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PLATO, *Gorgias* [Latin translation by Leonardus Brunus Aretinus] and PHOCAS, *Ars de nomine et verbo*

In Latin, manuscript on paper
[Northern Italy, (Venice ?), c.1475-80].

107 folios, on paper (watermark close to *Mosin* [1983], nos. 191-209: all of Venetian origin, circa 1475-1480), collation (i¹⁰, ii⁸ (10-2) [lacking 2 first folios of quire], iii¹⁰, iv¹⁰, v¹⁰, vi¹⁰, vii¹⁰, viii¹¹ (12-1) [lacking last folio of quire, no text lost, folio undoubtedly blank], ix¹⁰, x¹⁰, xi⁸), catchwords, ruled in lead, prickings still visible, quires reinforced with strips of vellum, written in brown ink in a very regular and clear humanistic cursive script on up to 21 long lines (justification: 140 x 85 mm), heading in capital letters, some capitals touched in light red ink (mostly first initials of characters of platonic dialogue), 3-line high opening initial in pale red ink with marginal red ink penwork (fol. 1), 3-line high initial painted in bright red (fol. 80). Unbound exemplar, original leather thongs still apparent (some staining to paper, but legible copy nonetheless). Dimensions 210 x 140 mm.

Unusual and interesting association of two texts--the first philosophical, the second grammatical--, associated by the humanists for pedagogical purposes, copied in an elegant hand and perhaps just predating their respective first editions. Neither text exists in a modern critical edition.

PROVENANCE

1. Script and watermark confirm an Italian, probably Venetian, origin. Fifteenth-century annotations on the verso of the last leaf suggest that the manuscript was perhaps used in a monastic context and offer a date just slightly before 1475, as follows (fol. 107v): [I] "Ego frater Ambrosius de Cora fateor me recepisse unum ducatum aureum a frater Thoma[s] de Bergamo cujus rei testimonium hunc librum in pignus [?] dedi et hoc manu propria scripsi anno domini [1473] [?] mensis julii"; [2] "Ego frater Thomas de Vaniatus (?) de Pergamo (?) fateor me recepisse de venerabili lectore frater Ambrosio de Cora duos ducatis et [...]." ([I] I, brother Ambrosio de Cora acknowledge having received one gold ducat from brother Thomas de Bergamo in testimony of which I give this book as a guaranty, and I have written this by myself the year of the Lord 1473 in the month of July; [II] I brother Thomas de Vaniatus (?) de Pergamo acknowledge having received from venerable reader brother Ambrosio de Cora two ducats ...). Could this be the same Ambrogio di Casa Massari, called Coriolano, because he was at the Augustinian monastery of Cora near Rome? Ambrogio became the Procuror General and finally the General of the Order before dying in 1485. His monastery was particularly distinguished for its great learning, and he himself wrote an Augustinian Chronicle and had many books printed. Might the description of Ambrosio as "venerable reader" fit

Ambrogio of Coriolano? (cf. <http://web.tiscali.it/ghirardacci1/torelli/1283.htm> for a partial transcription of L. Torelli, *Secoli Agostiani*, 7 vols., Bologna, 1659-1686, vol. 5, pp. 30-31).

TEXT

1.

ff. 1–79, Plato, *Gorgias*; heading: *Platone Gorgias Incipit*; incipit: “Belli et pugne oportere aiunt O Socrates ita participem esse. SO[crates] An quem admodum dici solet post festivitatem venimus...”; explicit: “[...] nam est nullius digna O Callicles. Explicit feliciter” (see Hankins, 1997, citing 44 manuscripts containing Bruni’s Latin translation of the *Gorgias*).

Plato’s *Gorgias* consists of dramatic dialogues concerning rhetoric between Socrates and three individuals: Gorgias, Polus, and Callicles. In the first conversation, Gorgias admits that rhetoric is a set of verbal tricks that are learned and used for advantage but that offer no insight into ultimate truth. In the second conversation, Polus is forced to conclude that rhetoric is not an art but a form of flattery. In the third and final conversation, Callicles and Socrates eventually agree on the meaning of the “good life,” specifically that what matters most is how you are judged as a person when you die. Plato sets up for a definition of the arts that lies behind today’s institutions of higher learning. Medicine and law are arts—forming parts of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences—because they can be learned through training and a system of rules. Whereas rhetoric, cookery, make-up are not, because some people are naturally good at them.

The important Italian humanist, Leonardo Bruni (1370-44) began his translation of the *Gorgias* in 1405 and finished it in 1409. The translation was dedicated to Baldassare Cossa (Anti-Pope John XXIII), and Bruni stressed how the platonic dialogue could be construed as a “confirmation of true faith.” Insisting on the harmony of Plato’s doctrine with Christianity, he thus relied heavily on the content of the third conversation. Hankins concludes that, far from seeing the *Gorgias* as a drama about “the irreconcilable claims of rhetoric and philosophy,” Bruni interpreted it as “an entertainment, communicating ‘useful teachings’ in a pleasant and memorable form.” (1990, p. 57). After Bruni’s experience with Plato, it appears that he turned more toward Aristotle for his application of the ancients to Christian humanism and civic society. A thorough study and critical edition of Bruni’s translation of the *Gorgias* does not yet exist, and Steel notes that there is still much work to be done on the Latin translations of Plato (1990, p. 313). The preface and argument to Bruni’s translation of *Gorgias* are published (Bertalot, II, pp. 268–270)

For a list of humanist versions of Plato, see P. O. Kristeller, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, I, Florence, 1937, pp. clvi-clvii; for the versions of Bruni, see Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistica-Philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 161, 163, 172-174 and Garin, I, pp. 339–374. Plato’s *Gorgias* was first printed in Bologna, Printer of Barbatia, ‘Johannina’, c. 1475 (see Hankins, 1990, II, p. 739; Goff, P-775).

f. 79v, blank;

2.

ff. 80-106v, Phocas, *Ars de nomine et verbo*; heading: *Ars Foce grammatici de nomine et verbo*; incipit: “Ars mea multorum es quos secula prisca tulerunt...”; explicit: “[...] ut regnata pugnata percussa futurum ut vigilanda viris esse his similia. Explicit ars Foce grammatici de nomine et verbo feliciter” [Bursill-Hall, *Census...*, p. 299-300; records 52 manuscripts; Jeudy (1974) lists 73 manuscripts; see critical edition: Keil, H., in *Grammatici Latini...*, Leipzig, 1855-1888 (reprint,

1961), vol. V, pp. 411-439. In 1974, Jeudy signaled an upcoming new edition F. Casaceli (Libreria Scientifica Editrice, Naples)].

Phocas was a grammarian active end of fourth, beginning of fifth century. His treatise on nouns and verbs enjoyed immense popularity in the schools throughout the Middle Ages. The oldest remaining manuscript is dated in the eighth century (Paris, BnF, lat. 7530, Monte-Cassino, Beneventan script, c. 779-797), and his work survives well into the fifteenth century (some 41 manuscripts are of Italian fifteenth-century origin). Poggio is credited with the rediscovery of Phocas in 1417 in a manuscript kept in Fulda. The *Ars de nomine et verbo* was first published in 1473 (with the *De aspiratione* attributed to the same author), Milano, Zaroto, 1473, followed by Venice, N. Jenson, 1476 (see Jeudy, 1974, p. 71).

Jeudy has shown that most of the extant manuscripts are working copies, on paper, used by professors, students, philologists, and humanists. The *Ars de nomine et verbo* is most frequently copied with other grammatical treatises, classical or humanistic (e.g., the *Elegantiae* by A. Datus; *De diphthongis* or *Regulae* by Guarino da Verona; *Carmina de arte grammatica* by Laurentius Valla; see Jeudy, p. 71). In none of the extant manuscripts or early printed editions is Phocas transcribed with Plato. This present copy thus constitutes a rarity in that it is associated with a Platonic philosophical dialogue in its Latin humanistic translation used in schools but not per se a grammatical text.

f. 107, blank;

f. 107v, annotations (see above Provenance for transcription).

LITERATURE

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ONLINE RESOURCES

E-text of Plato's Gorgias in English translation

<http://www.gutenberg.net/etext/1672>