

## BOOK REVIEW

*A New Work by Apuleius: The Lost Third Book of the De Platone*. Edited & Translated with an Introduction and Commentary by JUSTIN A. STOVER. Oxford, 2016.

This brief and unassuming volume offers an admirable model for the exercise of textual criticism, translation, and philological commentary. It is a volume that holds potential interest for several audiences of classicist readers: those interested in ancient philosophy; those devoted to the second-century CE Latin prose master Apuleius; and those who might be intrigued by the publication of a “new” text of classical Latin.

Apuleius’ “minor works” have long languished in the shadow of his justly celebrated novel *Metamorphoses*.<sup>1</sup> Stover’s work on what he considers to be the third book of Apuleius’ *De Platone et eius dogmate* brings renewed, mainstream attention to the philosophical writings of an author best known today for his magical tale of Lucius and his asinine transformation.

Stover’s preface contains a valuable account of the more recent discoveries of classical Latin literature, from lost verses of Juvenal to missing notes of Tiberius Claudius Donatus on Virgil’s *Aeneid*. The author thereby situates his contribution to the rediscovery of hitherto “lost” literature in the context of more than a century of invention and analysis. He proceeds to his subject: a summary of some 5,000 words of fourteen of Plato’s works that was discovered in the mid-twentieth century in a thirteenth-century Vatican manuscript. For Stover, the fundamental problem to address was whether or not the work was an adaptation of a lost Greek original (as per the theory of its discoverer). His conclusion: it was in actuality a work derived from direct study of Plato’s Greek—nothing less, in fact, than the “missing” Book III of Apuleius’ *De Platone*, a work that Stover at least provisionally would label the *Compendiosa expositio*. The “newly discovered” Latin work is almost entirely concerned with treating various works of Plato, sometimes in quite brief compass. The only portion of the text that does not offer such an epitomized

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<sup>1</sup> There is a modern Teubner edition by Claudio Moreschini that contains all of the *philosophica*, including the works generally agreed to be spurious (*Apuleius De Philosophia Libri*, Stuttgart and Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1991). A forthcoming Loeb Classical Library edition by Christopher Jones contains the *Apologia*, the *Florida*, and the *De Deo Socratis*.

Plato is a fascinating paragraph near the midpoint that offers a threefold division of the Platonic corpus into Socratic dialogues, Pythagorean/Parmenidean dialogues, and the *Laws*—the only extant source, Stover notes, to present such a taxonomy.

Stover's lengthy introduction takes us on a meticulously detailed journey to explain how the author came to his conclusion about Apuleian authorship and the provenance of the work in the Apuleian corpus. Computational and other analyses of word choice, prose rhythm, and stylistic peculiarities are all offered as evidence in support of the editor's thesis. Stover also treats the history of ancient *abbreviatio*nes (e.g. Justin's of Pompeius Trogus), and the particular features of Apuleius' work in the genre. There is also extensive consideration of the similarities between the *Expositio* and the Platonic epitomizing of the medieval scholar Al-Fārābī; an appendix by Coleman Connelly explores the question of possible Middle Platonic sources for both works, and in general offers a more expansive treatment of the comparison of the two Platonic summaries.

The critical text and translation of this new work of Latin literature is accompanied by a detailed commentary. The author makes clear that the translation is offered mostly for the aid of those from the philosophical world who lack Latin; Stover describes it as both "literal" and "inelegant," the latter a perhaps overly harsh description of the translator's work on a text that does not much lend itself to displays of artistry. The commentary is especially valuable for its notes on Latin philosophical vocabulary, and for interesting material on the new text's *hapax legomena* (both absolute and "near"). Stover also provides analysis of the degree of coverage of each Platonic dialogue treated in the compendium; we find that the *Crito*, for example, receives a high amount of coverage (and the *Euthyphro* comparatively less). Throughout, Stover offers expert appraisals of the relative importance of each work in the Middle Platonic canon. The editor describes his commentary as "miscellaneous"; while true enough, the adjective may be a bit too self-deprecatory. This edition may well be a case of where the commentary is more interesting than the text it seeks to explicate, and students from a variety of classical and philosophical specialties can be assured that they will learn much from its pages.

A refreshing aspect of Stover's work is the palpable humility that comes through with each passing page. Stover presents his edition as a beginning of renewed dialogue and investigation of a problem that originated with the aforementioned discovery of the work in question by the historian of philosophy

Raymond Klibansky, who announced his find in 1949. Despite his different conclusions, Stover treats his late predecessor with respect, even veneration. This is a book devoid of polemic and replete with a refreshing spirit of discovery and excitement. It is also the sort of volume that will likely spur further interesting work from students of Middle Platonism in particular; throughout, Stover lays out exactly where in his estimation interested parties will discover fruitful avenues for additional study and consideration.

Individual readers will approach this “new” Latin text with varying degrees of interest. Indeed, Stover’s honest judgment of his subject is that the “lost book” is “a text still redolent of more than a little school-room dust.” As evidence for how Plato was being read and taught in the classrooms of the third century CE, however, it is priceless.

And beyond any consideration of the intrinsic worth of the “new” Apuleius, those who peruse the pages of this *editio princeps* with either casual or more sustained attention will be rewarded with a rich, indeed lavish philological treatment that is at once learned, judicious, and inspiring. Both editor and press are to be commended for a fine addition to the Apuleian and Latin philosophical bibliography, a text and commentary that does more than fair justice to an obscure work that has defied the ravages of time.

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