18. Chapter and Verse: Abstracts, References, and Quotations

Summary. In the final section of this first Part of Volume II we study the quotations, and quasi-quotations, found in the Placita. Explicit quotation, including a reference or at least a name, is a feature of philosophical writing and discussion. Quotation proves that the writer has taken the trouble to inform himself, or wants to make a serious and professional impression. No doubt the majority of Aëtius’ explicit quotations are inherited from the tradition. Indeed most of his lemmata can be regarded as tantamount to quotations, because of their explicit or implicit verbs of declaration. We have to realize, however, that contents are not only modified (or distorted) because of adaptation or modernization (or error), but may also be ‘misquoted’ on purpose. A quote has to be adapted to the style, purpose, and context of the writer who makes the quotation, and quoting verbatim may be considered inelegant. Aëtius’ usage of various verbs of declaration are studied, including the use of ‘says he’ found in the middle of a text purporting to be quoted. We also study his references to terminological inventions. ‘Misquotations’ found elsewhere are compared with the way the Placita summarizes the main points of Anaxagoras’ treatise. We note that intermediary authorities are not only quoted as sources for a specific tenet, but also as the source of an alternative version of a specific tenet. An interest in alternative versions occasionally makes itself felt. Diels believed that the quotation of Theophrastus as the source for a tenet of Xenophanes in 2.20 proved a Theophrastean treatise to be the ultimate source of the Placita and the related doxographical literature. But in ch. 2.20 Theophrastus is quoted for a version of a tenet that is significantly different from the mainstream varieties of this tenet attributed on several other occasions to Xenophanes elsewhere in the Placita.

In his account of Epicurus’ works Diogenes Laërtius tells us that the number of volumes involved amounted to about three hundred, and that in these ‘not a single quotation from somewhere else has been written out (γέγραπται δὲ μαρτύριον ἐξ ὥστεν ἐν αὐτοῖς οὐδέν); they are Epicurus’ own words.’ Epicurus is contrasted with Chrysippus, who tried to emulate him, ‘and in his hurry repeated himself and just jotted things down, and left things unrevised, and there are so many quotations that they alone fill his books, just as one finds in Zeno and Aristotle’.427

Much the same information is found in Diogenes Laërtius’ introduction to the catalogue of Chrysippus’ works: he is said to repeat himself, to write down whatever occurred to him, to leave things unrevised, and to being so generous in adding quotations (μαρτύρια) that someone reading one of his works, when asked what it was, said ‘Chrysippus’ Medea’. Diogenes then cites Apollodorus, who said Epicurus’ books did not contain quotations (ἄπαρα τι βλαπτα ομικρον) and that ‘if one were to strip Chrysippus’ books of all the extraneous quotations (δο’ ἀλλ’ ομικρον παρατεται), his pages will be left blank’. The term μαρτύριον, translated above as ‘quotation’, means ‘testimony’, ‘evidence’: quotations may serve as testimony in the course of an argument, discussion, or exposition. The verb παρατίθεσαι, ‘to put alongside’, signifies the offering of such evidence in writing.

To the best of our knowledge there is no paper or monograph dealing with Aristotle’s quotations, but one has only to thumb through one of the major treatises to come across quite a few of them, mostly in verse but sometimes in prose. Zeno of Citium quoted Hesiod and other poets in support of his own doctrines. So did Chrysippus, as we saw. Epicurus was an exception. Quotations, references, are de rigueur in philosophical treatises, just as in mythographical and paradoxographical tracts: ‘to be able to cite impressive references (marturia) conferred prestige’.

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429 On what of course were quotations from ‘the poets and all other notable persons’ (the Athenians ‘appealing to Homer as a witness’ (Ὃμηρος μάρτυς ἐγγόμαντο) about Salamis, and the men of Tenedos to Periander in their dispute with the people of Sigeum), see Arist. Rhet. 1.15.1326b28–34. Compare the references to mythical stories for political purposes cited Cameron (2004) 223–227. On proverbs as μαρτύρια see Rhet. ibid., 1.15.1376a2–4, one proverb quoted as an example.

430 Such as there is e.g. for Plutarch, Helmbold & O’Neill (1959), a bare index without discussion. Much material in Bonitz under personal names, e.g. Ὅμηρος, Ὁιόδος, Ἡράκλειτος, Πλάτων, etc.

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432 SVF 1.100 (scholium on Hes. Th. 134, better text in di Gregorio (1975)), SVF 1.103–104, 274–276. Against the popular view that Zeno wrote a Commentary on Hesiod see the convincing argument of Algri (2001).

433 For the mythographical literature see Cameron (2004) 89–123, for the paradoxographers ibid. 88–90, 158–159; for ‘bogus citations’ in this literature ibid., 124–163.

434 Russell (1973) 43. On tags and quotations at second etc. hand see Anderson (1976).