

The Cohn-Wendland Critical Edition of Philo of Alexandria

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The Cohn-Wendland edition of Philo (*Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* [6 vols.; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1896–1915]) is familiar to any serious student of Philo, and I will merely sketch some of its valuable features. Prior to their work on this edition, Leopold Cohn and Paul Wendland had both made important contributions to our understanding of the history of the text of Philo. Most notably, Cohn had published a new edition of *De opificio mundi* as *Philonis Alexandrini libellum de opificio mundi* (Breslau: Wilhelm Köbner, 1889). And Wendland had published two books: *Philos Schrift über die Vorsehung: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der nachristotelischen Philosophie* (Berlin: R. Gaertner, 1892), and *Neu entdeckte Fragmente Philos: Nebst einer Untersuchung über die ursprüngliche Gestalt der Schrift De sacrificiis Aboris et Caini* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1891). Indeed, the comprehensive prolegomena to PCW 1, in which Cohn surveys much of the manuscript evidence for Philo, reads from time to time like an expansion of the prolegomena to his 1889 edition. And the indirect tradition of Philo, consisting chiefly of various catenae and florilegia, had also been used by Cohn in that earlier edition, as well as more extensively by Wendland in his *Neu entdeckte Fragmente*.

However, for their critical edition the editors undertook a much more thorough investigation into the manuscript tradition, and the prolegomena to the six volumes show their familiarity, usually on the basis of first-hand inspection and collation, with virtually all the relevant manuscripts known at their time. This includes not only the manuscripts of the works of Philo, but also the manuscripts that contain excerpts from Philo, as well as the manuscripts of the indirect tradition. And, of course, the editors are completely familiar with the quotations of Philo to be found in Eusebius and other early Church writers. The usefulness of the edition is enhanced by their division of the books into smaller sections (now the universal way of referring to passages), and by the very clear printing and layout. If one contrasts a page of the Cohn-Wendland edition with a page of Mangey, itself a magnificent accomplishment in 1742, one will see the difference that 150 years made in the understanding of what an edition should be.

But what I would like to spend a little more time on is considering some questions about the edition that have occurred to me during my decades of living with it.

1. What was the intended scope of the work? As far as I can tell, Cohn and Wendland make no statement about what works they intended to include in their edition. Cohn's long prolegomena in vol. 1 would be the natural place to say something like that, but he doesn't. One can see the problem by comparing their work with Mangey's. Mangey includes at the end of his vol. 2, after *Legatio ad Gaium*, first *De mundo* (2:601–24), and then a long collection of fragments: the extracts in Eusebius from *QG* 2.62, *De providentia*, and *Hypothetica* (2:625–47) as well as an extensive collection of brief texts from catenae and florilegia (2:648–80). Naturally, *De mundo* can be excluded, as not really being a “work” of Philo, and some of the brief texts are mistakenly attributed to Philo.¹ But I wonder about the other material. In the *editio minor* Cohn includes the excerpts from *Hypothetica*.² And Wendland had done so much work on *De providentia* that it seems strange that the Eusebian excerpts from that work would not have been within the purview of an edition that presents the “works that survive” (i.e., *opera quae supersunt*). Mangey's title (*Philonis Judaei opera quae reperiri potuerunt omnia*) does promise “all” the works, and comes closer in some ways, although certainly Cohn and Wendland give a much more accurate picture of Philo's works not only in the textual details but especially in Cohn's

¹One can see the details in my *The Spurious Texts of Philo of Alexandria: A Study of Textual Transmission and Corruption with Indexes to the Major Collections of Greek Fragments* (ALGHJ 22; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991), 171–79.

²Cohn and Wendland, *Philonis Alexandrini opera quae supersunt* 6 (*editio minor*; Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1915), 191–200.

reconstruction of *Spec.* 1–4. Mangey, though, does not go so far as to include the ancient Latin translation of *QG* 6, which was known and already published at his time. And it is difficult to imagine that Cohn and Wendland would ever have considered including the Armenian version, although the Latin version would have been well within their competence. But including “all” the Greek works, at least, would seem like a plausible goal. They had examined many of the important manuscripts of the catenae and florilegia, and must thus have done a lot of the basic work toward a collection of the fragments, simply by identifying all the citations that derive from the works that they edited and thus by exclusion identifying the ones that come from other works. On the other hand, I would note that when they survey the editions of Philo’s works that follow Mangey’s edition, the works that deal exclusively with the Greek fragments are conspicuously absent.³ In particular, they do not mention the collection of Mai, the publications of *QE* 2.62–68,⁴ the collection of Harris, or even the collection by Wendland himself. This absence suggests, but does not quite prove, that they were not intending that their own edition would somehow supersede those earlier collections of fragments, as it was, of course, intended to supersede the editions of Turnèbe, Hoeschel, and Mangey.

Although a precise statement of the intended scope seems not to be found, there are two tantalizing clues. First, in Cohn’s prolegomena to vol. 1 (1:lxxxii), he speaks of his and Wendland’s plan to publish a new edition “of all the works of Philo” (“omnium operum Philonis”). No doubt “in Greek” (“graece”) is to be understood. But then Cohn goes on to say that the new edition will follow the order of the works in Mangey, and of course clearly at the beginning of their project Cohn and Wendland could well have focused on the (more or less) complete works rather than the fragments.⁵ But following the order in Mangey might lead us to expect that a collection of fragments would come at the end of the new edition. However, there is no explicit listing of the projected contents.

The second clue is in the final volume 6 of the *editio minor*. There Cohn writes:

Editionis minoris operum Philonis quod in publicum proferimus volumen sextum bibliopola honestissimus ultimum esse voluit. operum igitur vel deperditorum vel armeniace tantummodo servatorum reliquiae et fragmenta nisi in editione critica non edentur. ea causa commoti libri Philonei *Hypotheticorum* vel *Apologiae pro Iudeis* fragmenta apud Eusebium servata, quippe quae cum argumentis librorum in hoc volumine editorum aliquatenus cohaereant, supplementi instar ad calcem huius voluminis addere constituimus.⁶

The very distinguished publisher wished the sixth volume, which we are publishing, to be the last of the *editio minor* of the works of Philo. Thus, the remnants and fragments of the works that are lost or preserved only in Armenian will be edited only in the critical edition. Consequently we have decided to add the fragments of the Philonic book *Hypothetica* or *Apologia pro Iudeis* that are preserved by Eusebius as a kind of supplement at the end of this volume, since they somewhat cohere with the contents of the books that are edited in this volume.

³See PCW 1:lxxviii–lxxxii.

⁴However, see 1:xxvii, where they cite the editions of these sections in the course of their description of Vaticanus gr. 379.

⁵In fact, it is clear that the “book” *De vita contemplativa* is really just a fragment of some longer work; note that in Mangey it occupies 2:471–86, and so is just about the same size as the Eusebian “fragments” of *De providentia*, which occupy 2:625–26 (one page) and 2:634–47. And both of these are longer than what might be viewed as the “complete books” of *De gigantibus* and *De sobrietate*. But these latter two are really only parts of larger works that have been divided within the manuscript tradition. The outcome is that the distinction between a “work” and a long “fragment” is somewhat arbitrary. What we tend to count as a “book” of Philo is, of course, influenced by the decisions of Cohn and Wendland.

⁶Cohn and Wendland, *Philonis opera* 6 (*editio minor*), v.

Certainly here we have the strong suggestion that the critical edition will contain the remnants and fragments. But if Cohn and Wendland actually had plans to continue their work, those plans were not carried through. Both Cohn and Wendland died toward the end of 1915, and thus the six volumes of the critical edition are all that remain. By the way I have looked at the *Nachlass* of both editors—Cohn’s in Berlin and Wendland’s in Göttingen—and have found nothing that sheds any light on these issues.

2. As I have moved toward completion of my new edition of the Paris papyrus of Philo (*Parisinus suppl. gr. 1120/1*), which contains *Quis heres* and *De sacrificiis*, I have often wondered why Cohn and Wendland did not look at this manuscript (their “Pap”) in Paris. They were well aware of the inadequacies of Scheil’s edition; see PCW 1:xliv. Furthermore, at one place they corrected Scheil’s edition from the published plates; at *Her. 14*, where Scheil edits εξαρω, Wendland correctly reads εξαγ(ωγη), which is Philo’s name for the second book of the Bible, stating: “cf. tabulam phototypicam apud Scheilium.” So they could surely have expected to find many more corrections in the papyrus itself. They did ask Carl Kalbfleisch, a papyrologist, to look at some places (see PCW 3:ix–xi), but that was only a very small sample, examined in a brief time. Apparently they viewed a papyrus as such an exotic entity that even with their extensive experience with manuscripts they would not undertake its thorough study. But they lost a great opportunity there, and as a result the inadequacies of Scheil’s edition have remained embedded within PCW for more than a hundred years. Of course, if they taken out a few years to study that codex, we might well not have PCW in the extent that we do. So perhaps they made a wise choice.

3. I have always been puzzled by the division of editorial work between Cohn and Wendland. Let us look at the chronology of the six volumes of the edition:

1	Cohn	1896
2	Wendland	1897
3	Wendland	1898
4	Cohn	1902
5	Cohn	1906
6	Cohn and Reiter	1915

We see that the first three volumes appeared in quick succession, after, of course, years of preparatory work. But then the pace slackens. This is not really all that surprising. We all know, in our own work and in the work of others, how an initial enthusiasm may dissipate. We can see this, for example, in the work of correctors in manuscripts, who often begin by carefully annotating discrepancies but then by the end of the manuscript make hardly any notes at all. We can also see it in the multitude of works that are left incomplete. Of course, with Cohn and Wendland we have the added factor of their life spans. Cohn lived from Jan. 14, 1856 to Nov. 18, 1915, while Wendland lived from Aug. 17, 1864 to Sept. 10, 1915. One can thus see that the publication of vol. 6 roughly coincided with the deaths of both Cohn and Wendland. Cohn dates his preface to the first half of vol. 6 to April 1913, while Reiter dates his preface to the second half of vol. 6 to September 1914, at the end thanking both Cohn and Wendland. And then Cohn added a brief preface to the whole of vol. 6, which is dated October 1914. The preface to vol. 6 of the *editio minor* (written by Cohn and Reiter) is undated, but the volume was published in 1915.

Now, if I am judging the interests of Cohn and Wendland correctly, it seems that Wendland would have been the more natural person to edit vol. 6. And if that had happened, we would have a completely symmetrical contribution to the project: Cohn would have done vols. 1, 4, and 5, and Wendland would have done vols. 2, 3, and 6. There are a few remarks in the prolegomena to vol. 6 that show that Wendland had in fact done some work on the material there; see pp. iii, xxxii, xxxiv. But for some reason Wendland’s main contribution ceases with vol. 3. And then Cohn’s own productivity slows down, so that eventually Reiter steps in to edit the last two books (*In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium*). In fact, in his preface to vol. 6 Cohn gives two reasons for the long delay in publication: his work on the German translation of Philo’s works, and the beginning of World War I. But I cannot account for Wendland’s status.

4. Following up on that issue, let me note the following. As supplements to their editorial work Cohn and Wendland wrote a number of articles discussing especially problematic places in the works that they edited. One finds these articles by Cohn on the works in vols. 1, 4, 5, and even 6 (published posthumously), and by Wendland on the works in vol. 2. Thus, an article by Wendland on the works in vol. 3 is conspicuously absent (along with any such work by Reiter on his two books). Again it looks as though Wendland finished vol. 3 and then just disappeared from the project, while Cohn labored on, even while slowing down the pace and eventually bringing in Reiter.

These articles are all conveniently listed by G-G; see the following:

- #845⁷ = Cohn on vol. 1
- #848 = Wendland on vol. 2
- #856 = Cohn on vol. 4
- #859 = Cohn on vol. 5
- #865 = Cohn on vol. 6

Observe, though, that Wendland did join with Cohn in making one further contribution (G-G #852) on Philo's biblical text.

⁷This should be *Hermes* 32 (1897).