A New Testimony on the Platonist Gaius

Michele Trizio

Apart 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.¹ 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.² Galen tells us that he followed the classes of two of Gaius’ pupils in Pergamum and Smyrna respectively.³ As to Proclus, he twice mentions Gaius, among other Platonists, in his commentaries on the Republic and the Timaeus.⁴ 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. 146v mentioning Ἀλβίνου τῶν Γαίου σχολῶν ὑποτυπώσεων πλατωνικῶν δογμάτων. That is to say, Albinus’ edition of Gaius’ scholia on

³ De propriorum animi 41, ed. W. de Boer (CMG V.4.1.1, Leipzig 1937); Libr.propr. 2.1, ed. V. Boudon-Millot (Paris 2007).
⁴ In Ti. I 340.24 Diehl; In R. II 96.11–13 Kroll.

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Plato were probably included in this ms. and only later lost.\textsuperscript{5} Finally, the tenth-eleventh century \textit{Paris. Coisl. 387} (at 154\textsuperscript{v}) and the fifteenth-century \textit{Bodleianus Auct. T.2.11} (at 359\textsuperscript{v}) mention Gaius, among others, as the author of useful commentaries.

This paper argues that a middle Byzantine treatise on \textit{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,\textsuperscript{6} wrote several short treatises on Aristotle’s \textit{De interpretatione} dealing with specific sections or passages of the text;\textsuperscript{7} unlike his master, who paraphrased the entire text of the Aristotelian work in question, Italos’ comments on \textit{De interpretatione} are all short and discuss parts or


\textsuperscript{7} P.-P. Joannou, \textit{Joannes Italos. Quaestiones quodlibetales} (Ettal 1956): e.g. 29–37, q. 28 Eiς τὸ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας ἔκδοσις ἐπίτομος; 40–41, q. 30 Πῶς τὸν Ἀριστοτέλους φήσαντος τὴν τις καὶ τὴν οὖ πᾶς ἐπὶ τῆς ἐνδεχομένης καὶ μόνης ὦλης συναληθεύεται, αὐτίκα καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς ἀναγκαίας ἀληθεύεται φαίνονται: τι γὰρ ζῶον ἄνθρωπος καὶ οὐ πάν ζῶον ἄνθρωπος; 45–47, q. 37 Διατι παθήματα καλεῖ ὁ Ἀριστοτέλης τὰ νόημα τῆς φυσῆς; 55, q. 44 Διατι ἐὰν πᾶς καὶ ἡ σωτικὴ λέγονται ἑναντίας; 55–58, q. 45 Eις τὸ Περὶ ἑρμηνείας; 58–60, q. 46 Πῶς τοὺς λέγοντας ὅτι πῶς ἄν ἑὑρεθεὶ ἀντίφασις ἐπὶ τῆς ἐδονάστου ὦλης, διὰ τὸ δοκεῖν τὴν οὖ πᾶς παρεισφέρειν τὴν τις, οἷον πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὑπέτει, οὐ πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὑπέτει; 61–63, q. 49 Eις 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 Ἑμέτερος 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 οὐδεὶς λέγονται ἐναντίαι· ὁ μὲν οὖν Ἀμμόνιος αἰτίαν ἀποδίδωσι διὰ τὸ μιμεῖσθαι τὰ ἐμμέσα ἐναντία· ὁσπερ γὰρ ἐκεῖνα δύνανται ἀπεῖναι τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, οὕτω καὶ αὕτα συμψεύδονται: ὁ δὲ Πορφύριος διὰ τὸ πλείστον ἄλληλον ἀφε- στηκέναι ταῦτα φησίν ἐναντία· ἢ μὲν γὰρ πᾶς ὑπαρξίν τινα παντελῆ σημαίνει, ἢ δὲ οὐδεὶς παντελῶς ἀνυπαρξίαν· Γάϊος δὲ ὁ φιλόσοφος οὕτως· ὁσπερ τὰ ἐναντία συμψεύδονται, οὕτω καὶ αὕτα, καὶ ὁσπερ ἐκεῖνα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἄδυνατα εἶναι, οὕτω καὶ ταῦτα, Ἰωάννης ὁ φιλόσοφος ὁ Ἰταλός, ὁ Ἑμέτερος 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. 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-

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8 A. Busse, Ammonius, In Aristotelis de interpretatione commentarius (CAG IV.5, Berlin 1897) 92.3–102.18.
situation: “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 Taran, 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.9

9 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’ Paraphrase 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 manusciptorium 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. 17–45v), 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. 50–67v, 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. 53v–54v concerning De Interpretatione 7 and the problem of contraries); Ambr. L.93 sup. (ff. 60v–79v, tenth century, copied in southern Italy and later annotated by Constantinopolitan hands, the scholia relevant to De Interpretatione 7 at ff. 62v–64v). All MSS. have been collated via digital reproduction or microfilm. Scholia ascribed to Olympiodorus have

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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.\(^\text{10}\) 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 -\(\omicron\) 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 \(\iota\lambda\tau\) a very short lambda (which could easily be read as \(\iota\lambda\tau\)), or let us imagine an itacism, a quite common phenomenon, which transformed an eta into an \(\iota\alpha\). 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 \textit{De interpretatione} 7 directly

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.\(^{11}\) Galen also informs us that he commented several times on *De interpretatione*, on Theophrastus’ Περὶ καταφάσεως καὶ ἀποφάσεως, and on Eudemus’ Περὶ λέξεως,\(^{12}\) 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.\(^{13}\) As a matter of fact, it might

\(^{11}\) 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 Minoïdas Mynas on Mt. Athos; ed. K. Kalbfleisch, *Galen’s 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,” *Abh.Münch* 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 Logic,” *Jahrb.klass.Philol.* Suppl. 23 (1897) 679–708, who defended the authenticity of the work and set the foundation for its subsequent acceptance.

\(^{12}\) Galen *Libr.propr.* 14.11, 17.1, 17.2 (Theophrastus commentary), 17.3 (Eudemus commentary).

\(^{13}\) 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 VIIe 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 contradictories. 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 pinax 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.14

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 contradictories.15 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 9.16

14 See the literature cited in n.5 above.


16 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),\textsuperscript{17} or whether he opted for a milder approach to this issue comparable to that of Albinus and the anonymous commentator on \textit{Theaetetus}, who found it natural to trace Aristotle’s categories back to Plato’s \textit{Parmenides}.\textsuperscript{18} 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” (Ὄσπερ ἕκείνα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ὀδύνατα εἶναι, οὔτω καὶ ταύτας).\textsuperscript{19} In other words, Gaius states

\textit{stotelismus} 553–556.

\textsuperscript{17} See Simplic. In Cat. 174.14 ff.

\textsuperscript{18} Albinus \textit{Didaskalikos} 6.10, ed. P. Louis, \textit{Albinos. Epitomē} (Paris 1945) 159.34–35; Anonymer \textit{Kommentar zu Platonis Theaetet} (Papyrus 9782), ed. J. L. Heiberg (Berlin 1905) 68.10–49.

\textsuperscript{19} The vocabulary used by Italos is of a later period, as is confirmed by the word ὀδύναται, 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 \textit{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 ὀδύναται/ὀδύναται 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 \textit{In Aristotelis Analyticorum Priorum librum I} commentarium, ed. M. Wallies (CAG II.1,

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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.\(^2\)

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.\(^3\) 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.\(^4\) Accordingly, for the time being, I suggest that this Byzantine witness should be included among those already known on the

\(^{20}\) See e.g. Moraux, Der Aristotelismus 592–601.

\(^{21}\) These are listed in Hasnaoui, La tradition 151–158.

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.\textsuperscript{23}

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University of Bari  
Piazza Umberto I, 1  
70121 Bari, Italy  
miktrizio@gmail.com

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