

J. Mansfeld, D.T. Runia, *Aëtiana. The Method and Intellectual Context of the Doxographer, vol. II: The Compendium*, Leiden: Brill, 2009 (Philosophia Antiqua 114), 2 parts, X + 745 pp., ISBN 978-90-04-17206-7.

In 1879 a young German scholar, Hermann Diels, was only establishing himself in the academic milieu. Yet, the work that was to ensure his position was to set the paradigm of scholarly excellence and longevity as well as to influence the character of many investigative endeavours to come, particularly where the research into ancient philosophy or, for that matter, studies into the *Überlieferungstradition* of ancient texts were concerned. Indeed, for more than one hundred years Diels' monumental *Doxographi Graeci* (hence, *DG*) has dominated the imagination and actual practice of classical scholars and historians of ancient thought, holding a worldwide sway over their methodology and influencing our perception of philosophical fragments, their survival, source criticism, etc. To imagine the impact of Diels' method it is enough to remember that it was successfully reapplied in the composition of *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* by the man himself (one could also mention its deployment in Hans von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*). The challenges were few and rare¹. Also symptomatically, the *DG*, in spite of Diels' own doubts concerning various points of its argument (confirmed by the notes he himself introduced into his copy of the book), was never reissued, never updated² – manifestly, this was THE work, the basis of his academic position, the *opus magnum* on which rested his claim to academic immortality. Yet, it is easy to note – even to one only superficially acquainted with the imperial literature – that the *DG* suffer from a preconception which in a way proves both its major strength and, simultaneously, a major drawback: Diels' preoccupation with the *Urtext*, the work prior to Aëtius himself (and in itself a source for the presupposed *Vetusta placita*, the text thought to constitute the immediate source for the *Placita* themselves) and identified by him as the Theophrastean Φουσικῶν δόξαι. As the result of this, the actual sources for Aëtius were important only as far as the means enabling (or partly enabling) a glimpse of this *Urtext*, hence uninteresting and unimportant in their own right. This instrumental approach results in the further weakness: any change introduced to the original text must be viewed at the very least as an impediment in a scholarly endeavour, and hence as a change for worse, a deterioration or, indeed, wilful abuse. It comes hardly as a surprise that Diels did not like his sources; yet his contempt for Pseudo-Plutarch, Pseudo-Galen or John of Stobi, so manifest in the massive prolegomena to his volume and implicit in the tabulary presentation of the text, remains a consequence of the very *telos* of his research.

The consideration of various drawbacks of Dielsian approach, and the discussion of the true nature of sources involved, were the focus of the first volume of Mansfeld's and Runia's acclaimed *Aëtiana*, published in 1997. The book read as a detective story, highlighting the possible problems in the *DG* and furnishing a new transmission theory. The appreciation of the many factors motivating the authors of the later compendia, the careful (re)consideration of the various intellectual undercurrents and often conflicting intents that influenced the source texts, and, finally, the re-evaluation of the internal dynamics of single books and chapters of the work demonstrated the urgent need for a new Aëtius, for an edition that would account for the circumstances and factors ignored, neglected or suppressed (even though understandably) by the editor of the *DG*.

¹ Full overview of the scholarly debate concerning the *DG* may be found in *Aëtiana...*, vol. I: *The Sources*, Leiden 1996.

² This is particularly striking when we recall the later, updated editions of *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, all fathered and updated by Diels, of which only the fourth retains the canonical status in the modern scholarship. Concerning Diels' notes in his copy of the work compare J. Mansfeld, D. Runia, *Aëtiana...*, vol. I, pp. 104 f.

Now, after twelve years, we are finally presented with the sequel, a massive one at that: the *Aëtiana* vol. II, subtitled *The Compendium*. Produced in two parts, the volume is devoted to the actual shape of the work that came to be regarded as Aëtian: it discusses the internal organization of the *opus*, its philosophical and rhetorical background, and then, provides a *specimen reconstructionis*, the reconstruction of a single book of Aëtian *Placita*³, namely *Placita* II (the cosmos). One may wish to emphasize the importance of its first, “structural”, volume: the careful examination of the macro- and microstructures of Aëtius’ doxography reveals the important, yet almost invisible, mechanisms of subject distribution within both the work and its single books, pinpoints the importance of the very sequence of exposition, and as an effect, emphasizes certain intellectual tendencies and practical factors that helped to shape the work. Thus, for example, it stresses the importance of Aristotelian categories and divisions that manifest themselves in the organization of the *Placita*. This Aristotelian element seems to pervade the whole work (most manifestly ch. VIII, pp. 97–109 or XIV, pp. 158–172) – still, as the authors rightly insist, it remains compatible with the more general tendency to organize any considerations along the Aristotelian lines, a tendency well attested in sources far removed from the doxographic tradition⁴. On the other hand, the authors insist on the importance of the Hellenistic heritage – the prominence of Hellenistic philosophers in the work tends to highlight the role played in the composition of the *Placita* by the contemporary history of philosophy: this seems particularly manifest in the case of philosophical “successions”. Yet, the volume offers much more than that: contained in it are inquiries concerning the presentation techniques, authorial comments, and self-referential remarks (such as e.g. expository proems) – rare that they are, they seem to reveal some data relating to both the original author and, possibly even more importantly, to his excerptors and emulators. Occasionally, this study of seemingly innocent remarks allows a rare glimpse of Aëtius’ predecessors (as in the case of *Placita* IV 13), and contributes to the discussion on the doxographical *Fachsprache*. More importantly, it stresses the rather particular status of single *kephalaion*, clearly intended to be read as unity: the chapters are composed to be perceived and then considered (discussed) as separate units (this is particularly important given the widespread tendency to separate the *doxai* and take them out of the actual context, a tendency much aided by the tradition of *Quellenforschung*)⁵. The whole part (comprising 18 chapters) is in fact an in-depth study of thought patterns, methodological preconceptions, methodological assumptions, and intellectual tendencies at heart of the imperial culture: as such it constitutes a nearly invaluable contribution to our knowledge of the period.

Presented as a sample reconstruction, the second part of the volume is devoted solely to Aëtian *Placita* II, each chapter being carefully considered, the related exegesis being divided into five parts: witnesses, analysis, structure, reconstructed text, dialectical-doxographic parallels. While the “witnesses” part provides a source list for the text, the “analysis” contains in-depth discussion of the internal relation between the sources, transmission route, the organization of the text and the possible motivation of this latter, the nature of the discussed subject and its status in the ancient philosophical discussions, thus constituting the major part of the considerations devoted to an analysed chapter. To facilitate the reading, this part is organized according to certain general

³ In spite of many doubts concerning Diels’ identification of the *Placita*, and noting the near impossibility of ascertaining the true authorship of the work, the authors preserve – at least nominally – the by now traditional name (on the issue, cf. e.g. *Aëtiana*..., vol. I, pp. 320–327, vol. II, p. 3).

⁴ Cf. e.g. T. Barton, *Power and Knowledge: Astrology, Physiognomics, and Medicine under the Roman Empire*, Ann Arbor 1994, pp. 105 ff., 151 f. et al., S. Fazzo, *Un arte inconfutabile. La difesa dell’astrologia nella Tetrabiblos di Tolomeo*, RSF XLVI 1991, pp. 213–244, or J. Komorowska, *Astrology, Ptolemy and technai stochastikai*, MHNH IX 2009, pp. 129–140.

⁵ The most important text is *Placita* IV 14, 4, discussed on pp. 183 f. The authors (quite correctly, I think) stand firm on the issue of the authenticity of the text, *pace* Wachsmuth who had it bracketed in his edition of Stobaeus (ad I 52, 16, p. 486, 1–2).

lines: opening with the status of the respective issue in the philosophical debates and hence the justification for its inclusion in the present context, it continues with the discussion of the two principal source texts (Pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaeus, in this sequence), other witnesses in direct and indirect line, the problem of the completeness of the chapter and of the arrangement of the lemmata, diaereses, and, finally, with brief, but instructive, overview of parallel discussions in sources from outside the doxographic tradition. Next, the relatively brief “structure” part gives a reader an outline perspective of the views discussed, diaereses being demonstrated in diagrams, and the “parallels” part lists other texts important for the respective discussion, texts often confirming the ubiquity of the diaereses and oppositions. Between the two latter sections, the reconstructed text of Aëtius’ work flows in single, unbroken column followed by apparatus and an English translation below. Manifestly, what we are dealing with is far more than a simple reconstruction.

The most obvious change from Diels is the resignation from tabulary presentation: while the principal part of the *DG* presents the reader with two columns of text, employing the sources from which to reconstruct the Aëtian text, annotated with testimonies or other sources, hence emphasizing the fragmentariness and divergences of the two principal sources (Pseudo-Plutarch and Stobaeus), M. and R. provide continuous reconstructed text, heavily annotated and supplied with outstandingly detailed commentary. While this may seem a minor point to those unacquainted with the Dielsian work, those well versed in its idiosyncrasies will appreciate the importance of the change, which tends to concentrate our attention on the original text yet does no disservice to the intermediate sources. Indeed, the presentation results in the reader obtaining a view of the original Aëtian text (as reconstructed) and being given the opportunity to investigate its later transmission through the consideration of surviving sources. By contrast, when reading Diels’ edition what one saw were mainly the many mutilations to the hypothetical (and missing) *Urtext* as these latter were perpetrated and attested in the texts of later authors⁶. Thus, where Diels’ synoptic approach tended to highlight the differences and possible distortions, to some extent emphasizing certain unreliability of the later tradition, the method employed in the *Aëtiana* re-evaluates and partly rehabilitates the later doxographers, for whom – one should remember – the Aëtian text was only a basis of their own literary or antiquarian endeavour.

Second, the new presentation tends to emphasize the already mentioned internal dynamics of the original doxographic exposition and its possible distortions (and reflections) in the later tradition. In accounting for this dynamics, for the ruling principles of diaeresis and diaphonia, the exposition reveals the rhetorical element inherent in the composition of the *Placita*. Moreover, the interest in the internal dynamics of the text, the dynamic resulting from a rigid compositional method seems to hint at the existence of a generic constant, a defining feature of the doxographic genre, preserved even by the strongly derivative pseudo-Galen⁷ and even in the strongly descriptive chapters (such as e.g. II 7 *On the Order of the Cosmos*). Simultaneously, the presence of so rigidly maintained compositional principles may be seen as reflecting possible practical dimension of the work, doxography being regarded as a welcome help in the rhetorical (and philosophical) training. Strikingly, reading the chapter headings, one cannot help but notice the essential similarity displayed by the type of questions forming the basis of Plutarch’s *Quaestiones convivales*, or even of the table-talks of Calvenus Taurus briefly mentioned by Gellius in his *Noctes Atticae* VII 13 or XVIII 2⁸.

⁶ The remark made by the authors with respect to Ps-Galen’s rendition of *Placita* II 7 seems particularly illustrative in this context: “Even if it is of almost no value for the reconstruction of A, G’s text is nevertheless interesting for what it reveals about the way epitomizing doxographers work” (p. 395).

⁷ One may invoke *Placita* II 3, and the comments on Pseudo-Galen’s abbreviation on p. 395.

⁸ One may also note that the inconclusiveness and the *diaphonia* of the chapters is mirrored in Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Platonicæ* (on these latter, cf. e.g. J. Komorowska, *Plutarcha z Cheronei “Quaestiones Platonicæ”: wprowadzenie do problematyki*, Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia IV 2009, 4, pp. 107–114).

To conclude: the work reads well, perhaps surprisingly so for such a heavy and complex matter, and more than fulfils the promise contained in the title. Indeed, it is the intellectual context of both Aëtius and his successors that remains the focus of this massive volume, making its study particularly worthwhile for anyone interested in the culture of the imperial Greco-Roman world. As for me, I shall impatiently await the appearance of further volumes.

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Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison, Jaś Elsner (eds.), *Severan Culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 569 S., ISBN 9780521859820, £ 87, 00.

Die im rezensierten Band gesammelten Beiträge zur Kultur der Severerzeit – wie Stephen Harrison und Simon Swain im Vorwort informieren – wurden Ewen Bowie gewidmet, der in den Jahren 1965–2007 den Posten von E.P. Warren Praelector in Classics in Corpus Christi College in Oxford innehatte. E. Bowie ist nicht nur Erforscher der griechischen Dichtung und der Kultur des Kaiserreiches (insbesondere der zweiten Sophistik), sondern vor allem Lehrer einer imponierenden Zahl von Schülern, von denen zumindest einige Dutzend in verschiedenen Instituten weltweit (auch in Polen) Forschung betreiben und unterrichten. Dieser Band setzt sich aus Beiträgen von sechszwanzig seiner Schüler und Freunde zusammen.

Eine solche Genese des rezensierten Bandes hat seine Gestalt entscheidend beeinflusst. Das Projekt *Severan Culture* [= SC] ist nämlich kein systematischer Vortrag über die wichtigsten Aspekte der Kultur der Severerzeit, sondern eher eine Sammlung von Beiträgen, die sich auf ausgewählte Aspekte der Kultur in der Wende des 2. zum 3. Jh. n. Chr. beziehen, die von den Redakteuren in drei Kapitel aufgeteilt wurden. Schon ihre Titel (*Literature and Culture*, *Art and Architecture* und *Religion and Philosophy*) zeugen deutlich davon, dass die Bandstruktur *post factum* entstand. Die „Kultur“ ist zum Glück ein äußerst umfangreicher Begriff, dessen Sinn unfassbar bleibt, wodurch er in verschiedensten Kontexten auftreten kann. Auch wenn dieser Umstand nicht außer Acht gelassen werden sollte, kann der Bandtitel vielen Lesern irreführend vorkommen.

Einerseits ist es nämlich ein Pionierversuch, mehrere Aspekte der Kultur der Severerepoche darzustellen, die mit Sicherheit besonders beachtenswert ist¹, andererseits sollten alle Vorhaben dieser Art jedoch sichere theoretische Grundlagen haben. Leider fehlen diese offensichtlich im Falle von SC. Und es handelt sich auch nicht mehr darum, dass wir nicht erfahren, wie die Redakteure des Bandes den Begriff der „Kultur“ definieren, warum sie gerade solche und nicht andere ihrer Aspekte ausgewählt haben und warum kein Text sich im Prinzip auf die Probleme bezieht, die in der heutigen Kulturforschung vorherrschen². Das Hauptproblem ist nämlich die Beantwortung der

¹ Als ein ähnlicher Versuch, von zwar viel weiterer chronologischer Reichweite, kann das Kapitel VI. (*Religion, Culture and Society*) der neuen Herausgabe von *The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edn., vol. XII: A.K. Bowman, P. Gransey, A. Cameron (eds.), *The Crisis of Empire, A.D. 193–337*, Cambridge 2005, S. 521–671 (G. Fowden, *The World-view*; G. Fowden, *The Individuals and the Gods*; G. Fowden, *Public Religion*; M. Edwards, *Christianity, A.D. 70–192*; G. Clarke, *Third-century Christianity*; J. Huskins, *Art and Architecture*) betrachtet werden.

² Siehe kurze Einleitungen: Ch. Barker, *Cultural Studies. Theory and Practice*, London 2000; E. Baldwin, B. Longhurst, S. McCracken, M. Ogborn, G. Smith, *Introducing Cultural Studies*, Cambridge 2004.