In the late nineteenth century J. L. G. Mowat published a short note in the *Journal of Philology* pointing out that in the Bodleian’s MS of the *Dissertationes* of Epictetus there is an ink smudge (on fol. 25r) where all the other MSS have lacunae in several lines, leading to the conclusion that the Bodleian MS is the archetype for all other surviving copies.¹

The MS in question (Auct. T.4.13; Graec. Misc. 251)² was acquired by the Bodleian as one of a group of fifty bought in 1820 for £500.³ These all came from the collection of Giovanni Saibante. Little is known about Giovanni Saibante but in the early eighteenth century Scipio Maffei described Saibante’s library in his *Verona Illustrata*, reporting that it contained 1300 manuscripts.⁴ Among these were eighty Greek manuscripts, out of which came the fifty purchased by the Bodleian.⁵ We do not know where the Epictetus MS was before then.⁶

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³ The purchase is described in Madan (n. 2), 422. The fifty MSS are described in Coxe (n. 2), cols 774-812.
⁵ For further discussion of the Saibante MSS and their fate see E. M. Jeffreys, ‘The Greek Manuscripts of the Saibante Collection’, in Kurt Treu, ed., *Studia Codicologica, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur* 124 (Berlin, 1977), 249-62. The Epictetus MS is discussed at 259 and is no. 59 in Jeffreys’ list. This follows the enumeration of Maffei. Of the 30 Greek MSS not acquired by the Bodleian in 1820, Jeffreys traces their current locations where known and Saibante MSS can now be found in Florence, Paris, and London.
⁶ Jeffreys (n. 5) reports what is known of the provenance.
Mowat’s observation was built upon by H. Schenkl in his editio maior of Epictetus, first published in 1894 and revised in 1916. Schenkl took the Bodleian MS as the foundation for his edition and included a facsimile of the page with the ink smudge. Schenkl claimed to have identified the Bodleian MS as the archetype of the surviving tradition, although one of his reviewers thought this was grossly unfair to Mowat. When a little later J. Souilhé turned to prepare the Budé edition of Epictetus, the first volume of which was published in 1943, he took the Bodleian MS to be foundational, to the point of printing its foliation in the margins (as had Schenkl in his 1916 editions).

Since the days of Schenkl and Souilhé the study of MSS has benefitted from the rise of digital imaging. It is now possible to produce a wide range of images of texts such as high-resolution enlargements and infrared images. Recently there arose the opportunity to look again at the ink smudge in Epictetus and to see if, with the help of modern digital imaging, it might be possible to recover a few more words or to confirm or reject some of the conjectures that editors have made.

While the ink smudge on fol. 25r extends over approximately 15 lines, there are just 4 lines with letters that have proved completely illegible to previous editors (lines 11-14 = Diss. 1.18.10). Mowat, W. A. Oldfather (using Schenkl’s text as a base for his Loeb edition), Souilhé have all proposed different ways of reconstructing those 4 lines, while Schenkl simply marked the gaps without printing any conjectures in his text. Readers of Epictetus have had little independent evidence against which to assess the competing

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7 H. Schenkl, Epicteti Dissertationes ab Arriano Digestae (Leipzig, 1894). This editio maior was followed by an editio minor in 1898 and second editions of both were issued in 1916. See W. A. Oldfather, Contributions Toward a Bibliography of Epictetus (Urbana, 1927), 6-7.

8 In the 1916 edition the facsimile plate is mistakenly identified as ‘fol. 52a’ instead of 25a.

9 See the review by J. B. Mayor, CR 9/1 (1895), 31-7, supplemented with corrections by W. M. Lindsay, ibid., 37-9. Schenkl replied to what he considered to be a grossly unfair review in CR 9/4 (1895), 231-4, to which Mayor responded in the same issue, 234-5.


11 The occasion for this was a small exhibition of Stoic-related texts, including the Epictetus MS, at the Bodleian Library under the title ‘Stoicism and its Legacy’, displayed at the Proscholium in May-June 2013. Digital images of the MS (along with prints of the same) were made possible by a small grant from the Lorne Thyssen Research Fund of the Ancient World Research Cluster at Wolfson College, Oxford, very gratefully acknowledged here.

reconstructions. These 4 lines of fol. 25r, as printed by Mowat, Schenkl, Oldfather, and Souilhè are as follows:

Mowat (1877):
11. καὶ μισητικάν; [μὴ εἰσενέγχης] τὰς φωνὰς ταύτας
12. ἂς οἱ πολλοὶ [εἰκή ἐρούσιν]- τούτους οὖν τοὺς κα-
13. ταράτους καὶ [μη[σὴτους ἐλεύς]ω; σὺ πὼς ποτ’ ἀπεσο-
14. φώθης ἀφρω[ς οὔτως ὡς]τε χαλεπὸς εἰ; διὰ τί οὖν

Schenkl (1916):
11. καὶ μισητικὰν μὴ ἔ . . . . πης τὰς φωνὰς ταύτας
12. ἂς οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν φιλοφισογούντων “τούτους οὖν τοὺς κα-
13. ταράτους καὶ μιαροῦς . . . .’ ἔστω- σὺ πὼς ποτ’ ἀπεσο-
14. φώθης ἀφρω . . . γ. ἄλλως χαλεπὸς εἰ; διὰ τί οὖν

Oldfather (1925):
11. καὶ μισητικάν- μὴ εἰσενέγχης τὰς φωνὰς ταύτας
12. ἂς οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν φιλοφισογούντων “τούτους οὖν τοὺς κα-
13. ταράτους καὶ μιαροῦς μιαροῦς” ἔστω- σὺ πὼς ποτ’ ἀπεσο-
14. φώθης ἀφρω ὡςτε ἄλλος μιαροῖς χαλεπὸς εἰ; διὰ τί οὖν

Souilhè (1943):
11. καὶ μισητικόν τίς οὐ<ν> εἰ ᾧ<νθρωπε> <ἐί>να εἴπης τὰς φωνὰς ταύτας
12. ἂς οἱ πολλοὶ εἰώ-θας τότε λέγειν > τούτους οὖν τοὺς κα-
13. ταράτους καὶ μιαροῦς <ἀρον >· ἔστω- σὺ πὼς ποτ’ ἀπεσο-
14. φώθης ἀφρω <καὶ νῦν> ἄλλος χαλεπὸς εἰ; διὰ τί οὖν

On the basis of a fresh examination of prints of high-resolution digital photographs of the MS the following points may be made about each line:

The lacuna on line 11 remains illegible. Schenkl was probably correct to print πης afterwards and this accords with Souilhè’s reading too. The χης required for Mowat’s proposal of εἰσενέγχης adopted by Oldfather seems doubtful.

In line 12, again the lacuna remains illegible. Schenkl’s τῶν after πολλοὶ seems right and this may well be followed by φιλ (this is plausible but not certain), making Oldfather’s proposal of φιλοφισογούντων certainly possible. This counts against Souilhè’s εἰώ.

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All of the following observations are by Nigel Wilson, who very generously agreed to examine enlarged images of the MS.
In line 13 Schenkl’s μιαροὺς and ἔστω both look secure. It is not possible to discern the word in between. Oldfather and Souilhé offer different conjectures here, neither of which can be confirmed.

In line 14 Schenkl and Souilhé both print ἄφνω, which looks secure. However Souilhé’s suggestion <καὶ νῦν> does not look right, for there is space for punctuation immediately after ἄφνω. However, Souilhé’s ἄλλοις looks to be correct, against Schenkl’s ἄλλως. On the basis of what can be discerned, the most plausible reading here might be ἄφνω· τί τοῖς ἄλλοις χαλεπός εἶ; There is no room on the line for the µωροῖς added by Oldfather.  

Taking all of these observations into account, it is possible to discern the following text:

11. καὶ μισητικόν· μὴ . . . . . . . . τῆς τὰς φωνὰς ταύτας
12. ἢς οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν φιλοφοιγοῦν· τῶν· τούτους· οὖν· τοῦς· κα-
13. ταράτους· καὶ· μιαροὺς· . . . ἔστω· σὺ· πῶς· ποτ’· ἀπεσο-
14. φώθης· ἄφνω· τί τοῖς· ἄλλοις· χαλεπός· εἶ;· διὰ· τί· οὖν

Oldfather’s version of this passage, which is probably the most widely read, now looks somewhat harsh. If there is one word that stands out in his text of Diss. 1.18.10 it is the repeated µωροῖ. But there are no secure grounds for accepting the first instance and simply no room on the line for the second. The context of the passage as a whole makes Oldfather’s µωροὺς (supplied by Capps) in line 13 quite reasonable, if this meant to be the exclamation of an imaginary interlocutor angry at others. However the insertion of µωροῖς in line 14 not only does not fit in the space of the line but also seems contextually inappropriate, for here Epictetus is referring in his own voice to people to whom he has been arguing we ought to display understanding (they may be acting wrongly, but all wrongdoing is the product of unintentional error). Where Oldfather translates the final section as ‘but how is it that you have so suddenly been converted to wisdom that you are angry at fools?’ we might instead put ‘but how is it that you have so suddenly been converted to wisdom; why are you so severe to everybody else?’.

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4 In a note Oldfather reports that µωροῖς was ‘supplied by Capps’, presumably Edward Capps (1866-1950), the first American Editor of the Loeb Classical Library.