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LA PHILOSOPHIE DES NON-PHILOSOPHES DANS L'EMPIRE ROMAIN DU I^{er} AU III^e SIÈCLE

sous la direction de
**Sophie Aubert-Baillet, Charles Guérin
et Sébastien Morlet**



Nec ignara philosophiae: Imperial Logic and Grammar in the Light of Gellius' *Noctes Atticae**

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Résumé

Les Nuits Attiques ont pour fonction principale de revendiquer le caractère non seulement divertissant et social, mais aussi utilitaire et moral de l'ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, selon le point de vue d'un milieu socio-culturel bien précis. À la différence de la grammaire normative, la logique joue un rôle important dans ce modèle d'honesta eruditio : les formes dialectiques d'argumentation et la logique propositionnelle peuvent se révéler des outils efficaces pour une articulation des problèmes éthiques, mais c'est surtout la définition de termes isolés qui constitue l'aspect le plus fécond de ce savoir. Aulu-Gelle est persuadé que toutes les formes attestées par un auteur littéraire sont légitimes et il est parfaitement conscient du fait que le langage des lettrés n'est pas uniforme. Par conséquent, il s'intéresse moins aux discussions sur la correction morphologique qu'à la précision sémantique. À cette fin, il combine l'étude du vocabulaire latin avec la philosophie du langage pour parvenir à une meilleure compréhension de ce trésor linguistique national, ainsi que de l'histoire et de l'héritage de celui-ci.

Abstract

Gellius' Noctes Atticae reveal not only the entertaining and social character of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, but also its moral function, and, more generally, its usefulness to a specific socio-cultural group. Unlike purely normative grammar, logic has a part in this model of honesta eruditio. The dialectical forms of argumentation and the study of propositional logic can be useful tools for the articulation of ethical problems, but the most important aspect is the definition of isolated terms. Gellius is persuaded that all the forms attested by a literary authority are legitimate and is perfectly aware that learned usage is not uniform. Thus he is not particularly concerned by the discussions of morphological correctness, but rather is interested in semantic precision. To this end, he combines the study of the Latin vocabulary with the philosophy of language, in order to achieve a better understanding of that national treasure, as well as its long history and its heritage.

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INTRODUCTION: THE CULTURAL CONTEXT

At the beginning of the imperial age, probably starting from the work of Persius' teacher Palaemon, scholastic grammar took the shape of a systematic form of teaching, based on a variety of formal norms aimed at imposing analogical paradigms on the Latin language. Its principal fields, reflected by the structure of the standard tripartite manuals (*artes*), were: (1) spelling and pronunciation, (2) parts of speech, and (3) linguistic virtues and faults. The fossilisation of this normative method soon became stigmatised by those like Quintilian who preferred an undogmatic attitude, for which *grammaticae loqui* and *Latine loqui* did not necessarily overlap (*Inst.*, XII, 6, 3-27). From this perspective, "speaking good Latin" could essentially mean conforming to learned usage. Grammar, for its part, like music, "should not be ignorant of philosophy (*nec ignara philosophiae*), both because of the numerous passages in practically every poem that depend on intricate points of natural science," and because of so many poets who "expounded philosophical doctrines (*praecepta sapientiae*) in verse," relying on ethics (*Inst.*, I, 4, 4, trans. Russell).

Conversely, some authors of the imperial period, such as Epictetus, Plutarch, and Seneca, complained that school was also responsible for a major change in philosophy, which had lost its ethical commitment to become a pure form of erudition. Seneca coined an aphorism to criticise the intellectual paralysis that made people exercise their wits on Ciceronian and Vergilian passages instead of developing their souls with real study of authentic ethical problems: *quae philosophia fuit facta philologia est* "the study of wisdom has become the study of words" (*Ep.*, 108, 23, trans. Gummere).¹

The Antonine period does not seem to have changed this situation, and works like the *Noctes Atticae* can be seen as voices from a universe supposed to be an alternative to school. Out of the 383 chapters still preserved, about a hundred are devoted to history and anecdotes, about sixty concern philosophical arguments, and about thirty treat scientific or pseudo-scientific questions. The remaining half (190) are entirely dedicated to linguistic and literary topics. The anonymous grammarians who take part in the several *mises en scène* where Gellius himself appears as "participant observer" are always discredited. Their specialisation in the scholastic *ars grammatica* reveals a limited intelligence and a specific intention to get money and fame as unique authorities in critical reading to the detriment of a larger public of amateurs like Gellius.² Very rare exceptions suggest the grounds on which grammar should, ideally, be rebuilt. The most explicit example is given by Domitius Insanus, a *magister* otherwise unknown, who criticised the philosopher Favorinus for his lack of interest in the

1. See Barnes 1997, p. 45 f., for whom, nevertheless, "At most, we may speak of a change of emphasis, of a growing interest in exegetical matters, or of an increased tendency to give philosophizing a textual basis. [...] Given the state of our evidence, it would be rash to insist that they [i.e. such changes] mark and characterize the imperial period." (p. 52). Yet, philosophical works were read in rhetorical schools and Plato was seen as a stylistic model (*ibid.*, p. 36, n. 57).
2. On Gellius and the grammarians see Kaster 1988, pp. 57-60; Gamberale 1995, pp. 257-260; Holford-Strevens 2003, pp. 149-152; Vardi 2001; on the *ars grammatica* in the *Noctes Atticae*: Cavazza 1986.

ethical function of the words that formed his, like the grammarian's, object of study (Favorinus had asked a question on the correspondence between *δημηγορία* and *contio*): "there is absolutely no hope left of anything good, when even you distinguished philosophers care for nothing save words and the authority for words (*nihil iam aliud quam uerba auctoritatesque uerborum cordi habetis*)" (XVIII, 7, 3; henceforth, trans. Rolfe, sometimes modif.). Grammar, on the contrary, established a link between the technical analysis of the language and wider behavioural norms: "I, a grammarian, am inquiring into the conduct of life and manners (*ego enim grammaticus uitae iam atque morum disciplinas quaero*), while you philosophers are nothing but *mortuaria* [codd.: *mortualia* Scriuerius, pler. edd.] 'winding sheets', as Marcus Cato (fr. 223 Sblendorio Cugusi) says: for you collect little glosses (*glossaria*) and word-lists (*lexidia*),³ filthy, foolish, trifling things, like the dirges of female hired mourners" (§ 4).⁴ This time, Favorinus (*test.* 45 Barigazzi = F 159 Amato) did not tear his interlocutor to pieces, as he was generally wont to do, but considered Domitius' lively answer as worthy of Antisthenes and Diogenes. These Cynic philosophers, whom Favorinus knew well and quoted favourably in his works,⁵ were indeed known not only for a form of *παρρησία* which could develop into aggressiveness, but also for some statements that were similar to the grammarian's.

Apart from Quintilian's directives and Domitius' paradoxes, the ethical character of grammar was an important aspect of a sometimes parallel, sometimes convergent process, whereby textual extracts were collected for their moral value and literary passages studied by means of philosophical tools. Many authors were particularly suitable for this double procedure, and the methods of textual criticism often allowed people to select exemplary or gnomic quotations.⁶ Thus, in his *Vergilius orator an poeta*, Florus praised the grammarian, *praecipientem bonos mores et sacrarum studia litterarum* (*Verg.*, 3, 8).⁷

Another chapter from the *Noctes Atticae* proves for its part that philosophy was perceived as separated from reality and withdrawn into itself. In this text, two Roman poets (not philosophers!) of the 2nd century BC express a negative evaluation of a learning confined to abstract discussions. Afranius (*CRF*³ 298 f. = 302 f. Daviault) "said that Wisdom was the daughter of Experience and Memory (*eam [sc. sapientiam] filiam esse Vsus et Memoriae dixit*). For in that way he shows that one who wishes to be wise in human affairs does not need books alone or instruction in rhetoric and logic (*non libris solis neque disciplinis rhetoricis dialecticisque opus esse*), but ought also to occupy and train himself in becoming intimately acquainted with and testing real life, and in firmly fixing in his memory all such acts and events" (XIII, 8, 1 f.). For his

3. The hapax legomenon *lexidia* has been introduced in Greek by Epictetus; Gellius' chapter probably echoes *Diss.*, III, 5 where Socrates is said to have taken over those who looked for *λεξείδια* and *θεωρημάτια* to Protagoras and Hippias, as he would have taken over someone looking for fresh vegetables to the market gardeners (§ 17).

4. See Gamberale 1995; Holford-Strevens 2003, pp. 150-152.

5. See Holford-Strevens 1997, p. 207: "A useful stick with which to beat their contemporary successors"; Idem 2003, p. 112.

6. See Morgan 1998, p. 151.

7. See Dahlmann 1968, p. 476 f. (= Idem 1970, p. 256 f.).

part, Pacuvius (TRF³ 348 = 4 Schierl) criticised those who hid their spiritual inertia and internal corruption under the mask of philosophy (§ 4 f.).⁸

Thus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* reveal not only the entertaining and social character of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία, but also its moral function, and, more generally, its usefulness to a specific socio-cultural group, that of the learned, rich, not necessarily noble but certainly a little snobbish Romans, whose identity and ethics lay in belonging to this very same group.⁹ As the preface of the *Noctes Atticae* shows, choosing the genre of the miscellany – collections of small texts, extracts, fragments of information, anecdotes and maxims, which could be thematically, alphabetically or chronologically organised, or left without any order¹⁰ – could point to an education different from that of the professional teachers.¹¹ Instead of cumulating a mass of data, priority was given to the promotion of a culture that could really become a specific way of life, characterised by τὸ πρέπον. Interestingly enough, in his general preface, Gellius considers that many *ingenuae artes* have a part in this model of *honesta eruditio*: “now, just because there will be found in these notes some few topics that are knotty and troublesome, either from grammar or logic or even from geometry, and because there will also be some little material of a somewhat recondite character about augural or pontifical law, one ought not therefore to avoid such topics as useless to know or difficult to comprehend” (praef., 13).

1. THE LAW OF DIALECTIC

One may ask why, besides grammar and geometry (the elementary forms of knowledge), and law (the traditional component of Roman culture), Gellius puts logic in his programme.¹² He could perfectly have shared Seneca's criticism against logical studies, that they are pure sophisms if they are seen as an end in themselves, without any application to ethics:¹³ “I hold the same opinion about these tricky word-plays (*de istis captionibus*); for by what other name can one call such sophistries (*sophismata*)? Not to know them does not harm, and mastering them does no good” (*Ep.*, 45, 8, trans. Gummere).

8. See Cavazza (Aulus Gellius [1985-1999]), vol. VII, pp. 117-124, who rightly remarks on the parallel between XIII, 8, 5 and IX, 2, 1; Holford-Strevens 2003, p. 216. On Gellius' philosophical chapters see Goulet 1989; Holford-Strevens 2003, pp. 260-289.
9. See Morgan 2004 with a more persuasive approach than Cova 2008, p. 38: “Tale cultura [...] appartiene alla categoria delle *remissiones*, sia pure intelligenti ed elevate. In questa prospettiva si può leggere non filosoficamente l'antologia stoica delle *Notti* come un documento culturale.”
10. See Vardi 2004.
11. See Morgan 2007, p. 331 f.
12. By *dialectica* Gellius specifically designates logic and dialectic, not philosophy in general. On this topic in *Noctes Atticae* see Garcea 2000.
13. See Cancik 1967, pp. 39-42; Barnes 1997, p. 12. At *Ep.*, 111, 1, Seneca remarks that Cicero has filled a lexical gap, translating Greek σοφισμα with *cauillatio* (but Cicero *De orat.*, II, 218 uses this word as “Launigkeit”, see Leeman-Pinkster-Rabbie 1989, p. 215), to which one could also add the pejorative *quaestiuncula* (§ 2). On this passage see Barnes 1997, p. 14: “Seneca [...] is not urging us to abstain from logic *tout court*: he is urging us to abjure a petty interest in piffling puzzles.” On Ciceronian models for Seneca's philosophical terminology see Setaioli 1988, p. 36, n. 110.

A good starting point is Gellius' chapter XVI, 2. It deals with the *lex disciplinae dialecticae*¹⁴ that enjoins one always to answer the questions of an elenchus (*disputatio*)¹⁵ with either “yes” or “no”. The disadvantages of this method come into light when one needs to answer something else. Here is an example of this “deceptive kind of catch-question” (*falsa [...] species istius captionis*): “I ask you to tell me whether you have given up committing adultery or not: whichever way you answer [...] you will be caught in the catch-question (*haerebis in captione*),” since both an affirmative and a negative answer presuppose an admission of adultery (XVI, 2, 4-7).¹⁶

2. FALLACIOUS ARGUMENTS

Gellius gives examples of all the argumentative forms that the Stoics classified according to their truth-value. This is an important sign of his interest in this part of logic. Even if they are intentionally presented in an unsystematic and non-linear order, all the relevant passages from the *Noctes Atticae* can be included in the following Stoic taxonomy:¹⁷

Λόγοι		
περαντικοί	ἀπέραντοι	ἄποροι
T/F	F	~(T/F) ¹⁸

The conclusive (περαντικοί) arguments correspond to a pre-established pattern of correct reasoning, or can be brought back to it through supplementary rules (θέματα); they are true or false when their premisses are false. In accordance with his criticism of dialectic's law, Gellius is mainly interested in the two other types of arguments.¹⁹

2.1. Inconclusive Arguments

Because they do not fit in with valid patterns of reasoning, the ἀπέραντοι λόγοι are always false. Among the different types of inconclusive arguments, which can have as many flaws,²⁰ those ἀπέραντοι παρὰ ἔλλειψιν include all cases which seem to have the necessary premisses for the conclusion but, in fact, entail an omission.

14. Epictetus, *Diss.*, I, 26, 1 seems to have introduced the use of νόμος as “law of logic” (see Barnes 1997, p. 90, n. 264), but first attestation is not necessarily first use.
15. Gellius' technical use of *disputetur [...] disputandi morem atque rationem [...] in plerisque disputationibus* (XVI, 2, 1-3) corresponds to Greek διαλογίζεσθαι: see Cicero, *De orat.*, II, 157 f. (with Leeman-Pinkster-Rabbie 1989, pp. 96-98); *Orat.*, 113-116.
16. Barnes 1997, p. 96, n. 285 signals Epictetus, *Diss.*, I, 7, 24 f., where a similar trick is detected in hypothetical reasoning.
17. See Diogenes Laertius, VII, 77-82 (*SVF*, II, 238, 274 = *FDS* 1036); Sextus Empiricus, *P.*, II, 137-139 (*FDS* 1058, 1064); *M.*, VIII, 411 (*SVF*, II, 239 = *FDS* 1065); Ebbesen 1981, pp. 25-29.
18. In ancient logic “true” and “false” may also denote “valid” and “invalid” arguments.
19. Gellius is also aware of post-Aristotelian thought on the categorical syllogism: see *XV*, 26; Cavarzere 1987.
20. See Sextus Empiricus *P.*, II, 146-150 (*FDS* 1111); *M.*, VIII, 429-434 (*SVF*, II, 240 = *FDS* 1110).

Gellius often observes the absence of a *tertium* in the premisses of a propositional syllogism. Thus the disjunction, which constitutes the major premiss of a syllogism (“the commands of a father are either honourable or base”), does not require that only one of the alternatives should be true (exclusive disjunction); it also admits a μέσος or ἀδιάφορον “indifferent” element (inclusive disjunction: see below note 38) because human actions can be honourable or base, or also neither honourable nor base, i.e. they take a positive or negative value only when they are accomplished. “Hence the premiss [...] is incomplete (*non [...] integra*), and it cannot be considered ‘a sound and regular disjunctive proposition’ (*neque ὑγιές et νόμιμον διεξυγγμένον*). For that disjunctive premiss lacks the third member (*deest enim diiunctioni isti tertium*)” (II, 7, 21 f. = FDS 975).

More ironically, Gellius quotes the answer that Bias of Priene gave to a man who asked him if he should marry or live as a bachelor his whole life. In order to suggest the second option, the Greek sage formulated a disjunctive syllogism, with a major premiss (“a man can marry either a beautiful or an ugly woman”) and a split minor premiss: the chosen woman could be beautiful, and thus κοινή “in common,” shared with other men, or ugly, and thus ποινή “a punishment” for her husband. Neither solution being satisfying, the conclusion was that one should avoid marriage (§ 1 f.). Nevertheless, as Favorinus (*test.* 34 Barigazzi = T 28 Amato) remarked, “there is a third possibility, also, lying between those two opposites” (§ 10: *est autem [...] tertium quoque inter duo ista, quae diiunguntur*), i.e. an intermediate type of woman, neither beautiful nor ugly, that Ennius called *stata* “in balance” (*scaen.* 294 Vahlen² = fr. 118 Jocelyn = F 101 Manuwald). This proves that Bias’ syllogism is not valid (V, 11, 8-11 = FDS 974).

Thinking that these kinds of syllogisms are pointless and idle sophisms (VII, 13, 7: *captiones [...] futiles atque inanes*) would, however, be an error. The Platonic philosopher Taurus (fr. 8 Lakmann) reminded his guests that these are concise formulae from which one can then develop a truly philosophical discussion. So those who ask themselves if it is appropriate to call someone who has just passed away or who is living his or her last instants “dying” should remember that Plato himself (*Parm.*, 155e-157b) considered this question in relation to the notion of instant at the limit of being (VII, 13, 7-10).²¹

2.2. Intractable Arguments

The last category is that of arguments that have no way out (ἄποροι), probably distinct from the conclusive and inconclusive ones, neither true nor false. Following them always amounts to falling into a contradiction. The list of the intractable arguments is inherited from the Megarian school, if one believes Diogenes Laertius II, 108 (Diodorus, *test.* 50 Döring), who considers Eubulides of Miletus as the inventor of the following sophisms: *The Liar* (ψευδόμενος), *The Man in Disguise* (διαλανθάνων), *Electra* (Ἡλέκτρα), *The Veiled Figure* (ἐγκεκαλυμμένος), *The Sorites* (σωρίτης), *The Horned One* (κερατίνης), *The Bald Head* (φαλακρός).²²

21. See Lakmann 1995, pp. 82-94. On Taurus’ attitude, and a parallel in Seneca, see Barnes 1997, p. 18, n. 18.

22. See Ebbesen 1981, pp. 42-51; Garcea 2003. Gellius also knows the use of ἄπορον / *inexplicable* in legal debates (see V, 10, 15; IX, 15, 6; XIV, 2, 3; XX, 1,16), where a judgement seems impossible, just as in certain logical procedures (XVI, 2, 3: “A discussion will become

2.2.1. A discussion between a Peripatetic philosopher and a Stoic, in which Favorinus (*test.* 44 Barigazzi = T 36 Amato) plays the role of judge, presupposes the pattern of the Sorites, questioning the existence of sharp, non-arbitrary boundaries. The Stoic thinks that virtue and happiness are identical one with the other, but the Peripatetic considers this opinion as much paradoxical as thinking that a single congius of wine is equivalent to an amphora (strictly speaking, if a single congius is lacking, there is no more an amphora, but adding it restores the amphora). In his reply, Favorinus observes: “This clever turn (*argutiola*) which you have used about the congius of wine is indeed set forth in the books; but, as you know, it ought to be regarded rather as a neat catch (*captio [...] lepida*) than as an honest or plausible argument” (XVIII, 1, 12). In fact, unlike a subunit of capacity, virtue cannot be seen as an addition or a supplement, because it is alone, by itself, the equivalent of happiness (§ 13 f.).²³

Chrysippus suggested a solution to this sophism: being silent (*quiescere* = ἡσυχάζειν) before the questions of the dialectician attain an ambiguous order of magnitude.²⁴ Gellius mentioned this proposal, together with the Master argument conceived by Diodorus, when he spoke of a young philosopher who claimed to be the most competent in the world in the field of logic: “As he spoke, he rattled off unfamiliar terms, the catchwords of syllogisms and dialectical tricks (*syllogismorum captionumque dialecticarum laqueis*), declaring that no one but he could unravel the *master* (κυριεύοντας), the *resting* (ἡσυχάζοντας), and the *sorites* (σωρείτας) arguments, and other riddles of the kind (*aliosque id genus griphos*)” (I, 2, 4).

By way of response, Herodes Atticus, who attended the conversation, brought out the text of Epictetus, *Diss.*, II, 19 “To those who take up the teachings of the philosophers only to talk about them”. The beginning of this *Discourse* (§§ 1-10), which seems to have inspired this chapter, gives the portrait of a young man boasting of the dialectical qualities he has acquired at school; the following section, which emphasises the priority of the personal application of ethics, is directly quoted by Gellius (§§ 12-17).²⁵

endless and intractable [*indefinitus namque inexplicabilisque sermo*], unless it is confined to simple questions and answers”).

23. As Holford-Strevens (*per litteras*) remarks, Favorinus’ answer “would not convince the Peripatetic; the point is rather that in order to refute an opponent one must accept his terms of debate at least for the sake of argument.” Gellius, XVIII, 1, 15 *tamquam apud arbitrum Favorinum* echoes Cicero’s *Tusc.*, V, 119 f., where Carneades, *tamquam honorarius arbiter*, plays the same role as Favorinus within the same type of discussion, that he considers as purely nominalistic. It is thus unlikely that Favorinus expresses here his own view, this Stoic point of view being rather more appropriate to Gellius: see Holford-Strevens 1997, p. 206 f.; Idem 2003, pp. 67 and 112.
24. It was certainly possible to answer “yes” to “is 1 small?”, “is 2 small” but, coming to 3, one had to stop: see Cicero, *Luc.*, 92 f. (*SVF*, II, 277 = *FDS* 1243).
25. For Cavazza (Aulus Gellius [1985-1999]), vol. I, p. 100, n. 10; p. 357, nn. 8 and 13, Epictetus is quoted from I, 2, 8 up to § 28, § 29 being alluded to at I, 2, 7; for his part Holford-Strevens (*per litteras*) takes “the quotation to end with the pointed question τί Στωικὸν ἔλεγες σεαυτὸν (§ 19), recognized even by the coxcomb to have been directed *ab Herode in eum ipsum* (§ 15); Gellius knows full well that Epictetus, abandoning his figment, continued in the plural (τηρεῖτε οὕτως ἑαυτούς ~ *in quosdam alios*), but Herodes, had he quoted more, would have blunted his attack.” According to Barnes 1997, p. 56 f., Epictetus’ attacks against logic “touch not the subject but its foolish or foppish practitioners.”

2.2.2. Reporting the enigmas that he heard at Athens during a dinner for the Saturnals, Gellius lists some *quaestiones* on literature (§ 6: “an obscure saying of some early poet”), ancient history, philosophy (“the correction of some tenet of philosophy which was commonly misinterpreted, the solution of some sophistic catch [*captionis sophisticae solutio*]”), and, broadly speaking, linguistics (“the investigation of a rare and unusual word, or of an obscure use the tenses of a verb of plain meaning”). Among the *captiones* or *sophismata*,²⁶ he quotes three paradoxes, *The Horned One*, *The No Man*, and *The Liar* (XVIII, 2, 9 f. = FDS 1209).

Gellius had already presented, with more details, *The Horned One* at XVI, 2: “If I should ask any one of them ‘Do you, or do you not, have what you have not lost? I demand the answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’,’ whichever way he replies briefly, he will be caught (*utrumcumque breuiter responderit, capietur*). For if he says that he does not have what he has not lost, the conclusion will be drawn that he has no eyes, since he has not lost them; but if he says that he has it, it will be concluded that he has horns, because he has not lost them” (XVI, 2, 9 f.). Gellius acknowledges: “It will be more cautious and more correct to reply as follows: ‘I have whatever I had, if I have not lost it’. But an answer of that kind is not made in accordance with the rule which we have mentioned; for more is answered than was asked” (§ 11).²⁷ A similar conclusion is found in Menedemus’ answer (*SSR*, I, fr. III F 18) to Alexinus (*SSR*, I, fr. II C 6): “It would be absurd for me to conform to your rules when I can stop you on the threshold” (Diogenes Laertius II, 135).

The Nobody is mentioned again at XVIII, 13, a new chapter on the games that the young Roman intellectuals made at Athens during the Saturnalia: “The catch-questions (*captiones*) were somewhat as follows, although they cannot be expressed very elegantly in Latin, or even without clumsiness: ‘What snow is, that hail is not; but snow is white, therefore hail is not white’. A somewhat similar one is this: ‘What man is, that a horse is not; man is an animal, therefore a horse is not an animal’” (§ 5). On this occasion, Gellius quoted the answer by Antisthenes’ disciple Diogenes of Sinope (*SSR*, II, fr. V B 480 = FDS 1251) to a Platonic dialectician who asked him: “You are not what I am, are you?” After Diogenes assented to it, and his interlocutor added “But I am a man,” Diogenes assented to this statement too, so that the dialectician could conclude: “Then you are not a man”. But “Diogenes retorted: “That is a lie, but if you want it to be true, begin your proposition with me”” (§ 8). Unlike Aristotle and his commentators,²⁸ Gellius avoids theoretical questions, such as the difference

26. This passage shows that the technical term *σόφισμα* (see Diogenes Laertius, VII, 34 and Sextus Empiricus, *P.*, II, 229 = FDS 1200) was translated in Latin either by *captio* (§ 9, on the activity of *capere per dolum*, especially by words see *ThLL*, III, 364, 42-76), or by the loanword *sophisma* (§ 10). Gellius’ *griphos* (I, 2, 4) stems from the Peripatetic tradition, known in Rome through rhetoric: see schol. Aristides, *Contra Platonem pro Quatuoruiris*, 148, 3 (3, p. 508 f. Dindorf); the taxonomy by the Peripatetic Clearchus of Soloi *ap.* Athenaeus, II, p. 142b-144e Kaibel. For *aenigma* or *griphus* as a kind of *allegoria* see the chapter *de tropis* of Sacerdos’ *ars grammatica* (*GL*, VI, p. 462, 19 f.).

27. See Bobzien 2012 for a thorough analysis.

28. See Aristote, *cat.* 3^b10; Simplicius, *CAG*, VIII, p. 105, 7-20 (*SVF*, II, 278 = FDS 1247); Philoponus, *CAG*, XIII, 1, p. 72, 4, app. crit. (add. ex. codex Marcianus 217 = FDS 1248); Ebbesen 1981, pp. 203-205.

between individual and general terms or between substrate and predicate; instead, he prefers to show the flaw of reciprocity.²⁹

3. PROPOSITIONS

Even if they were frequently assimilated to trivialities for evenings with friends, the dialectical forms of argumentation interest Gellius for a specific reason: far from being purely theoretical forms of speculation, they became useful tools³⁰ for the articulation of ethical problems, as the examples given in the *Noctes Atticae* show. They also appeared in legal issues.³¹ Nevertheless, the emphasis Gellius puts on the limits of these procedures shows that, to his purposes, other aspects of logic turn out to be more fertile.

On the propositional level, where the Stoics innovated the most, Gellius admits that studying logic is exhausting but soon rewarding, on the condition that this knowledge is only used as a tool: “If you do not set bounds to it, there will be great danger lest, as many others have done, you should reach a second childhood amid those mazes and meanders of logic, as if among the rocks of the Sirens (*in illis dialecticae gyris atque meandris tamquam apud Sirenios scopulos*)” (XVI, 8, 15-17). This image goes back to Epictetus,³² in a passage where, speaking about logic in the same terms as about rhetoric, he recommends avoiding the temptations that are implicit in these subjects, without rejecting them. One needs to study them at the right time, with the right purposes and the appropriate mental conditions: “Men act like a traveller on the way to his own country who stops at an excellent inn, and, since the inn pleases him, stays there. [...] Some persons are captivated by all these things and stay where they are; one is captivated by style, another by syllogisms, another by arguments with equivocal premisses, another by some other ‘inn’ of that sort, and staying there they moulder away as though they were among the Sirens (ὡς παρὰ ταῖς Σειρήσιν)” (*Diss.*, II, 23, 36-41).

Aelius Stilo first made an attempt at translating Greek propositional logic into Latin. Gellius tried to read his *Commentarius de proloquiis* (*GRF test.* 19 = fr. 1 Garbarino), which he found in Vespasian’s temple of Peace, but he did not understand anything in it: “Aelius seems to have made that book rather as a reminder for his own use than for the purpose of teaching others” (XVI, 8, 3). Obligated to return to his Greek sources, Gellius quotes the Greek definition of an ἀξιωμα “proposition,” without being able

29. An argument that is susceptible of conversion and, therefore, of rebuttal is a border-case between logic and rhetoric: thus Bias’ syllogism “does not seem to be in the least convertible (ἀντιστρέφον)” (V, 11, 4); Euathlus calls Protagoras’ λόγοι ἀντιστρέφοντες an *anceps captio* (V, 10, 11); the reasoning that Pliny the Elder quoted from a debate “is not without the flaw which the Greeks call convertible proposition (ἀντιστρέφον)” (IX, 16, 7). See Calboli Montefusco 2010.

30. This attitude, which is found under different forms in Alexander of Aphrodisias, Galen and Seneca, is called “logical utilitarianism” by Barnes 1997, pp. 20-23.

31. See e.g. Africanus, *Dig.*, XXXV, 2, 88 = fr. 52, I, col. 14 f. Lenel on the *lex Falcidia* and *The Liar*; Ulpianus, *Dig.*, L, 16, 177 = fr. 2948, II, col. 1186 Lenel on the topic *de adpromissoribus* and the Sorites.

32. See Barnes 1997, pp. 36-37. Quintilian, *Inst.*, I, 7, 35 *non obstant hae disciplinae per illas euntibus, sed circa illas haerentibus* has the same utilitarian conception of logic.

to translate its technical vocabulary: λεκτὸν ἀυτοτελὲς ἀπόφαντον ὅσον ἐφ' αὐτῷ “an absolute and self-evident sentence” (§ 4).³³ To this, he adds the Latin parallel found in book XXIV of Varro’s *De lingua Latina* (GRF 22 = fr. 29 Goetz-Schoell): *proloquium est sententia, in qua nihil desideratur* “a proposition is a sentence in which nothing is lacking”.³⁴ Then Gellius himself gives an interesting paraphrase of this concise definition, where the bivalence principle is explicitly mentioned: *quicquid ita dicitur plena atque perfecta uerborum sententia, ut id necesse sit aut uerum aut falsum esse, id a dialecticis ἀξιῶμα appellatum est* “Whatever is said in a full and complete sentence, in such a way that it is necessarily true or false, is called by the logicians ‘proposition’” (§ 8).

After some examples of ἀξιῶματα ἀπλᾶ – *Hannibal Poenus fuit, Scipio Numantium deleuit*,³⁵ *Milo caedis damnatus est* – Gellius examines the ἀξιῶματα οὐχ ἀπλᾶ, made by two or more simple propositions ($p, q...$) and a connector (σ). Both simple and complex propositions can fall within the scope of negation (\sim), that the Stoics applied to propositional units or to their components (πτῶσις and κατηγορημα), as shown below:³⁶

Negation			
simple propositions		complex propositions	
external	internal	external	internal
\sim (subject + predicate)	$(\sim$ subject) + predicate	$\sim (p \sigma q)$	$(\sim p) \sigma q$
	subject + $(\sim$ predicate)		$p \sigma (\sim q)$

Gellius’ example, *neque bonum est uoluptas neque malum* “pleasure is neither a good nor an evil” (§ 7)³⁷ represents the external negation of a disjunction $\sim (p \vee q)$,³⁸ whose simple propositions are *bonum est uoluptas* and *malum est uoluptas*. The presence of this complex proposition with the joint negations *neque [...] neque*, after three parallel examples of simple propositions, can be explained by the fact that it represents a famous ethical definition of ἀδιάφορον, which also appears in the quotation of Epictetus *Diss.*, II, 19, 13 at I, 2, 9 (ἀδιάφορα δὲ τὰ μεταξὺ τούτων [sc. ἀγαθὰ καὶ κακὰ] :

33. I prefer these less precise but understandable translations to the technical calques “sayable” (λεκτόν) and “assertible” (ἀξιῶμα).
34. Varro fr. 36 Wilmanns = GRF 22, pp. 194-196 = 29 Goetz-Schoell: all these editors attribute this passage to Varro’s *De lingua Latina*, book XXIV. If so, Gellius could have found a reference to Stilo’s *commentarius de proloquiis* in this work, where, allegedly, book XXII was devoted to propositions in general, book XXIII to the simple ones, and book XXIV to the complex ones. Starting from a parallel between Gellius XVI, 8, 8 and [Apuleius] *int.* p. 190.1-8 Moreschini, Barwick 1957, pp. 23-25 rather thinks that the common source of these texts is the Stoic Sergius Plautus (on whom see Barnes 1997, p. 4, n. 14), but the technical term *effatum* (see Cicero, *Luc.*, 95), used by Sergius Plautus, is not found in Gellius: cf. Holford-Strevens 2003, p. 280, n. 86.
35. On this example see also Cicero, *Fat.*, 27; Bobzien 1998, p. 69 f.
36. On this topic see Cavini 1985, pp. 47-84.
37. On these examples see Atherton 1993, p. 386: “Gellius provides indirect evidence that the Stoics did deal with propositions formed with the copula [...] even in elementary handbooks.”
38. According to De Morgan’s law, the negation of a disjunction between two propositions is equivalent to a conjunction with the negation of each proposition: $\sim (p \vee q) \equiv \sim p \wedge \sim q$.

see above, § II, 2, 1); in the chapter where the problem of always obeying paternal commands is treated (II, 7, 18: *haec [...] per sese ipsa neque honesta sunt neque turpia*); and, most importantly, in the discussion of the philosophical opinions *de genere ac natura uoluptatis* at IX, 5. There, Zeno's point of view is given in these terms: "Zeno thought that pleasure was indifferent, that is neutral, neither good nor evil (*indifferens, id est neutrum, neque bonum neque malum*), that, namely, which he himself called by the Greek term ἀδιάφορον" (IX, 5, 6 = SVF, I, 195).

Then Gellius treats the ἀξίωμα διεζευγμένον, a type of complex proposition that, as we have seen above, § 2.1, he uses elsewhere in his *Noctes*, when he analyses problematic argumentative structures. The example of *uoluptas* occurs again in relation to the disjunction with three terms that must be reciprocally contradictory, like their contraries: "There is also another form, which the Greeks call διεζευγμένον ἀξίωμα 'disjunctive proposition', and we call *disiunctum*. For example: 'Pleasure is either good or evil, or it is neither good nor evil' (*aut malum est uoluptas aut bonum aut neque bonum neque malum est*). Now, all members of a disjunction ought to be incompatible with each other (*pugnancia*), and their opposites (*opposita*), which the Greeks call ἀντικείμενα, ought also to be antithetical (*inter se aduersa*). Of all members of a disjunction, one ought to be true and the rest false" (XVI, 8, 12 f.). The contradictory opposites (*pugnancia*) that form this proposition cannot both be true. If a negation is put before the ἀξίωμα διεζευγμένον, it preserves the truth-value of the components, because it has the connector, not the single units, in its scope.³⁹

The same theory of negated contraries is found at VII, 1, where Gellius cites Chrysippus' reply (SVF, II, 1169 = FDS 946) to those who deny the existence of providence because of the evils in the world (§ 1). Quoting Plato, *Phaed.*, 60b-c in his Περὶ προνοίας book IV, the philosopher explains that the existence of the negative term implies that of the positive, and *vice versa*: "Since good is the opposite (*contraria*, another translation of ἀντικείμενα) of evil, it necessarily follows that both must exist in antithesis to each other (*opposita intere sese*), supported as it were by mutual adverse forces; since as a matter of fact no opposite is conceivable without something to oppose it" (§ 3). This is for example the case of the virtues *iustitia*, *fortitudo*, *continentia* and *prudentia* in relation to the flaws *in-iustitia*, *i-gnauia*, *in-temperantia*, *in-prudentia* (§ 4).

In conclusion, the study of propositional logic turns out to be similar to that of argumentation: it is applied to ethics, and is also present in legal texts,⁴⁰ but, again, Gellius observes that this part of logic is not very useful. The propositions that he quotes in his examples show that the most important aspect is the definition of isolated terms (as in the case of *uoluptas*), and this is the process that perfectly fits his cultural needs.

39. This interpretation is confirmed by the correspondence between *pugnancia* and μαχόμενα, *opposita* and ἀντικείμενα, technical terms designating, respectively, constituents that cannot coexist and propositions that differ by the presence of an external negation. See e.g. Sextus Empiricus, *M.*, VIII, 89 (SVF, II, 214 = FDS 925); Cavini 1985, pp. 57-67. Gellius also mentions the ἀξίωμα παραδιεζευγμένον (XVI, 8, 14), which in his view seems to embrace all forms of inclusive, logically invalid disjunction: see Garcea 2000, p. 150 f.

40. See e.g. Proculus, *Dig.*, I, 16, 124 = fr. 8, II, col. 161 Lenel on disjunction.

4. THE PROBLEM OF DEFINITION

Gellius explicitly recommends the interconnection between logic and grammar at the infra-propositional or lexical level, where a new foundation of the knowledge becomes possible *via* the exact preservation of the inherited Latin vocabulary. A purely technical approach, based only on the morphology of the linguistic sign, is inadequate to identify a univocal, unambiguous term. Thus it is especially in the field of the lexical definition that the competences of the grammarian and the philosopher must intersect.

In the general index at the beginning of the *Noctes Atticae*, the *lemma* of chapter IV, 1⁴¹ includes an important reference to the specific flavour of the dialogue, where Favorinus (*test.* 33 Barigazzi = T 27 Amato) plays the main role: “A discourse of the philosopher Favorinus carried on in the Socratic manner (*in Socraticum modum*) with an over-boastful grammarian”. Gellius’ story begins with a grammarian praising himself of his vast competences in Latin morphology. He explains that the *ueteres* used the word *penus* as a neuter or a feminine, and that they declined it either *penus peni* or *penus penoris* (§ 1 f.). Favorinus, for his part, asks what difference it makes what for he uses provided⁴² he does not do so too barbarously (§ 5 *non nimis barbaramente*). More importantly, one should know “what *penus* is, and how far that word may be employed” (§ 6 *quid sit penus et qua fini id uocabulum dicatur*), in order to assign this name to everyday referents with the necessary competence.

The polemic between the two interlocutors goes on when the grammarian answers with a list of things that *penus* can designate: wine, wheat, oil, lentils, beans, etc. Then Favorinus adds other plants that one cannot call *penus* without hesitation: millet, panic-grass, acorn, barley (§ 7 f.). Like the Platonic Socrates, who got similar answers from his interlocutors,⁴³ Favorinus observes that the purpose of this research should be the definition of a linguistic sign, rather than a list of referents that it designates. In other terms, one should not accomplish a univocal denotative act (§ 12 *ostendere*), but find the conventional rules of a term’s usage, since this term can occur in different contexts for a virtually indefinite number of referents. The essential definition, which is different from an ostensive or a purely lexical one, is made by a *διάίρεσις* going from the genre of *penus* to the distinctive characteristics (*differentiae*) that distinguish this word from similar kinds (§ 9): “Can you not, instead of telling me some sort (*speciem*) of *penus*, rather define the meaning of the word by stating its genus and adding its distinctive characteristics (*genere proposito et differentiis adpositis*)?”⁴⁴. Since the grammarian openly admits that he does not understand this question, Favorinus agrees to “prechew” (§ 11 *praemandere*)⁴⁴ a matter of common knowledge for him. Thus, to define a human being, one would not designate single individuals but, rather, give the definition of a mortal living being, endowed with reason and knowledge, or of other distinctive characteristics. The grammarian is forced to confess: “I have never learned philosophy, nor desired to learn it (*philosophias [...] ego non didici neque discere*

41. On this chapter see Garcea 1999, pp. 379-382; pp. 390-398.

42. *si modo* (§ 5) C, Holford-Strevens (*per litteras*): *si nemo* RPV, *recc.*, *edd.*

43. See, for example, in Plato, *Tht.*, 146c-147c, Theaetetus’ answer to Socrates’ question τί σοι δοκεῖ εἶναι ἐπιστήμη;

44. On this image see Cicero, *De orat.*, II, 162; Quintilian, *Inst.*, X, 1, 19; Otto 1890, p. 247 f.

adpetiui), and if I do not know whether barley is included under *penus*, or in what words *penus* is defined, I am not on that account ignorant also of other branches of learning" (§ 13).

Unfortunately for him, Favorinus' speech proves the opposite: "To know what *penus* is [...] is not more a part of my philosophy than of your grammar (*non ex nostra magis est philosophia quam ex grammatica tua*)" (§ 15). The choice of *penus*, in fact, is not pure coincidence. When treating the problem of definition, Cicero and Quintilian mentioned the same example,⁴⁵ and, by this indirect allusion, Favorinus can blame the grammarian for his ignorance of the fundamental texts of scholastic rhetoric. More importantly, the grammarian seems to forget a Vergilian passage (*Aen.*, I, 703 f.), where two possible interpretations depend on a definitional, not purely morphological criterion, i.e. the fact that the adjective *longus* is compatible with *penus* or with *ordo*; one can thus read either – *quingenta intus famulae, quibus ordine longam | cura penum struere et flammis adolere penatis* "there are fifty serving-maids within (i.e. in Dido's palace), whose task is to duly arrange the long feast and keep the hearth aglow with fire" or [...] *quibus ordine longo | cura penum struere [...]* "whose task is to arrange the feast in a long succession."⁴⁶

Without necessarily arriving to an aporetic definition like the Platonic Socrates, Favorinus admits, nevertheless, that finding a univocal definition of *penus* is not easy:⁴⁷ even an authority like Q. Mucius Scaevola is not exempt from criticism.⁴⁸ Gellius himself gives other suggestions, showing that there is no definitive solution of the problem.⁴⁹ Be that as it may, the study of language cannot be complete without a philosophical component, going beyond the technicalities of the grammar. For his part, Favorinus acknowledges: "This information [...] although I have devoted myself to philosophy, I yet did not neglect to acquire; since for Roman citizens speaking Latin it is no less disgraceful not to designate a thing by its proper word than it is to call a man out of his own name" (§ 18).

45. See Cicero, *Top.*, 26 f. on the distinction between the definition of a real referent and the definition of mental images; *Part.*, 107 on beginning a definition from the nature of a word, not from that of a text; Quintilian, *Inst.*, VII, 3, 13 on definitions that explain both everyday words, like *penus*, and technical expressions like the form of reparation called *clarigatio* or the partition of an inheritance called *erctum citum*.

46. *longam* Charisius *GL*, I, p. 74.30 = 94.24 f. Barwick, cf. Ausonius 320, 28, p. 17 Peiper *cui non longa penus, huic quoque prompta fames : longo* BmyR ω (periit in GP), Nonius p. 247.38 Mercier = 373 Lindsay; *schol.* Persius 3, 74; Servius and Tiberius Claudius Donatus *ad loc.*

47. Favorinus probably agreed with the image of an aporetic and sceptical Socrates that Arcesilaus had proposed: see Ioppolo 1993, who puts Favorinus in the sceptical Academy rather than in the Pyrrhonic trend. Against the hypothesis of influence from the sceptical antidogmatism of Favorinus in Gellius IV, 1 (see Michel 1993, pp. 41-43), Vardi 2001, p. 45 remarks that "for Pyrrhonian sceptics definitions are neither necessary nor possible (*Sex., P.*, II, 205-12)". Nevertheless, as Beall 2004, p. 212 rightly observes, "While it is true [...] that Gellius would have disagreed with true Pyrrhonians about the status of grammar and the other liberal arts, we nonetheless find indications of a sceptical attitude in his treatment of these subjects, as well."

48. This very learned jurist, *cos.* 95 BC, is the author of *iuris ciuilibus libri XVIII*, that were commented upon until the 2nd century AD, and of a *liber singularis* $\delta\rho\omega\nu$, where Stoic logic was applied to juridical definitions: see Kübler 1933.

49. On the opinions of the Roman jurists about the rights of property and inheritance of the familiar *penus* see Lauria 1974.

The reference to a jurist like Scaevola reveals another important aspect of this cultural framework: ancient lawyers represented a treasure of expressions that Gellius' contemporary grammarians and *iuris periti* did not understand any more.⁵⁰ Hence the necessary mutual exchanges between law, grammar, and philosophy, especially when dealing with the problems of the definition and of the *differentiae uerborum*.⁵¹

Gellius behaves in the same way as Favorinus in other chapters, where he studies the etymology and meaning of words, without necessarily pushing his investigations to a definitive result. So, for example, in the case of *obnoxius*, when he asked a famous grammarian "what was the origin and reason of the word" (VI, 17, 2: *quaeque eius uocabuli origo ac ratio esset*), he concludes that "in the definition which that grammarian gave, he seems in a word of such manifold content to have noted only one of its uses" (§ 13: *qua uero ille grammaticus finitione usus est, ea uidetur in uerbo tam multiplici unam tantummodo usurpationem eius notasse*). In a similar manner, he is not satisfied with the answer that a *litterator* gave him in Brundisium about *bidentes*: "We will see later whether only sheep are called *bidentes*, as you say [...]. But now I asked you whether you know any reason for this name (*ecquam scias esse huiusce uocabuli rationem*)" (XVI, 6, 7 f.).

Gellius is persuaded that all the forms attested by a literary authority are legitimate and is perfectly aware that learned usage is not uniform. Thus he is not particularly concerned by the discussions of morphological correctness, but rather is interested in semantic precision. To this end, he combines the study of the Latin vocabulary with the philosophy of language, in order to achieve a better understanding of that national treasure, as well as its long history and its heritage.

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50. See e.g. XX, 10 on the juridical expression *ex iure manum conserere*, that another famous *grammaticus* does not understand; conversely, XVI, 10 on Gellius' friend, described as *ius ciuile callens*, who does not know the meaning of *proletarius* and protests that he is not a *grammaticus*; XII, 13 on Gellius himself who, as *iudex extra ordinem*, asks an explanation of the technical phrase *intra Kalendas* to Sulpicius Apollinaris rather than to *peritis studiosisque iuris* (§ 2). On this topic see Querzoli 2007 and 2008; more generally Holford-Strevens 2003, pp. 294-301.
51. See Cavazza (Aulus Gellius [1985-1999]), vol. II, p. 145, n. 16 ad IV, 2, 13 on the juridical nature of 11 of the 20 *differentiae* found in Gellius.

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Loin d'être l'apanage d'un cercle fermé de professionnels, la philosophie, à l'époque romaine, irrigue des textes de tous genres (rhétoriques, historiques, poétiques, dramatiques...) sous forme de réminiscences, d'allusions, de citations, de déformations et de réécritures.

C'est la centralité de la philosophie dans la vie lettrée qui est examinée dans ce livre, du début de l'époque impériale à l'aube de l'Antiquité tardive, tant dans le monde romain que dans le monde grec. Quels sont les auteurs qui, sans pour autant se définir comme les disciples d'une école ou comme des professeurs de philosophie, utilisent cette dernière ? Selon quelles modalités, pour quelles raisons, face à quel public le font-ils ? Font-ils usage d'une philosophie approximative en se contentant de recycler de simples topiques, ou développent-ils une réflexion approfondie et originale, témoignant d'une lecture précise des textes philosophiques ? En quoi consiste la philosophie de ces « non-philosophes », et quelle place cette appréhension élargie de la philosophie tient-elle dans la pensée et l'imaginaire à l'époque de l'Empire romain ?

Far from being confined to a closed circle of professionals, philosophy in the Roman age irrigates texts of all kinds (rhetorical, historical, poetical, dramatic), through reminiscences, allusions, quotations, deformations and rewritings.

This book examines the centrality of philosophy in scholarly life, from the beginning of the imperial era to the dawn of Late Antiquity, in the Roman as well as Greek world. Who are the authors who, even though they do not claim to be disciples of a school or teach philosophy themselves, make use of philosophy? In which ways, for which reasons, for which audience do they do so? Do they resort to an approximate philosophy, merely recycling topical patterns, or do they engage in deep and original reflection implying a precise reading of philosophical texts? What does this philosophy of "non-philosophers" consist in? What is the place of this broad approach to philosophy in Roman thought and imagination during the Empire?



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