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BABRIUS and PHAEDRUS

Translated by

BEN EDWIN PERRY

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AND
PHAEDRUS

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BABRIUS AND PHAEDRUS

LCL 436

TO
The Cherished Memory
of
EDWARD CAPPS
Teacher and Friend

ABBREVIATIONS

Aes. = *Aesopica* ed. B. E. Perry, vol. I, Urbana 1952. See Appendix p. 419 below.

CPh = *Classical Philology.*

RE = Pauly-Wissowa, *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft.*

RhM = *Rheinisches Museum.*

TAPhA = *Transactions of the American Philological Association.*

INTRODUCTION

1. The Aesopic Fable in Antiquity

In the long history of Aesopic fable, generically so called, the publication of a series of fables in verse meant to be read consecutively, each for its own interest and literary value, without a context or a specific application, is relatively late to appear. Phaedrus, in the time of Tiberius, is the first writer whom we know to have produced such a book, and his example was followed soon afterwards by Babrius, writing in Greek verse. The creations of these two poets mark a new epoch in the history of fable-writing and a midway point, as it were, in almost four thousand years of literary practice. Before Phaedrus, fables written in Greek prose were gathered into collections intended to serve primarily as repertoires of rhetorical materials, comparable to a collection of proverbs or apothegms of famous men, which would serve the needs of speakers or writers in quest of illustrations to be used within the context of an oration, a history, or an essay of some kind. Such a fable-collection, written in prose, was informative in theory and purpose, rather than literary or artistic, although its author might, and usually did, take pains in the stylizing of it, so as to give it in reality a literary value apart from its ultilitarian *raison d'être.* The collection might be read in whole or in part for its own sake as entertainment, in case

anyone chose to make that use of it, and some probably did; but it was not put forth by its author in the guise of literature or *belles lettres*, nor was it looked upon as such by the reading public.

Phaedrus and Babrius were the first writers to bring a disconnected series of Aesopic fables on to that avowedly artistic plane of literature, as an independent form of writing; but necessarily in verse, in order to sanction it as poetic composition. Only as such could it become, in theory, an independent form of literature in its own right, instead of a dictionary of metaphors. Told in verse a fable had the literary rating and recognition of poetry, by virtue of the form alone in which it was written, without regard to the subject matter; but a fable told in prose without a context, or a collection of such fables, was not literature, properly speaking, but raw material meant to be used in the making of literature, or orally. Archilochus in the seventh century B.C. had occasionally made use of beast fables written in iambic verse as a means of satirizing personal enemies, and Callimachus likewise includes a few Aesopic fables in his *Iambics*, just as he includes myths about gods and heroes; but in both cases it is the artistic verse that constitutes the literary form and the sanction for its publication apart from a context. A myth as such is not a literary form, but may be used as subject-matter in various kinds of poetry or prose, and the same is true of what we call fable. In the early period of Greek literature, and in the Alexandrian Age, fables might be the subject-matter of separate poems, but much more commonly they were used subordinately as illus-

trations in a larger context, whether of poetry as in Hesiod,[1] Aeschylus,[2] Sophocles,[3] and Aristophanes,[4] or in prose, as in Herodotus,[5] Xenophon,[6] Plato,[7] and Aristotle.[8]

It was not until late in the fourth century B.C. that the first collection of Aesopic fables in prose which we know to have been made was published by the orator and antiquarian scholar Demetrius of Phalerum as a handbook of materials intended primarily for the use of writers and speakers. This collection, entitled *Aesopia* and contained in one book-roll (Αἰσωπείων ά, Diog. Laert. 5.80), has not survived, but it was still extant at the beginning of the tenth century when Arethas had it copied, and it must have been one of the principal sources used by both Babrius and Phaedrus, as well as by such sophistic writers

[1] *Works and Days*, 202–212, Hawk and Nightingale (*Aes.* 4a).

[2] In Fragment 139 from the *Myrmidons*, Eagle shot by an Arrow winged with his own Feathers (*Aes.* 276a); *Agamemnon* 716–736, Man who reared a Lion's Cub in his house, told to illustrate what Helen's coming to Troy meant for the Trojans.

[3] *Ajax*, 1142–1158, two short fables used by Menelaus and Teucer respectively in their altercation with each other.

[4] *Birds*, 474 ff. (*Aes.* 447), Lark burying her Father; *Wasps*, 1401 ff., Aesop and the Bitch (*Aes.* 423); *ib.*, 1427 ff., The Sybarite Man (*Aes.* 428); *ib.*, 1435 ff., Sybarite Woman (*Aes.* 438).

[5] *History*, I, 141, Fisherman pipes to the Fish (*Aes.* 11a).

[6] *Mem.* II, 7. 11, Sheep and Dog (*Aes.* 356a).

[7] *Alcib.* 123a, One-way Traffic into the Lion's Cave (cf. *Aes.* 142, Babrius 103); *Phaedo* 60b, Pleasure and Pain (*Aes.* 445).

[8] *Rhetoric*, II, 20, Horse and Stag (*Aes.* 269a), said to have been told by Stesichorus; *ib.* Fox and Hedgehog (*Aes.* 427); *Meteor.* II 3, Aesop at the Shipyards (cf. *Aes.* 8); *Polit.* III 13.2, Lions and Hares (*Aes.* 450).

in late antiquity as Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, Lucian, and Themistius in citing fables of Aesop.[1] There is no evidence that any book of Aesopic fables other than that of Demetrius, either in Greek or in Latin, was in existence before the time of Phaedrus; nor can we know to what extent, if any, the *Aesop* of Demetrius was altered or revised or incorporated in other collections in the course of its transmission throughout the Alexandrian Age. From the way in which Phaedrus speaks of his principal source as being a book of smaller compass than his own and as containing all the fables that he calls " Aesop's," we should infer that he knew only one book of Aesop and that that book was the official *Aesop* of Demetrius.[2]

Fragments of a collection of Greek fables in prose, in which each fable apparently was indexed with a promythium and ended with a gnomic sentence uttered by the last speaker in the fable, as in Phaedrus I 26 and IV 20, are preserved on the Rylands Papyrus No. 493, which was inscribed, according to its editor, C. H. Roberts, at some time in the first half of the first century after Christ.[3] This may well be a fragment of the book of Demetrius; but, whether it is really his text or not, it typifies, by its regular promythia and the absence of epimythia, the collection of Greek fables that must have served as the

[1] See pages 288–290 and 304 ff. of my article " Demetrius of Phalerum and the Aesopic Fables " in *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (*TAPhA*), 93 (1962), 287–346.

[2] Cf. p. lxxxiv below in the section on Phaedrus.

[3] C. H. Roberts, *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, 1938, III, 119 ff.

primary source for Phaedrus and the kind of fable-book that Demetrius himself had inaugurated.

The promythium, of which we have spoken, is a brief statement concerning the application of a fable made by the author before he begins the narrative, as in the Rylands Papyrus (lines 74 f.):

> *To a man who is rich, and also a scoundrel, the following fable applies.*

Or in Phaedrus III 5:

> *Success invites many to their ruin.*

The function of the promythium was to index the fable under the heading of its moral application for the convenience of a writer or speaker who would consult the fable-repertoire for the purpose of finding a fable that would illustrate an idea that he wished to express effectively; but since the promythium was also a summary of the fable's meaning, in other words its moral, it came to be added after the fable in the form of an epimythium, intended as an explanation (λύσις), when the original function of the promythium as an index had been forgotten or ignored;[1] as is the case in the first collection of Greek prose fables to be compiled after the time of Phaedrus, namely in the so-called Augustana collection, where we have epimythia throughout but no promythia. In Phaedrus epimythia appear for the first time along with promythia with increasing frequency; in his first book, where the formal influence of his Greek original is

[1] This is explained more fully in my article "The Origin of the Epimythium" in *TAPhA*, 71 (1940), 408–412, and in the article "Fable" in *Studium Generale*, XII (1959), 35.

most conspicuous, the proportion of promythia to epimythia is 25 to 4, but in the fifth book it is 2 to 7. Babrius, writing in the last quarter of the first century, has some epimythia but no promythia.

The oldest and largest extant collection of prose fables ascribed to Aesop is that which is known as the Augustana, because the manuscript from which it was first published, now codex Monacensis 564, was once at Augsburg. This manuscript, with which the newly recovered tenth-century manuscript 397 in the Pierpont Morgan Library (cod. G) is very closely related, contains some 231 fables from the ancient collection and can be traced to an archetype of the fourth or fifth century. The original compilation was probably made in the second century, if not in the latter part of the first, but it was unknown to Phaedrus and uninfluenced by Babrius except for a few fables which may be later accretions.[1] The Augustana, known also as Recension I, is the parent stock on which three later editions of "Aesop's fables" were founded in large part, either directly or indirectly, namely Recensions Ia, II (known also as the Vindobonensis), and III (the Accursiana or the Planudean recension). Ia, consisting of some 143 fables, dates from late antiquity, probably the third or fourth century, and the same may be true, as I now think, also of Recension II,[2] which includes 130 fables in

[1] Concerning the dating of the original Augustana collection, see *TAPhA*, 93 (1962), 288 f., note 8, where the matter is discussed in detail.

[2] This recension, based primarily on I, has three interpolated episodes in the *Life* and many odd readings in both *Life* and *Fables* which cannot be Byzantine in origin, but must have been taken from an ancient and variant version of both texts.

the best representative manuscript of its class, Vindobonensis 130. Some forty of the fables in this collection are in twelve-syllable verse and are derived indirectly from Babrius, but the others, in prose, are badly rewritten on the basis of I. Recension III, first printed by Bonus Accursius at Milan in 1474, hence known as the Accursiana, was made by Maximus Planudes near the beginning of the fourteenth century. It consists of 127 fables, of which 62 come from Recension II and are freely rewritten, the others mainly from the Augustana (I) with little or no alteration. In modern times this revised and abridged edition of the traditional fables was often printed as the vulgate Greek *Aesop* before the publication of the Augustana (I) by Schneider in 1812. The fables of Recensions I, II, and III are printed separately in the editions of Chambry[1] and of Hausrath,[2] and likewise such fables of Ia as are not found in I. What Chambry designates Class IV is the so-called Bodleian Paraphrase of Babrius, consisting of

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Because the manuscripts containing this Rec. II—what I have called SBP in the *Life*—are all later than the twelfth century, I had supposed that the interpolations that it contains were taken from an ancient text in the twelfth century; cf. *Aesopica*, I, pp. 22 and 308, note 30. Recently, however, a fragment of the *Life* in this recension has come to my attention written in an eleventh-century hand on a parchment leaf bound in a manuscript at Saloniki; and from this I infer that Rec. II with all its interpolated readings was made in late antiquity, in the fourth or fifth century.

[1] Aemilius Chambry, *Aesopi Fabulae*, Paris (Les Belles Lettres), 1925, 2 vols.

[2] A. Hausrath, *Corpus Fabularum Aesopicarum*, Vol. I, fasc. 1, Leipzig (Teubner), 1940; fasc. 2, *ib.* 1956; fasc. 2, second edition by H. Hunger, *ib.* 1958.

148 fables briefly summarized in prose, introduced by promythia, and ascribed to Aesop by its unknown compiler. The Augustana fables of Class I and its derivatives are independent of the Babrian tradition, except that many of them are derived from an early source common to both I and Babrius, probably the *Aesop* of Demetrius. The entire corpus of Greek fables in prose, with the exception of fables depending on the citation of Greek authors other than fabulists, and of a few taken into the collections from unknown sources, is made up of Recensions I–IV, contained in upwards of one hundred MSS., all but three of which are of later date than the thirteenth century. Many of these manuscripts are of mixed contents, containing blocks of fables drawn from two or more of the recensions above mentioned, and in some of them there is much conflation of one textual form with another, and occasionally newly worded paraphrases of older forms.

With the exception of Aphthonius, the fourth-century rhetorician whose forty fables, written in a highly artificial style, are *not* ascribed to Aesop, all the authors of extant fable-collections in Greek or Latin prose are either anonymous, like the authors of Recensions I–IV, or else, like " Romulus," Pseudo-Dositheus, and " Syntipas," obviously pseudonymous. The real author of a collection such as the Augustana (I) does not put his own name on the book he has written, but lets it pass under the name of Aesop, because he is not literarily ambitious in what he is doing. He makes no bid for recognition as a writer. The substance of his fables is presumed to have been invented by Aesop, but the prose in which they are

written can be anybody's text other than Aesop's and nobody was likely to claim it for himself. The fables of Babrius and Phaedrus were known and cited under their author's names so long as they remained in the original verse, but neither author's name survived on the prose paraphrases of his fables: Babrius became "Aesop," and Phaedrus " Romulus " translating "Aesop." Likewise in the medieval period we have many books of fables written in prose by unknown authors and a good number of fables in verse bearing the names of the authors who composed them: Avianus, Marie de France, Walter Anglicus, John of Schepey, Alexander Neckam.

The Arabic version of the so-called " Fables of Bidpai," known as *Kalilah wa Dimnah*, was translated into Greek by one Symeon Seth about A.D. 1080 and was widely circulated in many copies under the title *Stephanites and Ichnelates*; but this famous fable-book, derived from the Indian *Pañcatantra*, exerted thereafter, strange to say, not the slightest influence upon the traditional Greek *Aesop*. In the entire Greek tradition there is not, so far as I can see, a single fable that can be said to come either directly or indirectly from an Indian source; but many fables or fable-motifs which make their first appearance in Greek or Near Eastern literature are found later in the *Pañcatantra* and other Indian story-books, including the Buddhist *Jatakas*.

2. Nature and Origin of Fable

The rhetorician Theon in his *Progymnasmata* (ch. 3) defines fable in the Aesopic sense of the

term in just four words: λόγος ψευδὴς εἰκονίζων ἀλήθειαν, that is, a fictitious story picturing a truth. This is a perfect and complete definition provided we understand the range of what is included under the terms λόγος (story) and ἀλήθειαν (truth). The "story" may be contained in no more than a single short sentence, or it may be much longer, or include some dialogue; but it must be told in the past tense, as stories normally are, and it must purport to be a particular action or series of actions, or an utterance, that took place once upon a time through the agency of particular characters. All this is implied by λόγος, meaning story or narrative; and because a fable "pictures" a truth it is, theoretically, only a metaphor in the form of a past narrative; and when it happens to be very short it is indistinguishable from what we call a proverb, and what the ancient Semitic writers called a "likeness" (Aram. *mathla*, Heb. *mashal*, Ar. *mathal*, likewise Armen. *arak*). Proverbs are of several distinct kinds, according to the structural form in which they are cast, including precepts in the imperative mood, and generalities stated explicitly in the present tense; but the kind of metaphorical proverb which is identical with Aesopic fable, in respect to both its function as metaphor and its underlying structure as narrative of an event in the past, is peculiarly at home in western Asia and Greece throughout the ancient and medieval periods, in contrast with the various forms of proverb that have prevailed in western Europe, in ancient Egypt, and in the *Proverbs of Solomon*; which, by the way, betray their Egyptian background or inspiration by the very fact that they include no metaphorical pro-

verbs of the Graeco-Semitic type of which we are speaking.[1]

Since fable as we have defined it amounts to nothing more than an indirect and inexplicit way of saying something, the truths that it pictures metaphorically can be, and are in practice, of many different kinds. Often the idea conveyed is a general proposition relating to the nature of things or to types of human or animal character or behaviour, with or without an implied moral exhortation; but often also it is a particular truth applying only to a particular person, thing, or situation. The general proposition implicit in the fable is not always a moral or ethical principle, as is sometimes supposed; on the contrary, the majority of fables in our collections, as W. Wienert in his study of *Sinntypen* has pointed out,

[1] Krumbacher (*Byz. Lit.*[2] 906 f.) states the matter truly, as follows: "Orientalisch ist . . . die Form: 'Einem schenkte man einen Esel und er schaute ihm auf die Zähne', occidentalisch die Form: 'Einem geschenkten Gaul schaut man nicht ins Maul.' Durch diese Eigentümlichkeit scheidet sich das byzantinisch-neugriechisch-südslavisch-orientalische Sprichwort prinzipiell von den abendländischen." This form of proverb is common in ancient Greek literature as well as in the Byzantine period. See the examples cited below on p. xxxi. Proverbs of this kind are common in Sumerian, Babylonian, and Assyrian literature, but I have looked in vain for examples in Erman's *Literature of the Ancient Egyptians* (English translation by Blackman, London, 1927), where, amid the numerous ethical and didactic writings of both the older period and that of the New Kingdom, one might expect to find them. For the literal dependence of a series of Solomon's proverbs in the Old Testament upon the Egyptian book of Amen-em-ope, see Erman in *Oriental. Literaturzeitung*, 1924, no. 5, and Gressmann in *Ztschr. für alttestam. Wiss.*, 42 (1924), 272 ff.