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AN OVERVIEW OF THE CORPUS PROTAGOREUM: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ON LAKS AND MOST’S EARLY GREEK PHILOSOPHY

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1. Introduction

A new edition of Greek philosophical texts was recently published. The Loeb Classical Library edited by Harvard University Press was published in November 2016 and included the Early Greek Philosophy nine-volume work by André Laks and Glenn W. Most (2016a) [abbreviation: LM]. This edition was published simultaneously with the French version in one volume published by Fayard in Paris, titled Les Débuts de la Philosophie (Laks & Most 2016b). The work establishes a new collection of
writing fragments of the early Greek philosophers; it is described as an update to the canonical edition of Diels and Kranz (1952) [abbreviation: DK] and incorporates new historiographical and philosophical perspectives.

Laks and Most’s edition requires a detailed analysis. For this reason, in this bibliographical note, I only propose a revision of the chapter dedicated to the sophist Protagoras from Abdera. First, I provide a historical overview of the construction of the Corpus Protagoreum. Then, I concentrate on the novelties presented by Laks and Most’s new edition with respect to that of Diels and Kranz. Finally, I make some concluding remarks regarding this new collection.

2. The edition of Protagoras’ texts: An overview

Modern philological works have tended to constitute the literary corpus that brings together the conserved texts of ancient authors, which serves as a fundamental tool for historical work. The modern Corpus Sophisticorum has been established canonically from the edition of Herman Diels’ Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, later enlarged and corrected by Walter Kranz. This corpus includes the Corpus Protagoreum as a “special corpus”. In this case, since I am dealing with an author whose work is not preserved, but we know about it through testimonies and quotations from ancient authors, the corpus’ conformation is of vital importance because it defines the universe from which the author would have given meaning to the world in which his work is inscribed.
2.1. The edition of Protagoras’ fragments and testimonies

At the beginning of the 19th century, Jacobi Geelin’s Historia Critica Sophistarum Qui Socratis Aeate Athenis Floruerunt (1823) presented the first “collection of fragments and testimonies” of Protagoras. As part of his attempt to reconstruct the life and work of the sophists from a work on the sources, Geel’s work would serve as a basis for subsequent editions. However, the first edition of Protagoras’ fragments and testimonies conceived as such was the one compiled by Ioannes Frei in Quaestiones Protagoreae (1845). Otto Weber’s Quaestiones Protagoreae (1850), resulted from work on the commentaries of Aristotle and expands the collected texts, which were philosophically reorganized by Anne Joan Vitringa in Disquisitio of Protagorae Vita et Philosophia (1853). These books constitute the most significant contributions to the study of this sophist during the nineteenth century.

In 1903, at the dawn of the twentieth century, the German philologist Herman Diels published Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker in 2 volumes, which constitutes the first corpus of philosophical fragments of authors prior to Socrates; this work includes as an annex a corpus of texts of the old sophistic. It was corrected and enlarged by his assistant Walter Kranz, whose definitive edition (1952) was considered canonical for the pre-Socratic fragments for a long time.¹ Mario Untersteiner’s 1949 book titled Sofisti: Testimonianze e Frammenti was primarily intended to bring Diels’ work closer to the Italian students, but his