that the doxographical source of Nemesius is "very similar" to Arius Didymus, accords well with this hypothesis ¹⁰. The last philosopher mentioned in the "Placita" is Xenarchus the Peripatetic. According to Strabo XIV, p. 670, Xenarchus was Arius' friend, it would be quite natural for Arius to quote his own friend. Suppose that *SP-Placita* were a handbook of physical philosophy compiled by Arius especially *ad usum Augusti*. In this case the mention of Roman *denaria* (Plac. IV, 11,5), together with Greek *stateres*, would be quite natural. And, last but not least, Arius Didymus was acquainted with the work of Eudorus (*vide infra*).

II. EUDORUS

⁹ Ioannis Stobaei Anthologium, rec. C.Wachsmuth, vol.I, Berolini, 1958, p. 71, app. crit. ad 21.

¹⁰ H. Dörrie, Porphyrios' "Symmika Zetemata", München, 1959, S. 121.

Diels overlooked the fact established by Karl Praechter, that the *διαίρεσις τοῦ κατὰ φιλοσοφίαν λόγου* of the Platonist Eudorus of Alexandria, who may have been acquainted personally with Arius Didymus, was a doxographical work ¹¹. Our *Placita* may well be described as *διαίρεσις προβληματικῶς*: cf. especially *διελέσθαι* in the proem. What if our *Placita* and Eudorus' *λόγος φυσικός* [i.e. the physical part of the *διαίρεσις*] are identical? That the author of *SP-Placita* may well have been a Platonist (more precisely, an eclectic Platonist influenced by Posidonius and Antiochus of Ascalon) becomes clear from the definition of *ιδέα* in I,10,1, cf. also the peculiarly middle-platonic interpretation of the Forms as «God's thoughts» (I,10,3). The principal argument in favour of this hypothesis is the character of the quotations from Eudorus in Achilles' Commentary on Aratus' *Phaenomena*: these quotations are often «contaminated» with excerpts from our *Placita* ¹².

According to Diels, Achilles borrowed his physical doxography from Ps.-Plutarchus (*Doxographi Graeci*, p. 17 sq.). But

- 1) Achilles does not mention «Plutarchus»
- 2) Achilles' discrepancy with Ps.-Plutarchus in I,3,20 (in Achilles Hera = «earth», Aidoneus = «air», as in Stopbaeus; In Ps-Plutarchus Hera = «air», Aidoneus = «earth») makes this impossible.

Achilles repeatedly refers to Eudorus as his doxographical source. Diels was bound to suppose that in Achilles' chapter 11 the Stoic placitum is «*adsutum*» to *SP-Placita*. But isn't it more natural to suppose that Achilles cites Eudorus from the very beginning (cf. *Dox. Gr. P.* 24)?

Arius Didymus and Eudorus, who belong to the same doxographical tradition, are not necessarily alternative authors. Arius may well have borrowed from Eudorus

¹¹ K.Praechter, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, Berlin 1926, p. 531; H. Dörrie, *Platonica minora*, München 1976, p. 297 ff.; J.Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, London 1977, p. 114-135.

¹² Maass' attempts to separate Eudorus from "Aetios" are not fortunate: *Commentariorum in Aratum reliquiae*, Berolini, 1958, p.,30.

and expanded his doxography. Achilles (and Ps.-Plutarchus?) may have used Eudorus, and Stobaeus may have used Arius.

At any rate Diels has misdated the SP-Placita [= «Aetius»] about 100 A.D.

In the case of Arius Didymus the SP-Placita should be dated ca. The 40-ies or the 30-ies of the 1st century B.C., in the case of Eudorus somewhat earlier. There is no need of any «Vetusta Placita».

The probable middle-platonic origin of the *SP-Placita* raises the question whether their connection with another Middle Platonist, namely Plutarchus, is merely accidental. The character of contaminations in the P version of *SP-Placita* makes it clear that we are dealing with a pupil's lecture notes made ἀπὸ φωνῆς of his teacher. Why not to admit that this pupil was Plutarchus himself? In such case he will not be responsible for the content of the lectures. After Plutarchus' death this youthful lecture notes may have been found among his MSS. and erroneously edited under his name. The *Placita* are cited as a work of Plutarchus already by Eusebius who found the book in the Pamphilus' library. It is quite possible that the *Placita* existed under Plutarchus' name already in Origenes' Catechetical school. In this case Plutarchus' lecture notes are to be dated about 66 A.D., whereas the name of his teacher in such case is Ammonius who used a current middle-platonic handbook of physics [deriving from the tradition of Eudorus – Arius Didymus].

What has been said above is only the beginning of a complex collective work to be done in future. The monumental edifice of Diels' *Doxographi Graeci* had been built on sand and needs to be rebuilt.

[POSTSCRIPT APRIL 2013]

[In their monograph *Aëtiana. The Method and Intellectual Context of a Doxographer, volume One, The Sources*, Leiden (Brill) 1997 Jaap Mansfeld and David Runia dedicate a special Appendix "Lebedev and the Rejection of the Dielsian Hypothesis" (p. 333 – 338) to our criticism of the Dielsian theory and try to refute our arguments

against Diles's attribution of the *SP-Placita* to Theodoretus' "Aetios". We are grateful to them for their meticulous criticism. But of all their objections we are ready to accept as unquestionably correct only one on p. 334: indeed, the reading Μιλησίου in Cur. 1.112 is not different from the text of this *placitum* in Eusebius' PE ; we have been misled by Canivet. But this is a minor issue. Mansfeld and Runia fail to refute our main thesis about "Aetios" in Theodoretus. We reply to their criticism in a more systematic way in a forthcoming paper "Two doxographical myths...". Here we will point only to a couple of important issues that explain why we believe that they have not refuted our theory and that our 1988 paper (written 1983) has not been antiquated. First, they do not even mention our main argument, the statistics of the usage of the combination of particles καὶ μέντοι καί in Theodoretus' *Curatio*: 72 instances none of which supports Diels's interpretation of it as emphatic. This statistics alone constitutes a fatal blow to Diels' attribution of SP-Placita to "Aetios" because the attribution is primarily based on the assumption that καὶ μέντοι καί is emphatic, and therefore it is Aetios and not the two other writers (Plutarch and Porphyry) that Theodoretus regards as his main and even single doxographical source. In fact this hypothesis was implausible from the beginning because it made us to believe that two of the three works mentioned by Theodoretus were two versions of the same text, quite often undistinguishable. It seems that Diels understood the difficulties involved by his attribution and tried to eliminate Plutarchus by assuming that Theodoretus lies, because his only source, allegedly, was «Aetios».

Thus, Diels's attribution is based on two assumptions:

- 1) Theodoretus lies. He says he will quote from three sources, but in fact he quotes from one only.
- 2) The combination of particles καὶ μέντοι καί by which the name of Aetios is introduced, has unusual meaning «and last but not least».

These two assumptions of Diels stand or fall together. Nevertheless Mansfeld and Runia try to admit (2) and to deny (1).

We explain the text on quite different assumptions:

- 1) Theodoretus does not lie, he indeed quotes from three authors (though he may be quoting them wholly or partially from Eusebius).
- 2) The combination of particles καὶ μέντοι καί has a normal meaning «as well as», Theodoretus does not quote «Aetios» as his main source.

Our second point is that in quoting on p. 335 our arguments against Diels' attribution Mansfeld and Runia (in paragraph 4) omit the references to the passages in Theodoretus and Eusebius PE which are crucial for our theory. The reader thus might get an impression that we explain the confusion of the names AETIOΣ and APEIOΣ in Theodoretus solely by the supposed *lapsus memoriae* resulting from the association with the 4th century heretic couple «Areios and Aetios» (Aetios of Antioch was a disciple of Arius the heresiarch). This may be so or not, it is a conjecture, a psychological explanation. But our argument is based not on a conjecture (we admit other possibilities of explanation, too), it is based on the *fact* that after promising in V,16 to cite AETIOΣ, Theodoretus *in fact* cites below (V,25 and V,26) fragments of APEIOΣ ΔΙΑΥΜΟΣ from Eusebius. It is these crucial passages that Mansfeld and Runia omit in their quotation. Theodoretus *indeed* quotes first from Plutarch (brief *doxai*, 5.17 ff.) and then from Arius (misquoted in 5.26 as «Numenius»,) and Porphyry (on Longinus, Pythagoras and Plato, 5.27 ff). The confusion of Arius with Numenius in Theodoretus depends on the sequence of lemmata in Eusebius' PE 15.15 – 17: APEIOΥ ΔΙΑΥΜΟΥ – ΠΟΡΦΥΡΙΟΥ – ΝΟΥΜΗΝΙΟΥ.

Mansfeld and Runia are forced to agree that καὶ μέντοι καί has a normal meaning «and also...», «as well as», and not the emphatic meaning «and especially», «and last but not least». If so, in order to be consistent they should also agree that the Dielsian attribution is wrong. But they refuse to do so. Why? I presume, they give the answer on p. 333: «if Lebedev is correct in his conclusions, the entire argument of our book must be fatally flawed and the entire enterprise doomed to failure».

Here we have a dramatic situation, indeed, but I cannot plead guilty for creating it. I wrote my article in 1983 when I knew nothing about Mansfeld's and Runia's work on *Placita* tradition and my aim was to establish the truth, not to «doom to failure» their or anyone's else enterprise.

So how do they solve this contradiction? They recur to a somewhat unusual argument by proposing to interpret the non-emphatic meaning of καὶ μέντοι καί as Theodoretus' intentional attempt to «conceal rather than draw attention to his main doxographical source» (p.335)! In support of such interesting conjecture they quote a (what they believe to be) parallel from Clemens Alexandrinus *Strom.* 2.78-100 where Clemens quotes his source (Philo Alex.) after a long excerpt only at 100.3 to conceal his plagiarism. We do not find this example particularly “illuminating”. To begin with, “parallels” of this type from another writer prove nothing: Theodoretus is not Clemens Alexandrinus. But this particular parallel is not a parallel at all because we have here not only two different writers, but also two very different contexts. Clemens does not emphasize the name of his main source because he tries to conceal plagiarism and because his aim is to exaggerate his own originality. Theodoretus in this passage does not claim originality at all: on the contrary, he emphasizes that to avoid suspicions that he exaggerates the disagreement between Hellenes on the nature of man, i.e. falsifies the evidence, he will quote pagan authorities thus proving his objectivity and impartiality. Hellenic authorities, so to speak, are summoned like witness to the trial “Christianity versus Hellenism”; in Theodoretus' view their testimony will help Christianity to win because the Hellenes are self-refuting. It is also intended that the pagan writers he will quote are famous and authoritative among pagans themselves. It is therefore surprising that of the three writers he quotes the two are indeed very famous (Plutarchus and Porphyrius), whereas the third (Aetios) is not mentioned anywhere else (except two other quotations in *Curatio*) in more than 300 years before Theodoretus and 1000 years after him to the end of Byzantium. It should also be noted that the name Ἀέτιος becomes widespread in the Late Antiquity, i.e. about Theodoretus' own

times: all notable bearers of this name (the Arian theologian, the great Roman general, the famous doctor) date from 4th – 6th centuries A.D. On the contrary, Ἄρειος Δίδυμος fits the bill perfectly as the primary source of the enormous doxographical tradition originating in late 1st century B.C. He indeed is the most famous of all doxographers after Ps-Plutarchus, and not only because of his friendship with the emperor Augustus, but also because of the supreme quality of his doxographical work (to judge by the quotations from Συναγωγή).

Let us finish on a more harmonizing note: διαφερόμενον γὰρ ἀεὶ συμφέρεται. It seems that our highly esteemed opponents exaggerate and dramatize the catastrophic impact that the elimination of the empty name AETIOΣ would have on their work had they admitted that Diels made a mistake. Some corrections of the stemma (as well as some revisions of certain chapters, especially on Theodoretus and Plutarch) might be required, but the whole historiographical part, as well as the analysis of the compendium in vol. 2 etc., would not be seriously affected. As a matter of fact, although we strongly believe that “Aetios” is a non-entity, we agree with Mansfeld and Runia on a number of important issues (especially when they correct or criticize Diels) and we regard their work in general as informative and helpful.]