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ROGER BACON AND THE NEW APULEIUS

This year saw the first publication of the *De Platonis pluribus libris expositio compendiosa*, an acephalous summary of fourteen Platonic dialogues transmitted in one manuscript of Apuleius' philosophical corpus.¹ The editor, Justin Stover, argued that the text was originally the third book of Apuleius' *De Platone et eius dogmate*, whose existence we know of from an explicit in the oldest manuscript of the text. The sole manuscript to transmit the work (beyond a mere fragment) is Vatican City, Reg. lat. 1572, which was written around the middle of the thirteenth century in Northern France, probably for Richard of Fournival.² The sole contemporary testimonium to the work that Stover found was a reference in Albert the Great, Fournival's contemporary, mentioning the existence of a translation by Apuleius of Plato's *Republic*.³ There is, however, another contemporary who had actually read the text and cites it explicitly as the third book of the *De Platone*: the famous English scholar, Roger Bacon.

In his *Opus maius*, completed in 1267, Bacon twice references the 'third book' of Apuleius' *De Platone*:

Opus maius vii.iii.1.2.9-10 (1.53 Massa):

Apuleius etiam, in tercio libro De dogmate Platonis, dicit virtutem esse animi pulcritudinem.

. . . Et Apuleius [ait] virtutem non solum esse pulcritudinem animi, sed sanitatem et vires. . .

¹ Stover 2016.

² It was certainly in Fournival's library: see Rouse 1973: 266 (no. 85 in Fournival's *Biblionomia*).

³ Stover 2016: 7-9.

Apuleius too says in the third book of *On Plato's Teaching* that virtue is the mind's beauty...and Apuleius says that virtue is not only the mind's beauty, but its health and strength as well.

Opus maius vii.iii.1.13. (1.56 Massa): Apuleius etiam in tercio De habitudine Platonis dicit maliciam seu peccatum esse animi feditatem, et non solum hoc, sed infirmitatem et egritudinem.

Apuleius too says in the third book *On Plato's Custom* that evil or sin is the mind's ugliness, and not only this, but weakness and sickness. (translations mine)

These references are closely related to a similar passage in what was probably a slightly earlier work by Bacon, the *De viciis contractis in studio theologie*:

Apuleius eciam in 3-o libro De Dogmate Platonis dicit virtutem esse animi pulchritudinem. Et Apuleius, virtutem non solum esse pulchritudinem animi, set sanitatem et vires. . . Apuleius eciam in 3-o De Habitudine Platonis dicit, 'Maliciam seu peccatum esse animi feditatem'. (pp. 19-20 Steele)

The assumption has long been that these are all garbled references to, or quotations from memory of, *De Platone* I.18.216: *Sed tunc animanti sanitatem adesse, vires, pulchritudinem, cum ratio totam regit . . . Alioquin invehit aegritudinem atque invalentiam et foeditatem.*

While that passage contains the same idea as the one Bacon cites, the wording is different, and the book number would be egregiously wrong. Compare instead a passage from the newly-printed *Expositio*:

2.18-20, from *Rep.* III (p. 98 Stover): *virtutem animi esse sanitatem et pulchritudinem et vires, malitiam autem esse aegritudinem, infirmitatem, foeditatem.*⁴

“virtue of the mind is health and beauty and strength, while wickedness is sickness, weakness, and ugliness” (trans. Stover)

The wording is identical in both cases, and in case there is any doubt, Bacon uses the word *infirmitas* with the *Expositio*, where *De Platone* 1 had used *invalentia*.

This borrowing is less surprising when considered in context. Bacon was active in Paris around the same time as Albert the Great; indeed, it has long been surmised that he might have been an acquaintance of Richard of Fournival himself.⁵ But this claim has rested on Bacon’s indisputable acquaintance with the pseudo-Ovidian *De vetula* (Bacon is the first person to use and cite this work), whose attribution to Fournival has been frequently questioned.⁶ Even beyond the *De vetula*, Bacon’s breadth of reading presupposes access to a substantial library, and some of the items that he knows (like the *Liber Nemroth*) strongly indicate that Bacon had access to Fournival’s books, either before or after they were donated to the Sorbonne in 1260.⁷ Bacon’s use of a text which only Fournival possessed provides then

⁴ Compare also 17.9, from the *Laws* III (p. 114 Stover): *animi denique malitiam morbum esse et aegritudinem*; and 30.6, from the *Sophist* (p. 128 Stover) *malitiam aegritudinem esse*.

⁵ See Hackett 1997: 16.

⁶ The attribution to Fournival rests on the testimony of a fifteenth century Dutch scholar, Arnold Gheyloven; where he derived it from is unknown. See conveniently, Robathan 1957: 202-6, Klopsch 1967: 78-99, and Hexter 2011: 307-8.

⁷ See Livesey and Rouse 1981: 247-8.

another close link between the two scholars, or at least between Bacon's sources and Fournival's books, independent of the *De vetula*.

At the very least, Bacon demonstrates that a discerning reader studying the *Expositio* in a manuscript like Reg. lat. 1572 would come to the conclusion that it was indeed the third book of the *De Platone*. The question remaining is why. In the codex Reginensis, the *Expositio* is introduced without so much as a paraph at the end of the *De mundo* (f. 77r). The *De mundo* in turn had in turn been introduced with *incipit liber tertius* earlier on f. 64r, an incipit that is found in a number of other Apuleius manuscripts. Unfortunately, I have been able to find no citations of the *De mundo* in Bacon's works, although he does cite the *De deo Socratis* (often; e. g. *Opus maius* vii.i.4.5) and the other books of the *De Platone* (*Quaestiones sup. Metaphys.* 2, p. 76 Steele/Delorme citing *De Platone* I.5.190). Hence it is certainly possible that Bacon thought that the *Liber tertius de dogmate Platonis* was the *De mundo* combined with the *Expositio* as we have it in Fournival's manuscript. Another close link to this manuscript is Bacon's titles for the work: *De dogmate Platonis* and *De habitudine Platonis*. Both are attested as titles for Apuleius' *De Platone* in the manuscripts, but Fournival's manuscript contains both, *De dogmate Platonis* in the incipit to the first book (f. 47r) and *De habitudine Platonis* in the explicit of the second (f. 64r).⁸ But the possibility cannot be dismissed out of hand that Bacon was not reading Reg. lat. 1572, but rather its parent or some lost sibling (with similar textual features) with a more explicit title for the *Expositio* which never made it into Fournival's manuscript. Something like this certainly happened in Fournival's Propertius, Leiden, Voss. lat. O.38, which spectacularly mishandles the title and incipit, fathering the collection on *Propertius Aurelius Nauta*. It is worth noting that at least the editions of Bacon provide the correct reading *infirmitatem* in the quotation above from the *Expositio* where Reg. lat. 1572 has the trivial error *infirmitate*.

⁸ The manuscript titles are conveniently available in Klibansky and Regen 1993.

Either way, this citation provides new evidence for the circulation of the *Expositio* as the third book of the *De Platone* and provides new explicit evidence for a connection between Roger Bacon and Richard of Fournival in the 1240s or 50s.

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