The Title and Length of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*

Part VII section 1 of

Aristotle’s *Protrepticus*

reconstructed, edited, translated and commented upon, with essays, by

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The title *Protrepticus* occurs on all three of the ancient lists of Aristotle’s writings: the list of titles in Greek by Diogenes Laertius (D); the list of titles in Greek appended to the Vita Hesychii (H); and the list of titles in Arabic in Ptolemy al-Garib (A).

The title Προτρεπτικός α’, meaning “*Protrepticus, one book*” is the same on the two Greek lists; the Arabic list conflates the *Protrepticus* and the *On Philosophy* and erroneously reports the number of books of the latter work.

The Greek lists of Aristotle’s writings are ordered according to an editorial system of dividing his philosophy, on the first level into “universal works”, “intermediate works” and “particular works”; on a second level dividing “universal works” into “treatises” and “notebooks”, and on a third level dividing “treatises” into “dialogues or exoterica” and “works in propria persona”. There are further divisions of the “works in propria persona” (instrumental, practical, productive, and theoretical works), but we need not go into further detail because the *Protrepticus* is included among the “dialogues or exoterica” section on the two ancient Greek lists. Here is a translation and text of the first 24 titles in Diogenes Laertius’ list (5.22) of Aristotle’s works (5.22; the codes in parentheses give equivalences on the other surviving lists).

D1. On Justice, 4 (H1; A4). Περὶ δικαιοσύνης α’ β’ γ’ δ’

D2. On Poets, 3 (H2; A7). Περὶ ποιητῶν α’ β’ γ’

D3. On Philosophy, 3 (H3*; A1b). Περὶ φιλοσοφίας α’ β’ γ’

D4. On the Statesman, 2 (H4*; A-). Περὶ πολιτικοῦ α’ β’

D5. On Rhetoric, or Grylus, 1 (H5*; A3). Περὶ ῥητορικῆς ἤ Γρύλου α’

D6. Nerinthus (H6; A-). Νηρινθοῦς α’

D7. Sophist, 1 (H8; A2). Σοφιστῆς α’

D8. Menexenus, 1 (H10; A-). Μενέξενος α’

D9. Eroticus, 1 (H12; A14). Ἐρωτικός α’

D10. Symposium, 1 (H-; A-). Συμπόσιον α’

D11. On Wealth, 1 (H7; A-). Περὶ πλουτοῦ α’

D12. *Protrepticus, 1 (H14; A1a*). Προτρεπτικός α’

D13. On the Soul, 1 (H13; A-). Περὶ ψυχῆς α’

D14. On Prayer, 1 (H9*; A-). Περὶ εὐχῆς α’

D15. On Noble Birth, 1 (H11; A6). Περὶ εὐγενείας α’

D16. On Pleasure, 1 (H15; A17a). Περὶ ἱδονῆς α’

D17. Alexander, or About Colonies, 1 (H22*; A-). Ἀλέξανδρος ἢ ὑπὲρ ἀποίκων α’

D18. On Kingship, 1 (H16; A8*). Περὶ βασιλείας α’

D19. On Education, 1 (H18*; A5). Περὶ παιδείας α’

D20. On the Good, 3 (H20*; A9*). Περὶ τάγαθου α’ β’ γ’

D21. From the Laws of Plato, 3 (H23*; A18*). Τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων Πλάτωνος α’ β’ γ’

D22. From the Republic, 2 (H-; A16). Τὰ ἐκ τῆς πολιτείας α’ β’

D23. On Economics, 1 (H17; A-). <Περὶ> οἰκονομίας α’

D24. On Friendship, 1 (H24*; A28*). Περὶ φιλίας α’
Here are the first 24 titles on the list appended to the Vita Hesychii.

H1. On justice, 4 (D1; A4). Περί δικαιοσύνης δ’
H2. On poems, 3 (D2; A7). Περί ποιητῶν α’ β’ γ’
H3. On philosophy, 3 (D3*; A1b*). Περί φιλοσοφίας δ’
H4. Statesman, 1 (D4*; A-). Πολιτικὸν α’
H5. On statesman or Grylus, 3 (D5*; A3*?). Περί πολιτικῆς η Γρύλου γ’
H6. Nerinthus, 1 (D6; A-). Νηρίνθους α’
H7. On Wealth, 1 (D11; A-). Περί πλουτοῦ α’
H8. Sophist, 1 (D7; A2). Σοφιστῆς α’
H9. On Prayer, 1 (D14*; A-). Περί εὐξῆς α’
H10. Menexenus, 1 (D8; A-). Μενέξενους α’
H11. On Noble Birth, 1 (D15; A6*). Περί εὐγενείας α’
H12. Eroticus, 1 (D9; A14*). Ἐρωτικὸς α’
H13. On the Soul, 1 (D13; A-). Περί ψυχῆς α’

H14. Protrepticus, 1 (D12; A1a). Προτρεπτικὸς α’
H15. On pleasure, 1 (D16; A17a*). Περί ηδονῆς α’
H16. On Kingship, 1 (D18; A8*). Περί βασιλείας α’
H17. Economics, 1 (D23; A-). Οἰκονομικὸν α’
H18. On Education or Teaching, 1 (D19*; A5*). Περί παιδείας ἢ παιδευτικῶν α’
H19. Of Syllogisms, 1 (D48; A-). Σύλλογισμῶν α’
H20. On the Good, 1 (D20*; A9*). Περὶ τοῦ τάγαθου α’
H21. On principles, or On Nature, 1 (D41*; A-). Περὶ ἀρχῶν ἢ περὶ φύσεως α’
H22. Alexander, or Concerning Colonies, 1 (D17*; A-). Ἀλέξανδρος ἢ ὑπὲρ ἀποικῶν α’
H23. From Plato’s Laws, 3 (D21*; A18*?). Τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων Πλάτωνος α’ β’ γ’
H24. On Friendship, 3 (D24*; A28). Περὶ φιλίας α’

Although these lists frequently disagree as to the title and lengths of different works, Diogenes Laertius’ title 12 is identical to title 14 in the list of Aristotle’s works in the Vita Hesychii (edition in During, Aristotle in the Ancient Biographical Tradition, 83). Thus the earliest and the Greek evidence point to this title of Aristotle’s work:

Protrepticus, 1 book

Προτρεπτικὸς α’

Further evidence, should it be required, is that this is also the exact title that we should expect from the direct references to the work in the commentators: ἐν τῷ Προτρεπτικῷ (Alexander of Aphrodisias in Top. 149.13; Olympiodorus in Alciab. 144.15); also: ἐν τῷ Προτρεπτικῷ ἐπιγεγραμμένῳ (Elias Proleg. 3.18); ἐν τοῖς Προτρεπτικῶν αὐτοῦ συγγράμματι (David Proleg. 9.2). Further, all cognate titles by other writers from the fourth century or earlier have the same title: Προτρεπτικὸς (Antisthenes DL 6.1, Athen. 656f; Aristippus DL 2.85; Demetrios of Phaleron DL 5.81; Chamileon Athen. 184d; Epicurus DL 10.28); cf. [Plato]: Κλειτοφῶν ἢ προτρεπτικὸς (DL 3.60); see Gigon, 283-4. The words τὸν Ἀριστοτέλους Προτρεπτικῶν in the dedication attributed to Teles preserved in Stobaeus (45.22 H) are due to local grammatical context.
The only alternative indication of the title and number of books is in the list of Aristotle’s works in Ptolemy el-Garib, \(^1\) *Catalogue of Aristotle’s Writings*, included in the biography of Aristotle written by Ibn Abi Usaibia (1203-1270) in his *Lives of the Physicians* (*Uyūn ul-Anbā’ fi abaqāt ul-Aibbā*’) (pub. 1245-1246), ed. August Müller (Konisberg, 1884). Here is an English translation, Latin translation (by Mauricio Steinschneider in Rose, Berlin Aristotle volume 5, 1449-1473), [and Arabic text].

Work in which he exhorts to philosophy, 3 books.
In Greek entitled *Protrepticus to Philosophy*.

*liber in quo exhortatus est ad philosophiam, tractatus III*
<et nominatur graece wtulkis fšlitukis>

The reason for the difference in number of books from the other lists probably has to do with a conflation of two titles: *Protrepticus, On Philosophy*. The latter is said to have been in 3 books (cf. title 3 of Diogenes Laertius). Thus a reconstruction has been offered by Moraux (*Listes*, 295) followed by Düring (*Biographical Tradition*, 222), and Gigon (Berlin v. 3, 39):

Προτρεπτικὸς
Περὶ φιλοσοφίας ὑ

Such a reconstruction of Ptolemy’s text that assumes there was confusion in the Arabic translation between the titles of the Προτρεπτικὸς and the Περὶ φιλοσοφίας ὑ (thus leaving the number of books for the *Protrepticus* unspecified but presumably 1). There is no reason to suspect on the basis of the later Arabic list that Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* was a multi-book work. Contextual evidence underscores the point: it is not until the third century that there is any variation in the number of books and hence the syntax of protreptic titles: Προτρεπτικοὶ (Cleanthes DL 7.175; Persaios DL 7.36; Poseidonius DL 7.91 and 129); Προτρεπτικοὶ β̄ (Ariston of Chios DL 7.163); Προτρεπτικοὶ α β̄ γ̄ (Chrysippus SVF 3.69; 139; 753); Περὶ τοῦ προτρεπεσθαι (Chrysippus SVF 3.167; 761).

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\(^1\) The exact identity of Ptolemy, to whom the third list is attributed by its Arab source, has not been definitely established. It is possible that Düring is right in identifying him as “an Alexandrian neoplatonist, influenced by or belonging to Iamblichus’ school (fourth century AD)”. Elias called him “Ptolemy Philodelphus”; cf. Moraux, *Listes*, 289-309.