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Untersuchungen über Plato. *Untersuchungen über Plato*: Die Echtheit und Chronologie der Platonischen Schriften. Von Constantin Ritter, Repetent am Stift zu Tübingen. Stuttgart, 1888.

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UNTERSUCHUNGEN UBER PLATO.

Untersuchungen über Plato: Die Echtheit und Chronologie der Platonischen Schriften. Von CONSTANTIN RITTER, Repetent am Stift zu Tübingen. Stuttgart, 1888.

ENGLISH scholars are apt to look askance on 'quantitative criticism.' The method is mechanical and laborious; it has many drawbacks, and its advocates are often prone to assign to it an exclusive or an exaggerated importance. Examples of this might easily be drawn from the field of recent Shakespearean study. Yet within due limits and combined with tools of finer temper, this instrument is of unquestionable value, and has assisted in giving substantial certitude to the solution of some problems of exceptional nicety. The discussion of 'end-stopped lines,' 'weak endings,' and so forth, may have been wearisome, but it has helped to bring the characteristic differences between Shakespeare's earlier and later styles into a clearer light. And this is a real gain, although such determinations are of less consequence to the appreciation of a poet than is the corresponding discovery to the interpretation of a philosopher. The question of the order of composition of Plato's dialogues, complicated as it is with doubts of genuineness, is manifestly not less important than it has hitherto been obscure. And it is through quantitative criticism cautiously applied that there seems to be at last some hope of touching firm ground in this quagmire.

'How mean an instrument
May do a noble deed!'

For the present, it is enough to go back to the year 1881, when W. Dittenberger published his *Sprachliche Kriterien für die Chronologie der Platonischen Dialoge* (*Hermes* XVI., pp. 321-345). Having learned that the particle $\mu\eta\nu$, for example, was rarely or never used by the earlier Attic prose writers, he read through Plato with this in view, and found that the familiar formula $\tau\iota\ \mu\eta\nu$; was entirely absent from about two-thirds of the whole number of the generally acknowledged dialogues, and that in about half of them $\gamma\epsilon\ \mu\eta\nu$ was nowhere to be found; while on the other hand, in the remaining works more than a hundred instances of $\tau\iota\ \mu\eta\nu$; and about sixty of $\gamma\epsilon\ \mu\eta\nu$ appeared. Further, in three of these last-mentioned writings, the occurrence of both

formulae is much more frequent than in the rest. The line of investigation thus marked out by Dittenberger has since been pursued by many scholars, of whom M. Schanz's is much the most significant name. His paper in *Hermes* XXI., pp. 439-459, has given fresh importance to this whole inquiry. The number of test-formulae has rapidly grown, and the many paths of observation successively opened show a remarkable amount of convergence.

Constantin Ritter in the little book now before us (less than 200 pp.) has not only summed up the results of previous observations, but has added much patient labour of his own. The facts are presented by him with a completeness that has been lacking hitherto. His work is distinguished not only by thoroughness, but by much candour and critical acumen. His ultimate aim is to interpret Plato anew from himself, to see him as he is, and not through Aristotelian or other spectacles, and of this endeavour he has given a promising sample in his Appendix 'On the Movement of Thought and Fundamental Intuitions of the *Theaetetus*.' But he has realised the truth that until the order of the dialogues is determined, at least in outline, all study of their meaning and connexion must be comparatively crude, being baffled by an insuperable obstacle.

Herr Ritter has applied the linguistic or stylistic test not only to the dialogues 'now universally acknowledged by some critics,' but to the spurious and doubtful ones; and he has boldly undertaken to reconcile some rather grave discrepancies between what may be called the material and formal evidence. The case of the *Phaedrus* is still the most serious in this respect.

For the twenty-one genuine dialogues (the *Parmenides* and *Lysis* are regarded as doubtful) our author tabulates the results of more than sixty tests. He states moreover not only the number of pages contained in Hermann's edition of each dialogue, but the number of questions and answers in each, so that the actual occurrences of a particular form of reply may be compared with the possibilities of such occurrence. Another special feature of his work is of importance with regard to recent attempts to break up the *Republic*. He has made a separate register for each of the ten books. with, on the whole, a remarkable evenness in the result.

The tests here referred to consist chiefly

of certain particles, adverbs, adverbial phrases, and formulae of reply, together with the curious recurrence of the Ionic dative plural of the first and second declension, a peculiarity which some of the orators seem to have anticipated. But our author is not content with tabulating observations; he discusses their bearings, and accounts for various inequalities, which show that an immediate inference from any single set of phenomena would be unsafe. The judicious remarks of Gomperz in his *Platonische Aufsätze* (1887) have had a wholesome effect.

It may be well to summarize a few of the more striking of such phenomena.

Τί μὲν; occurs more or less frequently in seven dialogues, and in fourteen not at all (but this includes the *Apol. Tim. Critias*, where there are few replies).

Τῷ ὄντι appears in eight, to the exclusion of ὄντως: four have ὄντως only, five both, three neither.

Σχεδόν is in eight dialogues always followed by τε, in six never, in one hardly ever.

Ὅσπερ prevails in some dialogues, καθάπερ not less markedly in others.

Τὰ νῦν or τὸ νῦν for νῦν occurs with varying frequency in six dialogues, singly in five, but in ten never.

Some dialogues (and only some) show an abhorrence of hiatus,¹ particularly in using πότερον, not πότερα, before a vowel, whereas before a consonant πότερα is preferred.

Εἰς or κατὰ δύναμιν is absent from twelve dialogues, but is frequent in six.

Lastly, the Ionic dative plural occurs only in five dialogues, and that with varying frequency.

The point to be observed is that (making allowance for the obvious fact that the reply test is not applicable to the *Timaeus* and *Critias*) the same dialogues have in every column the preponderance of instances. It is a case of 'concomitant variations.'

The main results of this elaborate inquiry are as follows:—

1. Now, if not before, it is clearly proved that the *Sophistes*, *Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Leges*—in this order, or nearly so—form a separate group, and are the latest written. Ritter's peculiar view, that the *Philebus* is contemporary with the earlier books of the *Laws*, the *Timaeus* and *Critias* with the later books, is hardly made out, though he has something to show for it.

¹ This has been noticed in a general way by Blass and others. It is a rhetorical feature.

2. It is made extremely probable that the *Republic*, *Phaedrus*, *Theaetetus*, form a central group, of which the exact order remains uncertain. Ritter thinks that the two lesser dialogues may have been composed during occasional intervals in the prosecution of the *magnum opus*.

3. However this may be, the *Parmenides*, if genuine, cannot be much earlier or much later than the *Theaetetus*. It must belong to the central group.

4. All the other dialogues are earlier than these nine or ten. The *Phaedo*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Symposium*—and the *Lysis*, if genuine—are doubtfully indicated as the latest of the earlier set.

5. With regard to the *Republic*, the first book shows remarkably few signs of the later manner, but these few (including αἰρούσιν 345E) are significant. Herr Ritter seems disposed to think that the work may have been so far begun and cast aside and taken up again after an interval. But he refuses to follow the disintegrators beyond this point. The eighth book, which has been supposed to ignore the sixth and seventh, has more indications of 'lateness,' according to his tests, than any other.

6. Of the doubtful and spurious dialogues, some follow the earlier, some the later manner, while some (thus self-athetized) have imitated both impartially.

In this brief notice I can do little more than call the attention of Platonic students to a work which, although of modest dimensions, exhibits proof of great industry and of considerable insight. I hope at some future time to find an opportunity of discussing more at length some of the many interesting topics which it suggests.

LEWIS CAMPBELL.

NOTE.—In hinting that the first and most important of the above results might have been taken as proved, I refer to the contribution to this very subject which was contained in an edition of the *Sophistes* and *Politicus* published at Oxford in 1867 (General Introduction, pp. xix.-xlv.). It is true that the collection of instances there exhibited is incomplete, relying partly, as it did, upon the work of Ast, who, as a lexicographer, is not to be compared with Ellendt or Bétant. But the argument, if it has been little noticed, at least remains unrefuted, and while the tests employed (with the exception of the Ionic dative-plural-form) were different from those collected by Ritter, the conclusion to which they pointed, so far as it concerned the *Sophistes*, *Politicus*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*, and *Leges*, was substantially the same with his.

This fact is the more observable, as the volume in question has no place in his list of 'Citirten Schriften;' and it may therefore be assumed that inquiries wholly independent of each other have led to this coincidence of result.—L. C.