

# A New Testimony on the Platonist Gaius

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**A** PART FROM a single Delphic inscription (*FD* III.4 103), the testimonia of the life and work of second-century Middle Platonist Gaius fall into two classes.<sup>1</sup> The first includes first-hand observations of later philosophers up to Proclus: Porphyry, for instance, reports that Gaius was one of several authors read regularly by Plotinus' entourage.<sup>2</sup> Galen tells us that he followed the classes of two of Gaius' pupils in Pergamum and Smyrna respectively.<sup>3</sup> As to Proclus, he twice mentions Gaius, among other Platonists, in his commentaries on the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*.<sup>4</sup> The second class of testimonia includes statements concerning Gaius' scholarship on Plato in three important Greek MSS. The first of these, *Paris.gr.* 1962, is a ninth-century MS. of the so-called 'philosophical collection', which, among others entries, contains a pinax at f. 146<sup>v</sup> mentioning Ἀλβίνου τῶν Γαίου σχολῶν ὑποτυπώσεων πλατωνικῶν δογμάτων. That is to say, Albinus' edition of Gaius' scholia on

<sup>1</sup> On Gaius and the related bibliography see J. Whittaker, "Gaius," in R. Goulet (ed.), *Dictionnaire de philosophes antiques* III (Paris 2000) 437–440. All testimonia on Gaius are collected and discussed with reference to previous literature in A. Gioè, *Filosofi medioplatonici del II secolo d.c.* (Naples 2002).

<sup>2</sup> *V.Plot.* 14, ed. P. Henry and H.-R. Schwyzer, *Plotini opera* I (Leiden 1951) 19.10–14.

<sup>3</sup> *De priorum animi* 41, ed. W. de Boer (*CMG* V.4.1.1, Leipzig 1937); *Libr.propr.* 2.1, ed. V. Boudon-Millot (Paris 2007).

<sup>4</sup> *In Tī.* I 340.24 Diehl; *In R.* II 96.11–13 Kroll.

Plato were probably included in this MS. and only later lost.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the tenth-eleventh century *Paris. Coisl.* 387 (at 154<sup>v</sup>) and the fifteenth-century *Bodleianus Auct.* T.2.11 (at 359<sup>r</sup>) mention Gaius, among others, as the author of useful commentaries.

This paper argues that a middle Byzantine treatise on *De interpretatione* 7, which has so far passed unnoticed, should be added to these testimonia. The eleventh-century scholar John Italos, pupil of Michael Psellos,<sup>6</sup> wrote several short treatises on Aristotle's *De interpretatione* dealing with specific sections or passages of the text;<sup>7</sup> unlike his master, who paraphrased the entire text of the Aristotelian work in question, Italos' comments on *De interpretatione* are all short and discuss parts or

<sup>5</sup> On this MS. and its history see J. Whittaker, "Parisinus graecus 1962 and the Writings of Albinus. Part I," *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 320–354 (repr. *Studies in Platonism and Patristic Thought* [London 1984] XX); F. Ronconi, "Qualche considerazione sulla provenienza dei modelli della 'collezione filosofica': note a margine del Paris. gr. 1962," in D. Bianconi and L. del Corso (eds.), *Oltre la scrittura. Variazioni sul tema per Guglielmo Cavallo* (Paris 2008) 125–142. For an overview on the 'philosophical collection' and the large number of studies on it see G. Cavallo, "Qualche riflessione sulla 'collezione filosofica'," in C. d'Ancona (ed.), *The Libraries of the Neoplatonists* (Leiden 2007) 155–156. For a new interpretation of the editorial project or projects behind the 'philosophical collection' see F. Ronconi, "La collection brisée. Pour une étude des milieux socioculturels liés à la 'collection philosophique'," in P. Odorico (ed.), *La face cachée de la littérature byzantine* (Paris 2011) 137–166.

<sup>6</sup> On Italos see A. Rigo, "Giovanni Italo," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 56 (Rome 2001) 62–67.

<sup>7</sup> P.-P. Joannou, *Joannes Italos. Quaestiones quodlibetales* (Ettal 1956): e.g. 29–37, q. 28 Εἰς τὸ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας ἔκδοσις ἐπίτομος; 40–41, q. 30 Πῶς τοῦ Ἀριστοτέλους φήσαντος τὴν τίς καὶ τὴν οὐ πᾶς ἐπὶ τῆς ἐνδεχομένης καὶ μόνης ὕλης συναληθεύειν, αὐταὶ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀναγκαίας ἀληθεύουσαι φαίνονται· τί γὰρ ζῶον ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐ πᾶν ζῶον ἄνθρωπος; 45–47, q. 37 Διατὶ παθήματα καλεῖ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τὰ νοήματα τῆς ψυχῆς; 55, q. 44 Διατὶ ἡ πᾶς καὶ ἡ οὐδεὶς λέγονται ἐναντία; 55–58, q. 45 Εἰς τὸ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας; 58–60, q. 46 Πρὸς τοὺς λέγοντας ὅτι πῶς ἂν εὐρεθῆι ἀντίφασις ἐπὶ τῆς ἀδυνάτου ὕλης, διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν τὴν οὐ πᾶς παρεισφέρειν τὴν τίς, οἶον πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ἴπταται, οὐ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ἴπταται; 61–63, q. 49 Εἰς τὸ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας ἔκδοσις; 72–73, q. 53 Περὶ μίξεων; 133, q. 83 Περὶ προτάσεων; 134, q. 85 Περὶ ἀκολουθίας προτάσεων.

single passages. One short text of the latter type has been transmitted by one of Italos' students as a report of a lecture given by the master, as is clear from the formulation Ἰωάννης ὁ φιλόσοφος ὁ Ἰταλός, ὁ ἡμέτερος διδάσκαλος, οὕτως etc. The text deals with *De interpretatione* 7 (17a38–17b16), where Aristotle discusses terms and propositions that are contradictories. However, the first part of this text is problematic and deserves attention (55.1–7, q. 44):

Διατί ἡ πᾶς καὶ ἡ οὐδεις λέγονται ἐναντία· ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀμμώνιος αἰτίαν ἀποδίδωσι διὰ τὸ μιμεῖσθαι τὰ ἔμμεσα ἐναντία· ὡσπερ γὰρ ἐκεῖνα δύνανται ἀπειναι τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, οὕτω καὶ αὐταὶ συμψεύδονται· ὁ δὲ Πορφύριος διὰ τὸ πλεῖστον ἀλλήλων ἀφεστηκέναι ταῦτά φησιν ἐναντία· ἡ μὲν γὰρ πᾶς ὑπαρξίν τινα παντελῆ σημαίνει, ἡ δὲ οὐδεις παντελῶς ἀνυπαρξίαν· Γάιος δὲ ὁ φιλόσοφος οὕτως· ὡσπερ τὰ ἐναντία συμψεύδονται, οὕτω καὶ αὐταὶ, καὶ ὡσπερ ἐκεῖνα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἀδύνατα εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ ταύτας. Ἰωάννης ὁ φιλόσοφος ὁ Ἰταλός, ὁ ἡμέτερος διδάσκαλος, οὕτως ...

The references to Ammonius and Porphyry pose no problem whatever. In fact, we know both Ammonius' and Porphyry's views on contradictories from Ammonius' commentary on *De interpretatione*, the direct source of the doxography in this part of the text.<sup>8</sup> However, recognising that "Gaius the philosopher," the second-century Middle Platonist under discussion here, held a view on this issue is unprecedented and requires discussion. Though this new testimony on Gaius is no less obscure than those already known, it is different in one important respect: unlike the testimonia listed above, which do not mention any of Gaius' views, Italos' is the first report of Gaius' position on an Aristotelian text or issue, namely the status of contradictories.

He is nevertheless a problematic witness. First of all, as I will show, it is difficult to identify an accurate reference to a Middle Platonic doctrine in Italos' rudimentary report of Gaius' po-

<sup>8</sup> A. Busse, *Ammonius, In Aristotelis de interpretatione commentarius* (CAG IV.5, Berlin 1897) 92.3–102.18.

sition: “as it is impossible for the former [viz. non-exhaustive/separated/polar contraries] to be present in the same thing, so too it is impossible for the latter [‘all’ and ‘no’] to do so.” Furthermore, neither the late antique nor the Byzantine commentary tradition on this Aristotelian work (or on any other Aristotelian logical work) mentions Gaius at all. Boethius, Ammonius, Stephanus, the Anonymous Tarán, Michael Psellos, Michael of Ephesus, Leo Magentinos, not one of these sources gives the slightest clue as to Gaius’ views on terms or propositions as contradictories. The major known scholia concerning this Aristotelian passage are equally silent.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The commentaries by Michael Psellos, Michael of Ephesus, and Leo Magentinos are not available in modern critical editions. For Psellos’ commentary, being aware of the many flaws of the 1503 Aldine edition (on which see K. Ierodiakonou, “Psellos’ Paraphrasis on Aristotle’s *De interpretatione*,” in K. Ierodiakonou [ed.], *Byzantine Philosophy and its Ancient Sources* [Oxford 2002] 157–181, at 161–163), I collated MS. *Laur.Plut.* 10.26 (ff. 149–176). After Bandini (A. M. Bandini, *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae Mediceae Laurentianae* I [Florentiae, Typis Caesareis, 1764] 493) it has become customary to date this MS. to the twelfth century and to believe it to be the oldest MS. preserving this work. However, given the importance of this witness of Psellos’ paraphrase of *De Interpretatione*, it should be assessed according to its role within the tradition, and not simply according to its dating, which however I challenge on the grounds that the handwriting in this part of the MS. falls into the class of the *Beta-Gamma* style typical of the second half of the thirteenth century. The traditional dating of this MS. should therefore be corrected. Michael of Ephesus’ and Leo Magentinos’ commentaries on *De interpretatione* are found in the thirteenth-century *Paris. gr.* 1917 (ff. 17<sup>r</sup>–45<sup>r</sup>), where Michael’s commentary has been copied in the margin of Magentinos’ commentary. As for the scholia, to no avail I checked *Scholia in Aristotelem*, collegit Christianus Augustus Brandis (Berlin 1836), and the following relevant MSS. known for containing scholia on the text: *Laur.Plut* 72.5 (ff. 50<sup>r</sup>–67<sup>v</sup>, tenth century for this part of the text, with scholia copied by the two main copyists of this portion of the MS. and by later scribes, the scholia at ff. 53<sup>v</sup>–54<sup>r</sup> concerning *De Interpretatione* 7 and the problem of contraries); *Ambr.* L 93 sup. (ff. 60<sup>v</sup>–79<sup>v</sup>, tenth century, copied in southern Italy and later annotated by Constantinopolitan hands, the scholia relevant to *De interpretatione* 7 at ff. 62<sup>v</sup>–64<sup>r</sup>). All MSS. have been collated via digital reproduction or microfilm. Scholia ascribed to Olympiodorus have

Our knowledge of Gaius is so limited by lack of direct evidence on his teaching that, while acknowledging the possibility that Italos may have found this reference in some source-material unavailable to us, we should also ponder whether the reading Γάϊος as found in the MSS. might not be authentic. In order to verify this suspicion, I examined one of the two most important MSS. preserving Italos' work, *Vat.gr.* 316, a thirteenth-century palimpsest copied in southern Italy in the Salento area by a scribe whose handwriting falls into the class of the *Barock-styl* typical of the literary hands of this period from this area.<sup>10</sup> The MS. does indeed read Γάϊος, with the *gamma* in capital form but in the same dimension as the rest of the letters, the stroke above the word customary for the rendering of proper names, and -ος abbreviated in the usual way, i.e. with *omicron* superscribed.

A scribal mistake can only be admitted if this can be explained on palaeographical grounds. In our case the only alternative that one can take into consideration is the corruption, which I regard as highly improbable, of Γα(λην)ός into Γάϊος. Let us imagine for instance that one of the MSS. in the earlier stages of the text tradition reported instead of *iota* a very short *lambda* (which could easily be read as *iota*), or let us imagine an itacism, a quite common phenomenon, which transformed an *eta* into an *iota*. From Γάϊος then one could suggest that the correct reading should have been Γα(λην)ός. Unlike Gaius, Galen is known to have dealt with Aristotle's *De interpretatione* 7 directly

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been copied by a thirteenth-fourteenth century hand in the margin of the text of *De interpretatione* in *Vat.Urb.gr.* 35 (tenth century, ff. 54<sup>v</sup>–73<sup>v</sup>), and have been edited in L. Tarán, *Anonymous Commentary on Aristotle's De Interpretatione* (Meisenheim am Glan 1978) xxv–xli. These scholia also fail to mention Gaius at all.

<sup>10</sup> On this MS. see I. Mercati and P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, *Codices Vaticani graeci* I (Rome 1923) 467–474. The copyist's literary hand has been studied by D. Harlfinger, *Die Textgeschichte der pseudo-Aristotelischen Schrift Περὶ ἀτόμων γραμμῶν* (Amsterdam 1971) 147. See also D. Arnesano, "Aristotele in terra d'Otranto. I manoscritti fra XIII e XIV secolo," *Segno e testo* 4 (2006) 149–190, at 153–155.

in his *Institutio logica*, a work which had no impact on later commentators and whose authenticity was not accepted unanimously in the nineteenth century when it was discovered.<sup>11</sup> Galen also informs us that he commented several times on *De interpretatione*, on Theophrastus' *Περὶ καταφάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως*, and on Eudemus' *Περὶ λέξεως*,<sup>12</sup> a circumstance which could have made him an ideal candidate for restoring the true identity of the author referred to in Italos' text. However, this solution too is problematic, especially because, like Gaius, Galen is equally ignored in the earlier commentary tradition on *De interpretatione*.

Furthermore, it would be improper to question and dismiss Gaius as the appropriate reading in the MSS. tradition. In fact, not everything written in antiquity in the commentary tradition of *De interpretatione* has reached us.<sup>13</sup> As a matter of fact, it might

<sup>11</sup> Nowadays there seems to be general agreement on the authenticity of the *Institutio logica*. The text is transmitted by only one MS. (*Par.gr.suppl.* 635, thirteenth century, in bad state of preservation) discovered in 1844 by Minoidas Mynas on Mt. Athos; ed. K. Kalbfleisch, *Galenus Institutio Logica* (Leipzig 1896). The main objections against the authenticity of the work were brought by C. Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik im Abendlande* (Munich 1855) 591–610, on the grounds of the many barbarisms in the Greek text and the absence of this work in the list of his own works that Galen prepared to counter the circulation under his name of writings which were not his. Prantl nevertheless thought the work to be an authentic handbook of logic of the Hellenistic era. Following up Prantl's remarks on the authenticity of the work, I. von Müller, "Über Galens Werk vom wissenschaftlichen Beweis," *AbhMünch* 20.7 (1895) 403–478, rejected the attribution to Galen, but defended that it contains many Galenic logical doctrines. It was again K. Kalbfleisch, "Über Galens Einleitung in die Logik," *Jahrb.klass.Philol.* Suppl. 23 (1897) 679–708, who defended the authenticity of the work and set the foundation for its subsequent acceptance.

<sup>12</sup> Galen *Libr.propr.* 14.11, 17.1, 17.2 (Theophrastus commentary), 17.3 (Eudemus commentary).

<sup>13</sup> For an overview on the antique commentary tradition see C Hasnaoui, "La tradition des commentaires grecs sur le *De Interpretatione* (PH) d'Aristote jusqu'au VII<sup>e</sup> s.," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques* Suppl. (Paris 2003) 122–173, at 137–158.

be that the reason for Gaius' absence among the commentators on *De interpretatione* is that he actually never wrote any commentary on it, but nevertheless held a position on the status of contraries. It should also be remembered that the only two testimonia of Gaius found in MSS. are from the middle Byzantine period, the very period in which John Italos *floruit* first as a pupil of Psellos, then as "consul of the philosophers" in the reign of Michael VII Doukas (1071–1078). Intriguingly, as we have seen, one of these witnesses, *Paris.gr.* 1962, which includes the *pimax* referring to Albinus' edition of Gaius' scholia on Plato, most likely once contained the full text of Albinus' work, lost before Janos Lascaris brought the MS. to Italy in the late fifteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

Whether this lost work contained anything that might have formed the basis for Italos' account of Gaius' position on contradictories is a matter of pure speculation. There is however a stronger argument for maintaining that Gaius is the right reading in Italos' text and for accepting the witness transmitted by this eleventh-century treatise on *De Interpretatione* 7 as trustworthy: as to the general interest in logic by the Middle Platonists, who often attributed the invention of Aristotle's logic to Plato (see below), the surviving witnesses actually include several texts discussing the problem of contradictory pairs within a more general anti-Aristotelian reading of Aristotle's *Categories*, where the philosopher (13a37–b35) also discusses contraries.<sup>15</sup> Intriguingly, one reported statement by a Middle Platonist on contraries, that of Nicostratus, is found in Simplicius' comment on 13a37–b35, where, unsurprisingly, the discussion is placed in the broader context of Aristotle's *De interpretatione* 7 and 9.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> See the literature cited in n.5 above.

<sup>15</sup> On logic among the second-century Middle Platonists see P. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus bei den Griechen II* (Berlin/New York 1984) 519–561; J. M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*<sup>2</sup> (Ithaca 1996) 276–280.

<sup>16</sup> Simplic. *In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium*, ed. K. Kalbfleisch (*CAG* VIII, Berlin 1907) 406.6–407.14. On this passage see Moraux, *Der Ari-*

It is obviously difficult to say whether Gaius shared Nicostratus' negative view of Aristotle's categories (which was preceded by that of Eudorus),<sup>17</sup> or whether he opted for a milder approach to this issue comparable to that of Albinus and the anonymous commentator on *Theaetetus*, who found it natural to trace Aristotle's categories back to Plato's *Parmenides*.<sup>18</sup> But clearly there was a debate occurring around Gaius on these matters and there is no reason to preclude that Gaius had a view on them, even though John Italos' account of Gaius' position leaves us with very little certainty as to the view that Gaius actually did hold.

Italos' report can be tentatively explicated as follows. As said above, he ascribes to Gaius the view that "as it is impossible for the former [i.e. non-exhaustive/separated/polar contraries] to be present in the same thing, so too it is impossible for the latter ['all' and 'no'] to do so" (ὥσπερ ἐκεῖνα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἀδύνατα εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ ταύτας).<sup>19</sup> In other words, Gaius states

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*stotelismus* 553–556.

<sup>17</sup> See Simplic. *In Cat.* 174.14 ff.

<sup>18</sup> Albinus *Didaskalikos* 6.10, ed. P. Louis, *Albinos. Epitomé* (Paris 1945) 159.34–35; *Anonymer Kommentar zu Platons Theaetet (Papyrus 9782)*, ed. J. L. Heiberg (Berlin 1905) 68.10–49.

<sup>19</sup> The vocabulary used by Italos is of a later period, as is confirmed by the word *συμψεύδονται*, which occurs frequently only from Alexander of Aphrodisias onwards. However, this is not relevant, I believe, for assessing the authenticity of Italos' report of Gaius' view, since this is introduced by the report of Ammonius' and Porphyry's views present in Ammonius' commentary on *De interpretatione*, where in fact the word occurs at least six times (100.13, 101.9, 146.10, 146.27, 234.4, 234.9) in the discussion of propositional theories. Thus we need not be surprised that Italos, influenced by Ammonius, used late vocabulary in describing an earlier position. Furthermore, the terms *συμψεύδεσθαι/συμψεύδονται* also occur in a similar context in the work of an author like Alexander of Aphrodisias, late second/early third century, not so far removed from the second-century Middle Platonists. For Alexander's use of this term in general and in regard to the positions of earlier philosophers on the theory of propositions, see his *In Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum librum I commentarium*, ed. M. Wallies (*CAG* II.1,



that propositions including terms such as ‘All’ and ‘No’ can both be false about a certain subject, but cannot both be true about that same subject; analogously, non-exhaustive contraries like ‘black’ and ‘white’ can both be false of a certain subject, but cannot both be true of that same subject. At the present stage of research, however, it remains difficult to develop this rather simple logical statement and venture that Gaius shared the same metaphysical concern as other Middle Platonists in referring Aristotle’s categories and logic generally to the sensible world alone and not to the intelligible world.<sup>20</sup>

In conclusion, in spite of the difficulties in inferring Gaius’ doctrine from John Italos’ sketchy report, his treatise on *De interpretatione* indicates that it is more than probable that in eleventh-century Byzantium some additional information on Gaius was available, directly or more likely indirectly in the form of scholia in the margin of a logical text, possibly one of the lost commentaries written by the Neoplatonists.<sup>21</sup> It should be remembered that eleventh-century Byzantines could still read some ancient and late-antique material, in particular the Platonic and Neoplatonic texts that were not lost until later. The case of Michael Psellos, Italos’ master, who had access, among many other works, to the now-lost Proclean commentary on Plotinus’ *Enneads*, is particularly telling in this regard.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, for the time being, I suggest that this Byzantine witness should be included among those already known on the

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Berlin 1883) 418.5, and *In Aristotelis Metaphysica commentaria*, ed. M. Hayduck (CAG I, Berlin 1891) 336.25–29.

<sup>20</sup> See e.g. Moraux, *Der Aristotelismus* 592–601.

<sup>21</sup> These are listed in Hasnaoui, *La tradition* 151–158.

<sup>22</sup> See L.-G. Westerink, “Exzerpte aus Proklos’ Enneadenkommentar bei Psellos,” *BZ* 52 (1959) 1–10. Another relevant case is that of the anonymous commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*, tentatively dated by its editors to the third century A.D., discovered in the Archimedes palimpsest and probably copied around the tenth century. On this see R. Chiaradonna, M. Rashed, and D. Sedley (with N. Tchernetska), “A Rediscovered *Categories* Commentary,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 44 (2013) 129–194.

Middle Platonist Gaius. Scholars will then be in a position to accept or reject its authenticity after a thorough examination of its meaning and implications.<sup>23</sup>

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