EPITEDEIOTES IN PHILOSOPHICAL LITERATURE:
TOWARDS AN ANALYSIS

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E. R. Dodds in the Addenda et Corrigenda to the second edition of his Proclus: Elements of Theology has a brief note on 'the technical usages of the word epitedeiotes'. He distinguishes three usages: (1) inherent capacity for acting or being acted on in a specific way, (2) inherent affinity of one substance for another, and (3) inherent or induced capacity for the reception of a divine influence. The latter two usages are very specialised, occurring mainly in neo-Platonic authors. Usage (1) however has a long history, rooted in the commonplace meaning of the word, manifested in a variety of authors, and applied to a wide range of philosophical notions. Dodds only skims the surface of this rich vein, and I offer the following as a supplement to his account.

A further justification for this inquiry is that Dodds accepts the account offered by S. Sambursky that Philoponus' use of epitedeiotes as an alternative to the Aristotelian theory of potentiality is a significant innovation. This is an aspect of Sambursky's more elaborate thesis that this term came into use in the second century AD 'as a definite scientific concept' and that its use in Philoponus is evidence of 'the increasing mechanical-mindedness of later Antiquity'.

G. E. L. Owen has made some trenchant criticisms of this view, but no attempt to refute Sambursky's position in detail by a thorough examination of the term epitedeiotes has, so far as I know, been made. I hope to accomplish this also by my analysis.

Part One: Hellenistic Philosophy

It is clear that epitedeiotes does not acquire a technical sense prior to its usage by Philo the Megaric in his theory of possibility. In fact in pre-Hellenistic

1. Note on References: Since the Aristotelian commentators are extensively discussed I shall refer to them only by the title of the Aristotelian work, and the page and line number of the Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca (Berlin, 1883–1907); and for Alexander of Aphrodisias's minor works references are to Vol. II of the Supplementum Aristotelicum, ed. I. Bruns (Berlin, 1885–1903). Abbreviations: G.C.=de generatione et corruptione; PWLA=S. Sambursky, The Physical World of Late Antiquity (London, 1962).

4. PWLA, p. 106.
5. PWLA, p. 106; Scientific Change, p. 73.

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usage I have only located two usages of the noun. The adjective epitedeios is of course frequently employed in a wide range of senses. Of these we need take note only of what might be termed its relative sense. Here it is invariably followed by πρός or εἰς governing the object for which something is epitedeios ('fit' or 'useful'). Thus Thucydides describes a person as 'fit for', or 'tending towards' oligarchy (ἐπιτηδειον ἐξ ὀλιγαρχίαν ἐλθεῖν, 8. 26); Plato asks whether traditional poetry is 'fit to' or 'likely to' produce self-control in the young (ἐπιτηδειον εἶναι πρός ἐγκράτειν ἐκνευρίν νέων, Rep. 390b 3–4); and Aristotle describes the mixture of blood as 'suitable for the warmth of the brain and for quiet and sharp perception' (ἐπιτηδειον πρός τὴν τοῦ ἐγκεφάλου ἀλλακτικοῦ καὶ πρὸς τὴν τῶν αἰσθήσεων ἀσφάλειαν καὶ ἀκρίβειαν, Part. An. 686a 10).

What we need to note about the semantics of this aspect of early usage is a seminal distinction between a thing's capacity to do something, and its actually doing it. This is there in the need for both adjective and noun to be complemented by πρός or εἰς governing the purpose or object that a thing is 'fit' for. This complement is obviously conditional; it need not be fulfilled. Nothing hangs on this in any of the texts so far considered, and the context serves to indicate the conditions under which a given 'fitness' is or can be realised.

Now Philo the Megaric's9 usage of epitedeiotai as a technical term can be described as an attempt to exploit this seminal distinction in a paradoxical fashion. For he held that something was 'fit' to act or be affected, even if it never realised this 'fitness', and even if conditions prevented it from doing so. That is, the conditionality governing a thing's fitness that was present in colloquial usage is now excluded. 'Fitness' is made an inherent quality of a body. Our evidence for this theory is primarily in two texts of Alexander and Simplicius.

(1) Simplicius Cat. 195. 32–196. 3: For how, he [Aristotle] says, will we judge the perceptible and the knowable? By its fitness alone (τῇ ἐπιτηδειοτητὶ μόνῃ) as Philo said, even if knowledge of it neither exists nor will occur, as

7. In pre-Hellenistic usages I have located only the following two: (a) the Hippocratic Fractures 27, where there is a reference to τῶν ὀδοντῶν ἡ ἐπιτηδειοτης 'the suitability of the bandages' (Jones); (b) Plato Laws 778a 7–8, ὀδοθοδιόν ὅτε τις οἰκτέας κατασκευάσεσσος εἰς δύναμιν εἴῃ πλήρει καὶ ἐπιτηδειοτητὶ πρὸς ἐκόστας τὰς τῶν ἐρων παραβολήθεις. The non-technical connection here between δύναμις and ἐπιτηδειοτης is interesting in view of their later connection in Philo (v. below, p. 27), and among the Aristotelian commentators (v. Part Two below passim).

8. Absolute usages in the senses of 'friendly' or 'necessary' can be ignored for our purposes. It might be claimed that context makes it clear that all these usages are relative, i.e. that there is always some purpose which X serves if X is epitedeios. But it is more reasonable to describe as relative those usages followed by a preposition.

with wood in the Atlantic ocean that is combustible in itself and in its own nature? Or then are such things to be judged by the fitness that encounters no obstacle (τῇ ἀκόλουθῳ ἐπιτηδειότητι) . . .

(2) Alexander Pr. An. 184. 6–10: This view [of Philo] is expressed by mere fitness of subject (κατὰ ψηλήν τὴν ἐπιτηδειότητα τοῦ ὑποκειμένου), even if it should be prevented from existing by eternal necessity. So the husk in the grain or in the depths he said was capable of being burnt there, although restrained by what encircled it by necessity. . .

Although there is no precise parallel to these passages in Philoponus, he is clearly aware of Philo’s doctrine,12 and in one passage uses the expression employed by Simplicius – ἡ ἀκόλουθος ἐπιτηδειότης – as an antithesis to the Philonic view, in a discussion of Aristotle’s views on possibility in de generatione et corruptione B11.13 Thus both he and Simplicius try to establish the notion of ‘fitness’ conditional on there being no obstacle to actualisation (ἀκόλουθος ἐπιτηδειότης) in contrast with a bare or inherent ‘fitness’ (μόνη ἐπιτηδειότης) independent of any such conditions.14

Philo’s theory is interesting, then, in two respects: first, its semantic revision of the natural usage of epitedeiotes separates the notion of ‘fitness’ from any conditions of its realisation; and secondly, its use of this rare term at all, when the more natural expression of the idea in question would be in terms derived from δύνασθαι. The latter innovation introduces a new term into an area already extensively charted by Aristotle in his analysis of potentiality and possibility. Having seen that the Aristotelian commentators were aware of this innovation, we shall not be surprised if they employ Philonic language in

10. 'πῶς γὰρ δὴ, φασίν, τὸ αἰσθητὸν καὶ τὸ ἐπιστημὸν κρινέμεν; πότερον τῇ ἐπιτηδειότητι μόνη, ὅσπερ Φίλων έλεγεν, κἀν μὴτε ἡ μὴτε μέλλη γίνεσθαι αὐτοῦ ἐπιστήμη, ὅσπερ τὸ ἐν τῇ ‘Ἀθλαντικῇ πελάνει ξύλον καυστὸν ὅστιν δόθη ἐκεῖν ἑαυτῷ καὶ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστήμην; ἤ ἀρα τῇ ἀκόλουθῳ ἐπιτηδειότητι κρίτερον τὰ τοιοῦτα . . .

11. ἂν δὲ τοῦτο τὸ κατὰ φύσιν λεγόμενον τὴν ἐπιτηδειότητα τοῦ ὑποκειμένου, κἀν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐξεδεχόμενον ἀναγκαίαν ἢ γίνεσθαι κακωθῆσθαι, κἀτά τὸ ἄχρι τὸ ὑπό τῇ ἀκόλουθῳ λέγεται καὶ γίνεται ἐν τοῖς ἑκατέρους ἑυγενεῖς καὶ τοῖς ἑυγενεῖς συνήκριται . . .


14. This no doubt reflects Aristotle Met. Θ7. 1049a 5–8 which (as Owen, Scientific Change, p. 98 says) shows that ‘fitness, like the potentiality, is one of a set of conditions which are jointly sufficient for [an event]’. This was part of Owen’s criticism of Sambursky’s view that among the commentators epitedeiotes simply meant ‘sufficient condition for actualization, (Scientific Change, p. 73). What our observation of the term ἀκόλουθος ἐπιτηδειότης adds to this is that the commentators were aware of just that ‘Aristotelian’ sense of epitedeiotes which Sambursky would have them altering. In the texts examined in Part Two it will be obvious that epitedeiotes does not mean simply sufficient condition.
paraphrasing Aristotelian texts where δύναμις and cognate terms are used.\textsuperscript{15}

But first, I shall briefly examine the usage of \textit{epitedeiotēs} among the Stoics and Epicureans, although, as far as I can see, no technical usage occurs with them. In Epicurus we read of ἐπιτηδειότητες πρὸς κατεργασίας τῶν κοιλωμάτων καὶ λειτούργων ('opportunities for the creation of these thin hollow films', \textit{Letter to Herodotus} 46, trans. Geer) in the discussion of the formation of ἄδοκλα. But this is just the natural sense that we found in earlier literature. In the \textit{Letter to Pythocles} worlds are said to be formed from seeds that are ‘fitting’ (para. 89), and clouds from atoms that are various and ἐπιτηδειόν εἰς τοῦτο τέλεσαι (para. 99); while rain occurs when winds blow from suitable places (ἀπὸ ἐπιτηδείον τόπων), and is severe ἀπὸ τινον ἄθροισμάτων ἐπιτηδείον εἰς τὰς τοιῶτας ἐπιτεμψυχες (para. 100). Though we may wonder about the teleological element introduced into Epicureanism by these usages (we can compare Lucretius’s use of \textit{certus}), it is clear that they again are no different from the non-technical senses discussed above, and obviously fulfil no technical role in the system.

I cannot agree with Dodds\textsuperscript{16} that the Stoics took over Philo’s technical usage. The one passage in which the term occurs is worth analysing in some detail as it points the way to the assimilation of the term by the Aristotelian commentators. Von Arnim, \textit{Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta} III. 217 quotes Simplicius \textit{Cat.} 242. 12–15:

\begin{quote}
And the Stoics relegated fitness, as simply conceived of (ἐπιτηδειότητα ... τὴν ἀπλὸς θεωρουμένην) to the skills, but declared that with regard to the virtues a notable tendency (τὴν ἀξιόλογον προκοπήν) existed beforehand by nature – what the Peripatetics called natural virtue.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

Now this occurs in the context of Simplicius’s discussion of natural capacities apropos \textit{Categories} \textit{8} 9a 14–27. Apart from this passage the commentator uses \textit{epitedeiotēs} as a substitute for δύναμις some ten times in his note.\textsuperscript{18} Moreover the distinction between \textit{epitedeiotēs} conceived of ἀπλὸς and κατὰ προκοπήν employed in the report of the Stoic doctrine is made a few lines earlier by Simplicius himself,\textsuperscript{19} and seems solely to be formulated to accommodate within his general analysis the Stoic notion of προκοπή.\textsuperscript{20} The whole distinction cannot therefore be considered part of Stoic doctrine, and \textit{epitedeiotēs} cannot be considered a Stoic technical term.

\textsuperscript{15} V. below, Part Two.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Elements of Theology}, p. 344.
\textsuperscript{17} καὶ γὰρ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοάς πρὸς μὲν τὰς τέχνας ἐπιτηδειότητα μόνην ἀπέλιπον τὴν ἀπλὸς οὕτως θεωρουμένην, πρὸς δὲ τὰς ἄρετας τὴν ἀξιόλογον προκοπὴν ἐκ φύσεως προηύμεναν ἀπεφιέντο, καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ Περιπάτου φυσικὴν ἄρετὴν ἔκάλουν.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Cat.} 242. 5, 8, 9, 17, 19, 22 and 243. 3, 5, 11 and 14.
\textsuperscript{19} At \textit{Cat.} 242. 7–10: διητῆς δὲ οὕτως ταύτης [sc. ἐπιτηδειότης φυσική at 242. 7] τῆς μὲν ἀπλῶς, τῆς δὲ κατὰ προκοπὴν τινα θεωρουμένης ...
For the remainder of this note I shall examine only the usages of the three Aristotelian commentators Alexander of Aphrodisias, Philoponus, and Simplicius. They were, as we have seen, aware of the technical usage of epitedeiotes, and the latter two formulated an antithetical expression to it. If they employ the term widely, it is conceivable that they do so as a result of their awareness of this philosophical source. I shall not attempt to make an exhaustive analysis of their usages, but simply discuss enough texts to indicate its range. Only in dealing with Sambursky's thesis shall I analyse texts in detail. Since the usage of the commentators is largely parasitic on a given Aristotelian text, and is not confined to the description of Aristotelian concepts, I shall not offer any general analysis of the types of concept to which it is applied; nor shall I offer any rationale for its assimilation until our investigation is complete.

Part Two: The Use of EPITEDEIOTES by Aristotelian Commentators.

A. Alexander and Simplicius. First, then, we shall review some texts in Alexander of Aphrodisias' works. Here we find one group of usages that apply epitedeiotes to matter, both the primary matter of the elements and the proximate matter of an artifact. Thus at De Sensu 44.25-27 Alexander compares the relation of transparency to colours with that of substrate to properties: thus: πάσι τοῖς ἐν ἄλλοι περιφύκοι γίνεσθαι τε καὶ εἶναι ἔτι οὕτως ἐπιπεδείδεται ἐχον πρὸς το κατ' αὐτό εἰδοποιεῖσθαι καὶ ὅλη ἐστὶν αὐτῶν. — Here epitedeiotes is simply substituted for the notion of being in potentiality. We can also compare his description of ὑλικὸς νοῦς at de anima 84.24-25 as an ἐπιπεδείδειτις . . . πρὸς τὴν τῶν εἴδων ὑποδοχὴν. Not surprisingly we find an analogous usage in a text in the Quaestiones (Book II. vii) on the problem 'what matter will be if from privation it has an unqualified and unshaped character, but is qualified and shaped by form'. We cannot however be

21. Hereafter the noun will be discussed for the most part, because it occurs more frequently among the commentators and in all relevant contexts. We shall not catalogue usages of ἀνεπιπεδείδειτις for ἄδειαμα, since this would add nothing to our basic point about the significance of the usage of epitedeiotes.

22. This scholastic distinction serves our purposes, since Alexander, and the other two commentators discussed here, hold the so-called classical theory of primary matter. It is thus irrelevant whether or not this is Aristotelian.

23. V. Quaest. II. 7 (τι ἐστὶν ἡ ὅλη εἰ παρὰ μὲν τῆς στέρησας ἐχει τὸ ἀπόθεος ἁγνω καὶ ἀσχημάτιστος, παρὰ δὲ τοῦ ἐδοὺς τὸ περιστάθη . . .) 52. 28-30 and 53. 15; cf. especially the interesting attempt to distinguish ἐπιπεδείδειτις from στέρησις at 53. 9ff. The close connection between epitedeiotes and receptivity that we find in this and other texts is to be expected. Epitedeiotes in Philo covered the capacity of something to be affected. If the term is applied to ὅλη, this shifts the emphasis from matter's being in potentiality to its capacity to undergo affects. So Alexander can speak of ὅλη as δικτικὴ ποιοτήτον (Quaest. 52. 30; cf. 57. 22), or ἐπιπεδείδειτις τῶν ἑνωτίων (de mixt. 229. 28; cf. his de anima 5. 8). This pattern of usage seems to be a development of the Philonic use in an Aristotelian context. What has been jettisoned is the notion of epitedeiotes as an internal property—which was its raison d'être in the Philonic theory of possibility.
certain that this or any of the texts in the *Quaestiones* is authentic, although they may use typically Alexandrian vocabulary.

Elsewhere we find *epitedeiotes* used to describe the capacity of proximate matter to be affected in a certain way. In an analogy with the ὑλικὸς νοῦς a plain tablet is said to have a πρός τὸ γραφῆναι ἐπιτηδειότης (*De An.* 85. 2–3). At *de sensu* 68. 15 and 68. 27–28 a doctrine described by Aristotle as holding that water is ὑλὴν τοιοῦτην στενὸν πανσερμῆν χωμὸν (*de sensu* 441a 6–7) is paraphrased as [that smells occur in water] κατ’ ἐπιτηδειότητα τὴν πρὸς αὐτοῦ [sc. τοὺς χωμοὺς] τὸν τοῦ ἔδαφος μορίων.

Finally we find *epitedeiotes* used, as it was by Simplicius in his description of the Stoics (v. above, p. 6), to describe a human capacity: v. *de an.* 12. 25, or *de fato* 198. 5 where man is said to derive from nature a δόναμιν τε καὶ ἐπιτηδειότητα δεκτικὴν [τῆς ἀρετῆς]; cf. also *Met.* 401. 30, 34.

The preliminary conclusion to be drawn from the usages of this one commentator is that whatever its historical origins in Megaric philosophy, *epitedeiotes* is not used here technically. It is used neither frequently nor consistently. It can be applied to the Aristotelian notions of potentiality or capacity, but also to a non-Aristotelian formulation of a broadly similar idea. In fact it seems to function as an alternative piece of jargon rather than as a significant philosophical term. We can reasonably assume that, since it is not used by Aristotle, the Megaric usage inspired the commentator to employ the term, but only in a manner that debased its original philosophical sense.

Next we shall examine Simplicius’ usages of *epitedeiotes*. These are confined to his commentaries on the *Categories* and *Physics*. Surprisingly none occur in that on the *de anima*, one of their major loci with Philoponus.

We have already noted Simplicius’ use of the term in the sense of a human capacity to act in the commentary on *Categories* 8. This substitution as an equivalent for δόναμις in this text can be paralleled from several of the other commentaries on this much-discussed work.24

In his commentary on the *Physics* the term is used quite promiscuously to describe aspects of theories as diverse as the relation between the Platonic One and the Great and the Small (*Phys.* 222. 32), 25 and the sense in which Anaxagoras’ Νοῦς ‘governs’ bodies in the cosmos (*Phys.* 465. 21). Elsewhere it

24. Philoponus *Cat.* 143. 25–27; Ammonius *Cat.* 81. 10–13; Porphyry *Cat.* 129. 21–25 and 135. 7–12; cf. also Aspasius *Eth. Nic.* 5. 25 and 53. 12, and also Proclus *Theol. Plat.* 1. 2 (p. 9, 1, Saffrey and Westerink). This may well have been the most widely diffused sense of the term, simply because of its usage in this intensively studied work. It is the only sense recorded by the *Patristic Greek Lexicon*, ed. G. W. H. Lampe, where we have examples of two authors distinguishing *epitedeiotes* as a human moral disposition from Christ’s ‘real’ disposition: (1) οὐ μᾶλλον ὡς ἐξερευνήθηκεν ἡ ἐπιπετηδειότης, ἀλλ’ ἐοότα ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ ἑνοργής (Basil *Adversus Eunomium* 2. 17); and (2) Didymus *De Trinitate* I. 15, . . . ἐκθάτην . . . ἐπιτηδειότητι . . . , ἀλλ’ ἐοότα ἀναστάσεως. For an earlier example v. Clement of Alexandria *Stromateis* VI. xii: ἡ δὲ ἐπιτηδειότης φορὰ καὶ πρὸς ἀρετὴν, ἀρετὴ δὲ ὡς.
25. The ἐν has an ἐπιτηδειότης πρὸς τὰ ἀντίκειμα.
paraphrases Aristotelian descriptions of Nature's capacity for motion, and the capacity of bodies to be ordered by it (Phys. 289. 12 and 287. 13-14 respectively). It is also used to describe the capacity of bodies for self-motion, or their capacity to be moved (Phys. 1358. 22, 28). Finally, as with Alexander, the term is applied to primary matter (Phys. 690. 20).

This pattern of usage confirms the conclusions drawn from Alexander's employment of the term. The only way in which epitedeiotes itself is a technical term for either commentator is because of its origin in Megaric usage. Otherwise its technicality in the texts that we have examined is entirely parasitic on the technicality of the concept discussed by Aristotle. Such a term, which can be used to describe mutually inconsistent concepts, is better described, as we have done for its usage in Alexander, as a piece of scholarly jargon than as a technical term.

B. Philoponus and Sambursky's thesis on EPITEDEIOTES. It is against this background of informal terminological syncretism in Alexander and Simplicius that Philoponus' usage of the term, from which Sambursky derives so much, must be set. As far as I can see, there is no usage of epitedeiotes in the texts of this commentator that has not been noted in our earlier discussion. His usage is, like those we have seen, largely parasitic on the Aristotelian text. He employs it to describe primary matter being in potentiality (De An. 14. 16-18; G.C. 63. 17, 284. 7), and to characterise the capacity of proximate matter to be affected (G.C. 149. 10-14 and De An. 355. 27 [discussed below]). Also, as we have seen, he uses it, like numerous other commentators, to describe a natural capacity (v. above, n. 24).

In his commentary on the de anima he frequently uses the term to describe the capacity of the body to receive the soul. It is with this term that he expresses the idea that only a given body can receive (= has the epitedeiotes for) a given soul. It is around this idea that he introduces some empirical examples which Sambursky regards as evidence of his originality in articulating a mechanistic world-view. We shall discuss these passages in detail below (number 3). First, I shall examine the other texts that Sambursky cites (PWLA, pp. 107-109).

(1) de generatione et corruptione 149. 10-14. This follows a summary of Aristotle's point (324a 14-22) that the change from opposite to opposite can be described in two ways: a substrate can be said to be first A then B, or it can be said that the A-ness becomes the B-ness where A and B are opposites such as hot and cold. Philoponus simply offers an empirical supplement to this account:

26. The first of these occurs in a quotation from Alexander.
27. In addition to the usages at De An. 107-108 examined below — text (3) — we may note the following: (1) 141. 24-25, δει ἑπιτεδειοτος τοῦ σώματος πρὸς τὴν ἀποδοχὴν τῆς τούτου λυγῆς; (2) 183. 10-11, a similar statement with particular reference to the form-matter relation; and (3) 218. 18, 24, 28, with reference to the analogy (Aristotle De An. 412b 6) between the unity of wax and imprint, and soul and body.
Certainly the density of the matter often acts as a restraint on the change (κόλλωμα τῆς μεταβολῆς). For the black in the vessel of the kettle-fish often overcomes the whiteness of milk, while that in ebony does not. So the matter with regard to the change of opposites must be suitable (ἐπιτηδεῖαν) for action and suffering. 28

What the passage does show is that epitedeiotes is used here as an outgrowth of Philoponus’ awareness of the Megaric use. For as we saw above he uses the expression ἐπιτηδείστις ἄκωλτος to describe the contrasting form of possibility to the Philonic view, and it is just such a possibility that his example here describes. For he stresses that matter is only ‘fit’ when it imposes no impediment to being affected. It is in this nexus that the significance of the passage may lie, and not as the evidence of conceptual innovation. 29

(2) De Anima 355. 27. In paraphrasing Aristotle’s statement that διττός ὁ ψόφος, ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἐνεργείᾳ τε, ὁ δὲ δυνάμει (De An. B8 419b 4), Philoponus points out that the noise produced under given conditions is different. So the effect of striking a bell with wood differs from that produced by striking it with brass. Philoponus concludes: ὁμολογομένως οὖν δὲ καὶ ὅλης ἐπιτηδείστης τὸν πληττομέναν σωμάτων. Again this is a simple empirical point. At the most it has the interest of giving δυνάμει in the Aristotelian text a fairly basic empirical criterion. But this is no great merit, since beyond the Megaric sense (irrelevant here), there is no independently established philosophical analysis of epitedeiotes, 30 which would surely be necessary for Sambursky’s point (PWLA, p. 108) that the term expresses Aristotle’s distinction ‘more clearly’ to be valid.

(3) De Anima 107–108. At De Anima 406a 30–406b 5 Aristotle offers a reductio ad absurdum of the view that the soul is a movement. His argument is: if the soul originates movements in the body its movements may be inferred from the observable movements of the body; we do observe the locomotion of the body; therefore the soul must undergo locomotion, and must therefore

28. ἀλλάς τε καὶ ἡ τῆς ὅλης παχύτης κόλλωμα γίνεται πολλάκις τῆς μεταβολῆς· τὸ γὰρ ἐν τῷ ἠλέμον τῆς ὁμολογήσεως ἐκπερατίσει πολλάκις τῆς ἐν γάλακτι λειχάτησις, τὸ δὲ ἐν ἤμενῳ οὐκέτι. οὐκ οὖν πρὸς τὴν μεταβολήν τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ τῆς ὅλης ἐπιτηδείας εἶναι πρὸς τὸ ποιεῖν τε καὶ πάθην.

29. The case of the ink in the sepia’s bladder could have been derived from Aristotle de partibus animalium 678b 36–679a 30. As for the example of ebony, its imperviousness to physical effect because of its density is noted by Philoponus at Meteorologica 58. 30; and earlier Alexander (Meteorologica 212. 2) notes its incapacity to float in water. On the continuity of such illustrations v. below, n. 32.

30. An acute discussion of the Philonic concept can be found at Sextus Empiricus Adv. Math. IX. 243–245 in the context of an analysis of causality, where he poses the question of whether a thing’s epitedeiotes per se can be a cause. If it cannot, as Sextus argues, then the Philonic concept of possibility as ‘bare’ epitedeiotes (v. p. 26 above) collapses. Sambursky (PWLA, pp. 106–107) misses the significance of this passage as a criticism of Philo. It must be this, in view of the example of ἔξολον καυστόν – cf. the passages from Simplicius and Alexander (p. 26 f. above).
be able to leave and re-enter the body, and it must be possible for the souls of the dead to arise. Now this argument occurs in the historical and critical first book of the *De Anima* before Aristotle’s positive theory of the soul has been developed. It is therefore rather pedantic of Philoponus to criticise this *reductio* as not allowing for the fact that the soul can only move the body as long as the latter has the *epitedeiotes* to be moved.

Philoponus’ argument rests on the general principle that πάντα τὰ κινούμενα ὑπὸ τινος δείκτα πάντως τινος ἑπιτεδείτωτος οἰκείας (*De An.* 108. 29–30). Two specific examples of this are considered. (i) at *De An.* 107. 32–108. 5, the case of a lever that raises a wall; if the lever slips, the wall collapses. Two explanations of this are possible: (a) 108. 5–7 – by Aristotle’s argument that motion can be transferred among bodies moved, we would say that the mechanical pressure had simply departed, since the motion of the lever simply was this pressure (κατὰ μὲν ἔχλειαν ἥν ἔγνωσεν τὴν κίνησιν); (b) 108. 7–11, the explanation that Philoponus favours is that the motion of the lever can no longer affect the wall because the *epitedeiotes* of that body has departed on its collapse. In the case of the body-soul relation as that of mover to moved, we say that the body has a ‘certain capacity for life’ (δύναμις τινα ζωτικήν), so that once the soul has left it, it cannot re-enter. For the body has no longer any *epitedeiotes*.

(ii) A supplementary example, 108. 24–27, is the case of a door being opened by a stick. This is no longer possible once the door is unhinged, and has lost its *epitedeiotes* to be opened.

The general principle on which this argument rests is certainly original, though it seems to have been constructed not as a *theory* but as a *critical response* to the Aristotelian argument. Its life is entirely parasitic on this text. The consistent principle of psychology which this argument upholds is that a body has a certain capacity to be ensouled. Philoponus expresses this as a paraphrase of certain Aristotelian texts, as we have seen (p. 31, n. 27 above). What is happening here is probably that he is attempting to impose this principle on the whole of the *de anima*, and not recognising the *ad hominem* character of Aristotle’s argument which in no way commits him to a general theory about the independence of κίνησις from the capacity of bodies to be moved. The whole argument seems to be the product of an over-extensive scholastic reflection on the Aristotelian text rather than any significant innovation in theoretical mechanics.

Now these are the three main texts on which Sambursky bases his thesis that (1) *epitedeiotes* is employed as a ‘physical or technical concept’ (*PWLA*, p. 107); (2) that it is a ‘conceptual development’ of the Aristotelian notion of potentiality. (1) has to be rejected on the grounds that the technicality of *epitedeiotes*, where this means a consistent and rigorous usage, is restricted among ancient philosophers to Philo’s theory of possibility. When Philoponus’s full usage of the term is taken into account it can be seen to be non-
Philonic, inconsistent, and informal, and to indicate the employment of a piece of jargon rather than a philosophically significant term. (2) although *epitedeiotes* acts as a terminological supplement to the Aristotelian notion of potentiality, it introduces no new concept, and, as Owen has pointed out, does much to fudge the rigour of the original notion. Also, Philoponus himself, as we have remarked, offers no independent analysis of the term, a basic requirement of any theoretical innovation.

The only difference between Philoponus and the other two commentators that emerges from these three passages is that he introduces detailed examples where *epitedeiotes* is an integral factor in the explanation of a physical phenomenon, whereas Alexander and Simplicius simply paraphrase an Aristotelian text. But this constitutes no significant theoretical advance. The use of such examples was part of the school-tradition to which Philoponus belonged. We can find many similar examples being handed through generations of commentators in a wholly stylised fashion. Thus, far from being scientific they are anti-empirical, since they prejudge experience. Philoponus, whose commentaries are derived from the lectures of Ammonius, is firmly within this tradition. While in other respects he has a claim to being an important innovator working within the matrix of Aristotelian concepts, such a reputation cannot be founded on his use of such examples as we have considered, nor on his general employment of the term *epitedeiotes*.

**Conclusion.** Sambursky's error raises an important general question about the usage of non-Aristotelian terminology by Aristotelian commentators. As far as I know this topic has never been systematically explored, and so it would be unwise to expect the conclusions reached from this discussion of *epitedeiotes*.

32. V. above n. 29. One example might be the illustration used to refute the Stoic theory of total mixture. The Stoics held that bodies of widely different magnitude could totally mix, and illustrated this by the case of a wine drop mixing with the sea (v. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, ed. J. Von Arnim, II 479, 480, probably a challenge to Aristotle *G.C.* A10 328a 26–28). Alexander (*de an. libr. mant.* 141. 19–21) argued that if this happened then the wine drop would be equal to the sea, and vice versa, as only equals could blend. This is presented as the paradox of θάλασσα ἐν κυάθῳ at Simplicius *Phys.* 530. 24 in an anti-Stoic context. Philoponus *Phys.* 505. 24–25 presents it without any reference to the Stoics and similarly at *G.C.* 90. 16. In both the latter instances it simply supports the relevant Aristotelian texts in which the paradox of two bodies being in the same place is introduced (*Phys.* 209a 4 and *G.C.* 321a 7). It is not evidence of any interest in hydrostatics, any more than the examples we have examined indicate interest in mechanics.
33. A fact always to be borne in mind in assessing the originality of Philoponus. For the manuscript indications of this dependence v. M. Richard, 'ΑΠΟ ΦΩΝΗΣ', *Byzantion* 20 (1950) 193.
to be reproduced elsewhere. There is evidence however that our view that this term is nothing more than a convenient piece of jargon inspired by a single technical usage can be extended to some other terms used by the commentators. The main example of which I am aware is the use of the terminology of the Stoic doctrine of common notions (i.e., κοιναὶ ἐννομαὶ, φωσκαὶ ἐννομαί, προληψεῖς) by commentators in a wide range of contexts. It serves to paraphrase Aristotelian texts in which general assumptions (ὑπολήψεις or ἐνδοξα) are referred to, as well as to describe axioms. Together, these usages are contradictory, and in the latter case completely pervert the Stoic doctrine. Like epitaxiotes these terms have no philosophical importance and merely indicate a terminological syncretism.

This use of jargon should not be surprising. The authors in question were discussing and paraphrasing Aristotelian texts, and like modern scholars discussing earlier philosophers, use terminology foreign to the original author. Thus we speak of Plato’s theory of sense data in the Theaetetus without committing Plato to the full implications of that theory; the term is simply a convenient entrée to the text. It is something of this process that we can detect among the Aristotelian commentators, and, as I hope to have shown, it should be borne in mind when assessing their originality. Failure to do so can result in egregious errors, one example of which I have tried to correct here.

35. The evidence for this is very extensive. I hope to present it at some length in a future article on the Stoic common notions. I simply note one example of each usage from Alexander: of ἐνδοξα at Topics 70.21–22, and of axioms at Met. 317.34–35.
36. Which, whatever it was, can be uncontroversially said not to be a theory of axioms.
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