ALBERT JOOSSE AND ANGELA ULACCO _____

Introduction

One of the more characteristic aspects of ancient philosophy is its organization into distinct traditions and schools of thought. In some periods and in some areas, there were literal 'schools' whose members would meet in order to learn, investigate and discuss. More often, however, we can – to some extent – identify traditions by means of founding figures, texts or distinctive views. Speaking of traditions can be useful for us, modern scholars, as a means to structure and understand the varied world of ancient philosophy and philosophers. But many ancient thinkers too thought in terms of traditions: traditions with which they identified, traditions in which they included their opponents or colleagues, and traditions from which they sought to exclude others. But how did ancient thinkers build and conceive of traditions? This is the question which this volume seeks to address. Its focus, specifically, is on the way in which authors deal with opinions that they do not share and on how such 'dealing with disagreement' contributes to the formation of philosophical traditions.

The contributions to this volume were solicited for a conference held at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Studies (FRIAS) on April 16–18, 2015, under the title 'Heterodoxy and Tradition: Conflict and Dialogue in Ancient Pagan and Christian Philosophy'. One of the premises of the conference was that Christian and pagan[1] intellectual activities should not be studied in isolation, if we are to understand ancient philosophical traditions properly. The contributions in this volume, we hope, bear out the fruitfulness of this approach. In its chronological scope the volume begins with the revival of Platonism and Aristotelianism in the first century BCE and ends with the last non-Christian generation of Platonist commentators in the 6th century CE. While late-antique studies has emerged as a field of its own, the developments in philosophy justify the inclusion of earlier centuries; hence our choice to employ the phrase 'later ancient philosophy' in the title.

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1 We use the term 'pagan' for want of a better alternative. For discussion see Sághy/Schoolman (2017); Jones (2014).

Constructing traditions

In the first century BCE, the philosophical schools geographically tied to Athens dispersed. This is likely one of the factors that led to the development of text-based philosophy. In the absence of the living guidance of Athenian scholarchs, philosophers turned to the writings of the schools' founders and claimed to be returning to their original teaching. The texts of Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and the early Stoics became a focus of philological study and philosophical exegesis.[2] To varying degrees, these texts and their authors served as authorities. It became common to appeal to the ancients as a way of rewriting one's philosophical pedigree and of providing support for one's philosophical convictions. By attributing authority to one set of texts rather than another, thinkers aligned themselves with distinct traditions.[3]

Moreover, as a result of this textual turn, the way philosophers dealt with disagreement also became more and more textual. The debates between Arcesilaus and Zeno, for instance, most probably occurred face to face. But from the first century BCE onward, responses to dissenters took the form of treatises and – increasingly – commentaries produced by leading philosophers.[4] By the same token, these texts increasingly became vehicles for the construction of traditions, whether through conscious strategies or other unconscious mechanisms. Such texts are therefore central to this volume.

Focusing on polemic, however, can easily obscure the extensive common ground between the different traditions in later ancient philosophy. This common ground includes the textual nature of philosophy we have just mentioned, but also a shared concern with emphasizing the antiquity of one's own tradition as evidence of its truth.[5] Moreover, we find many commonalities in the concepts employed by philosophers. As this volume aims to show, this common ground partly stems precisely from the polemic between schools.

These characteristics and mechanisms in the formation of traditions endured even when the dominant rival traditions were no longer the four Athenian ones, but the traditions we nowadays broadly identify as Neoplatonism and Christian

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2 As argued by Pierre Hadot (1987), 14–17, 22–23.

3 See the seminal work by David Sedley (1989, 1997, esp. 116–129) and, more recently, Bryan/ Wardy/Warren (2018), 1–19, as well as the Introduction in Erler/Heßler/Petrucci (2021). For a discussion of the very concept of epistemic authority in ancient textual traditions, see Opsomer/Ulacco (2016). As Baltzly has argued (2014), the authority which Neoplatonists attributed to Plato and his texts also involved the idea that these texts do not just express the truth but constitute a path to salvation for exegetes and students.

4 See the various contributions in Weisser/Thaler (2016); and cf. Niehoff's analysis of Neoplatonic *Timaeus* commentaries (with their view of creation as non-temporal) as pushbacks against Christian and Jewish attempts to claim this Platonic work (Niehoff 2007).

5 On the origin and importance of this motif see Boys-Stones (2001).

thought. This is only one of many reasons why it is essential to study later ancient philosophy and Christian thought side by side, as is increasingly being acknowledged.[6]

Disagreement and its uses

Before we turn to the individual papers in this volume, it may be useful to consider the different types of disagreement and the uses made of them. The problem with disagreement, according to ancient thinkers, is its incompatibility with knowledge. A central case, not specifically addressed in this volume, is the conflict between different beliefs simultaneously held by a person. This type of disagreement, diagnosed for instance by Socratic elenchus, disqualifies a person from claiming to be an expert. More to the point of this volume, disagreement plays an equally disqualifying role in communities. In the Platonic *First Alcibiades*, for instance, Socrates points out to Alcibiades that ordinary people are not suitable teachers of justice, since they disagree about what it means. This is a disagreement that is expressed in words, in the assembly. But it also manifests itself in behaviour: in conflicting actions and in war (*Alc. I* 111e11–112d3).[7] If disagreement is indicative of a lack of knowledge, then we should expect philosophical schools to avoid it. After all, they are communities of people striving for wisdom and knowledge. However, philosophers seem to find more value in disagreement than this conclusion would suggest.

Verbal disagreement may be diagnosed as merely verbal, when it conceals a substantial degree of agreement. Antiochus of Ascalon famously argued that the Stoics were in agreement with the Aristotelians and Academics; their disagreement was only verbal and due to Zeno's terminological innovations.[8] Where disagreement is not considered merely verbal, authors may choose to deal with it by passing it over in silence, whether because it is awkward in the specific context they are discussing or because they deem it to be of secondary importance. Compare for instance Proclus' and Olympiodorus' explanations of the passage

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6 See, among many other contributions, Hirsch-Luipold et al. (2009); Mitchell/Van Nuffelen (2010); Karamanolis (2013); Rowe (2016); Petersen/van Kooten (2017); Riedweg et al. (2017), esp. Wyrwa (2017); Marmodoro/Cartwright (2018, on mind and body); Zambon (2019); and Brouwer/Vimercati (2020), on fate, providence and free will). The current volume studies the interactions between late-antique pagan philosophy and early Christian thought with a specific focus on the relation between disagreement and the construction of traditions.

7 Note that this phenomenon is often seen as indicating that there are no experts in the community at all. But this does not necessarily follow. This difficulty leads commentators to posit further requirements with respect to knowledge (e.g. that it be successful in convincing others); or to change the terms of the debate (Proclus denies that a sage is ever in disagreement with his fellow citizens – only they are in disagreement with him: *in Alc.* 268.12–16).

8 See e.g. Cicero, *Nat. D.* 1.16, along with Tsouni (2019). On the alleged agreement between Plato and Aristotle in the Platonic tradition, see Karamanolis (2006).

from the *First Alcibiades* we just considered. Proclus notes the objection that the presence of agreement in a community does not prove that its members possess knowledge. After all, the Christians agree amongst themselves in denying the existence of the Greek gods (*in Alc.* 264.3–6). Proclus points to the Christians' internal agreement to highlight their collective divergence from what he sees as the truth. Olympiodorus, however, when commenting on the same passage, avoids mentioning the Christians and refers to a much less tricky example: the Democriteans' agreement about the void (*in Alc.* 92.5–7). He chooses to gloss over the disagreement between Christians and the Platonic tradition. This more accepting attitude may be due to Olympiodorus' desire not to cause trouble in the face of Christian pressure on the Platonist school, or to his conviction that the disagreement between Christians and Platonists is only superficial and that the views on which they agree are much more essential.[9] In either case, Olympiodorus presents his own tradition as encompassing and less hostile toward Christianity.

When philosophers do diagnose or introduce a substantial disagreement, they can approach or use it in a range of different ways. In many cases, authors see disagreement as a bad thing. A common way of dealing with it is to attribute opposing views to some kind of deficient source. By doing so, authors can both explain the existence of the disagreement and disqualify their opponents. For instance, disagreements may be thought to result from a cognitive incapacity on the part of readers or hearers: Morlet discusses cases of misunderstanding (*parakouein*), a phenomenon which in *Theaetetus* 195c Socrates associates with a cognitive weakness of humankind in general. At other times, philosophers more specifically attribute the existence of opposing views to a moral failure: ambition or irrationality are frequently invoked in such cases, as shown in the contributions by Morlet, Van den Berg and Tieleman.

Negative uses of disagreement – when a thinker aims to discredit an opponent altogether or attributes his opponent's erroneous beliefs to serious moral shortcomings – may nevertheless have constructive motivations: thinkers wish to defend or even reinforce their own tradition. This approach is exemplified by Firmicus Maternus' criticism of pagan mythology. As Helmut Seng shows, this author's aim is to bolster the Christian tradition, which he has only recently joined. The same approach is also adopted, in a different way, by the Middle Platonists discussed by Franco Ferrari, who construct histories of the Academy to show that they represent Plato's true philosophy and that the Academic Sceptics have broken with this tradition.

But there are other ways of using disagreement to positive effect. Disagreement can serve as supporting evidence for one's own ideas or tradition, in at least five ways. In such instances disagreement may not be actively sought, but can still be employed in a positive way. First, interpretive disagreement can be

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9 As argued by Griffin (2014).

seen as proof of the richness of a source text or of a founding thinker. In such cases disagreement is to be welcomed (especially when it concerns form rather than substance). Furthermore, dissenting views can be presented as likenesses or inferior versions of the truth. We may think here of the way in which Simplicius uses the Stoics' views to bring out the explanatory superiority of the Aristotelian scheme of categories, which Hauer discusses.[10]

A third way in which disagreement can be disarmed and used to bolster a tradition is by distinguishing between different domains of expertise. It is important to realize that ancient philosophers relate to the authorities they refer to in a variety of ways, which certainly do not always entail absolute and blind acceptance. Not agreeing with another philosophical tradition or with the theories of the masters of other schools does not *a priori* exclude the possibility of regarding them as authorities in certain domains, even though authors always tend to perceive the founder of their own tradition as the highest authority.[11] For instance, in order to explain the consistency of a Platonic theory, late-antique Platonists often found it necessary to appeal to other authorities, operating on different levels, to fill what could be perceived as gaps in Platonic thought. Such gaps could be seen to occur in those cases in which Plato had allegedly failed to formulate an idea clearly enough or had expressed a thought only from a single point of view. Platonists saw an opportunity to fill such gaps through a refined exegesis, sometimes by appropriating the theories of other schools. A case in point is the pseudo-Pythagorean text attributed to Timaeus of Locri, *On the Nature of the World and the Soul*.[12] Here we find the idea that the four elementary bodies mentioned in Plato's *Timaeus* primarily derive from form and matter.[13] This view is *de facto* a response to Aristotle's criticism that the *Timaeus'* mathematical approach cannot explain the constitution of physical bodies, since they actually derive from primary qualities (hot and cold, dry and wet) and not from primary triangles.[14] Timaeus Locrus appropriates Aristotle's hylomorphism, which at first glance is incompatible with Plato's views, and integrates it into the Pythagorean-Platonic tradition, which was in turn modified by this appropriation.[15]

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10 See also Chiaradonna (2007) on the subordinated integration ('integrazione subordinata', p. 215) of theories and terminology of other schools within the Platonic tradition. In particular, Chiaradonna discusses the integration of the Stoic notion of 'common conceptions' (κοιναὶ ἔννοιαι) in Alcinous, Galen, Plotinus, and Porphyry. This integration, which is aimed at reinforcing Platonic philosophy as a coherent system, deeply modifies the original meaning of the Stoic concepts and subordinates them to Platonic philosophy.

11 Cf. Opsomer/Ulacco (2016), esp. 25–27; 37–42.

12 This text was probably composed between the 1st century BCE and the 1st century CE. On the nature and general aims of the pseudo-Pythagorean corpus and its reception by late-antique Platonic commentators, see Ulacco (2020).

13 Timaeus Locrus, *de univ. nat.* 215.13–15 Thesleff.

14 See, for instance, Aristotle, *DC* 3.8, 306a20–26.

15 Cf. Ulacco (2016).

Timaeus Locrus' text is also a good example of the fourth way of using dis-agreement in support of one's own tradition, i.e. by appealing to a 'grand tradition' that encompasses both one's primary authority and a secondary authority.[16] In the sixth century, we find Simplicius dealing with Aristotle's criticism of Plato by invoking this text. Simplicius regards it as authentic, i.e. as a Pythagorean source that inspired Plato as well as Aristotle. This premise allows Simplicius to maintain that Plato himself, like Aristotle, was committed to a hylomorphic explanation of elemental bodies, even if he did not state this explicitly.[17] Simplicius thus invokes a grand Pythagorean tradition to demonstrate the substantial agreement between Plato and Aristotle. We find similar strategies at work in early Christian texts that see Greek wisdom and Christian revelation as deriving from the same source. Clement of Alexandria's use of Platonic allusions, examined by Joosse, is a prominent example. Galen of Pergamum's work also makes ample use of this strategy, as Tieleman shows: he constructs a cross-disciplinary tradition of medicine and philosophy that predates division into schools and finds its origin in Plato and Hippocrates.

As a fifth positive use of disagreement one may mention later thinkers who use critical remarks against what they regard as authoritative texts as weapons to attack alternative interpretations of these texts, justifying their own interpretive tradition in the process. Simplicius' appeal to Timaeus Locrus can once more serve as an illustration. In responding to Aristotle's criticism of Plato, Simplicius not only argues for their substantial agreement but changes the intention of Aristotle's critical remarks, arguing that they target only the apparent meaning of the text, and thus refute inadequate readings of the *Timaeus*.[18] We find the same mechanism in the work of Simplicius' contemporary, Asclepius of Tralles. Michalewski's contribution to this volume shows how Asclepius succeeds in ap-propriating Aristotle as an authority for his version of Platonism by reinterpreting his statements in textually ingenious ways.[19] In doing so, he constructs a more precise profile of his own tradition by redirecting Aristotle's critiques to superficial readers of Plato.

In addition to approaches to disagreement that use it as evidence of the strength of one's own tradition, positive use of disagreement is made when thinkers reject their opponents' views but, – perhaps precisely for this purpose – adopt their terminology. One instance of this sort is Boethus' inclusion of Academic distinctions in his account of the categories, discussed by Chiaradonna. Another instance comes to the fore in Van den Berg's analysis. When Philoponus

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16 See also Boys-Stones (2001).

17 Simplicius, *In DC*, 563.26–564.10.

18 Simplicius, *In DC*, 640.27–32.

19 For a discussion of the difference between the 'appropriation' of Aristotle's theories, which involves a selective reading and engagement with his texts and an actual 'integration', possible only after the commentary activity of Alexander of Aphrodisias in 2nd century CE and involving a deeper engagement with his works and arguments, see Falcon (2016b), 1–9.

charges Proclus with perverting the clear meaning of Plato's *Timaeus*, he is making the same accusation that pagan Neoplatonists regularly directed at Christians, namely: that moral depravity leads them to distort the text – violent interpretation, as Van den Berg calls it.

In parallel to the uses outlined above, we can also distinguish an important positive effect of disagreement, which need not result from conscious use: the emergence of not merely verbal but conceptual common ground across traditions. Conceptual common ground can result from the most intense polemics. A clear case in point is the charge of *parakoê* leveled at the Christians by Celsus and at Celsus by Origen, and which also features in further debates on and across both sides. Thus, the acknowledgment of partial truths can also involve an appropriation of the conceptual apparatus in which these are couched.

This subdivision of types and uses of disagreement can help to clarify the ways in which dealing with disagreement contributes to the formation of traditions. Here, we submit, fine-grained analyses are required, as it is impossible to identify general laws or make general claims that would accurately reflect such processes. For instance, both tolerant and intolerant attitudes toward disagreement can help construct traditions with strong identities, in different ways. A tolerant attitude can help build a tradition that sees itself as open to a variety of perspectives on the truth. The strength of the tradition may be bolstered by the inclusion of authorities from many different quarters. An intolerant attitude toward disagreement, expressed through frequent polemic, can give a tradition a clear and distinct identity. In order really to understand what makes particular traditions strong, we need to consider what concepts thinkers adopt or develop, in what ways, against what opponents, and in view of what interpretive constraints. There is no substitute here for detailed textual analyses.

Overview of the book

In his discussion of Andronicus of Rhodes and Boethus of Sidon, Riccardo CHIARADONNA argues that we should understand their view of the tradition in which they stand against the background of first-century BCE philosophy rather than that of the later Aristotelian tradition. Like contemporaries of theirs such as Antiochus of Ascalon and Eudorus of Alexandria, Andronicus and Boethus saw themselves as continuing the thinking of the 'ancients'. This group includes Plato as well as Aristotle, but also other 4th-century Peripatetics and Academics. Focusing on their interpretation of Aristotle's *Categories*, Chiaradonna argues that Andronicus and Boethus attempted to revive the philosophical project of these 4th-century thinkers, not to offer a faithful interpretation of the corpus of Aristotle. It is therefore unhelpful to describe these authors by using the terms 'orthodox' and 'heterodox', or generally to assess their thought on the basis of the degree to which they agree or disagree with the letter of Aristotle's texts. While this stance toward tradition is common in first-century BCE philosophy, differences between

traditions remain. Just as Eudorus provides metaphysical readings of Aristotle to advance his Platonic-Pythagorean agenda, Andronicus and Boethus use Academic thought, adapted to a non-essentialist Peripatetic program.

Franco FERRARI surveys the major topics of discussion among the so-called Middle Platonists and concludes that no real consensus on any of these emerged. This realization applies to the problem of how to define the relation between the demiurge and the Form of the Good; to the theory of principles; to the problem of the origin of evil; and even to the question of whether Plato considered the cosmos to have originated in time. With respect to this last issue, Ferrari argues that we do not know enough of the developments between Eudorus and Taurus to settle the question: Plutarch's claim that most Platonists rejected the notion of a temporal origin only shows that he regarded this position as dominant and his own view as exceptional.

While all Middle Platonists were concerned with offering a systematic inter-pretation of Plato, the variety of theoretical options available makes it impossible to identify a common dogmatic core in this movement. From our perspective, therefore, it is impossible to speak of orthodox and heterodox positions. Ferrari points out, however, that these thinkers indeed thought in terms of true and deviant traditions. We can see a double motive behind this approach. On the one hand, the Middle Platonists turned to historiography in order to boost their claim to be true Platonists. From a historiographical perspective, it becomes possible to mark out particular thinkers as having broken up the tradition or at least distanced themselves from it. The Academic Sceptics, in particular, were considered to be heterodox (Plutarch is a partial exception here), even if the Middle Platonists did not use this term themselves. On the other hand, thinkers of this period increasingly developed their philosophy in the form of commentaries on Plato. This too encouraged thinking in terms of true and deviant Platonism: since prior Sceptical exegeses constituted an important challenge to any systematic reading of Plato's texts, the Middle Platonists needed to reject them. In fact, Ferrari suggests, their hostility to Academic interpretations may have the best claim to being the factor that unifies the Middle Platonists.

Teun TIELEMAN's contribution focuses on Galen of Pergamum's attitude to the earlier medical and philosophical tradition. Tieleman argues that Galen's synthesis can be characterized as an attempt to overcome the division into schools or sects (*haireseis*) prevalent in both philosophy and medicine. Galen extends his criticism of unnecessary sectarianism to the Christians and Jews, treating them as forming another sect comparable to a Greek philosophical school. According to Tieleman, what is key to Galen's strategy of defining his own position and criticizing what he sees as the sectarian behaviour of others is the conviction that scientific and moral progress consists in further developing the insights of a venerable tradition. Galen projects this tradition into a pre-sectarian past by arguing that it was founded by Hippocrates and Plato and further refined by philosophers from various epochs and schools. Galen's criticism is directed at philosophers and doctors who have turned away from this tradition, driven

by desire for personal glory, and founded schools of their own. He seeks to remedy the situation by developing a method of demonstration modeled upon geometry, i.e. a deductive-axiomatic model of scientific procedure anticipated by Aristotle. Galen himself refuses to adhere to any one school, presenting himself as an independent-minded philosopher-doctor who feels free to select from each school what he believes to be the best theories. Tieleman shows that Galen's taste for controversy and disagreement allows him to harmonize his tradition of choice and to position himself within it.

Interaction across the Christian and Platonist divide is also addressed in Albert Joosse's chapter, which studies Clement of Alexandria's construction of a tradition of Christian philosophy. It zooms in on the Delphic injunction 'know yourself' as common ground across philosophical traditions. Joosse argues that Clement offers a sustained treatment of the Delphic maxim in the first book of his *Stromateis*, where he engages with Plato's and the Platonists' exegesis of it. Joosse argues that the very textual form of Clement's interpretations highlights structural parallels between Scriptural and Platonic phrases and ideas. Clement handles these parallels in such a way as to persuade his readers that the Christian tradition, as he construes it, is superior to the best the Hellenic tradition has to offer.

Sébastien Morlet's contribution is devoted to the accusation of misunderstanding (*parakouein*), employed by polemicists to explain the presence of false doctrines. The focus of his contribution is the polemic between Celsus and Origen, which furnishes most of the occurrences of this meaning of the word in the extant corpus of Greek literature. According to Celsus, the Christians have misunderstood both the myths of the Greeks and their philosophy. In his turn, Origen accuses Celsus and the Greeks in general of having misunderstood the biblical writings and the views of the church.

The polemic between Celsus and Origen turned the charge of *parakoê* into a weapon common to both pagan and Christian writers. The text which lies at the basis of this expression – Morlet shows – also provides an anthropological background for the accusation. In *Theaetetus* 195a, Socrates suggests that humans are cognitively so weak that they are prone to *parakouein* and misconceive most things (*pleista*). The connection between misunderstanding and *pleista* – Morlet suggests – facilitates, via the associations of *plêthos*, the later attribution of *parakoê* to incapacity and irrationality. In many of the passages Morlet discusses, an alleged moral deficiency similar to that examined by Van den Berg is said to cause interpreters to misunderstand their texts.

When it comes to the integration and differentiation of traditions, Morlet observes that a contrary effect underlies the common features of Celsus and Origen's polemic. For Celsus, to diagnose Christian error as a kind of misunderstanding is a way of excluding Christians from his pedigree of truth. For Origen, viewing pagan philosophy as a misunderstanding of biblical truth is a means to including it into his own tradition. The difference arguably results from the different statuses of the two traditions: for Origen, it is worthwhile to appropriate the prestige of

Greek philosophy for the Christian tradition. At the same time, as Morlet also points out in his contribution, a side-effect of Origen's use of the charge of *parakoê* is the exclusion of heretical Christian views from his own tradition. When Origen claims that Celsus' misunderstanding of biblical writings attests to his inability to grasp their spiritual meaning, this meaning also becomes a criterion of what counts as their tradition among those who self-identify as Christians. Moreover, some instances of Celsus' misunderstanding involve taking what Origen considers to be heretical views as representative of Christian thought. In both cases, then, Origen demarcates his Christian tradition internally by means of his polemic with Celsus.

Robbert M. VAN DEN BERG addresses cases in which different traditions appeal to the same authoritative texts but in order to draw very different conclusions. The focus of this contribution is the *Timaeus*, as interpreted by Neoplatonists and Christians. Each of the thinkers Van den Berg discusses – Plotinus, Proclus, and Philoponus – seeks to discredit his opponents' interpretation of key texts by means of a compound charge: these interpretations do violence to the text, or are expressed in an unclear way, because of a moral failure on the interpreters' part. Plotinus accuses the Gnostics of misunderstanding as well as plagiarizing Plato. According to him, they can successfully convey their interpretations only because their use of difficult and unclear jargon makes it hard for audiences to grasp their real meaning. Proclus argues that Christian interpreters of the *Timaeus* are incapable of using the word 'God' correctly, since they lack the virtue required to understand it in the first place. On the other side of the divide, Philoponus maintains that Proclus can deny Plato's clear proposition of a generated cosmos only by forcing an unnatural meaning onto the words 'principle' and 'generated'. Proclus does so, Philoponus claims, through an excessive love of the idea of an eternal cosmos.

The cases Van den Berg discusses clearly bring out the close connection between moral and hermeneutic rectitude which these thinkers assumed. Furthermore, in cases where the pedigree texts appealed to are the same for thinkers belonging to different traditions, the condemnation of readers' ability to interpret such texts becomes an important move in authors' overall strategy to distinguish and justify their own community vis-à-vis competing traditions. This move and the conceptual connection that justifies it establish common ground for the different traditions involved.

Conversion is the key word in Helmut SENG's account of Firmicus Maternus' *De errore profanarum religionum.* Firmicus, himself a recent convert to Christianity, takes pagan philosophical objections to Christian views and ritual and converts them into criticism of pagan myths and practices. He also embeds into his polemic existing, and widely shared, philosophical criticisms of pagan myths. And he converts pagan motifs which earlier Christian authors had used for apologetic purposes into tools for his polemic: rather than acknowledging the wisdom of the barbarians, Firmicus highlights their foolishness in their worship of the elements.

Seng shows that Firmicus is well aware of contemporary ritual practices and philosophical developments, and in some cases uses motifs that recur in later pagan authors. The *De errore* is an important example of the kind of Christian literature that departs from earlier apologetic intentions and advocates an intolerant attitude toward contemporary pagan religions and their practitioners. Firmicus' work attests to the way in which conceptual common ground is not only created by the polemic between traditions, but can also be used creatively by those eager to identify with a particular tradition.

Alexandra MICHALEWSKI shows that Asclepius harmonizes Aristotle and Plato by interpreting the former's comment about the soul being the place of the forms as indicating agreement with the theory of transcendent forms. By means of two other supposed citations from Aristotle, Asclepius reinterprets this comment as signifying that the divine intellect contains within itself the forms *qua* productive of reality. In this way, both Aristotle and Plato turn out to subscribe to the view that the divine intellect is not only the final but also the efficient cause of the cosmos.

A combination of tactics allows Asclepius to accomplish this purpose: he isolates Aristotelian phrases; he presents them in immediate succession, leaving it up to the reader to supply the necessary argumentative connections; he effectively suggests new readings of terms in earlier phrases based on the later phrases he quotes; and he presents as a quotation what is in fact a new formulation of his own.

In the process of demonstrating the harmony between Aristotle and Plato, Asclepius also emphasizes the purity of his own interpretation of Plato. Aristotle's objections against transcendent Forms must be interpreted as criticisms of a superficial interpretation of Plato. The incorporation of Aristotle into his Platonic pedigree therefore enables Asclepius to differentiate his own views from those of others who may call themselves Platonists, but are not true interpreters of Plato's works.

Mareike HAUER asks how and why Simplicius discusses the Stoic conception of quality. It is remarkable that Simplicius refers to Stoic ideas so often and so constructively, given that the Stoics were no longer in active competition with Simplicius' Platonic tradition. While these references likely go back to earlier Platonic commentators, Hauer argues that this assumption in itself is not sufficient to explain why Simplicius chose to include them in the first place.

To understand this inclusion, we ought to realize that Simplicius objected only to certain aspects of the Stoic theory but appreciated others. It is true that Simplicius objects to the corporeality of qualities and the existence of qualifieds without qualities. He agrees with the Stoics, however, that we may speak in terms of qualified things rather than qualities and that qualities have a formative function.

More importantly, by taking the Stoic discussion of quality seriously in this way, Simplicius presents it as a key part of their metaphysical theory and interprets the Stoic categories in general in parallel to the Aristotelian scheme of categories.

Simplicius' reason for rejecting the Stoic view is based on the assumption that the Aristotelian account has greater explanatory value. Simplicius represents the Stoic theory as a strong metaphysical position – Hauer argues – as a means to bring out his own account and his own tradition even more strongly.