

Edited by / A cura di
Virginia Mastellari

Fragments in Context – Frammenti e dintorni

Studia Comica

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Fragments in Context – Frammenti e dintorni

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Premessa

Il presente volume raccoglie gli interventi presentati e discussi nell'ambito del convegno "Frammenti e Dintorni / Fragmente im Kontext", che ha avuto luogo presso l'Accademia degli Studi italo-tedeschi di Merano dal 7 al 9 novembre 2019.

Dal secondo Ottocento fino a tempi molto recenti, il dialogo sui frammenti e la produzione di edizioni di testi frammentari hanno rappresentato uno dei campi di interesse primario della filologia classica. Per quanto riguarda i testi drammatici, per limitarsi a un solo esempio, il Novecento è stato segnato da maestosi progetti editoriali, che hanno messo a disposizione eccellenti e rinnovate edizioni, oggi imprescindibile punto di partenza per chi voglia avvicinarsi allo studio del dramma antico. Il riferimento è ovviamente alla raccolta dei *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, in cinque volumi, la cui pubblicazione ha coperto gli anni dal 1971 al 2004, èditi da B. Snell, S. Radt e R. Kannicht per i tipi di Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, e al *corpus* dei *Poetae Comici Graeci*, èditi da R. Kassel e C. Austin presso Walter de Gruyter dal 1983 al 2001, fino a ora in otto volumi. Anche in seguito all'acquisizione di ottime e aggiornate edizioni, ci si è presto resi conto del fondamentale contributo che alcuni testi, seppur frammentari, possono dare alla conoscenza di certi generi letterari e di specifici periodi storici. Per riallacciarmi all'esempio dei testi drammatici, nessuno oggi potrebbe considerare la Commedia greca facendo esclusivo affidamento sulle opere integre di Aristofane e Menandro¹. In aggiunta a ciò, una vasta bibliografia si è andata a costituire negli anni sul concetto di frammento, sulle metodologie di approccio a testi frammentari e sui limiti che il filologo deve porsi nella ricostruzione e nell'esegesi².

Dei vari problemi e sfide che l'approccio ai frammenti pone allo studioso, la novità di questo volume consiste nel concentrare l'attenzione sui 'dintorni' di testi appartenenti a vari generi letterari sopravvissuti al "naufregio dell'antichità"³ solo in forma frammentaria, appunto. Il termine 'dintorni' è declinato, nei contributi degli autori, in molteplici forme.

¹ Per simili considerazioni sulla tragedia cf. ora Finglass–Coo 2020, *Introduction* (p. 3) in *iid.* (eds.), *Female Characters in Fragmentary Greek Tragedy*, Cambridge 2020, pp. 1–16.

² Per un aggiornato *status quaestionis*, rimando ora alla trattazione del tema in Lamari–Montanari–Novokhatko, *Introduction*, in *iid.* (eds.), *Fragmentation in Ancient Greek Drama*, Berlin–Boston 2020, pp. 3–17.

³ Per usare una efficace e fortunata metafora, su cui cf. R. Kassel, *Fragmente und ihre Sammler* (p. 243 n. 2), in H. Hofmann–A. Harder (eds.), *Fragmenta Dramatica*, Göttingen 1991, pp. 243–253.

Nella maggior parte dei casi i ‘dintorni’ sono rappresentati dal contesto della citazione di un testo: in altre parole, il motivo per cui il frammento è citato e la fonte che lo riporta. È infatti estremamente pericoloso maneggiare testi frammentari senza considerare il contesto della loro provenienza o trasmissione⁴. D’altro canto, ciò che noi chiamiamo frammento di testo⁵ è di fatto una citazione testuale incompleta, o perché ambiva, in origine, ad essere completa ma qualche danno materiale l’ha impedito – è il caso tipico, ad esempio, dei papiri – o perché è stata sempre pensata come parziale, incompleta – ed è il caso di citazioni o *excerpta* (anche Montanari in questo volume)⁶. Il lavoro dell’editore nei confronti di testi frammentari non è, quindi, mai meccanico: in questo senso è opportuno valutare sia i casi in cui il contesto offre informazioni utili all’interpretazione, sia quelli in cui la fonte è responsabile di sovrastrutture interpretative che traviano il contesto e il significato originali⁷. La responsabilità dell’editore relativamente al pericolo di tralasciare, o travisare, il contesto di provenienza di un frammento si concretizza nel rischio di alterare la natura del commento, così come l’informazione destinata al fruitore del commento stesso. Se in un commento a un testo integro è il testo stesso ad agire da riscontro alle affermazioni di uno studioso, nel caso di testi frammentari ogni considerazione deve essere posta in un contesto ipotetico⁸ (anche Finglass in questo volume).

⁴ G. Most, *Preface*, in *id.* (ed.), *Collecting Fragments – Fragmente Sammeln*, Göttingen 1997, pp. v-viii.

⁵ In maniera invero impropria, seppur diffusa già a partire dagli Umanisti, chiamiamo oggi ‘frammento’ anche le citazioni di opere perdute testimoniate da autori successivi, le cosiddette ‘citazioni indirette’, che sarebbero più propriamente da identificare come ἐκλογαί o *excerpta*. Il termine *fragmentum*, in greco ἀπόσπασμα, denotava in origine testi ritrovati su supporti materiali (papiro, pietra, metallo, etc.), il cui stato è imputato al danneggiamento del supporto. Per la nomenclatura si veda e.g. M. Sonnino, *Corruzioni antiche e moderne di testi frammentari: Eupoli Maricante fr. 212 K.-A. nel codice Marciano di Esichio* (pp. 107–112), in N. Cannata–M. Signorini (eds.), *Scrivere, leggere, conservare. A colloquio con Armando Petrucci*, Roma 2014, pp. 107–140.

⁶ G. Most, *On Fragments* (p. 10), in W. Tronzo (ed.), *The Fragment: An Incomplete History*, Getty Publications 2009, pp. 9–20 [trad. in tedesco in G. Most, *Sensucht nach dem Unversehrten. Überlegungen zu Fragmenten und deren Sammlern* (p. 30), in P. Kelemen et al. (eds.), *Kulturtechnik Philologie: zur Theorie des Umgangs mit Texten*, Heidelberg 2011, pp. 27–43] e G. Most, *Fragments* (p. 371), in A.T. Grafton–G. Most–S. Settis (eds.), *The Classical Tradition*, Cambridge (MA) 2010, pp. 371–377.

⁷ Per un esempio, relativo a Euripide, si veda M. Sonnino, *Sovrapposizioni interpretative e decontestualizzazione di testi frammentari: Euripide Cresfonte fr. 453 Kann. in Timeo, Polibio, Stobee e Constantino VII Porfirogenito*, in G. Ottone (ed.), *Historia Para Doxan. Documenti greci in frammenti: nuove prospettive esegetiche*, Roma 2017, pp. 37–68.

⁸ S. Stephens, *Commenting on Fragments* (p. 76), in R.K. Gibson–C. Shuttleworth Kraus (eds.), *The Classical commentary: histories, practices, theory*, Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002, pp. 67–88.

I 'dintorni' di un frammento possono inoltre essere costituiti dalla formulazione e dal taglio che la fonte dà alla citazione. Di qui la scelta di includere nel volume casi di studio provenienti da diversi generi letterari (frammenti lirici, drammatici, storici e filosofici), in quanto essi presentano, anche e soprattutto relativamente ai 'dintorni', questioni e problematiche molto differenti tra loro. Infatti, se i frammenti lirici e drammatici sono citati perlopiù *verbatim* e il metro rende più semplice tracciare i confini tra la fonte e il testo del frammento, lo stesso non è sempre possibile per i frammenti storici, i cui confini non sono sempre nitidi (Lupi in questo volume), e neppure per quelli filosofici, riportati spesso tramite riformulazioni della dottrina o dell'insegnamento e, come se non bastasse, da fonti viziate dal voler contestare quanto nel testo è sostenuto (Männlein-Robert in questo volume)⁹. A proposito di questi dintorni, intesi in senso 'fisico' (ciò che nella fonte del frammento viene prima e dopo), l'editore si trova nella posizione di compiere delle scelte nei confronti del materiale da selezionare e stampare, scelte che talvolta possono indirizzare o addirittura stravolgere la lettura del frammento stesso (Finglass in questo volume).

Ma il termine 'dintorni', riportato allo *hic et nunc* del testo o della partitura teatrale cui il frammento originariamente apparteneva, può anche designare contesti socio-culturali (Csapo in questo volume), linguistici (Favi in questo volume), meccanismi drammaturgici (Andrisano in questo volume) e processi di evoluzione di un genere letterario (Konstantakos in questo volume), fino ad arrivare alla ricezione di frammenti antichi in opere di molto successive, laddove il frammento diventa a sua volta 'dintorno' per una nuova composizione (Petrides in questo volume).

Per i loro contributi, gli autori sono stati invitati, da un lato, a esporre i meccanismi che portano alla formazione di frammenti e il ruolo che il contesto o la fonte giocano nella selezione; dall'altro, ad ampliare in questo senso i propri orizzonti interpretativi, non limitandosi allo studio dei testi in sé e per sé, ma cercando di mettere in risalto i vantaggi che un'attenta contestualizzazione può fornire.

Il volume si apre con l'intervento di Patrick J. Finglass, che si concentra sull'importanza dei 'dintorni' dal punto di vista dell'editore di frammenti. Partendo da testi della lirica greca (Stesicoro, Pindaro e Saffo) e mettendo a confronto diverse edizioni critiche e i metodi di approccio ai 'contesti' di vari studiosi, il contributo esamina le questioni pratiche che l'editore deve affrontare – la quantità di contesto che è opportuno fornire nel citare un testo, il ruolo che ha la numerazione dei frammenti e come collocarli nell'edizione, in quale misura è opportuno sanare lacune – e la rilevanza di queste problematiche per i fruitori dell'edizione.

⁹ Most 1997 [n. 3], vii. Sulla sfida di editare frammenti filosofici da un punto di vista diacronico dal passato a oggi, cf. inoltre G. Most, *À la recherche du text perdu: On collecting philosophical fragments*, in W. Burkert et al. (eds.), *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte der Antike / Le raccolte dei frammenti di filosofi antichi*, Göttingen 1998, pp. 1–15.

Franco Montanari sostiene nel suo intervento che i frammenti pervenutici sono in realtà per lo più in origine citazioni, addotte per i più svariati motivi e trasmesse per via indiretta in molte fonti, tra cui la cosiddetta letteratura erudita. Egli fornisce un quadro di questo fenomeno, di enorme portata e complessità, e sottolinea l'importanza dello studio e dell'apprezzamento dei prodotti dell'erudizione antica in se stessi, dei metodi degli antichi esegeti e del contesto culturale in cui essi agivano. Nella parte finale dell'intervento sono esaminati a titolo esemplificativo alcuni frammenti comici (segnatamente di Eupoli e Cratino) provenienti dagli scolî all'*Iliade*.

Il contributo di Renzo Tosi prende in esame alcuni fenomeni caratteristici della tradizione indiretta lessicografica, caratterizzata da estrema fluidità: chi confezionava un'opera di questo tipo non si preoccupava della fedeltà al modello, bensì intendeva creare un nuovo strumento, funzionale al suo centro culturale. Vengono presentati, relativamente alle testimonianze lessicografiche, i diversi livelli della corruzione, la lemmatizzazione, la presenza di *interpretamenta* desunti, in modo letterale o concettuale, dal contesto del *locus classicus*, la non perfetta corrispondenza morfologica tra lemma e *interpretamentum*, la disomogenea qualità dell'esegesi e, infine, i pericoli dovuti alle epitomazioni.

Eric Csapo fornisce una nuova interpretazione dell'ipotesi papiracea agli *Imbrioi* di Menandro, finora letta come testimonianza di un caso di censura: il tiranno Lachares avrebbe bloccato, per ragioni politiche, la messinscena della commedia. Tuttavia, l'analisi del frammento nel contesto del linguaggio degli archivi drammatici, della gestione del *festival* e della storia politica ateniese di fine IV–III sec. a. C., mette in luce che la cancellazione della messinscena, semmai vi sia stata, non ebbe nulla a che vedere con la persecuzione politica o con censura di sorta.

Federico Favi offre una selezione di fenomeni linguistici in Epicarmo che trovano paralleli solo in testi successivi. In passato sono state esposte diverse teorie sull'origine di queste forme: in particolare si è discusso se queste (presunte) anticipazioni della *koiné* fossero innovazioni siciliane, oppure avessero in origine una più vasta diffusione. L'obiettivo del contributo è, tramite una selezione di casi, alcuni dei quali finora trascurati dalla critica, contribuire a una più articolata comprensione del lessico greco e delle teorie antiche sulla lingua.

Ioannis M. Konstantakos si spinge alle origini di un particolare filone della Commedia greca, la cosiddetta *Märchenkomödie*. Il mondo della fantasia e della favola era un'importante risorsa per la Commedia ateniese: motivi e temi tratti dall'immaginario popolare sono sfruttati dalla prima generazione di poeti comici, specialmente Magnete e Chionide, e si ritrovano dopo gli anni '50 del 400, quando alcuni poeti drammatici – in particolare Cratete, Ferecrate e Archippo – mostrano una predilezione per il materiale favolistico e arricchiscono il repertorio precedente con nuovi temi fantastici, come oggetti animati, il motivo del 'Paese di cuccagna' e la costruzione di utopici mondi paralleli.

L'intervento di Angela M. Andrisano analizza un verso corale delle *Rane* (v. 366) e ne fornisce una nuova interpretazione che mette in luce la satira di

Aristofane contro Cinesia, ditirambografo di successo, presentato come diarroico ed empio. Il verso, isolato come ‘frammento’, viene letto non solo nel contesto della messinscena di riferimento, ma anche in quello delle strategie drammatiche di Aristofane. Il comico appare censurare in primo luogo, attraverso una metafora scatologica, le scelte estetiche e lo sperimentalismo di Cinesia; le accuse di empietà contro questo personaggio, derivanti anche da una interpretazione letterale del verso in questione, entrano a far parte di una tradizione aneddotica e non sono altrimenti verificabili.

Il contributo di Antonis K. Petrides offre un esame di tutti i frammenti e le testimonianze della *Leukadia* di Menandro. In tempi successivi, un *Nachleben* per la commedia fu garantito dal fr. 1 Aust., otto dimetri anapestici sulla storia d’amore tra Saffo e Faone, che sembra non fosse parte integrante della trama della *Leukadia*, quanto piuttosto fungesse da ‘specchio’ alla vicenda. Un nuovo capitolo della ricezione della storia di Saffo e Faone – e della *Leukadia* – è stato di recente scritto dal poeta greco-cipriota Kyriakos Charalambides (1940–). Le sue poesie *Saffo a Leucade* e *Saffo (nelle onde di Leucade)* sono analizzate nella seconda parte dell’intervento.

Elisabetta Lupi affronta il ruolo del contesto di citazione dei frammenti storiografici, esemplificato dal dibattito sull’estensione e sul significato del fr. 50 di Timeo di Tauromenio. Il frammento è testimoniato in una lunga sezione dei *Deipnosofisti* di Ateneo sulla *tryphē* dei Sibariti (519b–520c), che Felix Jacoby attribuisce interamente allo storiografo, nonostante il suo nome compaia soltanto nel periodo iniziale. Il contributo mostra le conseguenze che una differente delimitazione del frammento ha sulla nostra interpretazione della storiografia ellenistica e ne propone una nuova lettura in considerazione del contesto citazionale e della tradizione letteraria su Sibari tra V e III secolo a. C.

Infine, Imgard Männlein-Robert presenta un caso di studio esemplare nell’analisi dei ‘dintorni’ travisanti nei frammenti filosofici: la trasmissione dell’opera del neoplatonico Porfirio in quella del vescovo cristiano Eusebio di Cesarea. Il testo del *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* di Porfirio è incorporato nello schema argomentativo del terzo libro della *Praeparatio Evangelica*: la strategia di Eusebio consiste nel citare, manipolandoli, singoli passaggi dell’opera di Porfirio, accusando e confutando il suo avversario con affermazioni proprie, fraintendendolo deliberatamente e ritagliando passi specifici utili al suo scopo argomentativo.

L’organizzazione della conferenza è stata possibile grazie a un premio per giovani ricercatori (“Ausschreibung 2019 zur Karriereförderung von Wissenschaftler*innen”) conferitomi dalla Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, che ha permesso anche la pubblicazione di questo volume. Mia sia concesso di ringraziare in questa sede l’Accademia degli Studi italo-tedeschi di Merano, nelle persone di Ivo di Gennaro e Verena Pohl, che hanno ospitato la conferenza e mi hanno aiutata

nell'organizzazione. Il colloquio e la discussione che ne è seguita non sarebbero stati altrettanto stimolanti e fruttuosi senza il fondamentale contributo dei colleghi friburghesi e membri del progetto "KomFrag" (Kommentierung der Fragmente der griechischen Komödie), che hanno moderato le sessioni e mi hanno supportata in ogni momento dell'organizzazione e dello svolgimento della conferenza. Desidero ringraziare Bernhard Zimmermann, alla guida del progetto e insostituibile sostegno a ogni iniziativa a esso collegata, Andrea Bagordo, Christian Orth, Francesco Paolo Bianchi, cui si aggiunge Massimiliano Ornaghi, presente a sua volta a moderare le sessioni. Posso affermare senza timore di esagerazione che questo gruppo di lavoro costituisce i 'dintorni' migliori che uno studioso possa auspicare.

Freiburg i. Br., agosto 2020
Virginia Mastellari

Irmgard Männlein-Robert

The Old Gods in Fragments or Modes of Deconstruction: Eusebius on Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων

Keywords: Platonism, Early Christian Apologetics, Statues of Gods, Deconstruction, Fragmentation

Greek gods, statues of gods and cult images have always been part of Greek culture and an integral part of the old Greek religion and its cults¹. They were still important for many people of the Greek speaking Roman world of the later Roman Empire in many religious and cultural respects, although the Christian religion was increasing and establishing more and more. In this very period of religious change the Platonist Porphyry composed his Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων (*De statuis*), which was, as far as we can see from the remaining fragments, a complex philosophical interpretation of statues of old pagan gods. To this day there is very little research literature on this text: apart from a very few contributions that are mainly interested in philosophical or editorial details, after the pioneer study by Joseph Bidez in 1913 now the commentary by Mino Gabriele (together with the Italian translation by Franco Maltomini) is the only helpful reading device for the whole text². But studies including interpretation of the contexts in which Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων is quoted, paraphrased or mentioned are, however, still lacking. The observations presented in this paper on the preservation and handling of Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων by one of his worst enemies, the Christian bishop Eusebius, belong to a current project on Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, which in my opinion has to be interpreted in a wider context of contemporary frictions and polemic between Platonists and Early Christian intellectuals in late antiquity³.

1. The Discourse and its Protagonists

Porphyry's treatise Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων is first to be embedded into a contemporary discussion about dignity, role, value and function of images of the old – Hellenic,

¹ For the ancient cults on statues and images of gods see Gladigow 1985–1986 and Scheer 2000, 54–66; Icard-Gianolio 2004a; Icard-Gianolio 2004b.

² Bidez 1913, Appendices pp. 1*–23*; Gabriele–Maltomini 2014. The preserved fragments and testimonies of this text are collected by Smith 1993, 351 F.–360a F. (pp. 407–35), according to which in this paper the text will be cited.

³ For this reason, here I will concentrate on the very aim of this paper and give only necessary references and literature. I hope to publish my more comprehensive study on Porphyry's Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων in 2021.

pagan – gods, which is conducted in confrontation with controversial Christian views: in the last half of the 3rd century AD, in which the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry is a prominent, well-known and well-connected author⁴, contemporary Christian intellectuals, apologists and early church fathers have already established their own literary tradition of rejecting pagan religion and not at least of rejecting pagan cult images and cult statues of the old gods. The Christians of the first centuries break with many old religious traditions of their Greek culture and essentially do *not* worship their God in images or statues, at least in pre-Constantinian times (Christianity is a practically aniconic religion for a long time and well into the 3rd century). They criticize and attack the non-Christian, old and established religious cult for statues of gods as superstition. Therefore, they also firmly reject pagan cult practices such as the care and worship of images of the gods and rituals around them as idolatry. I would like to mention just a few out of many Christian writers who were polemical against pagan images and statues of gods: e. g. Aristides (*Apology*), Athenagoras (*Legatio*), the *Barnabas letter* and the *Diognet letter*, Justinus Martyr, Tatian (*Oratio contra gentiles*), Clement of Alexandria (*Protreptikos*), Origen (*Contra Celsum*), Minucius Felix (*Octavius*)⁵ and Tertullian (*De idolatria*)⁶. These apologetes use on the one hand arguments from the philosophical tradition of the older Hellenic criticism of religion, such as Heraclitus or Xenophanes or Plato⁷, or even younger philosophers such as Plutarch⁸, and accordingly polemicize against material, artificial and anthropomorphic representations of gods. But the early Christian critics do not only refer to the Greek philosophical tradition, on the other hand they also have an ‘own’ literary tradition: this is the Old Testament, where criticism of the cults around images and statues of god (εἰδωλα in a negative sense) of the neighbouring people of Israel is called ‘*idolatria*’ and is formulated from a Jewish perspective, which is to be seen e. g. in the prohibition on images in the *Decalogue* (*Ex. 20,3–5*)⁹. So we may say that the Christian apologetic writers were not only defensive and apolo-

⁴ For Porphyry’s social and philosophical network see Männlein-Robert 2019, 338–47.

⁵ For a detailed interpretation of the *Octavius* see Zambon 2019, 19–39.

⁶ See Funke 1981, 773–75 and Stock 2007; Lanzillotta 2010, 448–63; Männlein-Robert 2017a, 178.

⁷ Cf. Heraclit. fr. 5 (DK 1964, I, p. 151,15–152,2), where he says that gods are not dwelling in statues (this is quoted in Celsus, see Origen. *Cels.* 7,62,9–11 Bader); Xenoph. fr. 14 (DK 1964, I, p. 132,15–17), fr. 15 (DK 1964, I, p. 132,18–133,4), fr. 16 (DK 1964, I, p. 133,5–7), fr. 23 (DK 1964, I, p. 135,2–5), where he claims anthropomorphism of the gods to be wrong and naïve; see also Plat. *Resp.* 377d–83c: Homeric gods do not possess ethic value, they do not perform as models.

⁸ Cf. Plut. *Cor.* 38,1–3; see Hirsch-Luipold 2002, 171.

⁹ See e. g. also *Deut.* 4,28; *Is.* 44,9–20; *Ier.* 10,1–16; *Ps.* 115,4–8 and 135,15–18. See also in Paul. *Act.* 19,21–40.

For more details see Stock 2007, 125–6 and Männlein-Robert (forthcoming), chap. IV.2.

getic, but also offensive, because they already used an established set of arguments against statues of gods.

The Platonist Porphyry, who in addition to his exegetical writings on philosophy of religion also wrote an extensive fundamental critique of Christianity (*Contra Christianos*)¹⁰, thus in the last decades of the third century found himself confronted with the increasingly threatening Christian religion and its polemics against the old gods and their statues. In his treatise *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, this is my thesis, he therefore involves himself (from a Hellenic perspective quite early) into an ongoing contemporary debate on the traditional pagan gods, their images and their statues.

Most fragments of Porphyry's *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* (351 F.–360a F. Smith) are preserved by the Christian Church Father Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (only single other ones by Iohannes Lydus, Stobaeus and Augustine)¹¹. To be exact: nine fragments, a few shorter and a few longer ones, are preserved by Eusebius (fr. 351 F.; 352 F.; 354 F.; 355 F.; 356 F.; 357a F.; 358 F.; 359 F.; 360 F. Smith). It is quite remarkable in my opinion that Porphyry's texts respectively their fragments, like *e.g.* *Contra Christianos*, but also *De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* and his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, are largely preserved by his rivals, by Christian authors, and not at least by the bishop Eusebius. As the other Christian church fathers, *e.g.* Hieronymus, Augustinus or Iohannes Chrysostomus, do with Porphyry's dangerous *Contra Christianos*, Eusebius, as we will see, also quotes and uses many of Porphyry's texts in order to disprove him or to fight against him and his arguments polemically¹². And it is precisely these Christian intellectuals themselves who have passed on parts of his texts and his arguments. For a correct and coherent interpretation of the fragments of Porphyry's writings, but also for a better understanding of Eusebius' own methods of Christian intentions and strategies by using these texts, it may be an important task to include the closer Eusebian contexts of citation of the respective Porphyrean texts into interpretation, as the very contexts of the fragments or testimonies are completely missing in the excellent Porphyry edition by Andrew Smith, and also in the elder collection by Bidez, which is not comprehensive, contexts are given only in a few cases in the apparatus.

For another work of Porphyry, *Contra Christianos*, there are already recent studies by Ariane Magny and Matthias Becker, which include the contexts of fragments into consideration for interpretation¹³. But this is still to be done for the

¹⁰ See note 2 above.

¹¹ Porph. fr. 354a F. Smith = Stob. 1.31,7–10; Porph. fr. 357 F. Smith = Ioh. Lydus *De mens.* 138,18–139,5 and Porph. fr. 360a F. Smith = Stob. 1.25,2; Porph. (?) fr. 358a F. Smith = Aug. *civ.* 7.25,1–12.

¹² On his polemic strategies see more detailed Männlein-Robert (forthcoming).

¹³ The recent studies by Magny 2014 and Becker 2016 are dedicated to this important concern for Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*.

other writings of Porphyry, preserved in fragments and testimonies, and also for his important treatise *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*.

In the case of *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων*, we must include in our interpretation the fact that Eusebius embedded parts of this writing in the argumentative process of his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (Εὐαγγελικὴ προπαρασκευή). This is a complete preserved work of 15 books, dedicated to the bishop of Laodicea in Syria, Theodotus, but for sure composed for a much wider audience as a huge and (quite special) apologetic work¹⁴. Eusebius wrote his extensive *Praeparatio Evangelica* probably after 311 AD, after the time of the Edict of Galerius (311 AD) and the Milan Agreement of Constantine (313 AD); we believe that he was working at between the years 314–324 AD. In this very period, after numerous persecutions of Christians, the as yet unestablished Christian religion for the first time experienced an essential and consequential acceptance¹⁵. But the religious order of Christians was by no means persistent yet. When Eusebius wrote his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, he had recently become bishop of the metropolis of Caesarea in Palestine, where he had a well equipped library and was also busy as teacher in theology. With his *Praeparatio Evangelica* the historian and biblical scholar Eusebius tried to convince educated circles of Christian converts of the intellectual competitiveness of Christian religion and theology and to construct a (new) intellectual identity for Christians¹⁶. He wanted to present arguments why and inasmuch in comparison with the old religions of the Greeks and Egyptians the Christian religion is right and better than the other ones. His pedagogical and above all his literary strategy show an extravagant display of learning in order to prove that Christians (like him) are very well acquainted with the works and arguments of their adversaries. So, according to Eusebius, conversion to Christian religion was to be seen as inspired by real intelligence and careful consideration of the other options¹⁷. His *Praeparatio Evangelica* is an isagogic and apologetic text as it tries to make people who converted to Christian religion familiar with an argumentative intellectual background and to confute non-Christian religions by demonstrating Christian theology, religion and philosophy as the better one. The still quite new Christian religion was not yet established at all, but it was already extensively criticized and polemized by pagan respectively Hellenic intellectuals like Porphyry, e. g. the Platonist Celsus about 100 years earlier, and after Porphyry, by the emperor Julian and the Athenian Neoplatonists¹⁸. Obviously the Platonist Porphyry was considered to be extremely dangerous for Christian intellectuals like Eusebius because of his platonically

¹⁴ For the apologetic tendency see Johnson 2006a, 198–233 and Johnson 2014, 26–31; Zambon 2019, 41–61. The text of the *PE* is quoted in this article after the excellent edition by Mraz 1982.

¹⁵ Rich presentation in Zambon 2019, 389–415.

¹⁶ See also Miles 2015, 78–79.

¹⁷ Johnson 2006b, 67–89.

¹⁸ For Celsus' criticism of the Christians see Andresen 1955; Pichler 1980; Watson 1992.

based religious interests, his deep and profound knowledge of Christian Texts¹⁹ and above all because of his extreme philological and philosophical strength.

Therefore Eusebius was busy in fighting against this very critic Porphyry. His strategy was to accuse and to refute his adversary with his own words and his own texts quoted. The fact that Eusebius quotes and polemically comments from many texts of Porphyry more than 100 times²⁰ in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* makes us aware *how* dangerous the arguments by this prominent Platonist must have been for the Christian audience targeted. Moreover, according to Hieronymus (*De viris ill.* 81) Eusebius is said to have written a work of 25 books titled *Against Porphyry* (not preserved) – and he was not the only one polemizing extensively against this dangerous Platonist: *e. g.* also Methodius from Olympus and Apollinaris from Laodicea wrote a *Contra Porphyrium*²¹. This means, however, that Porphyry's text in its original state must have had a considerable explosive effect on its (Christian) contemporaries, both with regard to the subject (statues of pagan gods), the arguments and figures of thought (his interpretation of the philosophical and theological meaning of these statues in detail) and as well as to the method he chose (allegorism). Porphyry's treatise *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* apparently had such an impact and outreach that the Christian bishop Eusebius felt compelled to refute and to fight against this very text and its author. For this reason we definitely must respect in our analysis the dynamics between the quoted Porphyrean text and the Eusebian context, which must also be included in our interpretative evaluation.

2. Eusebius and Porphyry

Let us take a closer look as to where exactly and how Eusebius deals with Porphyry's text. In the very beginning of *Praeparatio Evangelica* Book 3 Eusebius explains his method: for his refutation (ἔλεγχος) he will use the original wordings and texts of famous philosophers, to show that their *θεωρίαι* were wrong (*PE 3 prooem.* p. 105–06 Mras–Des Places). Then he starts quoting from Plutarch's *Daidala* to demonstrate that the old pagan religion (of the Greeks and even more the Egyptians)

¹⁹ See Becker 2016, 71–76.

²⁰ See Sirinelli–Des Places 1974, 28–31.

²¹ All these texts are not preserved. Methodius of Olympus (311–312 AD) wrote *Adversus Porphyrium* (testified by Hieron. *De viris ill.* 83), still in Porphyry's lifetime; the same did Apollinaris of Laodicea (according to Hieron. *De viris ill.* 104). For some perhaps more polemical text against Porphyry see the fragments by Macarius Magnes, who based his *Apocriticus* on (refutation of) views of an anonymous pagan philosopher, who had in many respects similarities with Porphyry; for the ongoing discussion on the relation between Porphyry's texts and Macarius' polemics against him see Viltanioti 2017 and Volp 2017. For more details and for a list of all Christian authors who quoted from Porphyry's *Contra Christianos* or knew about this text, see Becker 2016, 17–20.

is nothing else than *physiology* in form of myths, mythical figures and religious rituals (*ibid.* 3.1,1–1,7 pp. 106–10 Mras–Des Places). In his opinion the old gods turn finally out to be pure physical phenomena, so he ascribes to Porphyry a Stoic doctrine, because of his use of the explanatory model of *theologia naturalis*. A little later Eusebius makes clear that the old Hellenic and the old Egyptian religion and their gods are to be held as chronical and old “disease” (νόσος), from which Jesus Christ through the εὐαγγελικὴ διδασκαλία is able to relieve (*ibid.* 3.5,1,5 p. 120 Mras–Des Places). Then Eusebius is very vivid in his statements that not “physical elements” from the world perceptible, but the transcendent Demiurge, the creator of the whole universe, is the only one *true* god – and nothing else (*ibid.* 3.6,5–6,6 pp. 121–22 Mras–Des Places). And now he comes closer to Porphyry:

τοσούτων ἡμῖν ἀποδεδειγμένων εἰς ἔλεγχον τῆς ἀσυστάτου θεολογίας τῆς τε λεγομένης μυθικωτέρας καὶ τῆς ὑψηλοτέρας δὴ καὶ φυσικωτέρας, ἣν οἱ παλαιοὶ Ἕλληνες τε καὶ Αἰγύπτιοι σεμνύνοντες ἀπεδείχθησαν, ὥρα καὶ τῶν νέων τῶν δὴ καθ’ ἡμᾶς αὐτοὺς φιλοσοφεῖν ἐπαγγελλομένων ἐπαθρῆσαι τὰ καλλωπίσματα. οἶδε γὰρ τὰ περὶ νοῦ δημιουργοῦ τῶν ὄλων καὶ τὰ περὶ ἀσωμάτων ἰδεῶν νοερῶν τε καὶ λογικῶν δυνάμεων τοῖς ἀμφὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα μακροῖς ποθ’ ὕστερον χρόνοις ἐφευρημένα καὶ λογισμοῖς ὀρθοῖς ἐπινενοημένα συμπλέξει τῇ τῶν παλαιῶν θεολογία πεπειραμένοι μείζονι τύφῳ τὴν περὶ τῶν μύθων ἐπαγγελίαν ἐξῆραν. ἄκουε δ’ οὖν καὶ τῆς τούτων φυσιολογίας, μεθ’ οἷας ἐξενήνεκται τῷ Πορφυρίῳ ἀλαζονείας. (Euseb. PE 3.6,7 p. 122 Mras–Des Places = 351 F. Smith)²²

After we have given so many proofs in confutation of their inconsistent theology, both the more mythical so-called, and that which is forsooth of a higher and more physical kind which the ancient Greeks and Egyptians were shown to magnify, it is time to survey also the refinements of the younger generations who make a profession of philosophy in our own time: for these have endeavoured to combine the doctrines concerning a creative mind of the universe, and those concerning incorporeal ideas and intelligent rational powers – doctrines invented long ages afterwards by Plato, and thought out with accurate reasonings – with the theology of the ancients, exaggerating with yet greater conceit (μείζονι τύφῳ) their promise concerning the legends. Listen then to their physiology also, and observe with what boastfulness it has been published by Porphyry (μεθ’ οἷας ἐξενήνεκται τῷ Πορφυρίῳ ἀλαζονείας). (Transl. Gifford²³)

²² Here and in the following quotes and translations in this article I give Eusebius’ words in *italics*, the quotes from Porphyry in *recte* (as it is presented in the text given by Mras–Des Places).

²³ Gifford 1981, 43.

Eusebius now turns to contemporary, younger philosophers, especially Porphyry. He clearly classifies him in the field of Platonic philosophers, as his reference to *Nous* (Intellect) as Demiurge of the universe and to immaterial ideas proves. But he criticizes the confusion of these Platonic doctrines with the “theology of the ancients”, meaning: with the pagan religion. He criticizes Porphyry as Platonic philosopher of religion and as applying a pure physical exegesis. By doing so, he would, according to Eusebius, denounce the validity of interpretation and its reach into transcendental realm – what, of course, for Porphyry’s Platonic metaphysics would be essential. Eusebius obviously tries to distort Porphyry’s allegorical method polemically, accuses him of inconsistencies and also emphatically accuses him of arrogance, pretension and boasting²⁴. With the reproach of arrogance (τῦφος) Eusebius refutes his adversary with his own words, after Porphyry had accused the Christians for that because of their illegitimate use of *allegoresis*²⁵. Now Eusebius is turning the tables. And we may notice that Eusebius’ sound is noticeably stronger here – before, in his treatment of the Platonist Plutarch, he was still quite objective and relaxed.

The following literal quotation from Porphyry’s *On Statues* is not introduced by Eusebius with its title:

φθέγχομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ’ ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι, σοφίας θεολόγου νοήματα δεικνύς, οἷς τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς δυνάμεις διὰ εἰκόνων συμφύλων αἰσθήσει ἐμήνυσαν ἄνδρες, τὰ ἀφανῆ φανεροῖς ἀποτυπώσαντες πλάσμασι, τοῖς καθάπερ ἐκ βιβλίων τῶν ἀγαλμάτων ἀναλέγειν τὰ περὶ θεῶν μεμαθηκόσι γράμματα. θαυμαστὸν δὲ οὐδὲν ξύλα καὶ λίθους ἡγεῖσθαι τὰ ξόανα τοὺς ἀμαθεστάτους, καθὰ δὴ καὶ τῶν γραμμάτων οἱ ἀνόητοι λίθους μὲν ὀρώσι τὰς στήλας, ξύλα δὲ τὰς δέλτους, ἐξυφασμένην δὲ πάπυρον τὰς βίβλους. (Euseb. *PE* 3.7,1 pp. 122–23 Mras–Des Places = 351 F. Smith)

To whom it is right I will speak; close the gates, you who are uninitiated! I am showing the thoughts of a theological wisdom, with which men revealed God and the powers of God to physical perception through kindred images, delineating invisible things in visible forms, to those who have learned to pick out the outlines of the gods from the images as if from books. It is not surprising that the most uneducated consider the statues to be wood and stones, just as indeed those ignorant of letters see inscribed columns as mere stones, writing tablets as pieces of wood, and books as woven papyrus. (Transl. Johnson²⁶)

²⁴ See more detailed Männlein-Robert 2017a, 199–200 and Männlein-Robert (forthcoming), chap. IV.3.4.

²⁵ Zambon 2019, 150.

²⁶ Johnson 2013, 165.

Obviously this is the *prooemium* of Porphyry's text. Already the first sentence is significant: Porphyry starts quoting a hexametric verse of Orphic origin (fr. 245 Kern): φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι. Thus the speaker quoting this verse habitually assumes the role of 'Orpheus' or that of a priest who describes what is proclaimed below as 'divine revelation'. In the gesture of secrecy Porphyry makes clear that this should not be accessible to the uninitiated (βέβηλοι), but only to the initiated ones. This very opening verse is to be meant as an *exclusion formula* anchored in ritual and established in religious literature – the oldest proof of which is currently given to us in the Derveni-Papyrus, col. 7 –, but which is mainly handed down in imperial and late antique texts²⁷. This old Orphic formula thus underpins the legitimacy of the following statements. The speaker, here probably the author Porphyry, appears in the priestly gesture of indicating (cf. δεικνύς). Thus he becomes recognizable as a hierophant of ancient mystical knowledge of revelation through Orphic stylisation (cf. fr. 351,17 F. Smith: ἐμήνυσαν). We know from an autobiographical episode from his *Vita Plotini* that Porphyry really did like to slip into this role: there he reports how he was once personally and explicitly honoured by his master Plotinus as a "poet, philosopher and priest at the same time" (Porph. *VP* 15,4–6: ἔδειξας ὁμοῦ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν καὶ τὸν φιλόσοφον καὶ τὸν ἱεροφάντην)²⁸. Moreover, in his *On statues* his religious, hierophantic gesture converges with that of the divinely inspired, revealing exegete: for this text is the written interpretation or exegesis of statues of the gods. They are to be 'read' as signs with a certain meaning, known only by 'initiates'²⁹. Porphyry therefore wants a certain group of 'unbelievers' to be excluded from his literary exegesis of gods in the gesture of revelation. Since with the Orphic formula he ascribes the rank of religious secret knowledge to the following, we can identify the programmatically exclusive, so to speak antichristian tendency of this text already in the beginning. And this is exactly the reason why Eusebius is so furious about this very text, as the Christians are excluded as βέβηλοι. Eusebius, by quoting not only this (in his eyes) offensive *prooemium*, but also quite a few passages from Porphyry's text, definitely betrays his close familiarity with this 'exclusive' pagan text. Quite pointedly he does not care about Porphyry's Orphic exclusive formula, but, as we can see, he definitely is furious about the anti-christian implicit polemics there.

Afterwards Eusebius quotes a longer section: Porphyry, however, emphatically here defends the material nature and form of the pagan statues of the gods and explains their meaning and semantic reference (fr. 352 F. Smith). Light reflexes

²⁷ See Euseb. *PE* 13.12,3–5 pp. 191–94 Mras–Des Places for Aristobulus (= fr. 247 Kern); cf. Tat. *Or. ad Graec.* 8, p. 9,13 Schw., or Clem. Al. *Protr.* 7.74,4; more examples in Riedweg 1993, 47–48 with note 118; rich references gives Mino Gabriele in Gabriele–Maltomini 2014, 109–10.

²⁸ Männlein-Robert 2017a, 206.

²⁹ See Zambon 2019, 212.

were used for statues of the gods, since the divine was light-like and surrounded by subtle fire. He shows that certain characteristics of the material statues reflect certain characteristics of the divine, more precisely: the respective material qualities of the statues of the gods refer to corresponding qualities of the divine itself (light, beauty etc.)³⁰. So, according to Porphyry, we are able to draw certain conclusions about the gods from their statues respectively their material quality. And this Eusebius finds absolutely ridiculous. Finally he concludes this quote with his own ironic summary:

ταῦτα ὁ θαυμαστός φιλόσοφος· ὧν τί ἂν γένοιτο ἀσημιονέστερον τὰ αἰσχρὰ σεμνολογοῦσιν; τί δὲ βιαιότερον, τὰς ἀψύχους ὕλας, χρυσὸν καὶ λίθον καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, εἰκόνας φέρειν τοῦ φωτὸς τῶν θεῶν καὶ τῆς οὐρανίου καὶ αἰθερίου φύσεως δηλώματα φάσκειν; ὅτι δὲ τῶν νέων ἐστὶ ταῦτα σοφίσματα μηδ' ὄναρ τῶν παλαιῶν εἰς ἐνθύμησιν ἔλθόντα, γνοίης ἂν μαθῶν ὅτι καὶ ἀπόβλητα ἦν παρὰ τοῖς προτέροις τὰ διὰ χρυσοῦ καὶ τῆς νομιζομένης πολυτελεστέρας ὕλης ζόανα. λέγει δ' οὖν Πλούταρχος ὡδέ πη κατὰ λέξιν· [...] (Euseb. PE 3.7,5 p. 124 Mras-Des Places)

These are the statements of this wonderful philosopher: and what could be more unseemly than talking, as they do, in solemn phrase about shameful things? Or what more violently unreasonable than to assert that lifeless materials, gold, and marble, and such like, bear representations of the light of the gods, and manifestations of their heavenly and ethereal nature? That these are modern sophistries, and never entered, even in a dream, into the imagination of the ancients, you may learn, on being informed that statues made of gold, and other material esteemed more precious, were even rejected among the men of former times. Plutarch, at all events, speaks somewhere thus, word for word [...] (Transl. Gifford³¹).

Eusebius is quoting Porphyry's *On statues* κατὰ λέξιν, and by doing so he is introducing and concluding his verbal quote. In this framing we can identify strong emotions: obviously Eusebius feels offended, is quite aggressive and ironic in the end. Afterwards he tries to undermine Porphyry by quoting from Plutarch and Plato just to show that Porphyry as a later Platonist is not in accord with the Platonic religious tradition in his defense of material statues and images of gods. Eusebius makes him a young philosopher who is wrong, especially in comparison with the old, much more serious and learned Platonists (and, of course, Plato himself).

³⁰ See also Gabriele-Maltomini 2014, 113–14; Miles 2015, 88; Männlein-Robert (forthcoming), chap. IV.3.2.

³¹ Gifford 1981, 44.

Later on, after further verbal quotations (*ibid.* 3.9,1–5, pp. 126–28 Mras–Des Places = fr. 354 F. Smith), Eusebius criticises the anthropomorphism of the old gods and the Orphic allegory of an anthropomorphic sitting statue of Zeus, which is – so Porphyry says – to be taken as *symbol* for the body of the cosmos, which is directed by the *Nous* of Zeus (as the Demiurge). In quite sophisticated arguments Eusebius deconstructs the old gods like Zeus to be pure πλάσματα, *i. e.* inventions or fictions, and in their mythical shape – *e. g.* as Zeus – not compatible with the Christian and also Platonic doctrine according to which the transcendent god is the Demiurge of the cosmos as *Nous* (*ibid.* 3.9,6–10,26, pp. 128–34 Mras–Des Places). While for Porphyry the mythical Zeus and also his statue would be a (partial) manifestation of the transcendent divine – a manifestation you have to ‘read’ correctly (see above) –, Eusebius purposefully deconstructs the highest (mythical) god of the ancient pagan religion, Zeus, whose statue Porphyry interprets. While he reveals via the allegorical method this god as a (mythical respectively material) symbol of the Demiurge, *i. e.* the Intellect (*Nous*) and interprets him according to Platonic ontology, Eusebius does refute this: from his Christian perspective he considers the Demiurge to be the highest transcendent god, but assumes Porphyry to have declared Zeus (only) to be a symbol of the physical cosmos. Zeus would be no longer transcendent, but material, and could thus – according to Eusebius – no longer be held as divine³².

Also in the following Eusebius is very busy in presenting Porphyry as inconsequent, as a not stringent and self-contradictory philosopher, whom the recipients of Eusebius should not believe. As far as we can reconstruct from the remaining fragments and testimonies, Porphyry with his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* offered a kind of catalogue or gallery³³ of statues of important old Greek gods and goddesses, their typical iconographic representation and their attributes, as well as towards the end also of some Egyptian deities. This gallery is structured in a hierarchy: Porphyry opens with the statue of Zeus, the highest god, and leads them via Hera, Hestia, Demeter, Dionysus, Pluto, Attis and Adonis to Artemis and Athena and finally, after numerous other Hellenic deities, to Egyptian deities like Kneph, Isis and Osiris (and Helios and Selene) – just to name a selection out of many mentioned gods and explained images.

Here Eusebius differs in presenting and marking his verbal quotes: he says *e. g.* (*ibid.* 3.7,2 p. 123 Mras–Des Places) *γράφει πρὸς λέξιν* or simply (3.8,2 p. 125 Mras–Des Places) *φησὶν* (where he quite sure quotes word by word). When he infers *ἐπιφέρει λέγων ὧδε* (3.10,26 p. 134 Mras–Des Places) or (3.11,5 p. 135 Mras–Des Places) *διαίρων ἐπιλέγει* or *προϊών ἐξῆς λέγει* (3.11,6, p. 136 Mras–Des Places) or *τούτοις ἐξῆς ἐπισυνάπτει λέγων* (3.11,9 p. 136 Mras–Des Places), he only

³² For a more detailed interpretation of this fragment see Männlein-Robert (forthcoming), chap. IV.3.5.

³³ So with Bidez 1913, 21: “galerie d’images” and Des Places 1976, 17.

seems to be close to the Porphyrean text. In fact, he does not quote *verbatim*, but skips single words, sentences or little parts of the texts. A hint to this free quoting and summarising is given by Eusebius himself, when he remarks it in the end after such a passage, where he says:

τοσαῦτα μὲν οὖν καὶ τάδε, ἃ καὶ ἀναγκαίως ἐπιτεμόμενος παρατέθειμαι [...] (*ibid.* 3.11,17 p. 138 Mras–Des Places).

So far, then, we have these statements (*sc.* of Porphyry), which I have been compelled to set before you briefly [...] (Transl. Gifford³⁴).

Or his following transition, where he is quite explicit about his quoting technique:

καὶ τί δεῖ κατὰ μέρος ἕκαστον ἀπελέγχειν, ἐπιδραμεῖν δέον, ὡς ἂν μηδὲν ἡμᾶς τῶν ἀπορρήτων λανθάνοι, καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐξῆς αὐθις ἐπιτεμέσθαι φυσιολογίαν, ἣν ἐκτέθειται ὁ δηλωθεὶς συγγραφεύς, τόνδε ἐπεξίων τὸν τρόπον. (*ibid.* 3.11,21 p. 139 Mras–Des Places).

But what need to refute each part separately, when we ought merely to run over them so that none of their secrets may escape us, and to cut short the physical explanation of what follows, which the author before named has set forth, proceeding in the following manner (Transl. Gifford³⁵).

This sentence of transition and abbreviation, which refers to Porphyry's allegorical explanations referred to earlier (*e. g.* to Pluto, Kore, Demeter as well as Dionysus, Attis, Adonis), is particularly revealing for the evaluation of the citation context in Eusebius: for here he makes unambiguously clear that he epitomizes, *i. e.* that he is cutting, shortening and omitting the original Porphyrean text, and thus he is preparing and modelling his enemy's text according to his own interests. So he is easily able to refute Porphyry's errors, contradictions and absurdities contained therein about the old gods and their statues.

In addition, Eusebius maliciously refers to Porphyry's habit of secrecy, which, as quoted, became clear in the *prooemium* of his treatise: what Porphyry is about in this text are (τὰ) ἀπόρρητα, secrets, about which only initiates are allowed to experience and to learn³⁶. While Porphyry had meant the statues of (mythical) old gods and their demanding religious Platonic semantics which he had explained and revealed for insiders, and while he wanted to exclude the uninitiated from such religious knowledge, Eusebius takes pleasure in presenting this very religious

³⁴ Gifford 1981, 49.

³⁵ Gifford 1981, 49.

³⁶ In my opinion, this text was not meant to be for pedagogical purposes, cf. Krulak 2011 and Johnson 2013, 165.

knowledge of the hated Platonist in its absurdity and thus to profane and devalue it. Finally Porphyry did not achieve his goal of reserving this Platonic knowledge to an exclusive inner circle – and this is exactly what the Christian Church Father Eusebius himself in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* proudly presents, and in which respect we learn about a real dynamic effect flowing from Porphyry's text via his provocative opening and his Platonic allegories of statues of gods over to the Christian apologist Eusebius. Citation and epitomization of Porphyry's text by Eusebius turn out to be tendentious, emotional and even polemical. Not least through the emotional engagement of Eusebius the danger caused by the Platonist Porphyry for Christian intellectuals and elites, as Eusebius embodies it exemplarily, becomes manifest to us. The meaning and relevance of his treatise on statues of gods therefore seems to have been considerable, because Porphyry with his Platonic allegorical explanations of statues of gods obviously had hit a nerve with Christian contemporaries.

Eusebius shortly later (*PE* 3.11,45–13,2, pp. 142–46 Mras–Des Places = fr. 360 F. Smith) concludes his presentation of Porphyry's text on Greek gods and their iconography and presents in the following Porphyry's explanations of the statues of Egyptian gods³⁷: first comes a detailed explanation of the Egyptian god Kneph, whom the Platonist explains as demiurgic, as a cosmos-creating deity, which appears in statues in human form. Further gods (Helios, Isis, Osiris, Selene) are also represented as humans (or as hybrids, but essentially anthropomorphically) by the Egyptians. In this context Porphyry refers to the cult established in the Egyptian village of Anabis³⁸, which is not for a god, but for a human being who receives divine honours there with sacrifices and sacrificial meals (a similar phenomenon is known to the Greeks as 'hero cult'). Porphyry also mentions this very fact in another text, namely in *De abstinentia* (4.9,13–15, p. 242 Nauck), literally quoted by Eusebius in the passage after (*PE* 3.4,10, p. 119 Mras–Des Places). It is obvious that this fact of the divine worship of a human being for the Christian bishop might have been scandalous. And indeed, in his concluding remark, after quoting the passage from Porphyry's text just referred to, he explicitly distances himself:

ταῦτά μοι ἐκ τῆς τοῦ προειρημένου ἀνδρὸς γραφῆς ἐπιτετιμήσθω, ὡς ἂν μηδὲν ἡμᾶς λάθοι τῶν ἀπορρήτων τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς ὁμοῦ καὶ Αἰγυπτιακῆς θεολογίας, ἧς ἀποστάτας ἑαυτοὺς καὶ φυγάδας ὁμολογοῦμεν, κρίσει καὶ λογισμῶ σῶφρονι καὶ τάδε παραιτησάμενοι. οὐ γάρ με ἡ ἀλαζῶν ἐκπλήξει φωνή, φθέγξομαι οἷς θέμις ἐστί, θύρας δ' ἐπίθεσθε βέβηλοι

³⁷ For Porphyry's use of the Stoic Chaeremon as model of his Egyptian part and for differences between the passages on the Greek and the Egyptian gods see Männlein-Robert 2017a, 181–82.

³⁸ For Anabis as a highly probable corruption of Athribis, see the commentary in Gabriele–Maltomini 2014, 283.

φήσασα. βέβηλοι γοῦν οὐχ ἡμεῖς, ἀλλ' οἱ γε τοιάσδε αἰσχράς καὶ ἀπρεπεῖς μυθολογίας κανθάρων πέρι καὶ θηρίων ἀλόγων σοφίας θεολόγου νοήματα εἶναι ἀποφηνάμενοι, οἱ κατὰ τὸν θαυμάσιον ἀπόστολον “φάσκοντες εἶναι σοφοὶ ἐμωράνθησαν· ὅτι δὴ ἤλλαξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ ἐν ὁμοιώματι εἰκόνοσ φθαρτοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πετεινῶν καὶ τετραπόδων καὶ ἐρπετῶν”. (Euseb. PE 3.13,3–4, p. 146 Mras–Des Places)

Let it suffice, that I have made these short extracts from the writing of the before-named author, so that we may not be ignorant of any secrets of the theology which is at once both Grecian and Egyptian, and from which we confess ourselves to be apostates and deserters, having rejected these doctrines with sound judgement and reasoning. For I am not going to be frightened by the arrogant voice which said, “*I speak to those who lawfully may hear: depart, all ye profane, and close the doors*”. Not we at all events are profane, but those who declared that such foul and unseemly legends about beetles and brute beasts were the thoughts of a wise theology – they who, according to the admirable Apostle, “*professing themselves to be wise, became fools*” (= Paulus, Rm 1,22–23), seeing that they “*changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things*” (Transl. Gifford³⁹).

Also in the following, Eusebius continues to emphasize that he does know about the Hellenistic respectively Platonic “secrets” (ἀπόρρητα) very well, but rejects them decidedly for Christian reasons. With this he makes clear that he disregards Porphyry’s (Orphic) formula of exclusivity and that he definitely is familiar with the Platonist’s theological allegories about the semantics of traditional statues of the gods in Greece and Egypt, which are to be unmasked as unreasonable, ridiculous, and simply absurd.

3. Eusebius’ Method of Deconstruction

The Christian bishop Eusebius is in some respects focused on the Platonist Porphyry, because he knows him well as an extremely dangerous critic of the Christian religion and its holy texts.

Concerning Porphyry’s treatise Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, quoted, misinterpreted, and discredited in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (Book 3), the Christian Church father Eusebius obviously identifies not only its subject, statues of old Hellenic and Egyptian gods, but also Porphyry’s chosen method of *allegoresis* as problematic and reprehensible. His concerns regarding statues of pagan gods may be obvious

³⁹ Gifford 1981, 52.

from a Christian point of view, as these many gods and goddesses – well known from many Hellenic (and Egyptian) myths as not really that exemplary in terms of morals – are anthropomorphic⁴⁰ or hybrid, material, and created by human artists. So, with regard to Porphyry's subject and the apologetic tradition against Hellenic ἰδολατρία we are able to embed Eusebius' polemics into a wider discourse and learn that Eusebius positions himself in this field. With regard to Eusebius' emotional and aggressive mode of presentation and commenting of Porphyry's *On Statues* (especially *PE* 3.6,7–14 pp. 122–51 *Mras-Des Places*), the considerable alterity of the early Christian and the Porphyrean Platonic understanding of God, the Divine and statues of gods becomes clear⁴¹.

But what is mainly Eusebius' problem with this (roughly) contemporary Platonist is the method of *allegoresis* and Porphyry's philosophical explanation, as to what the single ἄγαλμα from a Platonic perspective means. Eusebius is busy himself with *allegoresis*, which he got experienced with as pupil of the Christian Platonist Origenes, who himself with his (Platonic) allegorizing of Christian texts tried to be distinct from (close) other Platonists⁴². As Porphyry opened his treatise with an ostentative Orphic exclusion formula to prepare his following text as revelation of theological knowledge, only for Platonic initiates and insiders who are really allowed and able to decode the statue's meanings, it is Eusebius' aim to demonstrate his recipients his exact knowledge of these 'secrets' and to deconstruct the Platonist's philosophical allegories. As far as we can see, with his *Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων* Porphyry offered to an exclusive audience an explanation, or better: a philosophical conception of statues of gods via the method of *allegoresis*. The typologically explained statues of Greek and Egyptian gods are according to Porphyry σημεῖα or σύμβολα⁴³ with reference to the divine, which are therefore not identical with its images or its materiality. The true divine is therefore – in the Platonic sense – supermaterial and transcendent. In some fragments of this writing we can still recognize from terms and concepts, despite the abbreviation and the transformative evaluation by Eusebius, that Porphyry interprets and appreciates the statues of the gods in a strictly Platonic and definitely not a Stoic spirit, as Eusebius insinuates: for example, he mitigates the argument of materiality by referring to the comparable qualities of certain materials used for statues of gods and the divine represented: matter and deity have a related character. His Platonic metaphysics becomes unmistakably clear in this regard, especially in Porphyry's allegorical representation of the statue of Zeus: here he combines the iconographically famous, long since typological version of a Zeus statue of Phidias with an Orphic poetic hymn to Zeus. Porphyry thus combines the image, the statue of the god, with a theological text, illustrating the significance of the

⁴⁰ For this aspect see also Johnson 2006a, 86–87.

⁴¹ Still relevant are *e.g.* Geffcken 1919 and Elliger 1930, now also Meier 2003, esp. 538–53.

⁴² Pollmann 2017, 94–107.

⁴³ See Johnson 2013, 74–75 and 168.

physical performance of the statue, its body parts and its attributes. From this it becomes clear that the statue of Zeus is a decodable image of ‘Zeus’, who in the Platonic allegory of Porphyry is clearly understood as *Nous* and as Demiurge, *i. e.* as a transcendent deity⁴⁴, but as a deity who affects the world, creates it and holds it within himself, as it were, ‘embodies’ it. But Eusebius insinuates that Porphyry undertakes a purely physical (and thus stoicizing) *allegoresis*⁴⁵. Thus, according to Eusebius’ conclusion, the old Hellenic, pagan gods finally are only physical, *i. e.* material elements or powers of nature, which are worshipped in form of anthropomorphic statues. He thus denies the Greek gods and their statues any theological value because of their polytheism, anthropomorphism and materiality. By doing so, he lays a counterattack on Porphyry’s *allegoresis* as Porphyry before with his *Contra Christianos* also tried to deny authorization for Christian *allegoresis*: in his eyes, *allegoresis* is a specific Hellenic (pagan) method of interpretation, a claim, which the Church Father Eusebius wants to shake⁴⁶.

What can we conclude to be Eusebius’ strategy? We see that Eusebius deliberately misunderstands the text of Porphyry’s *Περὶ ἀγαμάτων*, partly quoting it literally or close to the text, but apparently deliberately cutting it into fragments and selecting passages to purpose. In the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, passages in which Eusebius epitomizes and paraphrases from this writing of Porphyry alternate with those which he quotes in detail and word by word (*κατὰ λέξιν*)⁴⁷. Most of the time he introduces Porphyrean passages with detailed statements of his own and formulates a resultative (critical) remark at the end. We identify in Eusebius decidedly polemic introductions, transitional remarks and conclusions around the literally quoted and abbreviated Porphyrean passages. Besides, in his polemical framings Eusebius acts quite personally and emotionally against Porphyry himself and tries to undermine his arguments and method, his credibility as Platonist and philosopher by demonstrating Porphyry’s inconsistencies with Platonism and by distancing Porphyry from Plato’s and other Platonists’ (like Plutarch’s) theology⁴⁸. His selection of Porphyry’s *allegoresis* and his arrangement of these passages are embedded in the context of his *Praeparatio Evangelica* for Eusebius’ own strategical purposes, *i. e.* to demonstrate the Platonist’s problematic and wrong approach to divine subjects. With his intentional polemic frames Eusebius is creating new contexts for Porphyry’s words and arguments. His aim by doing so is to demonstrate that the Platonist’s text is not convincing and not to be accepted, because it is contradictory, and for a Platonist too close and too akin to Stoic philosophy as Porphyry (at first sight) seems to use allegory in a similar approach for his

⁴⁴ Johnson 2013, 170.

⁴⁵ Cf. Johnson 2013, 168–69.

⁴⁶ Becker 2016, 73, 75–76; Zambon 2019, 217–28.

⁴⁷ See also Johnson 2013, 30–31.

⁴⁸ See Magny 2014, 35–53; Magny 2017; for Porphyry’s polemics against the Christians see Männlein-Robert 2014, 117–38.

‘physical theology’. Eusebius therefore continues the struggle for authority in using allegory, which already Origenes and Porphyry were carrying out.

So, by his special mode and strategy of ‘quotation’ and epitomizing, by his intentional framing and selection of Porphyrean passages, but also with intentional misunderstanding, misreading and polemical bias the Church Father tries to deconstruct the most dangerous pagan Platonist at that time. But, as said in the beginning of this article, we may take it as history’s irony that it was exactly Eusebius himself to preserve at least parts of Porphyry’s provocative treatise *On statues of gods*.

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