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Joshua P. Hochschild
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Metaphysics Through Semantics

The Philosophical Recovery of the Medieval Mind

Essays in Honor of Gyula Klima

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Joshua P. Hochschild • Turner C. Nevitt
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Metaphysics Through Semantics: The Philosophical Recovery of the Medieval Mind

Essays in Honor of Gyula Klima

Springer

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Preface

Gyula Klima's distinctive work recovering medieval philosophy has inspired a generation of scholars. Klima's attention to the distinctive terms, problems, and assumptions that constitute alternative historical conceptual frameworks has informed work in philosophy of language and logic, cognition and philosophical psychology, and metaphysics and theology.

This volume celebrates Klima's project by collecting new essays by colleagues, collaborators, and former students. Covering a wide range of thinkers (Plotinus, Anselm, Aquinas, Buridan, Ockham, and others) and various specific questions (e.g., about language, cognition, the soul, and God), it is unified by a common interest in applying historically sensitive, hermeneutically sophisticated, and logically rigorous philosophical interpretation to recover, and appreciate, lost perspectives.

Each chapter is published with a proper abstract, but for another reason, we forgo a conventional introduction summarizing the volume's contents: it would feel artificial. As a celebratory volume, collecting works from diverse scholars with varying points of contact with Klima's rich body of work, the collection is eclectic in style and content. Some individual chapters engage Klima's thought directly, others draw on his work explicitly or implicitly, still others don't reference him but address topics in one or another of many overlapping spheres of interest. What unifies the set of contributions is nothing more nor less than the inspiration of Klima's general "historical-analytical" intention, the concern to intelligibly reconstruct difficult fundamental ideas in the history of philosophy.

The volume is framed by two pieces which more directly expound and interpret the significance of Klima's intellectual project. At the beginning, a more personal and general appreciation of Klima's character as a person and scholar; at the end, a more detailed exposition of his record of scholarship, effectively an extended (though by no means comprehensive) bibliographic essay. By both we hope not only to introduce new readers to Klima's legacy but to honor the man who produced it.

Credit for conceiving this volume is impossible to give. Thankfully, while parallel lines don't meet, parallel conceptions can converge, and a critical mass of grateful scholars and former students eventually came to a common understanding and

decided to execute. Some specific impetus deserves recognition. Gyula has been blessed with first one, and then another, devoted companion in life—devoted enough to travel to conferences with him and share in his friendships with students and colleagues. Making sure we were planning ahead for an appropriate landmark birthday, crucial encouragements and providential intercessions came first from Klima's late wife, Judit, before she died, and then later from Klima's second wife, Agnes.

As for the named editors, our work was shared but not the same. The overwhelming majority of editing individual papers was undertaken by Wood and Nevitt. Borbely secured and supported participation from key Hungarian scholars. Hochschild primarily organized and coordinated between authors and with the press. All took great pleasure in the chance to honor their teacher and friend.

Emmitsburg, MD, USA Joshua P. Hochschild

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Introduction: In Appreciation of Gyula Klima

Joshua P. Hochschild

Évezred hanyatlik, évezred kel újra,
Míg egy földi álom e világba téved,
Hogy a *hitlen* ember imádni tanulja
A köd oszlopában rejlő Istenséget.

—János Arany, "Dante" (1852)

One millennium sets and one millennium rises,
Till a mortal's dream into that world will stray,
Till the unbelieving person recognizes
That mist-hidden Godhead to which he must pray.

(trans. David Hill, 2010)

What began as a peaceful student protest in Budapest on October 23, 1956 quickly turned violent. Soon many strategically placed buildings had become staging grounds for confrontation between communist and populist forces. Within days, a Soviet tank had driven through the maternity ward at Saint Margaret Hospital in Óbuda. So it was that on October 30, in the midst of the Hungarian Uprising, a midwife was called to a modest house on Bercsényi Street, and Gyula Klima was born at home.

Klima would pursue all his schooling in Hungary, completing his PhD in 1986 at Eötvös Lóránd University. In 1986 and 1987, conference presentations outside of Hungary impressed established scholars (most notably Stephen Read, Simo Knuuttila, Sten Ebbesen, and Calvin Normore), leading to fellowship offers in Finland (1989–90, and 1991), Scotland (1990) and Denmark (1991), followed by successive faculty positions at three major American universities: Yale (1991–1995), Notre Dame (1995–1999), and Fordham (1999 to the present). Keeping the last position part-time, Klima has recently returned to Budapest, now with an international network of appreciative scholarly colleagues, former students, and friends. His external accomplishments are a matter of a long publishing record and attested, directly and indirectly, in this celebratory volume, with contributions from many who have been privileged to engage with his person and work.

Invited to recount his own early career, Klima is remarkably humble and bemused by the series of accidents, chance meetings, and good fortune that set him on such a distinguished and enviable, perhaps charmed, trajectory. So it seems not inappropriate to focus on the coincidences at the very beginning—the philosopher's home-birth during a world-historic political confrontation—and draw from them three defining threads, woven through his subsequent work: the characteristic Hungarian temper of resilient, independent, and creative traditionalism; attention to the practical implications of first principles; and lastly, midwifery—at least in the Socratic sense, which is to say, the service of dialectic.

The three threads intertwine, yet each in turn can serve more dominantly: the first, to highlight some general features of Klima's style; the second, to summarize his scholarly project; and the third to highlight the animating spirit of his work.

A Magyar Mind

It is not uncommon to suggest that there is a characteristically Hungarian temperament, often traced, at least in part, to the distinctiveness of the Hungarian language. The historian John Lukacs (who emigrated from Budapest to the United States in 1946 at the age of 22) noted "the loneliness of the Magyar language," having "no relative among the great families of European languages" (Lukacs 1988, 65). Not only vocabulary, but grammar and syntax, isolates Hungarian from Germanic and Romance languages. Its structure is "agglutinative," which linguists also call "synthetic": a syntax strictly rule-based and conspicuous through added syllables rather than by inflections and prepositions. Lukacs links this to "the frequent linguistic abilities of Hungarians" (and we might conjecture that such a mother tongue would offer advantageous perspective in studying both Latin and formal logic).

Its grammar and syntax also gives Hungarian speech a distinctive sound. In appropriately musical English, Patrick Leigh Fermor described how in Hungarian "changes of sense are conveyed by a concatenation of syllables stuck on behind the first; all the vowel sounds imitate their leader, and the invariable ictus on the leading syllable sets up a kind of dactylic or anapaestic canter which, to a new ear, gives Magyar a wild and most unfamiliar ring" (Fermor 1986, 31).

Lukacs describes the language as strongly "declarative… rational rather than mystical, lyrical rather than metaphorical," which he takes to explain why "there is little that is sly and secretive in the national character" (Lukacs 1988, 110). The Hungarian literary scholar Antal Szerb, linking language to the style of the nation's parliamentary politics, said the Hungarian mind "tends to monologue, rather than to dialogue" (quoted in Lukacs 1988, 109).

These historical and cultural reflections are relevant because language is central to Klima's philosophical project, not only as an object of study, but for its range of persuasive power—a range that somewhat confirms, and somewhat challenges, Lukacs's comments on Magyar rhetorical habits. Klima's own writing moves comfortably between technical formalization and elegant, often poetic, composition.

And anyone who has heard him speak knows his playfulness with language, his love of elegant turns of phrase and vivid metaphor, and his careful enthusiasm, perfectly fluent in English but taking on a rushing intensity when speaking in his native tongue.

The "loneliness" of the Magyar tongue has also inspired an almost unsharable pride in national literature, especially poets. It was a reading of Sándor Petőfi's 1848 "National Song," an anthem for freedom asserting independence from Austria, that also roused students to begin what became the 1956 Uprising. Klima's personal favorites include Miklós Radnóti and János Arany, modern poets who yet confirm the Hungarian habit of preserving and persisting through suffering, mixing piety and melancholy, nostalgia and hope. "Many of the most enduring achievements of the nation consist of conservative efforts of recovery and rebuilding after its worst disasters" (Lukacs 1988, 110). Lukacs finds that spiritually, Hungarians are more conscious of "that blending of major and minor, of optimism and pessimism, of light and darkness that is, after all, the inevitable human condition, and also the condition of any culture that is worthwhile" (Lukacs 1988, 24). Preserving culture involves not only protecting against threats but also assimilating valuable contributions from outside.

Klima's work reflects this creative traditionalism. One of the first things one notices as his student is that he does not treat medieval thinkers as part of a past age, a lost curiosity. He once remarked that, as far as intellectual culture is concerned, the Middle Ages lasted in Hungary well into the nineteenth century. Latin was Hungary's official language until 1844, still spoken in the halls of Parliament even after that. And again linguistic and philosophical effects are linked: "[T]he Enlightenment, the Century of Reason, the French Revolution hardly touched Hungary" (Lukacs 1988, 114).

There is no denying the specifically Christian dimension of Hungary's extended medievalism. "The Magyars were a people raised to the dignity of a kingdom by Rome itself," Frederick Wilhelmsen wrote in the days following the 1956 Uprising; and the Sacred Crown of St. Stephen, signifying Hungary's 1000-year sovereign destiny, is capped by a symbol of that destiny's resilient source: a Cross, bent but not broken (Wilhelmsen 1980). While Klima has always embraced modern developments with agility—for instance, as an early adopter of the internet for sharing his work, and in his creative use of new technological examples to illustrate classical concepts—his mind draws strength from contexts usually thought long past, and he comfortably treats medieval thinkers, and their concerns, as contemporary.

This transcending of categories, or creative traditionalism, is reflected in a label some might attach to Klima's work in philosophy: "Analytic Thomism." The contested title can cover a variety of approaches, from Thomists seeking to engage analytic thinkers or using analytic approaches, to analytic philosophers willing to draw Thomistic arguments into contemporary discussions. Yet Klima stands apart in his ability to use resources from both contemporary analytic and medieval thinkers to illuminate each other, bringing both into genuine dialogue to highlight the limitations of each, without compromising the insights available in either.

For that matter *qua* "Thomist" Klima is rare among his contemporaries in not being primarily trained within one of the dominant twentieth-century "schools" (Existential, Laval, Transcendental, Lublin), whose particular preoccupations, and

sometimes idiosyncratic jargon, therefore seem less significant to Klima's students. Klima acknowledges several influential teachers from his formation in Budapest, but none of them Thomists: in high school, a chemist, philologist, and polymath, Dr. György Bánhegyi; for training in formal semantics, Imre Ruzsa; and as a model of analytic philosophy, Ferenc Altrichter. From János Kelemen Klima learned more history of philosophy, as well as an appreciation of Dante, and Katalin Vidrányi was a special influence in Catholicism and scholasticism.

This background suggests a culture of rigorous philosophy, philology, intellectual history, and historically informed faith, but not of Thomism *per se*. Studying Aquinas more or less on his own—and only somewhat surreptitiously, under Hungary's softening "goulash communism" that didn't end until 1989—Klima was formed not by any school of *Thomism*, but by *Thomas*, the philosophical saint treated on his own terms and as capable of dialogue with the most prominent contemporary thinkers, Catholic or otherwise.

Although he has criticized Peter Geach in some important particulars (Klima 2015), Klima was inspired early on by Geach's confidence in Christian theology's power to keep logic honest, and by his ambition to reconstruct a pre-modern conceptual schema. As an epigraph to the third essay ("General Terms in their Referring Function") in his early volume *Ars Artium*, Klima quoted Geach's hope (articulated in his essay "History of the Corruption of Logic") to achieve the "Paradise Regained" of reconstructing an Aristotelian semantic framework (Klima 1988, 44).

In this underlying hope of recapturing a lost classical framework, Klima has something in common with another philosopher known for bringing Aquinas into very different contemporary philosophical conversations. Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue* taught many to think of our moral discourse as a collection of confusing scraps and fragments; ethics is more coherent, MacIntyre proposed, if its questions are reformulated in terms of a once fundamental, but now abandoned, teleological framework. Where MacIntyre attempted to recapture lost concepts of practical reason through an alternative narration of the history of ethics, Klima seeks to recapture lost concepts of theoretical reason by bringing them into dialogue with whatever displaced them—confident that, if they were ever intelligible, a judicious application of analysis and argumentation can make them intelligible once again.

If for MacIntyre in *After Virtue* the most important tool for renewing the intelligibility of a tradition is narrative, for Klima it is logic. More specifically, Klima's project commits him to dialectic, applied to semantics. It is in these terms that we can review more properly some of his particular contributions to philosophy and philosophical scholarship.

Contributions to Metaphysics Through Semantics

One can certainly find in Klima a hint of the tragic story of decline and loss with the transition from medieval to modern philosophy, the "vanishing of substance," as he puts it in the culmination of his series of undergraduate lectures—a virtual

monograph introducing the history of philosophy—delivered for Yale's Directed Studies program (Klima 1993). But this is complemented by a confident hope in anticipation of recapturing these lost ideas. Hume, and his positivist heirs, have not had the final say in modern philosophy—certainly not in eliminating metaphysics!—and Klima finds in contemporary analytic philosophy a revival of interest in fundamental principles of reality that often approaches (although rarely in such terms) medieval concepts and arguments about essences, individuation, analogy, and formal causality.

So, a recurring, explicit intention of Klima's work is to make classical metaphysical ideas available again by reconstructing and defending the coherence of the kind of discourse in which those ideas could be intelligible. As he writes at the end of his article comparing the different "essentialisms" of contemporary analytic philosophy and the Aristotelian tradition, "the time is ripe for a radical recovery of our lost metaphysical tradition, yet this is possible only through recovering the language in which it is properly conveyed, uniting the formal rigor of contemporary logical techniques with the metaphysical vigor of the pre-modern tradition" (Klima 2002a). And he begins his major paper on Aquinas's semantics of "being," announcing that he is motivated by the fact that "the very *form of discourse* within which the substantive claims of that literature [viz. Thomistic literature about the analogy of being] as well as Aquinas's own claims are formulated is radically different from that of contemporary philosophical discussions" (Klima 1996).

Still, different forms of discourse are also present *within* scholasticism, and a central theme of Klima's scholarship is the historical shift from *via antiqua* to *via moderna* semantics, which he sees as neither unmitigated progress nor an incoherent disaster, but a set of technically sophisticated innovations which nonetheless often led to confusion, with interlocutors talking past each other rather than engaging in fruitful argument. To make sense of this, Klima's strategy has been to disentangle the metaphysical shifts from the semantic developments—and so a major contribution has been to highlight the metaphysical neutrality of the different semantic frameworks, allowing for a metaphysical nominalism within the *via antiqua* and a metaphysical realism within the *via moderna* (Klima 1991).

Thus Klima's work often involves developing traditional Aristotelian or Thomistic ideas in light of later insights and tools (for instance, scholastic supposition theory or modern formal logic), as well as developing the modern insights and tools in order to reconstruct pre-modern ideas (for instance, the existential quantifier, logical formalizations of supposition theory, and clarifications of the square of opposition). For this project of making different conceptual frameworks intelligible to each other, Klima has variously cited Kuhn (on "straddling different paradigms"), Gadamer (on seeking a "fusion of horizons"), and Wittgenstein (on learning to play different "language games"), all in favor of what can also be described as a revival of "scholasticism," that is,

> a new conceptual synthesis, comparable to the scholastic synthesis, namely, one which is modern without any anachronism, and yet an authentic, organic continuation of the traditional discourse, and which therefore is able to present the breakdown of this discourse over the past few centuries as a (conceptually) merely contingent historical episode (Klima 1997).

Thus in his various projects we find Klima comfortably engaging a variety of approaches, and it is no wonder that his network of colleagues and collaborators exhibits a diverse range of commitments, interests, and styles.

This synthesizing perspective also explains what might otherwise appear the paradox, or irony, of a philosopher with Thomist sympathies devoting so much attention to a late scholastic nominalist, John Buridan. Attention to supposition theory and its novelty in relation to "realist" semantics is, on the face of it, a challenging test case for bringing rival conceptual frameworks into fruitful conversation. Klima not only meets the challenge, he finds in supposition theory resources for a revised articulation of realist semantics, capable of being brought into discourse with modern formal semantics; and this, in turn, informs engagement with topics in medieval and contemporary philosophy beyond logic and language: theories of cognition, philosophy of mind, the idea of mental language, theological discourse, and of course metaphysics.

Klima often adopts a semantic focus that does not presume metaphysical conviction, not so much to avoid but to make possible metaphysical reflection. Thus, far from construing questions of "being" as linguistic or conceptual rather than ontological, Klima's strategy of focusing on semantics helps identify where there is metaphysical disagreement and how it can be intelligibly formulated. So, for instance, he shows particular appreciation for the relation of semantics and metaphysics in his reflections on the function of the copula (Klima 2002b; here he might enjoy another Hungarian advantage: the function of the copula is less likely to be taken for granted in the Magyar tongue, where it is rarely used).

But as this example shows, even in focusing on semantics, Klima is able to shed light on traditional (and sometimes apparently intractable) metaphysical topics even within Thomism (for instance on analogy, causality, and participation; the real distinction between being and essence and divine simplicity; the soul, illumination and abstraction), avoiding the ruts of established Thomistic arguments by focusing his efforts on making novel concepts intelligible—in themselves, and as part of an overall coherent framework—independently of and as propaedeutic to the development of arguments that could defend traditional theses as true.

More recently Klima has come to refer to this strategy as "historical-analytic metaphysics" (as he has named a recent book series), and he has become increasingly explicit that, at the center of his work to recover the intelligibility of lost classical notions is attention to the role of the notion of "form." Resisting translation into the implicitly static modern notions of "objects" and "properties," form is an active principle of intelligibility and being, and plays a crucial role not only in physics or metaphysics but in cognition and thus semantics. Form thus once helped integrate philosophical inquiry, and without it we cannot properly comprehend medieval arguments and theses. As Klima described it in a recent lecture, the notion of form is a kind of "conceptual keystone" holding together the elaborate scholastic "cathedral of thought" (Klima 2021).

In this respect, Klima's project with form in medieval thought is not only parallel to or proportional with MacIntyre's project on virtue in classical ethics, but more

radical and fundamental. Klima himself embraces the MacIntyre comparison, even extending and transforming it:

> Indeed, I'm following in [MacIntyre's] footsteps, while paradoxically walking ahead of him, which is after all possible if we are both walking backwards, as we are, *in history*. So, just to bore you with one more metaphor, in this strange scenario I can do two things he could not: I can *deepen his footprints*, while also *fixing my eyes on our present horizon*. I intend to *deepen* MacIntyre's footprints by digging deeper down to the roots of our contemporary predicaments, identifying the *historical-metaphysical* roots of the dismal scenario he identified in modern moral discourse. And I am *fixing my sight* on our current horizon both by taking into account recent welcome developments in the recovery of some aspects of the scholastic tradition, *and* by identifying what I think we can gain by a *full* recovery of this tradition, something that points us *beyond* this horizon… (Klima 2021, 2).

Intellectual Midwifery

Klima's strategy of facilitating metaphysical reflection through semantic clarification points to another crucial dimension of logic in his work: the role of dialectic. I earlier suggested that what narrative is to ethics in *After Virtue*—the means of reconstructing (without recourse to metaphysics!) a "teleological" alternative to modern confusion—dialectic is to metaphysics in Klima's overall project: the means of making intelligible a lost conceptual framework. As we have seen, Klima's aim in reconstruction is not so much to assert victory over other alternatives, but to learn to enter into, to occupy, and even to enrich, alternative frameworks.

Even more, dialectic trusts that, under the right conditions, we can find those alternative frameworks already within ourselves. The Platonic contrast of *mythos* and *logos* is not between supernatural and natural explanations, but between modes of persuasion. The storyteller is invitational, calling one to trust a vision proposed; the dialectician is maieutic, assisting one to recognize intelligibility in and from one's own participation in reasoning. It was thus not only an act of humility, nor as plausible deniability for the accusation of "teaching," that Socrates compared himself to a midwife. It was part of his understanding of human reason, as containing within it forgotten truths, or (in more Aristotelian terms) potencies waiting to be actualized.

In its Platonic development, dialectical exercise of *logos* even points to spiritual heights more mystical than conventional *mythos*: ideas themselves are grasped as traces of an original intelligibility, a transcendent Truth and Goodness and Being inarticulable in words, but the source and end of our participatory intellectual activity.

One might not know it from his most technical papers in medieval Aristotelian semantics, but Klima has a deep and sincere affection for Plato (and for the Platonist tradition, as in Augustine, and even the integration of neo-Platonic metaphysics in St. Thomas). Without compromising his commitment to hylomorphic anthropology, Klima admires the film *Shawshank Redemption*, which he interprets as an overt allegory of the Platonic soul's struggle for emergence into freedom from the

oppression of embodied suffering. A favorite Hungarian film, *Testről és lélekről* ("On Souls and Bodies," Ildikó Enyedi, 2017), depicts ennobling *eros* in the context of a dismal slaughter-house; its two main characters suffer potentially isolating physical limitations—his mechanical, hers emotional—but are inspired by a shared, and apparently supernatural, vision of spiritual union.

What Klima admires about Socrates is precisely what Plato always tried to depict in his dialogues: a rationality seeking communion with others. Argument is an act of friendship, not competition. Not every philosopher who loves to argue is as committed to the Socratic principle that we should be as glad when shown wrong as when shown right: either way we end up closer to the truth.

If for Klima *form* is scholasticism's keystone concept, *dialectic* is its architectonic practice: hence dialectic as the "art of arts" is a recurring theme of Klima's work (starting with the title of his first book), and he finds it especially well articulated by Buridan:

> [W]e should note that dialectic (that is, logic) is rightly said to be the art of arts, by reason of a certain superiority it has over other arts, [namely], in virtue of its utility and the generality of its application to all other arts and sciences. Due to this generality, which it shares with metaphysics, it has access to disputations that concern not only the conclusions, but also the principles of all sciences (quoted in Klima 2009, 8).

This vision of dialectic offers to unify intellectual pursuits, not in the reductionist way imagined by positivists and rationalists—by translating complex ideas into a simple conceptual framework—but by making ideas intelligible in and across conceptual frameworks. Dialectic is what makes it possible to evaluate different frameworks, not by translating one into another in order to eliminate it, but to understand and inhabit both and move between them, and beyond them, ever closer to the truth. The Gadamerian "fusion of horizons" does not resolve one framework into another, but brings them into genuine conversation—making them capable of enriching each other and thus transcending their own limitations.

So understanding dialectic as *ars artium* suggests more than that it is a foundation for all the sciences; it is also the foundation of society and friendship. Dialectic is a common pursuit of truth, not competitive manipulation. This view has a Socratic and Platonic heritage, and is reinforced by traditional Christian theology, but for even this function of dialectic Klima has drawn inspiration from the nominalist arts master Buridan:

> Dialectic, when applied in speculative matters or utilized in a speculative manner, is directed toward opinion; for both disputants aim at acquiring an opinion about the point of the discussion; they take contradictory stances, and each of them should produce probable arguments for his position, if he has any. He should also solve his opponents' arguments, if they also have probable solutions—and not in a litigious manner, just in order to win, but in order that both of them should assent, in agreement with each other, to the position that they have seen to have been supported in the disputation by more probable and less soluble arguments; and if they do otherwise, then they slip into a sophistic disputation, which often happens (*Summulae de dialectica,* 7.1.4; in Buridan 2001, 499).

Teasing out the political and spiritual stakes of this conception of dialectic, Klima glossed this passage from Buridan in remarks introducing a recent conference he

organized on “The Metaphysics and Theology of the Eucharist” (Budapest, September 2021):

> [T]he point is that *a dialectical disputation is not a zero-sum game*. It is all too often that we see the deterioration of such worthy discussions into petty quarrels, indeed, we shall see historical examples of how they can turn into something worse: fights, schisms, even wars (in which we know truth is the first victim), all for winning by vanquishing the opposing party. But a dialectical discussion is not for vanquishing one’s opponent: it is a win-win encounter for both parties, from which both come away with the prize of *deeper understanding*.

At stake in dialectic’s maieutic persistence is this commitment to the common good, the principle of friendship and justice—an implicit awareness of which permeates not only Klima’s philosophical project, but his generosity to students and his dedication to colleagues and peers. It would be hard to ignore the role of community-building in Klima’s career. From founding formal societies (the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics in 2000, and more recently the Society for the European History of Ideas in 2021) and establishing book series, to organizing international work groups, conferences and conference sessions, Klima has fostered networks of scholars not only in philosophy but in fields such as theology, cognitive science and artificial intelligence.

The good of dialectic points not only to political but to spiritual communion. No wonder then that even in sober technical papers Klima does not shy away from gesturing to the more mystical implications of Thomistic metaphysics, and its ascent to a simple God who transcends discursive reason. Indeed, only upon directly contemplating the divine essence would dialectic lose its utility, as even St. Thomas judged his own work to be mere straw compared to what he had glimpsed of God in mystical experience.

Until we are given such experience, dialectic rightly pursued can continue to help lead us to truth, Divine and otherwise, and to improve the human condition by fostering productive harmony between minds and hearts. Klima’s career testifies to the power of philosophy to overcome cultural, political, and spiritual isolation. Born in the midst of fragmentation and devastation from twentieth-century ideology and technocratic violence, Klima’s pursuit of truth has animated a spiritual quest, cultivating coherence and conversation across disciplines, across nations, and across intellectual history. In his noble persistence in dialectic, Klima’s efforts have not only left impressive and lasting scholarly resources, they have helped to build up a community of grateful fellow wisdom-lovers, friends inspired and humbled to join him in pursuit of ever-greater understanding of life-giving truth.

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Part I
Before Aquinas

Chapter 1
Pythagoras, the Philosopher and Grammar Teacher (Br. Lib. Add. MS 37516 *recto*)

István Bodnár

To Kornél Steiger, for all the years[*]

Keywords Pythagoras · Ancient grammarians on morphology · Epic language · *chreia* · Classroom exercises · Jokes · Autonymy · Mention and use · Vegetarianism

This paper is about a writing tablet.[1] It was acquisitioned in 1907 by the British Museum.[2] It is from Egypt, but we know nothing more about its provenience. It has been dated to the third century C.E., based on its lettering. This dating, which

*This piece has been long in the making. I first gave a talk on the basis of a first draft as the Annual Lecture of the Hungarian Classical Society in 2010, and at the close of the talk I marked the 65th birthday of Kornél Steiger. Then I presented a second draft in the Cambridge B-Club in October 2014. Now I am pleased that I can publish it here, with the original dedication to Steiger, the teacher who fundamentally shaped my approach and sensibilities, in a volume dedicated to Gyula Klíma, in remembrance of the years when we studied logic together under the guidance of Professor Imre Ruzsa

[1] I am grateful to Dr. Cillian O'Hogan, Curator of Classical and Byzantine Studies at the British Library at that time, for making the writing tablet accessible to me on 21 October 2014 and on 30 May 2015. I am also grateful to Professor David Sedley, whose comments on a penultimate draft saved me from quite a few errors. Needless to say, whatever errors remain are solely my responsibility. And, even more importantly, I would like to stress how much this piece owes to his fundamental insights in Sedley 1998a, b. As the continuous chain of references in this piece amply attest, Sedley's two papers served as the starting point for this piece; without them I don't think I would have gotten the joke of the *chreia*.

[2] 1907 is given as the date of acquisition in Painter 1967, 110.

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Kenyon gave in the first publication about the tablet, remained unchallenged for quite a while.[3] Only recently did Guido Bastianini and Manfredo Manfredi date the tablet to one century later (accepted by Sedley 1998a, 167 n. 1 and 1998b, 122; Andorlini and Linguiti 1999, 681; Bastianini 2003, 169; and Piano 2015, 381 and 382). As we shall see, however, the different dates assigned do not bear on the interpretation of the contents of the tablet.

The tablet is 415 by 135 mm; it is painted white on both sides; and both sides are ruled, or rather lines for both rows and columns are scratched into the two sides. After these rows and columns had been in place—in modern parlance: after formatting—the tablet split into two, and the two broken parts were joined together with dowels. These tablets were no throwaway items. Even if they suffered serious damage, it was worthwhile to repair them, and continue to use them even with the added inconvenience caused by the fault line that—as in this case—did not run along the rows of the tablet.

Both sides of the tablet contain grammatical school exercises. The horizontal lineation of the two sides is identical. Both sides were lined by hand, without a ruler, to contain 18 lines. The vertical lineation, however, conforms to the type of exercise on the two sides. On one side, which has been dubbed the *verso* by Kenyon,[4] there is an exercise of conjugation. Here the tablet is divided into six columns, leaving the third of the tablet on the right side empty. The other side contains the declension of a specimen sentence. Here the tablet has two vertical margins scratched in.

Accordingly, the two sides are already distinguished by the formatting. It had a word manipulation side, with six columns, and a sentence manipulation side, without this articulation into columns. Needless to say, this distinction could be overruled on occasion. Just as the fault line could not prevent further use of the tablet, one could write whole sentences across the columns, or if someone needed columns on the other side as well, these could be supplied in ink on occasion. Some such versatility is also evidenced in the case of our writing tablet. Even though both sides have 18 lines scratched onto the surface, the word manipulation side is written much denser: the pupil included 32 lines of exercises on these 18 lines.

The types of exercises on both sides are well known from ancient educational practice. Greek conjugation must be learnt so that the forms come automatically without effort. Anybody who has studied Greek (or for that matter, Latin) will remember those months of tedious rote of practicing all these tables. The other side,

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[3] Kenyon 1909, 29–30. The tablet was dated to the 3rd c. also by Cribiore in her extensive study of school exercises. See Cribiore 1996, 264 f. (item **364** in the Catalogue, a photo of the tablet features on Table LXI).

[4] Actually the order of writing these two sides may well have been the other way around: Sedley 1998a, 167 and 1998b, 122 show that "the tablet had already been repaired before the [*chreia*] was written on it," whereas Piano 2015, 381 f. observes that the side containing the conjugation of the verb *νικᾶν* in the optative and its participles in the nominative may have been written before the tablet was broken and repaired, because part of one of the conjugated forms apparently was located over the area where the tablet was fractured.

the one Kenyon dubbed the *recto*,[5] contains a *klisis*, a specimen of a well-known type of the *progymnasmata,* or preparatory exercises of rhetorical schooling. This is an exercise of sentence manipulation, going through the declension of a *chreia*, consisting in producing the declensional forms of the nominal group at the head of the *chreia* and the other parts of speech in the sentence co-ordinated with it, in all three numbers, and in all five cases (the vocative included) in these three numbers. A *chreia* is a single sentence that sets out a significant utterance or deed of someone that is characteristic of this person. Therefore, some of those declensions almost inevitably will produce rather bizarre outcomes—just as in our case, a sentence about Pythagoras. When we get to the sentence in the dual, it will mention the two Pythagorases. In the plural, there will be a multiplicity of Pythagorases. The aim of this exercise is not direct use of these sentences, but rather that the pupil should be able to produce without effort, and without morphological errors, nominal phrases embedded in complex syntactical structures.[6]

Apparently, as anyone can see from the transcript of Piano 2015 in Table 1.1,[7] the pupil writing here is still quite far from this proficiency. We should pass over in silence his typos, where he uses by mistake some other letter than the required one. The lack of the augment may also be assessed as such a simple mistake of lettering. The numerous minor mistakes in the dual forms should also surprise no one.

Even so, it certainly is over the top that in line 15, in the plural dative of the sentence, we read διδασκοντοις instead of the elementary grammar form διδάσκουσι. Line 5, the vocative singular, is teeming with errors. The pupil could not guess the vocative of the name Pythagoras correctly; the way he tried to put the two participles after the name into the vocative was not a high point of Greek grammatical education. At any rate, even if he could not suppress this urge, the vocative of διδάσκων is definitely not διδασκον. Furthermore, it is downright astonishing that in the singular vocative he employs—instead of the second person singular

[5] Note that Cribiore 1996, *loc. cit.* exchanges the order of the sides without citing a reason, and calls the conjugation side the first one, and the declension side the second one. Hock and O'Neil – perhaps under the somewhat confusing interference between Kenyon and Cribiore – locate the declension of the *chreia* first on the *recto*, and then on the *verso* (Hock and O'Neil 2002, 62 and 64).

[6] This can be true for the singular and the plural forms of the exercise. There was not much point to possessing the same dexterity with the dual. The exercise, at least in these lines, must have been meant "to show who is boss… by humiliating it [the *chreia*] into total submission," as Sedley 1998b, 128 stresses.

[7] In Table 1.1 I reproduce Piano's transcription with changes in the apparatus as follows: The remarks are in philologese Latin, and also in English. Piano's first apparatus is sorted out into two lists, a first one describing the readings of the tablet, and a second one correcting for the grammatical and clerical errors of the pupil. Here I also include Sedley's and Wouters's correction (Sedley 1998b, 125 and Wouters 2007, 150) for the incorrect vocative of Pythagoras's name in line 5. Furthermore, in the third apparatus, listing the different readings of modern editors, I included only the conjecture of line 5 from Wouters 2007, 150 f. I am extremely grateful to Valeria Piano for help and advice about the readings of the tablet, and for further comments on this paper.

Table 1.1 Br. Libr. Add Ms 37516, 1: transcription and apparatus from Piano 2015, 384 f. (from Wouters including only the conjecture of line 5)

1 \`ὁ´ Πυθαγόρας φιλόσοφος ἀποβὰς καὶ γράμματα διδάσκων συνεβούλευεν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
2 τοῦ Πυθαγόρου φιλοσόφου ἀποβάντες καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντος λόγος ἀπομνημονεύεται συνβουλεύοντος τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπ[έ]\`χεσθα̣ι̣´
3 τῷ Πυθαγόρᾳ φιλοσόφῳ ἀποβάντι καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντι\`ἔδοξεν´συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
4 τὸν Πυθαγόραν φιλόσοφον ἀποβάντα καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντά φασιν συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
5 ὦ Πυθάγορε φιλόσοφε ἀποβὰς καὶ γράμματα διδάσκον σύ ποτε συνεβουλεύσατο\`ν´ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
6 καὶ δυκῶς
7 τὼ Πυθαγόρα φιλοσόφω ἀποβάντην καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντε συνβουλευέτην τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
8 τοῖν Πυθαγόροιν φιλοσόφοιν ἀποβάντο̣ι̣ν̣ καὶ γράμματα διδασκόντοιν λόγος ἀπομνημονεύεται συνβουλευόντοιν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνω[ν] \`ἀπέχεσθαι´
9 τοῖν Πυθαγόροιν φιλοσόφοιν ἀποβάντοιν καὶ γράμματα διδασκόντοιν ἔδοξεν συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
10 τὼ Πυθαγόρα φιλοσόφω ἀποβάντην καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντέ φασιν συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
11 ὦ Πυθαγόρα φιλοσόφω ἀποβάντην καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντε σφώ ποτε συνβουλευσάτην τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
12 καὶ πληθυντικῶς
13 οἱ Πυθαγόραι φιλόσοφοι ἀποβάντες καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντες συνεβουλεύσθην τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
14 τῶν Πυθαγορῶν φιλοσόφων ἀποβάντων καὶ γράμματα διδασκόντων λόγος ἀπομνημονεύεται συνβουλευσάντων̣ τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέ̣\`χεσθαι´
15 τοῖς Πυθαγόραις φιλοσόφοις ἀποβᾶσ̣ι καὶ γράμματα διδασκόντοις ἔδοξεν συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
16 τοὺς Πυθαγόρας φιλοσόφους ἀποβά̣ν̣τας καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντάς φασιν συνβουλεῦσαι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι
17 ὦ Πυθαγόραι φιλόσοφοι ἀποβάντες καὶ γράμματα διδάσκοντες ὑμεῖς ποτε συνβουλευετιν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθ̣α̣ι̣
Readings of the tablet: 2 συνβουλευοντοϲ *corr. ex* συνβουλευϲαντοϲ 3 συνβουλευϲαι *corr. ex* συνβουλευϲθαι 7 *an* αποβαντην *ex* αποβαιντην *corr.?* 8 συνβουλευοντοιν *corr. ex,* συνβουλευϲαντοιν 15 αποβαϲ̣ι *ex* αποβαντοιϲ *dubitanter leg.* Kenyon; *sigma fortasse ex* το corr. (after the second *alpha* traces of a *nu,* apparently neither corrected nor washed)
Correction of errors: 2 ἀποβάντος ‖ συμβουλευ- *hic et passim* 5 Πυθαγόρα ‖ διδάσκων ‖ συνεβούλευσας *vel* συνεβούλευες 6 δυϊκῶς 7 ἀποβάντε ‖ συνεβουλευέτην *vel* συνεβουλευσάτην 10 ἀποβάντε 11 ἀποβάντε ‖ συνεβουλεύσατον *vel* συνεβουλεύετον 13 συνεβούλευον *vel* συνεβούλευσαν 15 διδάσκουσιν 17 συνεβουλεύετε *vel* συνεβουλεύσατε
Readings/conjectures of modern editors: 5 συνεβούλευες *coni.* Wouters, *probante* Lapini 11 συνεβουλευσάτην *perperam* Hock – O'Neil 14 συνεβουλευσάντων̣ *lapsu* Sedley 15 διδασκόντοις *lapsu* Hock – O'Neil (erroneously printed in 'corrected' text) 17 συνβουλεύετιν Sedley, συνβουλευέτιν Lapini (as a lapse of the student for συνβουλευέτην).

συνεβούλευσας—a form, συνεβουλευσατον, which with all its air of affectation happens to be a second person *dual* aorist. But the fact that we have a form that would be in order elsewhere does not mean that the pupil will employ it on that other occasion. Indeed, when it comes to the dual vocative form, the pupil has συνβουλευσατην instead, a form with the third person ending and without the augment. The third instance of the vocative, the plural one, is no better either: here, in the last line, we have a blurred συνβουλευτιν, again without the augment, and with a deeply troubling ending—instead of the second person plural συνεβουλεύετε or συνεβουλεύσατε.

Small wonder that the lack of linguistic and morphological competence on the part of the pupil gave rise to assessments, first in a summary way by Cribiore (*loc. cit.*), and then in more detail by Sedley 1998a, b, that our pupil may not have been a native speaker of Greek.[8] I leave the assessment of the competence of upper primary school pupils in third- or fourth-century Egypt to others. What I would nevertheless submit, already at the start, is that even a late fourth-century dating, and the somewhat limited morphological proficiency of the pupil, will not necessarily allow for the further claim, that one should correct the wording of the first line, because the pupil would also be liable to such elementary clerical errors of botching up his copying while writing down the specimen sentence itself. Instead, in what follows I will try to construe the *chreia* in the version as we have it throughout this writing tablet.

After this quick glance at the morphological dexterity of the pupil it is time we turned to the *chreia* itself. The text of the *chreia* is:

> ὁ' Πυθαγόρας φιλόσοφος ἀποβὰς καὶ γράμματα διδάσκων συνεβούλευεν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ μαθηταῖς ἐναιμόνων ἀπέχεσθαι.

Every reader of this *chreia* could take it for granted that the advice or injunction of the second half of the sentence refers to the Pythagorean ban on eating meat, a direct consequence of Pythagoras's signature doctrine of the transmigration of souls. Hock and O'Neil, accordingly, translate the sentence as:

> Pythagoras, the philosopher, once he had disembarked and was teaching writings, used to counsel his students to abstain from red meat (*Chreia* 55 in Hock and O'Neil 1986, 335 f.).

[8] Nevertheless, the debate about the native language and the proficiency of the pupil, between Sedley 1998a, 170 and 173 f. and 1998b, 125 and 129; and Luzzatto 2004, 174 f. with n. 45 (arguing that the native language could just as well have been Greek, and that compared to the intricacy of the exercise, the performance of the pupil is by no means so abysmal) is summarized by Piano 2015, 382. (Note, however, that Sedley 1998b expressly speaks about "the standards of comparable output from Egyptian schoolrooms," by which the student's accomplishment "may seem high-quality work." It is "by any absolute standard" that "it is not at all distinguished." Sedley 1998b, 125).

This translation was later revised, without further comment, into:

> Pythagoras, the philosopher, when he had disembarked and was teaching letters, used to advise his pupils to abstain from red meat (Text 15 in Hock and O'Neil 2002, 65).

Two remarks are immediately in order about these interpretations. In the case of the first, it is somewhat strange to suggest that Pythagoras, after disembarking in Southern Italy, started to teach writings—that is, his very own writings, as Hock and O'Neil suggest in their first translation (Hock and O'Neil 1986). First of all, as for the writings of Pythagoras, there need not have been any. But let us assume for a moment that a late *chreia* might be intent, nevertheless, to attribute the teaching of Pythagorean writings to Pythagoras. This would also imply that this late *chreia* does away with the fundamental distinction between *akousmatikoi* and *mathēmatikoi* among the disciples of Pythagoras. Fundamental to this distinction is that those disciples who were supposed to observe the Pythagorean way of life were introduced to this way of life through oral precepts, which they *heard.* Pythagoras did not need to recite these precepts from a written document for these disciples.

Perhaps such considerations—and the fact that the expression γράμματα διδάσκειν does not really mean the activity of inculcating one's own, or for that matter anybody else's, writings—could lead to the revised translation where Hock and O'Neil submit that "Pythagoras, the philosopher, when he… was teaching letters, used to advise his pupils to abstain from red meat." An additional minor point about both translations would be that Pythagoras did not admonish against the eating of *red* meat, but rather against eating the meat of blooded creatures—fish and poultry included.

Sedley's two seminal papers have eliminated these problems, when he submitted the translation

> The philosopher Pythagoras, when he had gone away and was teaching letters, used to advise his own pupils to abstain from blooded creatures (Sedley 1998a, 169 and 1998b, 124)

or even—after a discussion of the meaning of the adjective ἐναίμονες, which could not be captured in the translation above—the translation

> The philosopher Pythagoras, went off and became a grammar teacher, and used to advise his pupils to abstain from ἐναίμονες (Sedley 1998a, 176 and 1998b., 132).

We lack any specific indication where Pythagoras could have gone off, at the close of his career as a philosopher, or as a journey to a destination where his philosophical activities were suspended for a time.[9] What Sedley rightly calls attention to is that this *chreia*—like so many others—turns on the ambiguity of a phrase, or in this case on the ambiguity of two different uses of the same phrase. Pythagoras, while

[9] There are indeed some indications about Pythagoras's comings and goings. E.g. Chreia 54 in Hock and O'Neil 1986, 334 f., when Pythagoras, "being asked how long human life is, went up (ἀναβάς) to his bedroom and peeked in for a short time," or somewhat more hopefully, Aristotle fr. 191 Rose (Apollonius *mirab.* 6): "Pythagoras foretold to the Pythagoreans the coming political strife; that is why he departed (ἀπῆρεν) to Metapontum unobserved by anyone" (where, however, there is no hint about Pythagoras's taking up a different line of activity like teaching grammar).

pursuing the career of a *grammatistēs*, however briefly, still lived up to his previous renown. Just as he used to advise his students against the use—the consumption—of the meat of blooded creatures, here, during his life as an instructor of proper Greek usage, he advised against the use of the adjectival form ἐναίμων, –ονος instead of the correct form, ἔναιμος, –ου.

The crucial next step in formulating an interpretation of this *chreia* is to delineate the immediate intellectual niche giving rise to this saying. Hock and O'Neil in their interpretation do not introduce such considerations; they just refer to the Pythagorean injunction against eating meat. Before turning to Sedley's considerations, as an intermediate step I would like to consider an intermediary proposal. This is the proposal by Isabella Andorlini and Alessandro Linguiti, which is a sort of hybrid of the interpretations by Hock and O'Neil and by Sedley:

> Pythagoras, the philosopher, having gone away and acting as a teacher, gave counsel to his disciples to abstain from blooded animals.[10]

Accordingly, Andorlini and Linguiti accept that Pythagoras left the place of his philosophical activities, and it was elsewhere that he became an instructor, or a master of pupils. Or, more precisely, they suggest that the second half of the *chreia* submits that in this new place of his activities, as a good schoolmaster he revised his original *dictum* in the light of common linguistic usage. In this new formulation he spoke about a ban on the consumption of blooded animals, and not on the consumption of ensouled beings.

After this Andorlini and Linguiti turn to a discussion of where we find the presence of soul so strictly tied to blood, and submit that—although there are signs of such a connection in the *Pythagoras Vita* of Diogenes Laertius, where we read that "soul nourishes itself from blood"[11]—a passage in Leviticus in the Septuagint, and another in Philo's *De vita contemplative* attest that this connection between blood and soul is a characteristic of the Judeo-Christian conception of the soul.[12] In light of this, according to them, the *chreia* sets in sharp relief how the original Pythagorean precept was reformulated in the matrix of a new cultural environment.

Before formulating an alternative proposal, I should turn now to the intellectual environment as charted by Sedley for his reading. To some extent this is in accordance with what Andorlini and Linguiti submit: Philo describes, on several occasions, the purest and most distinguished human diet—vegetarianism—as

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[10] Andorlini and Linguiti 1999, text **91** (the translation is on p. 682): "Il filosofo Pitagora andato via e facendo il maestro consigliava ai propri discepoli di astenersi da animali sanguigni."

[11] τρέφεσθαί τε τὴν ψυχὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος· (D.L. VIII 30).

[12] Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 73, quoted by Andorlini and Linguiti 1999, 684, pointing to Leviticus 17:11 within the section 17:10–16, establishing the exclusive connection between blood and soul and establishing the ultimate ground for the ban against eating blood. Note, however, that this connection is not exclusive to the Judeo-Christian tradition. We can find a—temporary—injunction to abstain from the consumption of blooded creatures in magical papyri: Προαγνεύσας ζ´ ἡμέρας τοῦ τὴν σελήνην πα[ν]σέληνον γενέσθαι ἐναίμων καὶ ἀνεψε[τῶν] ἀπεχόμενος, ἀφ' ὧν ἐσθίεις, μέρος ἥμι[σ]υ κ[α]τὰ ἴσον καταλιμπάνων ἐπὶ τὰς προκειμέν[ας] ἡμέρας ἐν ἀγγείῳ καλλαΐνῳ, ἐφ' οὗ καὶ σὺ ἐσ[θίεις, ο]ἴνου ἀπεχόμενος… (*Papyri magicae* 4.52–57).