

STUDIES ON THE TEXT OF PLATO'S *TIMAEUS*  
AND *CRITIAS*

JONKERS (G.) *The Textual Tradition of Plato's Timaeus and Critias.* (*Mnemosyne Supplements 400.*) Pp. xviii + 548. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2017. Cased, €180, US\$202. ISBN: 978-90-04-32591-3.  
doi:10.1017/S0009840X18000239

In his 1905 preface to the edition of the eighth tetralogy of *Platonis Opera, Tomus IV*, John Burnet observed two opposed but equally problematic tendencies in approaching the texts that volume contains (to which the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* and the *Critias* belong). One tendency, in taking our oldest and evidently best manuscript A (= *cod. Parisinus graecus* 1807) as the sole authority for the constitution of the text, would deny the other extant textual evidence in those cases where A and the hand which corrects it (A<sup>2</sup>) go astray, resorting to purely speculative emendations in such cases. The other, opposing tendency was to use readings from all extant manuscripts without due consideration of their place within the tradition of the transmission of the text. Regarding these two approaches to Plato's text Burnet writes: 'illud enim est suo Marto Platonem rescribere velle, hoc rivulos consecrari, fontes rerum non videre' (J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera IV*, p. iii).

At the time Burnet wrote these words, the correction of these two tendencies through the use of Lachmann's method had already begun. The purpose of Lachmann's method is to arrive at an understanding of the textual tradition by analysing the dependence relationships of manuscripts. These relationships are established through the study of various types of errors made through copying. For the purposes of editing a text, the goal is to ultimately eliminate from the critical apparatus those manuscripts which are dependent upon other, primary textual witnesses, and to establish stemmatic grounds for the preference of certain manuscript readings over others. Work in this vein was well underway before Burnet's edition. In the very same preface Burnet cites the contributions of A. Jordan and M. Schanz, both active in the 1870s, to the study of the transmission of Plato's text and the relative dating of the textual witnesses to it.

Schanz and Jordan both came to the conclusion that the manuscripts for these texts were to be divided into two families: A and all other manuscripts. The volume under review – a dissertation first published in 1989 under the slightly different title *The Manuscript Tradition of Plato's Timaeus and Critias* (Centrale Huisdrukkerij VU, Amsterdam) – builds upon about a century of textual scholarship in offering a stemmatic analysis of 53 manuscripts for the *Timaeus* and 19 manuscripts for the *Critias*. J. sets out to clarify which manuscripts of the *Timaeus* are primary (pp. 91–124), to give an account of the dependency relations among the primary manuscripts (pp. 125–44) and to come to conclusions regarding the value of the different manuscripts for the constitution of the text (pp. 145–7). This can be seen as the core of the argument of the book, both in the older and in the new version. J. also includes a detailed description of the manuscripts (pp. 45–90), a discussion of the secondary manuscripts of the *Timaeus* (pp. 202–322), a chapter on the primary and secondary manuscripts of the *Critias* (pp. 323–54) and an appraisal of the first printed editions of both dialogues with a view to finding information about the manuscripts upon which these editions were based (pp. 355–77). All this is also contained in the dissertation of 1989. What is new to the current volume is an *index testimoniorum* (pp. 397–523) and an accompanying *index auctorum Timaeum vel*

Critiam *laudantium* (pp. 524–36), which document the indirect tradition on the text of these dialogues. The inclusion of the indirect tradition justifies the change in title from the 1989 dissertation.

Of this more recent edition of his dissertation J. writes: ‘Since 1989, many studies on Plato MSS have appeared with new insights which provided me with the opportunity to adapt my conclusions in a number of cases’ (p. ix). His bibliography includes much recent literature, but J. does not state which of his previous conclusions are adapted and how. The addition of the indexes of *testimonia* is, however, in itself a highly valuable contribution to the study of these texts, and the fruit of much difficult labour. (I could not obtain access to P. Rawack’s 1888 Berlin dissertation *De Platonis Timaeo quaestiones criticae* which, as J. states, also contains a review of the indirect tradition.) As J. himself writes, the *Timaeus* in particular is perhaps Plato’s most cited dialogue in antiquity (p. 23). The first part of it was translated by Cicero (quite freely) and Calcidius (more literally), and we have citations from Proclus’ commentary for a significant part of the dialogue (Proclus covers 17a1–44d2). To this may be added more recently studied instances of transmission in Armenian and Arabic (work on this is briefly summarised by J. in the sub-chapters ‘Plato in Armenia’, pp. 391–3, and ‘The Arabic Tradition’, pp. 393–6). The indirect transmission of the text constitutes a valuable source for the evaluation of the medieval manuscripts that give us our texts of Plato’s *Timaeus* in particular, and a rare opportunity to look into the ancient textual tradition of Plato’s text. With this in view I shall summarise J.’s main results for the *Timaeus*, which is at the centre of his study.

The results for the textual tradition of the *Timaeus* are seen in J.’s stemmata of manuscripts (pp. xv–xvii), which remain largely unchanged from the previous edition. J. distinguishes four main families of manuscripts: the A-family (including his V = *Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 337), the F-family (F = *Vindobonensis suppl. gr.* 39), the C-family (C = *Tubingensis Mb* 14), and the g-family, where g is a collective siglum for three manuscripts, Y (= *Vindobonensis phil. gr.* 21), Θ (= *Vaticanus* 226) and Ψ (= *Parisinus* 2998). (In comparing the stemmata of the two editions, I note some significant revisions only in the stemma of the Y-group of the g-family.) J. argues for a position which Burnet also maintained, namely that A and F are the chief independent primary witnesses to the text of the *Timaeus*, and that they reflect distinct lines of transmission going back to antiquity (p. 145). He further maintains that V, despite being contaminated by manuscripts from the other main three families, affords us ‘a modest opportunity to take a furtive look behind the scenes of A’ (p. 146) and to catch a glimpse of the tradition that gave us our oldest surviving manuscript of Plato’s works.

Which stemmatic grounds do we have, then, to prefer the readings of certain manuscripts above those of others? J.’s answer is that the four families of manuscripts he identifies reflect three distinct ancient traditions, represented by AV, F and Cg respectively (p. 146 n. 19). He further claims that F and Cg are closer to each other, against AV. Still, A and F can be corrected by the tradition of Cg in certain circumstances (examples given on pp. 147–8). These results are derived in good part by reference to the indirect tradition; when a manuscript agrees with citations from the indirect tradition against variant readings in other manuscripts, its authority is confirmed (see e.g. J.’s arguments with regard to C and Cg, pp. 100–3). Given the methodological importance of the indirect tradition for this study, one would like to know where this form of textual transmission gives us something that differs from our extant texts, and what to make of it; but I found this nowhere noted (only a few examples are adduced on p. 387). J. makes cautious remarks about the possibility that the indirect tradition itself could have been tainted by the direct

tradition (p. 383 n. 4). Most of all, one would like to know how J. would change Burnet's text of the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*. Given his careful and patient study of the textual tradition, it is perhaps not too much to hope for a new edition, if not from J. himself, then upon the basis of his work.

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