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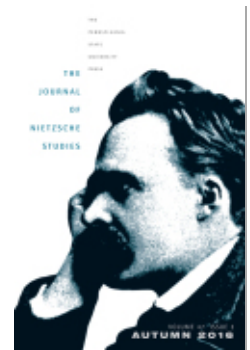
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*Die lateinischen Texte des Schülers Nietzsche. Übersetzung und Kommentar*  
by Christian Wollek (review)

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(Review)

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ethical tradition from taking Nietzsche as seriously as they ought, especially those concerning his egoism and his existentialism. Beyond this, Swanton offers novel perspectives on distinctively Nietzschean themes such as creativity, agonism, perspectivism, will to power, and life affirmation—themes that will be of interest to Nietzsche scholars more generally.

Christian Wollek, *Die lateinischen Texte des Schülers Nietzsche. Übersetzung und Kommentar*

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In 2010, Christian Wollek published his doctoral thesis *Die lateinischen Texte des Schülers Nietzsche. Übersetzung und Kommentar* (henceforth *LT*)—a German translation of Nietzsche’s Latin writings with an introduction and commentary. This book represents the breadth of Nietzsche’s Latin writings (his poems, school essays, translations, and excerpts from other authors) and his vast learning (Homer, Greek tragedy, lyric poetry, Horace, Cicero, etc.) while he was a student at the Naumburg Domgymnasium and Schulpforta. As Wollek tells us in the introduction, *LT* aims both to highlight the relevance of Nietzsche’s early writings, which he argues have been too often ignored, even in recent scholarship (20–26), and to develop a picture of Nietzsche’s education and reading in Naumburg, especially Nietzsche’s training in philology (29).

Wollek is not the first to translate Nietzsche’s Latin texts. In her 1993 dissertation *Antikes Denken und seine Verarbeitung in den Texten des Schülers Nietzsche*, Renate G. Müller also provides a translation of these texts. While Müller’s dissertation cannot be found in most libraries, *LT*, which is available through online bookstores, makes the translation accessible to a wide readership. According to Wollek, his book is also a more complete collection of Nietzsche’s Latin writings. Unlike Müller’s dissertation, which limits itself to the texts printed in *BAW*, Wollek’s book includes several texts, such as “Stoekerts Thesen” and the excerpt from Friedrich August Wolf’s “Prolegomena,” which are published only in *KGW* 1:2 and 1:3, edited by

Johann Figl and Hans Gerald Hödl (22–23). Wollek’s introduction offers a survey of scholarship on Nietzsche’s Latin writings and his early training in philology. The commentary of *LT* has been designed with the aim of providing important historical background, offering text-critical analysis of Nietzsche’s writings, and informing the reader about the composition of these texts, their various sources, their content, and their structure (30).

There is no doubt that this new translation of and commentary on Nietzsche’s Latin texts is a contribution to Nietzsche scholarship. In my review, however, I focus on some of the aspects of *LT* that I regard as problematic. I use Wollek’s treatment of Nietzsche’s school essay “Primum Oedipodis regis carmen choricum” to illustrate some general problems of *LT*.

Nietzsche’s essay “Primum Oedipodis regis carmen choricum,” written at Pforta in 1864, is a commentary on the first stasimon of *Oedipus Tyrannus*. The essay was written in three different languages, with some sections in German, others in Latin or Greek. In this essay, Nietzsche touches upon several issues central to his theory of tragedy, such as the origin of tragedy, its effect, and its relationship to religion. Both Barbara von Reibnitz and Thomas H. Brobjer maintain that this essay foreshadows *The Birth of Tragedy* in a variety of underappreciated ways (Reibnitz, *Ein Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsche, “Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik”* (Kap. 1–12) [Stuttgart: Metzler, 1992], 11–12; Brobjer, “Sources Of and Influences On Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*,” *Nietzsche-Studien* 34 [2005]: 279–80). I focus on the essay not only because of its importance for our understanding of Nietzsche’s theory of tragedy, but also because the longest section of *LT* (fifty-four pages) is devoted to it.

As mentioned earlier, *LT* was originally Wollek’s dissertation. His commentary, which is intended as a piece of Nietzsche scholarship, is addressed to a specialist readership rather than to the general reader. In his discussion of Nietzsche’s Oedipus essay, however, Wollek provides a summary of the story of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, which seems unnecessary for specialists and researchers (214). After the summary, Wollek attempts to establish the sources used by Nietzsche. Following Hermann Josef Schmidt, he draws attention to one source for Nietzsche’s text—Gustav Dronke’s book *Die religiösen und sittlichen Vorstellungen des Aeschylos und Sophokles* (215–16). But Dronke was not Nietzsche’s only source. As Brobjer has made clear, Nietzsche “plagiarized” several authors in the Oedipus essay without acknowledging them. Wollek does not even mention Nietzsche’s other sources like Gustav

Freytag's *Die Technik des Dramas*, Franz Brendel's *Geschichte der Musik in Italien, Deutschland and Frankreich. Von den ersten christlichen Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, and Adolf Schöll's *Gründlicher Unterricht über die Tetralogie des attischen Theaters und die Kompositionsweise des Sophokles*.

In his purportedly text-critical analysis of Nietzsche's essay, Wollek notes that there are errors in Greek in the transcripts previously published in *BAW* and *KGW* (221–22). He takes these mistakes to be made by the editors and decides to correct them *without* consulting the original manuscripts in the Weimar archive. Wollek makes no allowances for the alternative possibility that the mistakes are Nietzsche's. It is naïve to think that the Greek text Nietzsche wrote as a school student would be error free. In fact, even when he was a professor, Nietzsche still made Greek mistakes in his lectures, some of which are slips of the pen. For example, in his lecture on Greek religion, Nietzsche transcribed the word "Sphondylomantie" back into Greek and wrote σπονδυλομαντεια (the outcome should be σφονδυλομαντεια) (*KGW* 2:5, 483; cf. <http://www.nietzschesource.org/facsimiles/DFGA/P-II-14a,12>).

Wollek's textual emendation is flawed. I provide another example: In the third part of the essay, which was written in German and bears the title "Die Wirkung der Tragoedie und ihr Plan," Nietzsche refers to a key concept in Aristotle's *Poetics*: reversal (*peripeteia*). However, he spelled it incorrectly as *Peripatie*. Both the *BAW* and *KGW* editions have faithfully reprinted Nietzsche's mistake (*BAW* 2, 370; *KGW* 1:3, 335). In Wollek's book, instead of retaining the exact spelling of the word as it appears in Nietzsche's manuscript and writing "[sic]," he corrects Nietzsche's text and prints "Perip[e]tie," without giving the original spelling in the apparatus (187). Wollek's editorial decision needs to be reevaluated, for the misspelling has significant implications: it is evidence to support Brobjer's thesis that in this school essay Nietzsche copied several passages from Freytag's *Die Technik des Dramas* ("Sources Of and Influences On Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*," 284–85). Since the incorrect spelling "Peripatie" for "Peripetie" also appears in Freytag's book (*Die Technik des Dramas* [Leipzig, 1863], 148), we can conclude that Nietzsche did "plagiarize" Freytag, and that the young Nietzsche had limited knowledge of Aristotle's *Poetics* while at Pforta (for otherwise he would have corrected this error).

In his commentary, Wollek explores several noteworthy passages in Nietzsche's essay. For example, he discusses Nietzsche's references to Aristotle (217). Nietzsche first refers to several merits of *Oedipus Tyrannus* and says that it is because *Oedipus Tyrannus* conforms to all of Aristotle's

requirements for tragedy that this drama is for Aristotle “the tragedy *par excellence*” (BAW 2, 370). In the part concerning the chorus, then, Nietzsche expresses an idea that is a recurring theme in his writings starting with *The Birth of Tragedy*, and that is crucial to his theory of tragedy, namely that not *Handlung*, but *pathos* is the core of tragedy. And he clearly connects this idea with the brief account of the “Pathosscenen” in the *Poetics* (*Poet.* 1452b10–13) and with Aristotle’s qualification of Euripides as τραγικώτατος (“the most tragic”) (*Poet.* 1453a29–30). For Nietzsche, Aristotle calls Euripides τραγικώτατος because of the musical-lyrical elements in his tragedies and their strong emotional effect. He contrasts the Greek concept of the tragic, of which he regards Aristotle’s *Poetics* as a representative example, with what the moderns take to be tragic: while the moderns wrongly associate the tragic with *Handlung*, the Greeks rightly connect it with music and emotion (BAW 2, 375).

Referring to Nietzsche’s second reference to Aristotle, Wollek says that “Nietzsche [nimmt] die Aristoteles gerade erwiesene Reverenz wieder zurück.” This statement is likely to give the reader the misleading impression that Nietzsche rejects (what he took to be) Aristotle’s theory of the tragic. In fact, in the *Oedipus* essay Nietzsche offers a charitable picture of Aristotle’s theory. He not only gives credit to Aristotle for rightly understanding the merits of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, but also believes that he and Aristotle are in agreement on the crucial question of what the tragic is. Instead of analyzing Nietzsche’s understanding of Aristotle’s assessment of Euripides and Nietzsche’s idea that tragedy is centered on *pathos* rather than *Handlung*, Wollek merely comments that “Dies ist missverständlich: Euripides war der für Aristoteles der τραγικώτατος eben wegen der tragischen Handlungskonflikte und gerade nicht wegen der musikalisch-lyrischen Partien.” Yet the key point here is that even if Nietzsche is wrong, it is more important to explore the way in which the wrong idea contributes to Nietzsche’s theory of tragedy than to point out Nietzsche’s mistake by appealing to the mainstream interpretation of Aristotle.

Wollek then discusses a Greek formulation in the second part of the essay—“τῶν τοῦ Σοφοκλέους ἰ δεῶν ἀλλότριον θεόν τινα” (BAW 2, 368). Müller translates the phrase as “according to the ideas of Sophocles a hostile god.” Wollek argues that the phrase is better rendered as “a God who is alien to the ideas of Sophocles,” since the word ἀλλότριος means, above all, “alien” (231). According to Nietzsche, it is this god who makes *Oedipus* mentally deranged. Wollek declares that the power of this god is similar

to what Nietzsche calls “the Dionysian” in his later works (232). In my view, it is an open question whether ἀλλότριος means “alien” or “hostile” here, and Wollek’s reading is an interesting possibility. He seems to suggest that, as a school student, Nietzsche already had an inclination toward the Dionysian, arguing that Nietzsche ascribes “many chthonian attributes” to an “unknown god” in an untitled poem (*BAW* 2, 428). Wollek, however, gives no hint of which attributes of this god are chthonian. In fact, it is difficult, pace Wollek, to find clear chthonian attributes. Only the verses “[. . .] und ich fühl’ die Schlinge<n>, / Die mich im Kampf darniederziehn” could be loosely associated with one of the attributes of the chthonian divinities, namely the serpent. Wollek also claims that this god “who is reaching deeply into my soul” contrasts with the Christian god who resides in heaven. The contrast is obviously untenable because in the Christian tradition, God is clearly described as having an intimate relationship with individuals: he does not merely reside in heaven.

Some carelessness in Wollek’s book is also conspicuous. It seems that Wollek’s translation of the essay is mainly based on the *KGW* edition, and that he follows the section numbers in the *BAW* edition. On page 186, however, the section number “III.” is missing from his transcription. And on page 193, the section number “II.,” which was inserted by the *BAW* editors, is omitted. In his translation of Nietzsche’s essay, Wollek uses three abbreviations, “[dt.],” “[gr.],” and “[lat.],” to inform the reader in which language different sections were written. Yet on page 213, Wollek forgets to note that the phrase “Good luck!” at the end of the essay was written in Greek. There are also many misprints. For example, on page 214, “Steinhart” is incorrectly rendered as “Steinhard” and “unzureichend” as “uzureichend.” On page 220, “Ödipusarbeit” is misprinted as “Odipusarbeit.” In Wollek’s book, the quotation format varies without any clear principle. Book titles appear sometimes in italics, sometimes in quotation marks, and sometimes in both italics and quotation marks. To take just one example: on page 219, we have “*Geburt der Tragödie*,” “Hiketiden,” and “*Oper und Drama*.” Finally, the book lacks a general index, which would help the reader find her way with relative ease to particular points.

I do not wish to leave readers with the impression that Wollek’s book does not deserve their consideration. His translation is trustworthy. Scholars who are interested in Nietzsche’s Latin writings can profit from his translation.