CHAPTER 11

Problemata 15: Its Title and Agenda

Alan C. Bowen

1 The Title of Problemata 15

There is a variety of titles for this book in the surviving manuscripts as well as in our modern editions and translations, a fact which ultimately signals the difficulty of interpreting the problemata within book 15 and discerning the principle of their collocation. This uncertainty is evident even in the earliest manuscript witness (designated Yª), which is found in the codex Parisinus graecus 2036. Nevertheless, I propose that this manuscript also indicates an understanding of book 15 that grasps its coherence in an interesting way.

The Earliest Witness

Parisinus graecus 2036 was written in the 10th century and thus some 200 years before the next surviving copy of the Problemata. It is singularly important not only for its antiquity but also because it is complete, well preserved, and a source consulted by several later readers and annotators.

The original layout of the pages is straightforward: there is the body text and to the left in the margin are given the numbers of the problemata themselves. In another hand, in the far left or far right margins are given the book numbers.1

To punctuate Yª, the copyist uses the following signs:

+ a cross placed at the left margin to mark a major division and the beginning of new text, usually the title of a book, as well as on occasion the end of this text when placed at some distance from it on the same line (see, e.g., f. 93v)

: a dicolon to separate text, occasionally one problema from another (see, e.g., f. 93v) or the title of a book from its first problema (see, e.g., ff. 135v, 139r, 175v)

:– a dicolon with paragraphos (–) to mark the start of a textual unit

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1 Louis (1991–1994, 1: xli) reports only that the book numbers are in the right margin and says nothing of the hand. In my digital image of the codex, however, the ink for the book numbers is quite faded but still appreciably more black than that of the body text and numbers for the problemata, and the letters are not that well formed.
:: a dicolon with coronis (⁻) to mark the end of a textual unit, usually the last problema in a book
• an upper point to conclude an independent textual unit, be it a book title (see, e.g., f. 124r), some text within a problema (where we might use a colon, a period, or a question mark), or a problema (all but the last problema in book 15 conclude with an upper point), as well as to separate items in a list.
. a lower point to conclude a dependent textual unit (where we might use a comma).

One also finds written in another hand (Y₃²) within each problema in the left margin:

⁻ a paragraphos to mark a major transition such as that from the leading question of a problema to a secondary question (see Plate 4).

In addition to these conventions, it is important to notice some features of this copyist’s engagement with his text. First is that he is not a mere copyist but does on occasion intervene in Ya to correct careless mistakes. Next is that he starts the opening text (usually a title) of a new book of problemata on a new line. And last is that he does not always follow this practice in dealing with the problemata within a book. The rule here is to end the sentence of the concluding problema with an upper point (⁻) and then, after a blank space of two to

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2 According to Louis (1986, 199; 1991–1994, i: xlii), this hand dates from the early 16th century: he describes the writing as thick, clumsy, with letters that are more slanted, and in ink that is much faded. So far as I can judge from my digital image of the codex, this hand may also be responsible for the book numbers in the left or right margins beside the book titles: see, e.g., Plate 3.


4 According to Louis (1986, 199 n. 10), there are four instances in which the copyist makes such corrections: his edition (1991–1994), however, shows only three—all in book 10 (891b11, 891b19, and 891b32).