Platonic Receptions in the Second Sophistic

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

My dissertation examines interactions of three Second Sophistic authors (Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Ailios Aristeides) with Plato and his dialogues. Although the significance of Plato and his dialogues for Greek literature of the imperial period is well-known, there is lack of nuanced case studies attempting to uncover the mechanics and purpose of literary interactions with Plato. Scholarship tends to explain Plato’s presence in the Second Sophistic literature en masse as a socio-cultural phenomenon, interpreting Platonic presence in the Greek imperial authors as a cultural and stylistic statement on their part: as a means by which authors create their cultural identity and construct the cultural status of the present. Consequently, particular instances of the interaction between Second Sophistic authors and Plato frequently remain unexamined.

In my examination of texts by Dio, Plutarch, and Ailios Aristeides, I focus on their meaning and how it is shaped and modified by placing Plato in the background.

In the Introduction, I offer a broad picture of the reception of Plato and his dialogues before and during the Second Sophistic. I draw attention to the fact that by interacting with Plato, a Second Sophistic author located himself within a lengthy and complex tradition of Platonic reception. I examine different literary strategies by means of which Second Sophistic authors interact with Plato, with special emphasis on a literary
allusion and a dialogic genre as two ways of positioning one’s work vis-à-vis Plato’s text(s).

The three chapters of my dissertation examine different approaches to Plato and Platonic legacy. In the first chapter, I examine two dialogues which evoke Plato both structurally and verbally: Dio Chrysostom’s Charidemos and Plutarch’s Symposium of the Seven Sages. Both these texts make a considerable use of Plato’s Phaidon. I examine literary techniques by means of which Dio and Plutarch evoke Platonic text and ask the question about the function and significance of the Platonic background.

In the second chapter I focus on Platonic allusions in two non-dialogic works by these two same authors: Plutarch’s On listening, a work focused on philosophical education, and Dio’s Euboikos. The affinity of these two works lies in their choice of the Republic as a subtext; in my examination I argue that recurrent references to the Republic are a sign of an intense interaction with Plato’s views on education and politics as expressed in this particular dialogue.

In the third chapter I move to a slightly younger author and examine Ailios Aristeides’ To Plato: in Defence of Oratory, to show an author actively engaged in the discussion over the Platonic legacy and the values and perils that it involved.
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Introduction

1. The Divine Plato. The Reception of Plato before and during the Second Sophistic

The presence of Plato is ubiquitous in Greek literature of the first three centuries CE, usually referred to as the Second Sophistic.¹ It would be difficult to find a Greek author of this period who does not quote Plato, imitate Plato, or somehow refer to Plato. Platonic allusions may be found in a host of literary genres, such as dialogues, educational treatises, consolations, political rhetoric, sophistic performances, biographies, satire, and medical writings.² The immense popularity of Plato among the Second Sophistic authors was a result of several factors including the literary qualities of his dialogues, their preoccupation with the most fundamental issues of human existence, as well as the stylistic and linguistic features of Plato’s diction, increasingly more important for the authors of the imperial period, who subscribed to the form of linguistic purism.

¹ I use the term Second Sophistic in a loose sense to designate Greek literary culture between the middle of the 1st c. CE and the beginning of the 3rd c. CE. For a recent discussion of the term and its history, see Whitmarsh 2001, 41-45.
² For general popularity of Plato in the Second Sophistic, see De Lacy 1974, Trapp 1990. Plato’s authority in the literary circles in the first centuries CE seems to be paralleled by a growth in Plato’s auctoritas among philosophers (Sedley 1997).
called Atticism.\(^3\) The vast range of themes discussed in the dialogues – philosophy, ethics, politics, law, love, poetry, music, education, mathematics, astronomy, biology, literature, etymology, theology, cosmology – made his dialogues a well of inspiration and a point of reference for men of utterly diverse interests and mind sets, from the novelist Longos to the physician Galen.\(^4\)

Beside the inherent values of Platonic writings, the well-established authority of Plato, who is frequently referred to by authors of the period as “the divine Plato,” gradually became a factor influencing the frequency of the allusions and references to his works. The way in which an author referred to Plato reflected on his own self-presentation. In some cases, quoting Plato’s words was tantamount to a stamp of approval by a generally recognized authority. In Plutarch, a common literary technique is to elaborate on some theme, and then refer to Plato, who expresses a similar thought; the created illusion is of Plato “agreeing” with Plutarch. Disagreeing with Plato, on the other hand, was going against the current, a sign of one’s independent judgment – Ailios Aristeides’ writings against Plato are the most obvious examples of using Plato for this type of self-fashioning. Between these two opposite techniques there is a whole range of less conspicuous, more subtle ways of interacting with Plato and his dialogues – evoking and transforming recognizable Platonic images, echoing Plato’s phrases and sentences, mirroring some structural features of Plato’s dialogues, etc. By means of these literary


\(^4\) On Longos and Plato, see Hunter 1997. Plato’s presence in Galen and Galen’s relation to the Platonism of his times is a broad theme, recently discussed by Chiaradonna 2009.
strategies imperial-period authors engage with Plato’s ideas, sometimes playfully, sometimes in earnest, and frequently mixing seriousness with jest.

How did Plato come to enjoy such overwhelming popularity in the Second Sophistic? In the second century CE Ailios Aristeides saw Plato’s reputation as a relatively recent development. In his *Sacred Tales* he narrates a dream, in which he envisions himself approaching a building, which turns out to be a temple of Plato (*ST* 5.61-63):

Αὐτός δὲ ἐν τῷ προνάῳ γενόμενος ὡς τὸν νεῶν Πλάτωνος ὄντα τοῦ φιλοσόφου καὶ τὸ ἁγαλμα ἐκεῖνον μέγα καὶ καλὸν ἐστηκός, ἐκ δεξιὰς δ’ αὐτοῦ οὐκ οἶδ’ ὀστίς εἰστήκει. Καθήστο ἐπὶ τοῦ ὃδου γυνὴ μᾶλ’ εὐσκήμων, ἥ διελέγετο περὶ τοῦ Πλάτωνος καὶ τοῦ ἔδους. Συνεπελάμβανον δὲ τινες καὶ ἄλλοι τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἀμα ὡς περὶ παλαιοῦ διελέγοντο. Κἀγὼ τούτῳ μὲν, ἔφην, οὐκ ἔνεστιν εἰσεῖν ὅτι καὶ παλαιῶν· ὅ τε γὰρ τύπος τῆς ἑργασίας ἐλέγχεται νεώτερος ὑπ’ ἕν, Πλάτωνος τε οὐ πολὺς ἢν λόγος ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ Πλάτωνος, ἄλλ’ ὑστερον, ἔφην, προὺβη ἢ δόξα.

When I was at the entrance, I saw that it was a temple of Plato the philosopher, and that a great and fair image of him was erected there, and a statue of someone was erected on his right. A very beautiful woman sat upon a threshold and discoursed about Plato and the statue. Some others also took part in the discussion, and at the same time discoursed as if it is ancient. And I said “It is not possible to say that it is ancient. For the form of the workmanship shows that it is rather recent, and there was not much regard of Plato in Plato’s own life time, but,” I said, “his reputation grew later.”

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In this intriguing dream, Aristeides plays the role of an expert before the gathered crowd – a quick glance at the temple is enough for him to know when it was built. In fact, he does not even need to look at the temple, for he knows, from his reading we suppose, that the development of Plato’s reputation was a process extended in time, and consequently, that the worship of Plato did not go back to “ancient” times.

Aristeides had access to Hellenistic literature which is no longer extant; thus, his statement that the reception of Plato was a process extended in time merits our attention. However, it is necessary to remember that his own attitude towards Plato’s legacy is emotionally charged, as we can see from his other writings. One of the goals of Aristeides’ two texts against Plato was a de-idolatrization of Plato, which he perceived as his cultural mission, aimed at recovering vitality and independent judgment for contemporary literary culture. Nevertheless, Aristeides, seeing Plato’s reputation as a relatively late construct, questions the picture of an immediate acceptance of Plato into the literary pantheon and encourages us to provide a short overview of the process of the reception of Plato before the imperial period.

The reception of Plato in the fourth century BCE and in Hellenistic literature has not been systematically studied. The disappearance of much of the writings composed during this period is a serious problem for anyone trying to get a thorough picture;

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6 In my overview I omit the influence of Plato on the development of Hellenistic philosophical schools and focus on literary texts, though I am aware that the distinction between philosophical and literary is artificial in a culture in which “literary” texts were imbued with references to philosophy and philosophers wrote in a variety of genres and employed a variety of literary techniques.
however, some evidence exists. A unique feature of Plato’s reception is that his works almost immediately generated reactions in very diverse environments: philosophy, comedy, rhetoric, literary criticism, poetry. This is in large part due to confrontational nature of Plato’s philosophy, which was creating its identity – as a lifestyle, as a way of thinking, as a writing mode – in relation to other competing options. This feature of Plato’s philosophy, which questioned other lifestyles and other cultural and literary phenomena, locating itself not next to them but above them or instead of them, naturally triggered emotional responses. It was also responsible for their, for the most part, dichotomous character, their anti- and pro-platonic nature.

After death of Plato, philosophers associated with the Academy wrote a number of Platonic biographies, which were a source of stories and anecdotes which we know from imperial-period literature. According to Diogenes Laërtios, the story of Plato’s divine birth circulated in Athens already during Plato’s life.

The presence of a considerable corpus of pseudo-Platonica, encompassing spurious dialogues, letters (the issue of their authenticity is still a matter of debate), and a handful of short epigrams, testifies both to a fascination with and controversy around Plato. Some of the letters explain Plato’s reason for his involvement in Sicilian politics, indicating that Plato’s actions met with some criticism. The spurious dialogues are

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7 Riginos 1976 provides a thorough examination of the anecdotes concerning Plato and their sources. Watts 2007, 118, believes that some of them originated after death of Plato among the Academy members, who presented Plato’s personal legacy in a way that supported their particular philosophical approach.

difficult to date, but it is assumed that most of them were written in the Hellenistic period, some maybe even soon after Plato’s death, i.e. around the end of fourth and beginning of third century BCE (e.g. *Alkibiades II, Epinomis*), some as late as the first century BCE (e.g. *Axiochos, Halkyon*). Circumstances of their composition must have been varied; some of them might have been written by Academy members (*Epinomis* was attributed to Philip of Opos), others were probably composed outside philosophical schools. They are unique in extant literature on account of their employment, after Plato and Xenophon, of the Socratic dialogue format which in general seems to have gone out of fashion after the fourth century BCE.\(^9\)

But there is also a large amount of hostility towards Plato in many of the anecdotes coming from the Hellenistic period, testifying to the existence of a significant anti-platonic tradition in the Hellenistic period.\(^11\) We can identify four main sources of reaction against Plato: comic poets, philosophers, orators, and grammarians. The motifs for their criticisms against Plato are diverse. Comic poets, as Diogenes Laërtios informs us, frequently mocked Plato even during his lifetime: they amused their audience with

\(^9\) Guthrie 1978, 384.
\(^10\) White 2010, 371.

\(^11\) For a more detailed discussion of ancient anti-platonic tradition, see Theiss 1916; Fenk 1913; Geffcken 1928; Düring 1941, Chroust 1962, Riginos 1976. The term “anti-platonic tradition,” which scholars routinely use, is misleading since it suggests that authors of texts directed against Plato shared certain background, mental outlook, and motivation, which is not true. I retain the term, however, as a useful shorthand for texts directed against Plato, written by authors of different background and in different historical and cultural circumstances.
references to both Plato’s conduct and his obscure doctrines (Vit. 3.26-28), following Aristophanes’ presentation of Sokrates in the Clouds, which showed a comic potential of the figure of a philosopher. Comic mockery did not have to be based on hard feelings against Plato, but it shows clearly that Plato was a prominent and easily recognized person in Athens.

Two strains of anti-platonic writing originated in personal antagonism and rivalry between Plato and his followers on one hand, and other fourth-century BCE intellectuals and their pupils on the other. Plato was criticized by other associates of Sokrates, especially Antisthenes, who, as Diogenes Laërtios asserts, wrote a book against Plato; its title, with a pun on Plato’s name, indicates that it was an invective (Vit. 3.35; 6.16). Though the extant texts of Aristotle suggest that his criticism of Plato never went beyond intellectual disagreement, some of his students displayed a less kind spirit, for example Aristoxenos of Tarentum accused Plato of plagiarizing Protagoras and of planning to burn all the writings of Demokritos out of jealousy (Diogenes Laërtios, Vit. 3.37; 9.40). Anti-platonic anecdotes were disseminated later by philosophers with diverse philosophical views – Cynics, Epicureans, Cyrenaeans, etc., and we can suspect that they had roots in contemporary antagonisms between followers of Plato and philosophers of other provenience.13

12 However, Watts 2007, 109 discusses an anecdote which, if true, would suggest that there were some tensions between Plato and Aristotle. Watts also sees Aristoxenos’ attack on Plato in context of rivalry between Xenokrates and other Academy members, 119-121.

13 For the complexity of the reception of Plato in the Hellenistic philosophical schools, see Long 2006.
A reaction against Plato also emerged among orators. It is impossible to know the details of the relationship between Plato and Isokrates, however, we have evidence that two associates of Isokrates, Kephisodoros and Theopompos, censured Plato in their writings. Timaios the historian, according to Plutarch, slandered Plato (Nic. 1.4: λοιδοεσθαι). Zoilos of Amphipolis, a “Cynic rhetorician” known as Homeromastix for his vehement criticism of Homer, seems to have censured Plato in an especially violent manner. The attacks of orators on Plato were probably a result of both personal tensions between the philosopher and fourth-century BCE orators and of antagonism between orators and philosophers of Platonic provenience; the denigration of rhetoric in Plato’s dialogues must have been responsible for particular hostility of orators against Plato.

Finally, a separate reaction against Plato originated among grammarians and literary critics dedicated to Homeric studies, who felt obliged to defend Homer before Plato. Extant fragments of Herodikos of Babylon, a student of Krates of Mallos, are filled with enmity towards the philosopher.

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15 Both listed by Dionysios of Halikarnassos in the Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius, 1.16. According to Athenaios, Theopompos wrote a text titled Against Plato’s School (Deipn. 508c).

16 Ailianos VH 11.10.

17 Dionysios of Halikarnassos calls his work against Plato a καταδρομή, “an attack.”

18 Düring 1941.
On the other hand, extant literature enables us to track Plato’s influence on the Hellenistic poetry. Kallimachos’ famous epigram on a certain Kleombrotos, who “leapt from a lofty wall into Hades” after reading the *Phaidon* acknowledges the power of Plato’s dialogues. 19 Plato’s presence has been traced in the works of Kallimachos and Theokritos, who by means of Platonic images and reminiscences engage in metaliterary discourse. Hellenistic poets’ interaction with Plato, their allusiveness and a veiled manner of engaging in discourse by burying Platonic references in their verses, is reminiscent of the art of allusion we find in Second Sophistic prose. Plato’s political dialogues also inspired Hellenistic historiography and its discussions about government, as manifest in Polybios, whose theory of the mixed constitution, draws from Plato and Aristotle. 20

Our fragmentary evidence from the Hellenistic period indicates that different genres of Hellenistic literature engaged, both polemically and positively, with Plato, his dialogues, and his ideas; however, there is no evidence that between the fourth and the beginning of the first century BCE Plato enjoyed such popularity and authority as we observe in the Second Sophistic. The first century BCE seems to have played a significant role in bringing the revival of Plato. An interest in Plato’s style and language certainly increased with the rise of Atticism in the first century BCE. Demetrios’ *On Style* (1st c. BCE?), Longinos’ *On the Sublime* (1st c. CE?), and Dionysios of Halikarnassos’ works (1st c. BCE) all comment on Plato’s style. It is in this century that we see evidence

19 Though the exact meaning of Kallimachos’ allusive poem remains a matter of dispute (see White 1994, Williams 1995).

20 For the notion of the mixed constitution in Polybios, see von Fritz 1954.
of Plato’s extraordinary status. Longinos and Dionysios of Halikarnassos both attest that Plato enjoyed the “divine status” against which Ailios Aristeides would react in the second century CE. Longinos refers to Plato as τάλλα θείος Πλάτων (5), while Dionysios in the Letter to Pompeius acknowledges that attacking Plato is tantamount to impiety (1: ἀσεβεῖν). On the Latin side, we find Cicero referring to Plato as “divinus auctor Plato” and “deus ille noster Plato” (De opt. gen. or. 1.17; Epist. ad Att. 1.4.16.3). While Cicero, being a philosopher, by addressing Plato in such way indicates that Plato was for him personally a source of philosophical inspiration, Dionysios seems to reflect a certain tendency within his environment: a tendency to treat Plato as a figure of special significance, which is to be approached with piety and awe.21 In the subsequent three centuries Plato is regularly referred to as θείος or ἱερός by authors such as Plutarch, Galen, Athenaios, Iosephos, Ailianos, and – mockingly – by Lucian. The epithet gradually ceases to express an individual’s personal admiration for Plato and becomes a mark of an acknowledgement of Plato’s cultural status instead. It conveys the notion that, on one hand, Plato’s works are divinely inspired, i.e. that their composition required

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21 Interestingly, recent studies on Plato’s status in Hellenistic and post-Hellenistic philosophy indicate that in the first century BCE there was a parallel increase of interest in Platonic dialogues within philosophical circles. Sedley 1997 argues that Plato’s Attic dialect led first to his falling from prominence in philosophy of the Hellenistic period, which preferred texts written in koine, and then, due to the phenomenon of Atticism, to the revival of interest in Plato’ dialogues among philosophers of the first century BCE. On the growth of the authority of Plato among philosophers in the first century BCE, see also Boys-Stones 2001; Tarrant 2006.
greater than human capabilities; and on the other, that they exercise an extraordinary influence on readers. Ailianos in *On nature of animals* calls Plato “divine” when he refers to the cicadas-passage from the *Phaidros* (5.13). The epithet is related both to the inspired character of Plato’s account of cicadas and the power of the image which by the time of Ailianos became a part of Greek literary imagination.

2. The project

The process of reading Plato in the first centuries CE was framed by an awareness of Plato’s cultural status as well as the controversy around Plato. By interacting with Plato’s dialogues a Second Sophistic author was locating himself within a lengthy tradition of Platonic reception, which was by no means homogenous; and in relation to his immediate environment’s image of Plato. In my dissertation I will look at different approaches to Plato and Platonic legacy in the late first and second century BCE. In the first part, I will examine two 1st-2nd century CE dialogues: Dio Chrysostom’s *Charidemos* and Plutarch’s *Symposion of the Seven Sages*. I will look for what contributes to these dialogues “Platonic spirit” and what the function of Platonic structural and verbal reminiscences in these texts is. The second chapter will focus on Platonic allusions in two non-dialogic works by these two same authors: Plutarch’s *On listening*, a work focused on philosophical education, and Dio’s *Euboikos*. The affinity of these two works lies in their choice of the *Republic* as a subtext; in my examination I will argue that recurrent references to the *Republic* are a sign of an intense interaction with Plato’s views on education and politics as expressed in this particular dialogue. Finally,
in the third chapter I will move to the second century CE, and to Aristeides’ *To Plato: in defence of oratory*, to show an author actively engaged in the discussion over the Platonic legacy and the values and perils that it involved. In the following pages, I will provide a background for the three chapters of my dissertation.

3. The “Platonic genre”? Writing dialogues in the Second Sophistic.

The first chapter of the dissertation examines two dialogues composed around the beginning of the second century CE: Dio Chrysostom’s *Charidemos* and Plutarch’s *Symposion of the Seven Sages*. The main question which I would like to tackle before I offer my reading of these two texts and their authors’ interactions with Plato is what it meant to write a dialogue in the first and second century CE. Was the very fact of writing a dialogue indicative of the author’s interaction with Platonic legacy? Was there a typology of dialogic works? Was the “Platonic format” of certain dialogic compositions a conscious choice by their authors or a natural outcome of their decision to write a dialogue in the first place?

Dialogue, a prose text which is a literary representation of a conversation between two or more interlocutors, develops in Greek literature in the fourth century BCE in the form of *Sokratikoi logoi* – written accounts of Sokrates’ conversations with his contemporaries. Though Plato was probably not the inventor of the dialogue form, which was being practiced in the fourth century BCE by other Socratics as well, his
works by large overshadowed their enterprises. Though at times we speak of the “Platonic dialogue” as if Plato’s texts displayed a uniform structure, the Platonic corpus includes a great variety of dialogic formats. As Plato was not writing in a genre with a long-established tradition and consequently was not bound by generic principles, he freely experimented with the dialogic structure, the dramatic element and its relationship to the philosophical message, narration patterns, characterization of interlocutors, the balance between the historical and the fictitious, the balance between a speech and interpersonal exchange, etc.

We know that in the fourth century BCE numerous Academic and Peripatetic philosophers wrote dialogues – Aristotle, Herakleides of Pontos, Klearchos, Dikaiarchos, Praxiphanes, to name just a few; unfortunately, none of their compositions has reached us. In this period, dialogue moved further from the Sokratikoi logoi and underwent transformation and diversification. Aristotle has introduced a dialogue which involved, among other contemporary characters, the author himself, and which consisted for the

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22 A good examination of the remains of the works of other Socratics is offered by Kahn 1996. Rutherford 1995, 10-16, discusses the beginnings of the literary dialogue and the problematic nature of the evidence. As a general history of the genre of dialogue in antiquity, Hirzel 1895 remains the most comprehensive study.

23 There are several recent studies which examine different aspects of Plato’s dramatic art, e.g. Nightingale 1995 which examines Plato’s appropriation and transformation of various literary genres in dialogues; Blondell 2002 which focuses on interlocutors, their characterization, and dynamic relations between them.

24 For some thoughts on practicing dialogue in the fourth century BCE see White 2010, 371. For a more detailed examination of the evidence consult Hirzel 1895, vol. 2, 272-351.
most part of a presentation of philosophical doctrine. Herakleides, on the other hand, located the action of a dialogue in the past, introduced a variety of historical figures as interlocutors, and involved a substantial amount of anecdotes.\textsuperscript{25} The variety of dialogue formats which we observe in the Second Sophistic has roots in this period.

Apart from Pseudo-Platonic dialogues, the only extant ancient dialogues that were written between Plato and the first-century CE authors (Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom) are in Latin. Cicero composed numerous dialogues, some of them concerned with philosophical questions, some with rhetorical theory. They vary in format; some of them represent Roman statesmen of the past in conversation, while some depict Cicero and his friends, indicating that Cicero was carefully choosing a dialogue type that best suited the theme and purpose of the particular work. Varro’s \textit{On agriculture} manages to fit into the dialogic format a systematical exposition of its subject matter. In the first century BCE dialogue appears also as a topic of a theoretical reflection.\textsuperscript{26}

In the first and second century CE there is a significant interest in dialogue in Greek literature. Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, the two prolific authors of the period, composed a considerable number of dialogues, which allow us to examine the character and status of the genre in Greek literature at this point. A short glance through the works of the two authors made an extensive use of the existing variety of the dialogic forms and explored their potential. Dio’s dialogues are, for the most part, of two kinds. Some of

\textsuperscript{25} On Herakleides’ contribution to the development of dialogue, see Dillon 2003, 207; Fox 2009.

\textsuperscript{26} Aygon 2002, 199-202, examines ancient reflections on dialogue from Demetrios’ \textit{On style} to Quintilian and Suetonius.
them are set in the past, with the interlocutors being well-known historical or mythological figures with strong, vivid personalities (e.g. 2: Alexander and Philip, 4: Alexander and Diogenes the Cynic, 58: Achilles and Cheiron, 59: Odysseus and Philoktetes). These dialogues focus on revealing the personalities of the interlocutors and the dynamics of the conversation are propelled by the contrasting qualities and opinions of the characters. These works are preoccupied with the virtues and have a strong moral undertone.

The other group of Dio’s dialogues consists of contemporary conversations, focusing on a specific issue, usually of a moral or popular philosophical nature (14: on slavery, 21: on beauty, 23: on the happiness of the sage, 25: on the guardian spirit, 26: on deliberation, 55: on Homer and Sokrates, 56: on Agamemnon or on kingship; 61: on Chryseis, 67: on popular opinion, 70: on philosophy, 74: on distrust, 77-8: on envy). Some of them begin and end abruptly, and lack an elaborated literary frame; their interlocutors are not identified within the conversation by name, and there is a lack of balance between them: one of them for the most part only asks questions and expresses his doubt or assent, while the other, dominant figure, expounds his thoughts on the subject (e.g. 23, 25, 67, 74; the speakers are labeled in the translations as “Dio” and “Interlocutor”). In these dialogues there is little concern with ethopoia; the focus is on the argument. Some of Dio’s “contemporary” dialogues have a more developed dramatic frame and some amount of characterization, such as oration 28 (Melankomas II) or 15 (which reports an “overheard” discussion of two men on slavery and freedom).
Plutarch’s dialogues differ significantly from Dio’s. While Dio likes the dynamics of a conversation between two interlocutors (be that mythological, historical, or contemporary), Plutarch’s dialogues frequently involve a multitude of speakers, with a variety of temperaments and opinions on display. Most of Plutarch’s dialogues are placed in a contemporary setting (the *Symposion of the Seven Sages* and *On the daimonion of Sokrates* being exceptions), but unlike in Dio’s texts the interlocutors’ identities, who are frequently Plutarch’s friends and family members, are revealed. Moreover, there are some characters who appear in several dialogues. Some of Plutarch’s dialogues have a significant plot component (e.g. *Dialogue on love, On the daimonion of Sokrates, Symposion of the Seven Sages*), and for this reason show affinity with dramatic genres. Among Plutarch’s works there are dialogues which focus on one particular theme and dialogues which move swiftly from subject to subject; short dialogues and dialogues consisting of many books; dialogues preceded by introductions and addressed to a particular person and dialogues beginning in the middle of a conversation; narrated dialogues and recorded dialogues; there is a hilarious *Gryllos*, in which Odysseus converses with a swine; and a philosophical dialogue against the teachings of Epikouros.

By the first century CE dialogue, as a genre, has developed several different forms. The very process of writing a dialogue did not necessarily entail a close interaction with Plato, and both Plutarch and Dio created dialogues with little Platonic

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27 On Plutarch as a writer of dialogues, see Lamberton 2001, 146-187.

28 For the dramatic character of Plutarch’s dialogues and their affinity with tragedy and comedy, see Barigazzi 1988; for comic elements in Plutarch’s dialogues, Zanetto 2000.
presence. But there are some dialogues by Dio and Plutarch which have a very distinct Platonic character: which consistently evoke Plato both structurally and verbally. One of them is Dio’s Charidemos, which I will examine in the first chapter. It is an anomaly among Dio’s dialogues for its extensive use of Platonic material, which makes it seem an “imitation” or “adaptation” of Plato’s Phaidon. I propose that we do not take this format for granted, but ask the question what the purpose of Dio’s “imitative” strategy is: why the author chose to interact so closely with Plato’s specific dialogue in this text.

The other “Platonic dialogue,” which I will examine in the first chapter, is Plutarch’s Symposion of the Seven Sages. It is one of several dialogues of Plutarch with a conspicuous Plato’s presence, but it was not studied for its interaction with Plato.29

4. Literary allusiveness and the Second Sophistic.

Examination of the different modes of evoking Plato in Second Sophistic dialogic works leads us to the broad issue of literary allusiveness of the literature of this period. In general, the term “literary allusion” denotes an indirect, veiled reference by which a text refers the reader to another text; it is a literary device that activates the reader’s knowledge of another text. Such veiled references to texts of canonical authors are common in the Second Sophistic authors, and indirect references to Plato’s dialogues are especially frequent. Allusions may be more or less covert, and there is always some negotiation between concealment (“indirectness”) and the act of pointing, referring the

29 As was, for example, Plutarch’s Dialogue on love (Fleury 2007, Rist 2001).
reader to another work of literature.\textsuperscript{30} It has been observed that there is something ludic and gamelike in the nature of allusion, which expects the reader to “fill in the missing pieces of a puzzle”; this involvement in the process of completing the meaning is a source of pleasure.\textsuperscript{31} Allusion has been called a secret code, which strengthens the connection between the author and the audience.\textsuperscript{32} But allusion also discriminates between different types of readers, favoring the diligent and erudite ones against the hasty and superficial ones.

In antiquity, literary allusion was a highly developed and sophisticated device, capable of producing all sorts of meanings. In his typology of allusions present in Vergil’s \textit{Georgics}, Thomas distinguished between different kinds of literary allusions.\textsuperscript{33} The two which are of special interest for a reader of the Greek prose are what Thomas

\textsuperscript{30} Stewart, 1980, 1128, calls allusion “a reading of tradition, simultaneously a revelation and a concealment by which tradition is manufactured.”

\textsuperscript{31} Irwin 2001, 292; Irwin 2002, 523-4: „we derive pleasure from understanding allusions in a way we do not from understanding straightforward statements.” Cf. Thomas 1986, 172, who rejects the term “allusion” because of its associations with playfulness: “I hope it will become clear in the pages to come that Virgil is not so much "playing" with his models, but constantly intends that his reader be "sent back" to them, consulting them through memory or physically, and that he then return and apply his observation to the Virgilian text; the word “allusion” has implications far too frivolous to suit this process.” Finkelpearl 1998, 8 prefers the term “allusion” for Apuleius’ serio-comic art of writing precisely because of its ludic connotations: “Allusion will here be used above all to describe Apuleius' recalling, modifying, transforming, and playing around with passages and phrases in earlier Latin literature.”

\textsuperscript{32} Irwin 2002, 522-3.

\textsuperscript{33} Thomas 1986.
calls “single reference,” which “recalls the context of the model and applies that context to the new situation; such reference thereby becomes a means of (…) making connections or conveying ideas on a level of intense subtlety”; and what he labels “correction,” by which an author “provides an unmistakable indications of his source, then proceeds to offer detail which contradict or alters that source.”

Unfortunately, there is a lack of substantial, nuanced scholarship on literary allusion in Greek prose of the imperial period, both from the theoretical and interpretative perspective, though the issue has been discussed by classicists working in fields other than Second Sophistic.\textsuperscript{34} Second Sophistic scholarship tends to look at literary allusion as intimately linked with the mimetic culture of the period and explains them from a socio-cultural perspective. In this model, literary mimetic practices are interpreted as an attempt by Greeks to construct a cultural identity for themselves and emphasize their connection with a glorious past. Fascinating as the study of Greek collective self-fashioning is, there is a danger that it obstructs the interpretation and close reading of particular text. By explaining literary allusions \textit{en masse} as a socio-cultural phenomenon, it may, in a way, \textit{explain away} particular instances of allusive art. In the case of Platonic allusions, they are

\textsuperscript{34} In the field of Latin poetry the concept of literary allusion and “creative imitation” was examined by contributors to West and Woodman 1979 and discussed by Latinists afterwards. An overview of their discussions and further theoretical reflection on allusion is provided by Hinds 1998. Edmunds 2001, 164-9 discusses Hinds and reflects on the relation between the concepts of allusion and intertext. For Latin prose Finkelparl 1998 is an extensive treatment of allusion in Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}, while Finkelparl 2001 offers some further thoughts on ancient practice and theory of allusion. Recently Marchesi 2008 examined literary allusions in Pliny’s letters. Kelly 2008 discusses the allusive art of Ammianus Marcellinus.
interpreted as a cultural and stylistic statement on the part of the Second Sophistic authors: as a means by which authors create their cultural identity, construct the cultural status of the present, show their education, honor their predecessor, co-opt the authority of a generally recognized philosopher, etc. But the conceptual apparatus which may be useful for describing general cultural trends becomes an obstacle for a more nuanced reading of particular instances of interaction with Platonic texts. The very notion of imitation or *mimesis* which may be useful as a general description of Second Sophistic cultural practice, carries little meaning when applied to what a specific author does in a particular text, or a particular passage. Calling Dio Chrysostom’s *Borysthenikos* or *Charidemos* a *mimesis* of Plato means, basically, that there is a conspicuous presence of references or allusions to Plato in Dio’s text, but it does not explain whether and how these references add to the text’s meaning nor why the text was written in that way in the first place.

The terms such as reminiscence, allusion, imitation, echoing, reference which today for the most part have replaced notions such as “influence,” “debt,” and “borrowing,” are notoriously vague and subject to theoretical criticism. For a scholar, a significant problem associated with literary allusion is how it is to be distinguished from on one hand a bereft of meaning, accidental linguistic confluence, and, on the other, a literary *topos*, i.e. a conventional figure or image by which an author signals his

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36 For a discussion of the terms and attempt to distinguish between them, see Thomas 1986, Hinds 1998, 21-5; Finkelpearl 2001, 81, Hylen 44-59 (Biblical studies).
participation in certain tradition of writing rather than his active engagement with the
particular text in which the image is rooted. There are no formal rules that allow to
identify an allusion as opposed to an accidental linguistic confluence and a
conventionalized image. What distinguishes allusion from the two other cases is that it
establishes a resonance of meaning between the text in which it appears and the text to
which it directs the reader. The process of identifying an allusion is influenced by the
readers’ literary, cultural, and philosophical backgrounds.

Both questions are relevant to the study of Platonic allusions in the imperial
period prose. On one hand, Plato is one of those Attic writers whose texts were perceived
as models of the proper literary language; therefore, many Platonic expressions found in
the imperial period prose texts may have no specific purpose, but simply indicate that an
author’s literary language was shaped by reading Plato. On the other hand, many Platonic
images were present in Greek consciousness in relative isolation from their Platonic
contexts and their function in Plato’s philosophical argument. The Phaidros is here a
good example: the dialogue’s scenery, the chariot allegory, reappear again and again in
Greek texts, without really engaging with Plato’s text and thought directly.37 This sort of
engaging with Plato’s legacy differs from the allusion as defined above: while the
principle of allusion is an artful concealment, here we have an author revealing before his
audience, through an easily recognized Platonic image, his participation in the literary
tradition of stylized prose. However, one has to be careful not to dismiss references as
casual and meaningless too fast. R. Hunter recently argued that echoes of Plato’s

37 On the popularity of the Phaidros in the second century CE, see Trapp 1990.
Phaidros in Longos’ Daphnis and Chloe, usually interpreted as a stylistic device aimed merely at infusing the text with a modicum of philosophy, signal in fact a conscious and subtle interaction with Platonic themes.\(^{38}\)

Second Sophistic scholarship too often treats allusions to Plato as what Thomas calls “casual allusions” – as a means of creating a certain atmosphere, signaling an author’s “awareness of a central, authorizing text.”\(^{39}\) M. Trapp’s article on Plato’s presence in Dio Chrysostom does not discuss what sort of meaning is created by particular Platonic allusions in the context of particular texts. Instead of dynamic, varied, intellectual interaction between Dio and Platonic dialogues, Trapp sees Dio as “appropriating” Platonic pose: “A philosophizing (moralizing) orator needs a pose and stylistic register that, while giving him a creditable literary identity as a composer of prose for oratorical performance, will also set him apart from the austere, more utilitarian oratory of courts and assemblies.”\(^{40}\) I do not deny the value of the notions of performance and self-presentation, which are especially important in the context of Second Sophistic oratory,\(^{41}\) but they should not prevent us from looking for thoughts and ideas as well.

These reflections on the nature of allusion are in the background of the second chapter of my dissertation, in which I examine Platonic allusions in two texts: Plutarch’s

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38 Hunter 1997.

39 Hunter 1997, 16. Scholarship on Plutarch, especially on the Lives, is an exception; a number of studies diligently examine Platonic echoes and their function, e.g. Duff 2004 on Plutarch’s lives of Demetrios and Antony, where the Republic reminiscences are studied.


41 Gleason 1995.
On listing and Dio Chrysostom’s Euboïkos. In both cases I focus for the most part on allusions to a particular Platonic text, namely the Republic. The two texts which I examine evoke the Republic on several occasions and on different structural levels, indicating the centrality of this particular Platonic dialogue for the text.

5. The other side of the coin: opposition to Plato in the Second Sophistic.

In the opening section I briefly outlined major trends in the reception of Plato in Hellenistic literature, observing that it entailed acknowledgement and admiration on one hand and hostility and ridicule on the other. At least some Second Sophistic authors were familiar with the anti-platonic tradition and the charges raised against Plato. However, the elevation of Plato to the status of a cultural icon, discernible already in the first century BCE, made even partial criticism of Plato problematic; as Plato was generally considered a paradigm of style and philosophical depth, disagreeing with him or criticizing him might have been perceived as lack of refinement and culture. A preference for Classical literature over later koine prose also worked against the Hellenistic critics of Plato; one would rather associate with Plato than with some third-century orator. Dionysios of Halikarnassos in his Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius is an especially interesting example of an attempt to negotiate between criticizing Plato and not becoming estranged from the cultural tastes of the times. Though he precedes the period that is my main focus, his outlook bears a considerable resemblance to the one that we observe in the Second Sophistic. The circumstances of the composition of the Letter are noteworthy: in the Demosthenes Dionysios, while comparing the style of the orator with that of the other
authors, made some critical remarks about Plato’s manner of writing. His criticism prompted Gnaeus Pompeius to write a letter to Dionysios, expressing indignation with Dionysios’ criticism of the philosopher, whom Pompeius revered (Pomp. 1.1: σεβαστικῶς διάκεισαι). Dionysios twice refers to Plato’s “divine” status: he acknowledges that if he had really attacked Plato, he would have been guilty of impiety (Pomp. 1.4: ἀσεβεῖν), and later states that Plato “came close to the divine nature” (Pomp. 2.13: ἐγγὺς τῆς θείας φύσεως). In the opening chapter Dionysios distances himself from violent attacks on the philosopher carried on in the manner of Zoilos (the “Cynic orator” whom I mentioned above), and presents his own criticism of Plato as justifiable, aimed at truth only and not denying Plato’s greatness. In spite of these assurances, however, Dionysios does not hesitate to include in his Letter further criticism of Plato, which is by no means limited to the issues of style, which were discussed in the Demosthenes. In the Letter, Dionysios blames Plato for unfair, envious derision of his predecessors and contemporaries (Pomp. 1.12); for self-promotion in the Phaidros, in which he “engaged in the most banal and invidious task,” namely “praising his own oratorical skills” (Pomp. 1.10-11); and for hostility towards Homer (Pomp. 1.13). 43 Next Dionysios provides a list of “many great men” who fairly and justly criticized Plato before him: he names Aristotle, Kephisodoros, Theopompos, Zoilos, Hippodamas, and Demetrios of Phaleron. The appearance of Zoilos next to Aristotle, as one of the great men who justly criticized Plato, is striking, for Dionysios explicitly distanced himself from violent attacks on the philosopher.

42 The pagination follows Usener and Radermacher 1929.

43 On the animosity to Plato based on his treatment of Homer, see Düring 1941, 13.
from his attack on Plato at the beginning of the *Letter*. It is indicative of Dionysios’ attempt to have it both ways: to vent his dissatisfaction with Plato but in a way that at least pays lip-service to the cultural values of his environment.

Traces of Hellenistic anti-platonic charges may be found in the literature of the first century CE. Herakleitos composed around the end of the first century and beginning of the second century CE a treatise on reading Homer allegorically, which ridicules Plato and his criticism of the poet. He seems to share his anti-platonic outlook with Herodikos of Babylon, a grammarian of the Pergamene school, whose name appears in his treatise.44 Dio Chrysostom in the *Euboïkos* while criticizing the views of the poets assures us that he is not motivated by envy. Considering the centrality of the *Republic* to this work, this seems to be an allusion to the reaction against Plato’s treatment of Homer in some circles.45 Plutarch wrote a treatise *Against Kolotes*, directed against a student of Epikouros, who criticized and mocked Plato as well as other philosophers. Among strictly philosophical charges which Plutarch addresses, there are some directed against Plato’s presentation of Sokrates.

In the second and third century CE we observe an intensification of the reaction against Plato and a rise of interest in Hellenistic anti-platonic writings. Ailios Aristeides and Athenaios are responsible for the preservation of some fragments of Hellenistic anti-platonic writings, for example the above-mentioned Herodikos of Babylon. Lucian


45 See below, Chapter 2, p. 130-131.
parodied Plato’s divine status in his *Philosophies for Sale*, where the Plato-figure is announced for sale with a question: τίς ὅνειται τὸν ἰερότατον, “who will buy the height of sanctity?”; in the same work Plato’s “private republic,” equality of women, and Plato’s alleged pederasty are ridiculed (17).

The renewed interest in the controversy concerning Plato in the second century CE was directly linked to the growth of Plato’s popularity and was a response to superficial and uncritical engagement with his writings. It is, therefore, not adequate to see the anti-platonic reactions of the second century CE as merely “a recycling” the old anti-platonic arguments, as Düring does, who calls Aristeides’ polemic against Plato “a pale and verbose continuation of the fight which Isokrates and his school fought.” Anti-platonic reaction in the second century CE questions and ridicules the use made of Platonic texts by Second Sophistic culture. In the atmosphere of general veneration of the philosopher, the old anti-platonic arguments convey a hint of scandal. Athenaios clearly aims at shocking his audience when he has Masurius, one of the interlocutors in the *Deipnosophistai*, call Plato’s *Symposion* “complete nonsense,” ὅλως λῆρος (217a).

Ailios Aristeides argues that the cultural image of a venerable, august Plato is detached from the real Plato, whose temperament and personality are reflected in the dialogues. In *To Plato: In Defence of the Four*, Aristeides relates his experience of reading the *Gorgias* (627):

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46 Düring 1941, 162-3.
Then while Plato ran down oratory and refuted tyrants and discussed his other points, I followed along, as was reasonable, realizing that none of this is actually a refutation of oratory, and having the most just argument to counterpose. Still I admired his daring, and I marveled at his oratorical power and facility, and if it is fitting to speak in his manner, I had a notion, as it were, of a prancing lion, and I almost saw the man in his words.

The reading process of the *Gorgias* enables Aristeides to see the real Plato: he “almost saw the man,” as he says. But what he sees, is not a venerable sage. The person, whose presence he senses behind the *Gorgias*, is “a prancing lion,” the image which in the *Republic* is applied to the formidable, spirited Thrasyvoulos. This is a striking comparison, and a provocative one: why suggest that Plato resembles one of the most aggressive of Sokrates’ interlocutors? Aristeides untames Plato, who had become too familiar and recognizable through the process of cultural assimilation: he shows his readers a new Plato: a vehement, overbearing opponent, sly and crafty in his art. But for Aristeides, this Plato is in no way repulsive: it is the Plato who stimulates and instigates.

47 As he is nowadays, cf. Clay 2000, XI: “We are now separated from Plato by a gulf of 2400 years. That distance is even greater because Plato has been so transformed in an unbroken posthumous life of assimilation and criticism that he now seems near and familiar.”
In the third chapter I focus on one of Ailios Aristeides’ writings directed against Plato, namely *To Plato: In Defence of Oratory*. I examine in more detail Aristeides’ use of standard anti-platonic arguments in an attempt to answer the question how Aristeides positioned himself versus anti-platonic tradition on one hand and Plato on the other. Then I argue that the shape of Aristeides’ polemic against Plato is determined by Aristeides’ idea of rhetoric, the idea which lies at the core of the text.
Chapter 1: Playing with the dialogue format

1.1. Introduction.

In this chapter I examine two dialogues: Dio’s Charidemos and Plutarch’s Symposion of the Seven Sages, which evoke Plato on different levels: structurally, thematically, by means of Platonic imagery and phraseology. The authors create “Platonic dialogues,” i.e. dialogues with a particular Platonic work in the background. I have argued in the introduction, writing a dialogue in the Second Sophistic was not tantamount to writing a “Platonic dialogue,” a dialogue structurally or thematically mirroring Plato; therefore, as I suggested, the Platonic format of Charidemos and Symposion of Seven Sages should not be taken for granted, but deserves to be treated as a conscious, purposeful literary strategy.

The author composing a dialogue evoking another dialogue plays what we may call a game of “double mimesis.” Dialogue, as a literary depiction of a conversation, is an imitation of reality: it pretends to report a real exchange of real people by making the interlocutors speak directly to each other, oftentimes giving them names and personal traits as well as providing time, place and occasion of the conversation. To maintain the
illusion of reality, the authors of dialogues use simple, plain style. The cultured reader, familiar with the genre, activates the meaning of a dialogue by asking and solving two types of questions. On one hand, he interacts with the make-believe world, imagining that he is reading an account of a real conversation. This position enables him to ask questions about the characters, their thoughts and intentions. On the other hand, the reader continually shifts to another mode, in which he understands the characters as author’s resolute creation and is teased into making guesses about author’s purpose and intention. There is, therefore, a noticeable tension between the imitation of reality and the imitation of the literary model, a tension which imbues the text with a characteristic déjà-vu feel and a sense of playful unreality and artificiality. The text still pretends to depict a real conversation, but at the same time playfully undermines its own claim by shaping the exchange in a way that resembles another text.

In my examination of the two dialogues I focus on two general questions. First of all I try to understand why these texts are dialogues at all; what function the dialogic format plays; how the meaning is created by means of decentralization of discourse, which is being divided between participants. Second, I attempt to understand the interaction between the text and Plato. Placing a generally recognizable literary work in the background allows for some images, themes and problems of the imitated work to be absorbed into the text: it forces the eye of the reader’s intellect to move to-and-fro between the two texts, their respective moods and meanings, providing the work with additional hermeneutical dimension, the one of the past work to which it explicitly refers.

Aygon 2002.

Dio Chrysostom’s Charidemos (Charid.) is a dialogue between Timarchos, a father of recently deceased young Charidemos, and a visitor, usually labeled in editions of the text as “Dio,” who knew the youth, and now has learnt about his death. The exchange between these two characters constitutes a frame for a lengthy deathbed speech by Charidemos, which is built of two separate logoi, one offering “a pessimistic,” the other “an optimistic” vision of the human life and nature; these two logoi, Charidemos maintains, he has heard once from a wandering beggar (the “pessimistic” account), and a peasant (the “optimistic” account). Charidemos’ speech is read by Timarchos upon his interlocutor’s request, and is followed by a praise of Charidemos, made by the visitor.

The structure of the text – the speech of young Charidemos enclosed by the frame dialogue – raised speculations about the historicity of Charidemos and doubts about Dionian authorship. H. von Arnim in his influential Leben und Werke des Dio von Prusa stated firmly that Charidemos must have been a real person and that the speech, which is “ganz und gar nicht dionisch,”49 must have been composed by him; in his opinion, Dio was responsible only for the frame dialogue. Von Arnim’s view was rejected by other scholars pointing out the conceptual and stylistic affinity of

Charidemos’ speech with other works of Dio. Recently Dio’s authorship was defended by J. Moles, who urged scholars to “unreservedly welcome the Charidemos into the canon of Dio’s works and salute its greatness.”

Though clearly influenced by Plato and his Phaidon, the Charidemos is a mixture of philosophical ideas, the sources of which are hardly confined to Plato or the Orphic ideas, which are presented in the Phaidon. Cynic and Stoic influences were pointed out by scholars, and attempts were made to identify the enigmatic figures of the wandering beggar-priest and peasant in Charidemos’ speech with real philosophers, e.g. Antisthenes, Bion, Kleanthes, or Musonius Rufus. More recently the search for fontes, which dominated the scholarship on the Charidemos for a long time, yielded to literary interpretations. Two recent studies are here especially valuable. J. Moles’ article dedicated specifically to the Charidemos, is the most extensive literary interpretation of the dialogue. Moles appreciates literary qualities of the text and argues that the text reveals considerable “structural and verbal control”; he calls Charidemos a text of “immense literary resource,” “profound philosophical seriousness,” and “deep humanity.” Some of Moles’ ideas, however, especially a biographical reading of the dialogue, are unconvincing. For example, Moles believes that the figure of the prematurely deceased Charidemos is to be identified with the son Dio had lost and thus that the text is a self-consolation; moreover, that the speech of Charidemos, which moves

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from the “pessimistic” to the “optimistic” worldview, reflects Dio’s philosophical progression. These speculations tend to obfuscate the dialogue’s internal dynamics. The biographical reading of Charidemos is in part a consequence of conventional speaker indications, present in modern editions and translations of Charidemos, which conveniently tell us that it is “Dio” talking with “Timarchos.” Speaker indications, however, were not regularly used in the first century CE; they are missing from the manuscripts and early editions of Dio; and the name of Timarchos’ interlocutor does not appear in the body of the dialogue (he is never addressed by his name). In my examination I suggest that we suspend the speakers’ indications, as a preliminary step towards a non-biographical interpretation of the dialogue, which will allow us to focus on dialogue’s internal dynamics rather than biographical speculation. This is not to deny that the interlocutor which is labeled by editors as “Dio” shares certain characteristics with

52 Moles follows here Cohoon, the Loeb translator, who suggested that the speech of Charidemos represents different stages in Dio’s own beliefs – that the pessimistic outlook of the first logos reflects Dio’s exilic life, while the optimistic second worldview is a fruit of post-exilic period, when he “naturally acquired a more cheerful outlook on life.” Moles tries to distance himself from the straightforward biographic character of Cohoon’s interpretation and speaks of the logoi as representing the “real” or “alleged” progression of Dio from Cynic pessimism to Stoic optimism; however, the meaning of the “alleged progression” in this context is not clear to me.

“Dio,” the persona that emerges from other Dio’s texts; however, we should be cautious not to straightforwardly identify the character speaking in the dialogue with the dialogue’s author. Such identification, besides encouraging biographical reading, also lends the unnamed speaker an air of authority and diverts readers from careful examination of his words, from which the character of the speaker is supposed to emerge.

Another literary study of the Charidemos was offered by M. Menchelli in the introduction to her edition of the text. Especially interesting is Menchelli’s reading of the two *logoi*, constituting the deathbed speech of Charidemos, which are usually read as presenting two contrasting worldviews, one pessimistic, the other one optimistic (and interpreted as representing progress in Dio’s thought, which developed from pessimism to optimism). Menchelli in her examination of the two *logoi* pointed out the resemblances between them and emphasized the unanimity of their message: for a philosopher, death is not a bad thing.⁵⁴

The Charidemos’ particular affinity with Plato’s Phaidon was commented upon by several scholars. R. Hirzel rather unflatteringly called the Charidemos “ein später und etwas entarteter Nachkömmling des platonischen Phaidon.”⁵⁵ Moles referred to the dialogue as a “creative adaptation of Phaedo,” while Trapp discussed it as an example of “Platonic mimesis.” The question which was not asked, however, is what the function of these Platonic reminiscences in the Charidemos is? Is Dio casting Charidemos as a new Sokrates? Is he accepting the philosophical message of the Phaidon, or is he distancing...

⁵⁴ Menchelli 1999, 37-47.
⁵⁵ Hirzel 1895, vol. 2, 111.
himself from it? Or is he merely using the *Phaidon* references to imbue his text with “the Platonic spirit,” without committing himself to an in-depth interpretation of the Plato’s text? It is with these questions in mind that I approach the *Charidemos*. I will begin with an examination of the format of the dialogue and its affinity with the *Phaidon*’s structure. I will examine the frame conversation, the choice of interlocutors, and the dynamics of their conversation. Then I will move to the deathbed speech of Charidemos and analyze references to particular passages of the *Phaidon* in attempt to understand which elements of the *Phaidon* are used by Dio and what role they play in Charidemos’ account.

The frame conversation, the part of the text which scholars tend to neglect as merely “holding” the deathbed speech by Charidemos, consists of an exchange between the unnamed visitor, labeled “Dio” in editions, and Timarchos. It is the only “dialogic” part of the *Charidemos*, and the reason why the text can be classified as a dialogue at all. It has several functions: it outlines the situation, presents the interlocutors and their personalities, draws a sketchy portrait of Charidemos whose deathbed speech will follow, preparing thereby the reader for the speech and raising some questions and expectations.

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57 It may be worth noting that Dio himself considered the character-sketching as an essential component of Platonic dialogue (55.13). However, Dio admits that there are many people who do not pay attention to the characterization of the interlocutors: οἱ δὲ πολloi μάτην οἴονται τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεσθαι καὶ ἤχλον ἀλλως καὶ φλθαρίαι ήγούνται (55.13: “on other hand, most men suppose that such items are purposeless, and they regard them as vexation and nonsense”).

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The Charidemos, which describes the “philosophical death” of the eponymous youth, evokes the Phaidon both thematically and structurally. The text is preoccupied with death and the “right” behavior of a person facing it: the unnamed visitor declares that he wants to hear Charidemos’ last words to see if he τῷ ὄντι ἐὔθυμως καὶ ὀνεῦθυμως (Charid. 7). The opening conversation between the visitor and Timarchos is set some time after the death of Charidemos, just like the opening conversation between Phaidon and Echekrates takes place some time after the death of Sokrates. In both openings the character which was accompanying the dying person narrates the circumstances of the death (Phaidon narrates Sokrates’ last days in prison, while Timarchos the father narrates the illness of Charidemos), describes his courageous behavior while facing death and, as requested, provides an account of the last words of the deceased, though in the case of Sokrates it is his conversation with friends, and in the case of Charidemos – a speech.\textsuperscript{58}

Both dialogues operate on two different temporal levels: “the present,” provided by the frame conversation, and “the past” of the narrated (or read, in case of the Charidemos) core. As in the Phaidon, the audience experiences the events in an inverted order: first they meet the Interlocutor and Timarchos, and then, by listening to the speech of Charidemos, move back to the moment immediately preceding his death. The brief final part, constituted by concluding comments of the visitor and his addresses to the young Timarchos, restores the temporal order, just as Phaidon’s closing words directed to Echekrates do.

\textsuperscript{58} Though one should not forget that the Phaidon ends with Sokrates’ speech.
Though modeling the dialogue on Plato, Dio attempted to create nonetheless the illusion of a real conversation, “overheard” by the reader as if by a chance passer-by, by employing the strategy of suppression of details. We may observe this technique well in the opening sentences, in which the visitor explains how he acquired the information about Charidemos’ death: as soon as he arrived “here,” δευοί, he asked around about certain people he knew, and particularly about “these two” (Charid. 1: εὐθὺς γὰρ ἐπυνθανόμην, ὡς παρέβαλον δευοί, περὶ τε ἄλλων τινῶν καὶ μᾶλιστα δὴ περὶ τούτων ἀμφοτέρων, ὅπου τε εἶναι καὶ ὁ τι πράττοιεν). Then, he encountered a man who asked if he meant the sons of Timarchos and informed him that the younger of them was in Messene with the father on account of mourning for the older brother, in this manner conveying information about the death of Charidemos. The news disturbed the unnamed speaker deeply: at first, he could not believe it, and only after some time passed (Charid. 2: αὐθις), he accepted the truth. This short account is followed by an expression of grief, and the audience realizes that the unnamed speaker is talking with the father and the brother of Charidemos.

The temporality of the dialogue hinges upon the sequence of three events: the death of Charidemos; the arrival of the Interlocutor to an unspecified place (“here”), where he found out about the youth’s death, and finally the moment of the current conversation. The exact temporal relations between the three events are blurred: we do not know how much time passed between Charidemos’ death and visitor’s conversation with the man who informed him about the event, nor between this conversation and his
meeting with Timarchos; the temporal vocabulary – πρὸ ἰκανοῦ (Charid. 1), ἀνθίς (Charid. 2) – is resolutely vague. The only place name which appears thus far, Messene, does not help to locate the conversation spatially: the audience still does not know where the visitor arrived and what the purpose of his travel was, where the conversation takes place, from where the family had to travel to Messene to mourn Charidemos, and if there is any particular significance of Messene at all. This purposeful vagueness, consisting of making a hint of a place or event and the subsequent suppression of the information, creates a certain depth for the characters, who seem to have life extending beyond the reality of the dialogue; the information gaps tease the reader into trying to find answers.

The thematic and structural affinity of the Charidemos and the Phaidon creates a backdrop which highlights the very different choice of interlocutors by the two authors. In the case of the Phaidon, the choice of characters brings a spirit of reassurance which is contrasted with the gravity of the situation. Not only is Sokrates unmoved by his death, but he spends his last hours in the company of his close friends, carrying on a discussion about the afterlife, the immortality of the soul and philosophy. All the others are dismissed at the beginning of the dialogue: the wife is asked to leave (60a: “Kriton, let somebody take her home”); the opinions of the poets and sophists – which the poet Evenos represents⁵⁹ – are put aside (61b: “Tell Evenos that and bid him farewell”), and hoi polloi, “the many,” are left behind (64b: “Let us then, speak with one another, paying no further attention to them”). With only Sokrates’ friends present, the Phaidon depicts one of the most amiable conversations in the Platonic corpus. Not only is Sokrates

⁵⁹ For Evenos’ characterization as a poet and a sophist see Nails 2002, 153.
conversing with friends, but, unlike, for example, in the *Kriton*, he is talking with the philosophically minded ones, Simmias and Kebes, and thus the conversation sets a paradigm for a joint philosophical enquiry. This friendly and philosophical character of the internal dialogue is mirrored by the frame conversation, which is also held by friendly disposed persons, versed in philosophy (Phaidon is narrating the final hours of Sokrates to Pythagorean Echekrates and his friends, presumably also philosophers).

While in the *Phaidon*, then, the relations among the interlocutors emphasize philosophical friendship and joint philosophical enquiry, both in the frame dialogue and in the narrated conversation, Dio’s choice of characters sets a different tone for his dialogue. The frame dialogue between Timarchos, the father of the prematurely deceased Charidemos, and an anonymous visitor, under whose influence the young man was, highlights a tension between paternal authority and family relationships on one hand, and the intellectual influence of an outsider on the other. The first indication of the tension appears in the words of the visitor, who, after an introductory explanation of how he got to know about Charidemos’ death, expresses his grief: καὶ οἴματι γε ἐμαυτὸν οὐ πολύ τι ἐλάττων ύμῶν δηχθῆναι (*Charid.* 2: “Now, I believe that I myself was almost as deeply pained as you men were”). The dramatic circumstances outlined in the first paragraphs of the dialogue – the premature death of a youth and a grieving family – are typical for ancient consolatory writings, and the expression of grief, a gesture of

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60 Many of the extant consolations deal with a premature death of a child. Krantor (4th c. BCE), whose *On Grief* influenced later authors of consolations, addressed his piece to his friend Hippokles to comfort him
sympathy for the grieving family, comes as no surprise. However, the next words break
the anticipated emotional unison of the consoled and the consoling: τὸ μὲν γὰρ
μᾶλλον [sc. δηχθῆναι] φάναι οὗ θεμιτὸν οὐδὲ ὁσιὸν ἡμῖν, εἰ τίς ἐκεῖνον
μᾶλλον ἐφίλει ύμῶν τοῦ τε πατρός καὶ ἀδελφοῦ. καίτοι οὗ μέγα ἵσχυειν
ἐοικεν ἡ φύσις ἐν τοῖς φαύλοις (Charid. 2-3: “for to say “more pained” would not be
right nor proper for me, even if it were indeed true that one had loved him more than you,
his father and his brother, did. And yet the strength of natural affection does seem to be
not very great in persons of the common sort”). There is a hint of disparaging preaching
in these words, which question paternal and fraternal love, enlist the grieving men into
the midst of φαύλοι,⁶¹ and later compare them to some Opuntian man who valued his
possessions more than his young son. Although the speaker finally concedes that ἀλλ’
ὕμεῖς γε πάνυ ἐοίκατον ἀχθομένω τῇ συμφορᾷ (Charid. 3: “you two, however,
seem to be very much distressed by your affliction”), his questioning of family ties and
suggestion that he actually might have loved Charidemos more than the father and
brother is insulting to the two men, especially in the context of the occasion calling for
soothing consolation rather than for rebuke.

The visitor’s reproachful tone is contrasted with Timarchos’ polite response. He
concedes that the bond between Charidemos and his interlocutor was special and that

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⁶¹ See Menchelli 1999, 206: “il termine ha una valenza implicita di stultitia.”
Charidemos did value the stranger more than anyone else – even more than the father himself (Charid. 4). On his deathbed, Charidemos kept calling the visitor’s name, despite being surrounded by relatives, fellow citizens, and acquaintances. It is remarkable that Timarchos mentions together family members and fellow citizens, two groups of people with which one usually has the closest ties and among whom he seeks his first role models: the intellectual ties here, however, replace the family- and society-bonds. This is further emphasized by Timarchos, who believes that Charidemos would have been more careful in what he said if the visitor had been present (Charid. 7), and signaled by Charidemos himself, who at the beginning of the speech says that he had greater concern for the truth than for the people gathered around him – which would be a commonplace had it not reiterated the motifs from the frame dialogue.

The two interlocutors clearly represent two different worlds. Timarchos, who represents family ties, is deeply rooted in his community, as his repeated mention of fellow citizens and family implies. He cares for the good name of his family (Charid. 5, where he emphasizes the respect other citizens had for Charidemos) and shows little interest in the intellectual pursuits of his son and the visitor. He admits that he does not really know the visitor well when he says that he heard from others (ὡς ἐλεγον οἱ εἰδότες) that his son imitated him (Charid. 4). He also seems to be a man of some wealth, as the mention of heritage at the end of the text suggests.

The visitor, on the other hand, is an outsider, a traveler, not anchored in a community. We do not know where he comes from nor what the purpose of his traveling is. He is dedicated to moral preaching and exercises influence on young people, though
we do not know whether he conducts formal teaching. His conversation with Timarchos indicates that he has a rather low opinion of human nature. He believes that people are motivated by greed, as his mention of the Opuntian and the inheritance (Charid. 3; 46) suggests and feels compelled to urge them to follow a life of virtue. It is noteworthy in this context that each of the two men cherishes a very different image of Charidemos. The visitor describes Charidemos’ appearance as manly and stately (ἀνδρείον, σεμνόν τοῦ σχήματος), but also believes that he might have appeared to others as sober and stern (σκυθρωπότερος). Timarchos, on the other hand, remembers Charidemos as pleasant, smiling, and agreeable to his fellow citizens.

The frame dialogue, then, draws a distinction between the personalities and lifestyles of Timarchos and the visitor and places Charidemos somewhere in between them. It seems that both interlocutors believe that Charidemos resembled him. For well-mannered and polite Timarchos Charidemos was a playful, agreeable, well-liked youth; for the disillusioned, somewhat bitter visitor, Charidemos was serious and sober; it is with this uncertainty about the actual character of Charidemos that we approach his deathbed speech.

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62 The adjective σκυθρωπότερος (“sad,” “gloomy”) is used by Diogenes Laertios to describe severity and rigorousness of Xenokrates, who is described as σεμνός and σκυθρωπότερος (4.6). In Dio’s other works, the adjective has frequently a negative meaning, e.g. 1.79, 3.101, 4.91. In 16.1 it is associated with pain and suffering.
The frame dialogue ends with Timarchos giving an account of Charidemos’ last hours (Charid. 6-7); then, at request of the visitor, Timarchos reads aloud a speech which Charidemos dictated to a slave shortly before dying (Charid. 8-44). The speech consists of a short introduction (Charid. 8-9) and two logos narrated subsequently by Charidemos. In the introduction, Charidemos assures the listeners that his death was ordained by the gods and thus he considers it good: τὰ μὲν καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὁμώγονεν ὡς ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ, χρὴ δὲ μηδὲν τῶν ὑπ’ ἐκείνου γιγνομένων χαλεπὸν ἡγεῖσθαι μηδὲ δυσχερῶς φέειν. Charidemos’ statement – that nothing which is sent by the god should be considered difficult to bear – draws a distinction between two positions which will be developed in the form of extended logos. The first one finds death and life’s misfortunes difficult to bear (χαλεπὸν ἡγεῖσθαι, δυσχερῶς φέειν), and will be elaborated in the first part of the speech (Charid. 10-24), which Charidemos calls δυσχερέστατος τῶν λόγων (Charid. 9). The other one not only accepts life as it is ordained by the divinity, but insists that the divine will and its acts are good and lead to the good (Charid. 8). This approach, which Charidemos commends, will be developed further in the song of the peasant (Charid. 26-44). While the frame conversation announced affinity with Plato’s Phaidon through the overall thematic and structural reminiscences, the speech from the beginning emphasizes its Platonic background by clear references to Phaidon’s specific motifs and images.

The proem of Charidemos’ speech ends with the assertion that even in the worst case scenario his death is nothing terrible. The first logos is a detailed elaboration of this
“most difficult to accept” account. According to it, human beings are descendants of Titans and for that reason are considered enemies by the gods. The world is a prison (called either φρουρά, Charid. 10, or δεσμωτήριον, Charid. 11; both words used in Charid. 17) prepared by the gods, and death is liberation from the punishment. This particular vision of human existence appears in Phaidon 62b, where Sokrates, explaining why one should not commit suicide, refers to secret Orphic doctrines. According to Orphics, human life resembles a prison (φρουρά; the Orphic metaphor of prison mirrors the real prison, in which Sokrates spends his last days) in which people are placed by the gods and from which they must not escape. Sokrates himself does not accept the Orphic account: he calls it “weighty and not easy to understand” (Phaid. 62b: μεγάς τέ τις μοι φαίνεται και οὐ ὃδιος διδεῖν), and instead suggests another one, according to which the gods are guardians of people and people are gods’ property, κτήματα. This position, like the Orphic one, is concerned with explaining what human life – and consequently death – really is, and with the relation between the divine and the human. It uses similar imagery, explaining the relation between gods and men by referring to a certain type of relationship in human society.

Echoes of the Orphic description of human existence return in Phaid. 82d-84b, where human body is compared to prison. Human soul is said to be fastened to it and is unable to see things directly with its own power: it has to look at them through the body, which leads to error and confusion. The Orphic doctrines also look forward to the myth that Sokrates tells after the dialectical examination of the question of the soul’s
immortality. In the myth, Sokrates describes different regions of the Earth and distinguishes between the pure and beautiful surface of the Earth and its hollows, τὰ κοῖλα τῆς γῆς (Phaid. 109c). The pure surface of the Earth is unattainable for human race, Sokrates maintains. People live in the hollows, which are full of mud and mire and are corroded by bad air and moisture (Phaid. 109d-110a), although they believe that they inhabit the surface. The structure of the myth reiterates the structure of the prison metaphor: people are imprisoned within the hollows of the Earth, and the character of the place makes it impossible to gain true knowledge.

In the first logos, Charidemos makes use of both the idea that the world is a prison (Phaid. 62b) and of the description of the hollows of the Earth. The chapters describing human life contain many reminiscences of Sokrates’ myth. Charidemos describes the Earth as ill-ventilated, worn-out by constant changes of air temperature. The winters and summers, which make up most of the year, are barely endurable; natural disasters cause people to tremble; the food is scarce and of bad quality, causing the general weakness of the human body. Countless diseases which affect the body result both from its own constitution and from the food which people consume (Charid. 11-13, 15). Similarly, in Sokrates’ description of the hollows of the Earth there is an emphasis on the barrenness of the place (Phaid. 110a, 110e); the changeability of the seasons is identified as a cause of diseases (Phaid. 111b); the animals and plants and the whole region are said to be rotten because of the nature of the elements (Phaid. 110e).

In Charidemos’ account, the grim image of the region inhabited by people is supplemented with an equally bleak description of the nature of society and interpersonal
relationships, an element absent from Plato. Food must be obtained with the utmost hardship and there is not enough for everyone (Charid. 13). Houses and cities are just smaller prisons, which people build in order to shelter themselves from the weather and elements (Charid. 12). Thus, the only rationale for the existence of community is human frailty, not the social nature of human beings. Also, the traditional understanding of parenting and family is undermined: most people cannot leave the prison before they leave a child to succeed to the punishment (Charid. 17). The misery of the body is paralleled by the misery of the soul, which seems to be little more than a flux of desires, passions, fears and worries (Charid. 14), a description which looks back to the Phaidon 66b-c and 83b.

According to Charidemos, people do not stay alive voluntarily, but are bound by chains. To explain the nature of the chains, Charidemos refers to an account, which, as he maintains, he has heard as a child from ἀνήρ ἀγύρτης, a wandering magician-priest (Charid. 20-21). According to him, the chains by which people are bound by the gods are made of pleasure and pain, with one following the other in sequence. The words of the wandering magician are an obvious reference to the Phaidon, in which Sokrates talks about succession of pleasure and pain. In 60b-c Sokrates, referring to the sensation in his leg after the prison chains were taken off, observes lightheartedly that pleasure follows pain. This image, in which pleasure and pain are somehow related to the existence of

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63 On the meaning of the term, see Dickie 2001, 60-67. In the first Kingship Oration Dio says that he traveled in ἐν ἀγύρτου σχῆματι καὶ στολῇ during his exile (1.50). Epiktetos says that the appearance of philosopher resembled that of ἀγύρτης (4.8.4).
physical, real chains, is twisted in *Phaidon*. 83d, where pleasure and pain are said to be responsible for soul’s binding to the body: ὁτι ἐκάστη ἡδονή καὶ λύπη  ὀσπερ ἡλον ἔχουσα προσηλαί ἀντήν πρός το σῶμα (“for every pleasure and pain nails it [i.e. the soul] as with a nail to the body”). Both images are fused in Charidemos’ first *logos*, in which both pleasures and pains are imagined as links in the chain that keeps a person in the prison; great pleasures are followed by great pain, and the greatest pleasure is death – following the greatest pain of agony. While in the *Phaidon* both pleasure and pain were considered evil for they make a soul corporeal (83d: σωματοειδής) and focused upon physical world, in Dio it is pain and suffering that is considered bad, and pleasure only as far as it leads to pain.

The image of chains made up of hopes, which in Charidemos’ account follows the reflections on pleasure and pain, is not clear; the wandering magician associates it with the final part of human life. The fetters made of hopes are said to be greater in the case of foolish men and lighter in the case of more reasonable ones; they help people endure the great pains which are awaiting them at the end of their lives (*Charid.* 21: “it is clear that man has no greater pain and suffering than this which ends in death”), so presumably these are hopes connected with the afterlife. The association of hope with lack of knowledge and understanding is common in Greek philosophy. However, in the *Phaidon*, in which the word ἐλπίς and its cognates appear frequently, it never has

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64 On negative associations of hope, see e.g. Nussbaum 1986, 461 n. 37.
negative connotations – Sokrates presents himself as departing from life with joyous hope.

The last element of this elaborate prison metaphor in the \textit{Charidemos} is the file, ῥίη (Charid. 23-4). It is called by the prisoners \textit{logos}, “reason,” and can be found only by “the intelligent and the shrewd” because it is hidden and locked away “just as a person might hide a file in a prison in order that none of the prisoners might get hold of it.” It can be used to file the chains (made of pleasures and pains) – with due patience, a prisoner can gradually wear the fetters away, and when this happens, he walks around the other prisoners as if he was liberated. Here, again, there are clear Platonic undertones: in the \textit{Phaidon}, Sokrates describes philosophy as an instrument which allows one to free his soul, at least to certain point, from the bonds of the body; this is possible if one rejects pleasure and pain (82d-83b). In the cave allegory in the \textit{Republic}, Plato imagines a man who got free from the bonds and managed to leave the cave; afterwards, he comes back to his previous fellow prisoners, and becomes the only free man among them.

Let us now consider the interrelation between the first myth of Charidemos and the \textit{Phaidon}. We have noticed that it refers to several sections of Plato’s dialogue, especially the beginning of Sokrates’ conversation with his friends and the “myth” which closes the conversation. The literary strategy of Dio consists of taking up images and motifs from \textit{Phaidon} and developing them in more detail, with emphasis on the grim and pessimistic side. The Orphic metaphor of the prison is elaborated and pushed further in the speech of Charidemos; Sokrates’ mention of the succession of pain and pleasure – which he makes after his chains were removed, and which is spurred by the sensation of
pleasure – grows into a somnambular vision of the chain of pleasure and pain, in which the emphasis in on the pain, necessarily following the pleasure. The metaphor of the prison serves as a backdrop for the representation of human relationships, which are bereaved of any affection and are marked by distrust and isolation. This last element is not to be found in *Phaidon*.

The general difference between the *Phaidon* and the first myth of Charidemos is that in the *Phaidon* Sokrates’ description of human frailty and the misery of human life serves as a contrast for absolute beauty and goodness. Sokrates maintains that there is something beyond the hollows of the Earth: the surface of the Earth, pure and full of beauty. Similarly, in the *Republic* the man who has left the cave was able to get sight of real light and real things. The existence of the other world, though attainable by reason only, is a source of comfort and hope. In Charidemos’ de-sperate account, hope is for the foolish; there is nothing beyond the prison – it seems that the prisoner who set himself free from the bonds cannot leave the prison itself, but walks around other prisoners as if he was free (ὡςπεξελελυμένος); death is not a transition to another life (as in the *Phaidon*, in which it is called τοῦ παντὸς ἀπαλλαγῆ, 107c), but a termination of the misery.

Charidemos ends the first myth by distancing himself from its pessimistic view. He assigns it to some ἄνήρ δυσάφεστος, πολλὰ λελυμένος κατὰ τὸν βίον, ὡμὲ παιδείας ἀληθοῦς ἱσθημένον (Charid. 25) and decides that it is not true and not fitting for the gods (οὐ μὴν ἀληθῆ γε οὐδὲ πρέποντα θεοῖς). This statement ties the
perception of human life and the universe with one’s experience: Charidemos supposes that the sorrows of the unnamed man’s life led him to this pessimistic view on human nature. He is going to present an alternative, better account, one that he has heard from a peasant, a rustic man. The peasant’s version starts off with a reference to the gods – he began by singing the praises of Zeus and the other divinities – and this opening emphasizes the major difference with the first logos, which was “not befitting gods.” In its structure, the beginning of the peasant’s account is roughly parallel to the first one. The first chapter declares that people are neither the offspring of Titans nor enemies of the gods, but that the human race comes from the gods. In their life on Earth human beings are not prisoners, but colonists established by the god, with the same laws and sense of justice the gods have, although weaker and easily corrupted. While in the first myth the hostile relations among people were emphasized by the allegory of the prison, here the image of colonization and peaceful relationships between the metropolis and colony is in the background. Although the image is peaceful, there is some sense of disquiet introduced by the closing sentence: when the gods permitted people to manage their affairs by themselves, “sin and injustice began” (Charid. 27). However, this theme is not elaborated further; the passage ends abruptly with Charidemos announcing the second song of the peasant.

The peasant’s second song begins by comparing the world to a beautiful house: “he sang a second song telling that the universe is a house very beautiful and divine, constructed by the gods; that just as we see houses built by men who are called prosperous and wealthy, with portals and columns, and the roof, walls and doors adorned
with gold and paintings, in the same way the universe has been made (…)” (Charid. 28).

This passage has an equivalent in the description of kosmos in the first myth, chapters 11-12. The comparison of the universe to a wealthy man’s house reveals the peasant’s appreciation for both the beauty of the universe and the beauty of exquisite human housing (just as in the first logos the grim image of the universe was paralleled by the grim image of human housing).

The comparison of the universe to a house serves as a background for a banquet allegory. Human existence on Earth is compared by the peasant to being a guest at a symposion. People are invited by the gods to enjoy all the goods (Charid. 29). There is an abundance and great variety of food, the young and beautiful Seasons serve as waitresses and distribute garlands of flowers. The cheerful description of nature’s generosity is in clear contrast to the first logos, which emphasized scarcity of resources.

This idealized rural imagery especially suits the persona of the peasant, while the golden age imagery fits the convention of the hymn. The peasant’s song in its untainted admiration and affirmation of human earthly existence is as extreme as the first logos. However, a careful reading of the second logos reveals that the optimism of the peasant’s description of universe is merely a mirage. As chapters 33-44 reveal, the earthly goods that the human race is invited to enjoy (Charid. 29) lead to its detriment rather than benefit. People spend their lives gathering as many goods as possible; dedicate their lives to eating; play draughts and dice – a metaphor for taking risks in order to gain wealth. Some are intoxicated by pleasure, which is poured in their cups in great quantities by a female cup-bearer, Akrateia; they lead their lives stumbling, falling,
fighting and shouting and they depart from it dragged away by slaves. The easy access to the earthly goods praised in the symposion metaphor, their abundance and attractiveness, is in fact a trap. Unexpectedly, the charming description of the universe opening the second song of the peasant is reflected in the appearance of the wine-bowls which represent the variety of pleasures, and from which, as we may suppose, Akrateia draws her wine (Charid. 37): just as the universe was compared to a wealthy house adorned with gold and paintings (Charid. 28), the bowls are made of gold and silver and are decorated with figures of animals, scrolls and reliefs.

The group of people lured by pleasures is contrasted to the men gathered around the other cup-bearer, Nous. The drink he offers is sophrosyne, drawn from a plain, smooth crater made of bronze, mixed with a hint of pleasure, which is not altogether rejected. They do not freely use the earthly goods so brilliantly described in the peasant’s song previously, as they are aware of the danger involved: they neglect food and drink and enjoy pleasures in moderation “owing to their fear” (φοβούμενοι, Charid. 41). These people spend their lives contemplating the universe: they admire it and try to learn how it was built; they observe all the things happening as if they were depicted on paintings; they notice management and order. This is the universe as it is seen by the temperate and virtuous: this image “corrects” the luring, lavish description of nature’s resources (Charid. 29-33). It is not about feasting, food, abundance anymore: it is about order and inherent reason. The temperate men observe the universe as if it were a painting: they apparently do not take part in the dancing and merrymaking and do not

65 Menchelli 1999, 308.
care for the variety of food available described so vividly before. They notice the
Seasons, but while the first account emphasized their youth, beauty, garment (Charid.
31), the temperate guests do not pay attention to that, but rather admire ὡς εὖ τε καὶ ἐπισταµένως ἀπαντα πράττουσι, “how well and intelligently they do everything” (Charid. 41).

We may notice that in the second logos there appears a notion of friendship. The
temperate ones are said to gather in small groups and have discussions (Charid. 42); also,
when a temperate man leaves human life, he says farewell to his friends “joyous and
happy, because has done nothing unseemly” (Charid. 43). This image clearly evokes
Sokrates: talking to his friends, joyful, rating his integrity above anything else. The
intemperate, on the other hand, are pulled and dragged away by their slaves – the image
clearly echoing Phaidon 108b-c.

The two visions of life offered by the two logos are not so different after all. The
choice is not between pessimism and optimism, but between a life of temperance and
reason on one hand, and a life of desire on the other. The message of the seemingly
joyous symposion metaphor echoes the one of the first account. Pleasure does lead to pain
and misery, like in the metaphorical chain, as the image of stumbling, falling, fighting,
vomiting revelers vividly shows. The ambiguity of the symposion metaphor in
Charidemos is in accord with Dio’s use of it in other works, in which both symposion and
festival are used as a background to depict human intemperance and foolishness.66

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66 See especially or. 27.
The lavish, optimistic description of human existence at the beginning of the peasant’s song is later “corrected” by the outlook of the temperate men. They do not join the joyous dancing, drink and feast, for they know that cherishing earthly pleasures is dangerous (note the mention of fear, Charid. 41). In other words, even if the gods invite men to the symposion, they expect them not to behave as a typical banquet guest. They provide all the temptations and pleasures and watch their “guests” closely. They offer all kinds of tempting food which is to be neglected, a variety of wines in beautiful jars, which are to be avoided for the sake of the drink of sophrosyne. The gods, apparently, are tricksters.

But so is Dio, who makes his audience believe that the optimistic account of the peasant is to be embraced. He misleads the unwary reader who, weary with the gloominess of the first logos, emotionally joins the dancing and merrymaking human race. But there is a clue in the text that warns the reader not to believe the optimism of the second logos: the Homeric quotation in the opening of the speech of Charidemos. The youth begins with acknowledging that his death is a result of the will of the god, and maintains that everything the gods send us should be accepted. He evokes the authority of Homer, who said that the gifts of the gods should not be spurned by men (Iliad 3.65: οὐ τοι ἀπόβλητ’ ἔστι θεῶν ἐμίκυδέα δώρα δόσα κεν αὐτοὶ δώσιν; Charid. 8: παραινούσιν ἄλλοι τε σοφοὶ καὶ οὐχ ἥκιστα Ὁμηρος, λέγων μηδαμή ἀπόβλητα εἶναι ἀνθρώποις τὰ θεῶν δώρα). After quoting Homer, Charidemos praises the poet for rightly calling the acts of gods “gifts,” as they are all good and lead to
the good (καλῶς ὀνομάζων τὰ ἔργα τῶν θεῶν, ὡς ἀπαντᾷ ἀγαθὰ ὀντα καὶ ἐπ’ ἀγαθῶ γινόμενα). However, if we read the Homeric passage in context, we will discover that they are uttered by Paris, who justifies abducting Helen before Hektor: a man can not reject the gifts of gods; however disastrous Helen proved to be for Troy, Paris had no other choice; or so he says, trying to make the gods responsible for what he did.  

Charidemos’ explication of Homer’s thought – that all gods’ gifts are good and lead to good – clearly disagrees with the context of Homeric passage and should make the reader alert. But just as divine gifts are not all good in Homeric context, so they are not in the context of the second logos. They are exactly like Homer’s Helen – charming, tempting, for many irresistible – and disastrous.

Thus, the opposition between the “pessimistic” and “optimistic” is an artfully created illusion. In both visions the majority is too frail to be free: they are either bound by chains of desires or intoxicated by wine of pleasure. In both visions the man of reason is the only one to walk around free. Beyond the “pessimistic” or “optimistic” images of the two logos there is a consistent message: be on your guard; avoid a life of desires; cherish a life of temperance and reason.

The literary game of dissimulation requires the reader to look beyond appearances. The meaning of the text is hidden like the prisoner’s file – and it can be

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67 Cf. the comment of Kirk 1985, 273: ‘The glorious gifts of gods are not to be rejected’ he says, sliding cunningly from the particular to the general; ‘one would not willingly choose them’, he adds in a cumulated verse which makes his defence even more specious – for Paris did chose them by awarding the prize to Aphrodite in exchange for μαχλοσύνη (24.30) and the most beautiful woman.”
found by the readers who are κόμψοι καὶ δριμεῖς, “clever and keen” (Charid. 23). If there really is a purposeful amphibole in Charidemos’ statement ἥκουσα ἄνδρὸς ἀγύρτης ἀγύρτου παῖς ὤν (“I heard an ἀγύρτης when I was a child” or “I heard, being a child of ἀγύρτης”), the ἀγύρτης may be used here for its associations with deceit, and the whole sentence may be read as another clue of the dissimulation strategy.

The answer to the question raised by the frame conversation: what sort of man was Charidemos? remains problematic. The sober, serious youth of the visitor, or the cheerful, agreeable one of Timarchos? The speech does not offer a simple solution, but indicates that one need to see beyond the appearances, beyond the “sober” and the “cheerful.” The optimism of the second logos becomes, upon careful examination, very close to the pessimism of the first one. We may also note that the two logoi of the deathbed speech of Charidemos reflect, in a way, the polarity between Timarchos and the visitor in the frame dialogue. While the wandering ἀγύρτης of the first account bears resemblance to the visitor, the simplicity of the peasant is reminiscent of Timarchos.

What is the function of Platonic references in the Charidemos? We have noticed that Dio does use motifs and images from Phaidon as well as from other dialogues of Plato, however, he uses them rather freely and transforms them in a manner which suits best his plan. Dio makes use of the vividness of Platonic images; in the first logos he draws heavily from the prison metaphor and the Platonic myth about the hollows of the

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68 Moles 2000, 206 sees here amphibole; in his interpretation, the passage indicates that Charidemos represents the deceased son of Dio, who calls himself ἀγύρτης in the first Kingship Oration.
Earth, but changes its general point by highlighting and inflating only its grim elements. The usage of Platonic imagery in the second *logos* is much more limited, though the last words of the speech vividly evoke Sokrates and his death. But the text’s objective is hardly limited to imitating Plato or to recycling the figure of a dying Sokrates under the name of Charidemos. Dio plays with his readers a game; references to the *Phaidon* are just one of the elements of it rather than the substance of the text.\(^{69}\)

1.3. *A skeleton at a banquet. Plutarch’s Symposion of the Seven Sages.*

Plutarch’s *Symposion of the Seven Sages* (SSS), is a narrated dialogue depicting an imaginary archaic period *symposion*, with the Corinthian tyrant Periander as its host and the legendary Seven Sages among its participants. The structure is reminiscent of Plato’s narrated dialogues: the opening, in which a narrator, named Diokles, addresses his listener Nikarchos, creates a frame for the narration. The narration itself consists of two main parts: the first one describes a walk of Diokles, Thales, and Neiloxenos (a messenger of Egyptian pharaoh Amasis) from Corinth to the Corinthian port of Lechaion; the second one narrates the conversations and events that take place at the *symposion*.

\(^{69}\) It is noteworthy that the motif of imitation appears several times in *Charidemos*, and it is always either incomplete or merely superficial. According to Timarchos, Charidemos imitated the visitor in his taciturnity, gait, and other respects although he concedes that he rather relies on the opinion of others (*Charid*. 4: καὶ τὴ σιωπή καὶ τῷ βαδίσματι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις πάσι σε ἐμμεῖτο, ὥς ἔλεγον οἱ εἰδότες); this assertion is denied by the visitor.
The *symposion* itself consists of several segments: at the beginning, it is dominated by the Sages, their apophthegmatic utterances, and political topics; later, when less prominent participants move onto the scene, longer speeches become more prominent, and politics yields to discussions of drinking and eating. The flow of the discussion is interrupted by the arrival of Periander’s brother, who witnessed the miraculous saving of Arion, and narrates it for the banqueters in detail. The Arion story is followed by a short discussion of various miraculous events; then the banquet ends abruptly by Solon’s decision.

Plutarch’s engagement with the Seven Sages tradition is known from his other writings. He wrote a biography of Solon, and his other texts use freely the anecdotes and sayings associated with the Seven Sages. In general, much of the material that we find in the *SSS* is present also in other Plutarch’s writings. What is unique about the *SSS*, and unprecedented in extant ancient literature, is the format in which the traditional Seven Sages lore is fitted, namely the format of a sympotic dialogue. Plutarch’s choice of the genre was influenced by an ancient tradition according to which the Seven Sages met at a *symposion*. In the *Life of Solon* Plutarch mentions that all the Sages met in Delphi, and

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70 Plato’s *Protagoras* is the first extant text in which the Seven Sages are mentioned as a group (*Prot.* 343a), though many of the anecdotes about individual Sages go back to Herodotos. Ancient sources yield several different Seven Sages lists, however the core usually remains the same (Thales, Solon, Bias, Pittakos, Chilon). In the *Protagoras*, Plato includes Kleoboulos and Myson; Plutarch keeps Kleobulos, but substitutes the lively Scythian Anacharsis for Myson. For a discussion of the development of the Seven Sages legend in antiquity, see Busine 2002; a reflection on Plutarch’s choice of Sages may be found in Mossman 1997, 122-6.

71 Hershbell 2008 examines Plutarch’s presentation of Solon in his biography and in the *SSS*. 

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also in Corinth, where Periander organized for them a σύλλογος καὶ συμπόσιον (Sol. 4.1). Diogenes Laërtios informs us that there were Greek literary works describing the symposion of the Sevens Sages by Archetimos of Syracuse, Ephoros, and others (Vit. 1.40). Regrettably, the formats, themes, and character of these works remain unknown: were these dialogues or narratives? Were the participants limited to the Seven Sages and their host? What sort of topics did the authors highlight? How did they negotiate between history and edifying fiction? Answers to some of these question might have helped us to identify the thematic or structural elements of the SSS which were typical for the exposition of this particular subject, as opposed to these which were Plutarch’s own contribution, and therefore it is unfortunate that it is impossible to situate Plutarch’s SSS within this literary tradition.

19th c. scholarship appreciated the SSS as a representative of the ancient Seven Sages tradition; however, it assigned little value to its literary qualities. Wilamowitz mercilessly criticized the dialogue; he ridiculed Plutarch’s attempt to write a work of historical fiction observing that Solon and Thales behave as if they were “Papa Lamprias und Schwager Soklaros”; he found Plutarch inept at providing the dialogue with dramatic action and wit, not to mention historical adequacy. R. Hirzel’s impression was that Plutarch’s whim was to render a collection of chreias in the form of a dialogue, which he embellished with all sorts of rhetorical devices. In 1954 J. Defradas published an edition of the text, accompanied by translation and commentary, in which he defended

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72 Wilamowitz-Möllendorf 1890, 196.
73 Hirzel 1895, vol. 2, 142.
the text against the charges of Wilamowitz and others. Defradas examined the sources, structure, and philosophical content of the text, and concluded that the SSS followed structurally the format of Plato’s dialogues, and was filled with Platonic ideas.74

After Defradas’ study, the question of Plutarch’s intention and purpose for writing the SSS was regularly asked and variously answered. G. Aalders argued that Plutarch’s aim in the SSS was more ambitious than simply to give an account of the tradition of the Seven Sages and their ideas. According to Aalders, Plutarch expressed his own ideas about divinity and the soul through the medium of the Seven Sages, while most of the political concepts and ideas voiced by the Sages came in fact from the 5th and 4th c. BCE rather than from the archaic period.75 D. Aune suggested that in the SSS Plutarch wished to create an exemplary symposion, which would serve as a model for his contemporaries.76 This view seems to me untenable. It is true that any literary depiction of a symposion in general encourages reflection on the proper sympotic behavior. However, the SSS contains many puzzling, disquieting elements which hardly make sense in this interpretation: foreshadowing Periander’s fate, the tension between the tyrant and the other participants of the dialogue, the abrupt ending of the symposion etc. I do not think that all these disquieting elements can be easily explained (e.g. the abrupt ending), but it seems that Plutarch consistently breaks the flow of the conversation instilling some sense of discomfort or awkwardness.

74 Defradas 1954.
76 Aune 1978, 52.
L. Kim recently pointed to certain tensions in the SSS, especially in the first part of Diokles’ *symposion*-account, which, as he argues, are a result of Plutarch’s attempt to render what basically is a collection of anecdotes and sayings associated with the Seven Sages in the sympotic and dialogic format. He observed that “the Sages, despite the fact that their associations with orality, performance, improvisation, and wisdom appear to qualify them as ideal candidates for depicting in a symposium, are actually quite unsuited to a symposiastic context; their tendency toward brevity, their status as contextualized performers, and their interchangeability all militate against the kind of dialogue that Plutarch was accustomed to writing.”

According to Kim, Plutarch’s attempt to conciliate the sympotic dialogue form with the Seven Sages lore failed; the result is awkwardness and artificiality, especially in the first part of the text, in which most of the anecdotes and sayings are found.

Some recent studies of Plutarch’s *Lives* discuss a phenomenon of “disruptive *symposia*” – the banquets which “went wrong,” either because of excessive drinking or because of enmity among the participants. These studies indicate that for Plutarch a depiction of a *symposion* was a way of talking about the characters of its participants and their mutual relationships; and that the tensions between the ideal *symposion* and the particular event are significant, indicative of the participants’ flaws. If Plutarch used the sympotic scenery purposefully in his other works there is no reason why we should treat

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77 Kim 2009, 490.

the SSS as an exception, especially as the text, with its overt employment of Platonic
dialogic strategies, reveals a high degree of generic consciousness.

In this chapter I will attempt to understand the function of the sympotic scenery,
the dialogic format, and the Platonic references of the SSS. I will begin by an examination
of the significance of the puzzling Phaidon-reminiscences in the dialogue, and then I will
scrutinize Plutarch’s use of some structural strategies of Platonic provenience (an
opening which creates a frame for the subsequent narration, a walk). Finally, I will look
at Plutarch’s ethopoia, his characterization of the dialogue’s interlocutors, which shows
the extent of Plutarch’s dramatization of the traditional lore.

The SSS is one of only two Plutarchan dialogues set in the distant past, i.e. not
in the imperial period; the other one is On the daimonion of Sokrates, a lively dialogue
set in the fourth century BCE. Unlike the latter text, which describes in Platonic format
events which took place after the death of Sokrates, the SSS is overtly anachronistic in its
employment of the Platonic format for the archaic period legendary material. Not only
does Plutarch not try to alleviate the artificiality and tension raised by this anachronism,
he plays them up in some passages, which mirror certain behaviors of the interlocutors in
Plato’s Phaidon, e.g. when Solon is touching the hair of Aisopos, sitting on a stool next
to him (SSS 150a, 152c; cf. Phaidon 89b, where Sokrates plays with the hair of Phaidon,
who sits on a stool); when Chilon drops in Laconian dialect (SSS 150b; in the Phaidon,

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79 For the Greek text of the SSS I use the edition of Defradas 1954; the translations are F. C. Babbitt’s. In
order to avoid confusion, I have retained the pagination of the Loeb edition, which differs slightly from
Defradas.
the Theban Kebes speaks in his dialect, 62a). The number of participants (more than
twice seven, SSS 146c) reminds us of the number of participants in the *Phaidon*.\textsuperscript{80}
Plutarch’s decision to include Aisopos as the banquet participant might have been
inspired by the fact that he is referred to by Sokrates in the *Phaidon*, 60-b-61b. Other
reminiscences from the *Phaidon* is the motif of a swan song, which appears in the Arion
story (SSS 161c, *Phaid*. 84e-85b; in both passages Apollo is mentioned) and, possibly, of
a weaver (SSS 156b, 157c; *Phaid*. 87b-c). Finally, as Defradas observed, Solon’s views
concerning food expressed in SSS 159b-160c seem to be inspired by Sokrates’ thoughts
on the nature of death, soul, and body (*Phaid*. 64a-67b).\textsuperscript{81}

The predominance of the *Phaidon* references in the SSS is curious. They provide
the text with a peculiar, anachronistic character, and emphasize its fictional nature:
Plutarch does not aim at historical investigation here, but plays freely with the literary
heritage, creating a collage built of multifarious elements. However, it is still perplexing
that of all Plato’s dialogues it is specifically the *Phaidon* that is brought in again and
again in the text. Unlike in the case of Dio’s *Charidemos*, in which the presence of the
*Phaidon*’s references complements the theme of the work (philosophical death), they
seem out of place in the sympotic genre to which the SSS belongs. I would like to suggest
that the reason for the perspicuous presence of the *Phaidon* in the SSS is indicated
indirectly in the words of Thales, who describes an Egyptian custom of exposing a
skeleton at their *symposia* (SSS 148a-b):

\textsuperscript{80} Which mirrors the number of youths and girls (δίς ἑπτάά) saved by Theseus (*Phaid*. 58a-b).

\textsuperscript{81} Defradas 1954, 10.
ὁ δ’ Αἰγύπτιος σκελέτος, ὃν ἐπιεικῶς εἰσφέρονες εἰς τὰ συμπόσια προτίθενται καὶ
παρακαλοῦσι μεμνήσθαι τάχα δὴ τοιοῦτος ἐσομένους, καίπερ ἄχαρις καὶ ἄφρος
ἐπίκωμος ἦκαν, ὃμως ἔχει τινὰ καιρόν, καὶ εἰ μὴ πρὸς τὸ πίνειν καὶ ἑφυπαθεῖν
ἀλλὰ πρὸς φυλίαν καὶ ἀγάπησιν ἀλλήλων προτίθεται, καὶ παρακαλεῖ τὸν βίον μὴ
τῷ χρόνῳ βραχίν ὄντα πράγματι κακοῖς μακρὸν ποιεῖν

Now the skeleton which in Egypt they are wont, with fair reason, to bring in and expose at their
parties, urging the guests to remember that what it is now, they soon shall be, although it is an
ungracious and unseasonable companion to be introduced at a merry-
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The images from the *Phaidon* are just one of the ways by which Plutarch “brings a skeleton to the party.” Plutarch introduces the theme of death also by allusions to the miserable demise of certain people. At the very beginning of his narration, Diokles alludes to the unhappy affection of Periander’s mother towards her son, and to her suicide; these events cast a shadow over the *symposium*, which is indirectly their result: the passion and death of his mother caused Periander to despise Aphrodite and neglect her worship. Due to the dreams of his wife Melissa, however, he decides to conciliate the goddess, and it is the offering of the sacrifice to Aphrodite that provides the occasion for the banquet, foreshadowing the fate of some of the banquet participants. Death is also brought into the dialogue by foreshadowing the miserable fate of some of Periander’s family members. Melissa, who is present at the *symposium*, appears in memorable passages of Herodotos, who claims that Periander was responsible for his wife’s death and narrates her appearance as a ghost to Periander (*Hist.* 3.50, 5.92). Diokles’ interpretation of a birth of a baby centaur in *SSS* 149c-e foreshadows the tragic fate of Periander’s family: Diokles, who is Periander’s seer, believes that the portent is a sign by which Aphrodite foretells (τῆς θεοῦ προφανούσης) strife which may affect both marriage and offspring – the allusion here is both to the death of Melissa and to the

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82 Diogenes Laërtios 1.96; Parthenios 17. The suicide of Periander’s mother reminds of Sokrates’ discussion of suicide in the *Phaidon.*
enmity of Lykophron, Periander’s son, towards his father (which eventually led to Lykophron’s death: Herodotos, Hist. 3.50-53). 83

A metaliterary interpretation of Thales’ account of the Egyptian custom of bringing a skeleton to a symposion allows us to see both the Phaidon references and the allusions to deaths of specific characters as purposeful elements of the dialogue. But the presence of the Phaidon also emphasizes that though inevitably mortal, human beings can to some extent determinate the character of their death. It is remarkable that Plutarch foreshadows most vividly the death of Periander and his family, linking tyranny and dysfunctional love 84 with miserable ends as well.

I will now turn to an examination of the opening of the dialogue and the themes which it introduces. Structurally, the SSS consists of several parts, for which we can identify Platonic equivalents: the opening words of the narrator, which constitute the frame for the narrated conversation; the walk from the city to the port, and, finally, the account of the banquet proper. The opening paragraph is artfully structured. It plays with temporal notions of past and present, distant and recent:

η που προϊὼν ὁ χρόονος, ὦ Νίκαρχε, πολὺ σκότος ἐπάξει τοῖς πράγμασι καὶ πᾶσαν ἀσάφειαν, εἰ νῦν ἐπὶ προσφάτοις οὕτω καὶ νεαροῖς λόγοις ψευδεῖς συντεθέντες ἔχουσι πίστιν.

83 On Periander and Melissa in the SSS see also Mossman 1997, 126-7. She observes that there is a considerable amount of sadness and irony in the dialogue, just as there is in Plato’s Symposium.

84 Mossman 1997, 127: „In general in the Dinner, good government, happy connubiality and the welfare of the soul are linked, and tyranny, dysfunctional sexual relations, and sickness of the spirit are associated.” Greek authors, especially Herodotos, persistently link eros and tyranny (e.g. Wohl 2002, 220-1).
It seems fairly certain, Nikarchos, that the lapse of time will bring about much obscurity and complete uncertainty regarding actual events, if at the present time, in the case of events so fresh and recent, the accounts that have been concocted obtain credence.

This somewhat melancholic sentence emphasizes the inevitability of the passage of time and evanescence - not only of people, but also of memories about them; the motif of the shortness of human life will recur later in the dialogue in the words of Thales (SSS 148b). As the identity of the narrator begins to be unveiled in the next sentence (he identifies himself there as former Periander’s associate; his full identity will not be disclosed until SSS 149d), the reader realizes that νῦν, “the present time” to which the first sentence alludes, refers, in fact, to the past; and that he, the reader, belongs to the distant future, imagined by the narrator, in which it is impossible to see the events of Periander’s times clearly. In the sentence Plutarch signals that he is not aiming at historical truth, reminds the reader of his mortality, and, by having Diokles imagine the future, which is the present of the reader, creates a certain feeling of connection between the reader and his archaic period characters.

We can observe that the dialogue opening fuses the beginnings of Plato’s Symposion and Phaidon, the two narrated dialogues with significant frame conversations. Like Apollodoros in the Symposion, Plutarch’s Diokles tells of a banquet which happened some considerable time ago, and about which his interlocutors have been misinformed. Like Phaidon, who described the last hours of Sokrates’ life, Diokles has first-hand knowledge of the event, and his words: προθυµουµένοις ύµίν ἀπ’ ἄρχης ἄπαντα διηγήσοµαι (SSS 146c) echo Phaidon’s: ἔγω σοι ἐξ ἄρχης πάντα πειράσοµαι.
Diokles’ account begins with basic information about the place and time of the symposion. Periander, Diokles says, prepared the banquet not in the city, but near Lechaion (one of two Corinthian ports, three kilometers from the city center), in the vicinity of the temple of Aphrodite. As J. Defradas observes, the location of the symposion enables Plutarch to introduce the description of the banquet itself with a conversation which Diokles had with Thales and Neiloxenos during the walk to the port; the proximity of the sea also allows Plutarch to have Gorgias come straight from the beach after the miraculous rescue of Arion.

Periander, as Diokles narrated equipped all the guests with a carriage to take them to the port; however, Thales dismissed it with a smile and decided to walk together with Diokles and Neiloxenos, who has been sent by the Egyptian king Amasis. The three men get involved in a conversation, which provides the reader with further information about some of the symposion’s participants (Bias, Pittakos, Solon, and Chilon); explains the purpose of Neiloxenos’ visit to Corinth (he is sent to Bias of Priene by the pharaoh Amasis, who asks Bias to solve certain problem); and introduces some themes which will...

85 Athenaios also combines Plato’s Symposion and Phaidon in the opening passage of the Deipnosophists (Trapp 2000b, 353-4).

86 Though ancient writers associated Corinth with the cult of Aphrodite, they never mention a temple in Lechaion; the famous Aphrodite shrine was situated on the Corinthian acropolis.
be later discussed during the symposion, as well as themes which will not be discussed later with other participants of the symposion.

A peripatetic conversation is an easily recognizable Platonic motif; longer or shorter walks open, for example the Phaidros, Protagoras, and Symposium. In the SSS the opening conversation allows the characters taking part in the walk to talk about other participants of the symposion in an informal setting, and behind their backs. Of the three interlocutors, Thales speaks the most and his personality is most vividly sketched. Diokles, the narrator, merely asks questions, while Neiloxenos presents himself as a spokesman of his ruler rather than an independent thinker. Thales is characterized above all by his attitude towards kings and tyrants. Neiloxenos says that he is called μισοβασιλεύς and that some people reported to Amasis “hubristic remarks concerning tyrants” made by Thales (ὑβριστικαὶ περὶ τυράννων ἀποφάσεις): that the most paradoxical thing which one might see is a despot who got old; and that among the wild animals the worst is a despot, and of the tame – a flatterer (SSS 147a-b). The exchange between Neiloxenos and Thales distinguishes between wise men who are happy to be the friends of rulers or to be rulers themselves, such as Bias and Pittakos (SSS 146f-7a, 147c), and wise men who are suspicious of power and are unwilling either to be friends with rulers or to reach for despotic power (Thales and Solon, SSS 147a-c). This distinction,

87 A similar strategy is employed by Plutarch in De sollertia animalium. This dialogue opens with a conversation between Autoboulos and Soklaros, which precedes the arrival of young men who will deliver speeches on the intelligence of animals. Autoboulos’ opinions about hunting that are revealed to Soklaros are not openly presented to the young men.
presented before the banquet itself, emphasizes the theme of the relationship between wisdom and power as crucial for the text in general.

Neiloxenos says that Thales’ opinions about despots are considered offensive by Amasis, to whom they were reported, for “though kings pretend to be altogether different from despots, they do not like to listen to such remarks” (εἰ καὶ πάνυ προσποιούνται διαφέρειν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῶν τυράννων, οὐκ εὔμενῶς ἀκοῦσιν, SSS 147b). Amasis, apparently, is surrounded by informers who busy themselves with finding out what others say and think, and his outlook is shaped by their information. Thales is out of the king’s favor because he freely expresses his opinions concerning power. Responding to Neiloxenos, Thales first maintains that one of the sayings was in fact Pittakos’ joke, but in the next words he admits that he does agree with the statements quoted by Amasis’ messenger, and brings up the example of a young man who throws a stone at his dog and hits his stepmother.

Plutarch’s presentation of Thales sheds light on certain episodes and utterances in the first part of Diokles’ narration. First, Thales’ dismissal of the carriage sent by Periander and his decision to go by foot seems to be, in a way, a manifestation of his independence: he refuses to follow the course of events as planned by Periander and comes to Periander’s banquet on his own terms. This scene has parallels in two other episodes: in SSS 148b Thales refuses to take part in the customary preparations for the banquet, such as a bath and rub-down, and in SSS 149f he disregards sitting assignments

88 Here Plutarch plays with the Seven Sages tradition, in which a saying or an anecdote was frequently assigned to several different wise men.
by taking the place of Alexidemos, who has left the party, because he felt offended by Periander (Thales takes Diokles and Neiloxenos with him, presumably changing their sitting places as well).

The first theme discussed during the walk is a letter that Neiloxenos brings from Amasis. Upon learning that Neiloxenos was instructed to give it to Bias, Thales says with laughter: εἰ τι κακὸν αὐθίς εἰς Πριήνην· διαλύσει γὰρ Βίας, ὡς διέλυσεν αὐτὸς τὸ πρώτον (SSS 146f: “if it is anything bad, go to Priene again! For Bias will have a solution for this, just as he had his own solution of the first problem”). Defradas notices that Thales’ words echo a Greek proverb, transmitted in Zenobios’ collection: εἰ τι κακὸν εἰς Πυρράν, “if it is something bad – to Pyrrha.” Zenobios explains the meaning of the saying:

φασίν ὅτι οἱ Πυρραῖοι πρὸς τοὺς ὀμόρους πάντας απεχθῶς εἰχον. ἔκεινοι οὖν τὰ συμβαίνοντα αὐτοῖς κακὰ ἀποτροπιαζόμενοι, καὶ ἐκβάλλοντες εἰς τὴν Πυρραίων χώραν, ἔπεφώνουν εἰ τι κακὸν εἰς Πύρραν.

they say that the inhabitants of Pyrrha are in hostile relations with all their neighbors, who therefore avert all their misfortunes and turn to Pyrrha by saying “If it is [something] bad, [let it go] to Pyrrha.”

Though the proverb does not seem to have been a popular one – we do not find it quoted outside Zenobios’ collection – Plutarch’s wording is very reminiscent of it, and the appearance of the metaphoric reference to Priene (Bias’ city; metaphoric, for Neiloxenos does not have to go to Priene to meet Bias) seems to be influenced by Plutarch’s attempt

89 Ed. Gaisford 1836, 303.
to parallel the Pyrrha of the proverb. However, if Plutarch is echoing the proverb about Pyrrha, then Thales’ εἰ τι κακὸν αὐθάς εἰς Πρηνήνιν gains a second meaning. Beneath the surface meaning: “if something wrong happens to you, go to Priene, for there you will find help” Thales’ words reveal an apotropaic character: Amasis’ request is qualified as a potential trouble, τὸ κακὸν, and Thales hopes that it is Bias, not he, who will remain the recipient of the pharaoh’s requests.

Thales is characterized by Plutarch as a free-speaker, and his unbridled tongue leads to his unpopularity with Amasis. In this context, the anecdote about Amasis’ first question sent to Bias acquires an interesting meaning. Bias, Thales reports to Diokles, was sent a sacrificial animal by Amasis and ordered to send back to the king the worst and the best portion of the meat. The participle κελεύσας, “having ordered,” emphasizes the problematic character of the relationship between Amasis and Bias – though Bias is not Amasis’ subject, rulers contact others by means of orders. In response, Bias cut the tongue and sent it alone, which made him highly esteemed on the Egyptian court.

Plutarch’s story is based on a widespread gnome, which ancient authors associated with

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90 The authoritative tone of Amasis may also be seen in the letter, which is later read during the banquet (151b-c). The letter seems to be modeled on Amasis’ letter to Polykrates in the Histories of Herodotos (3.40), but while the Herodotean letter has a private character (as indicates the opening: Ἀµασὶς Πολυκράτετο ὠδὲ λέγει), the letter in the SSS is more formal. It emphasizes the position of both Amasis and Bias: Ἀµασὶς Αἰγυπτίων Αµασὶς λέγει Βίαντι σοφωτάτῳ Ἑλλήνων; is read publicly during the banquet, and Neiloxenos is ordered to hand it to other sages if Bias fails to solve the dilemma presented in it.
various Sages, in which a wise man, asked what is both good and bad, answered “the
tongue”; sometimes the maxim is elaborated into a short dialogue. In the SSS, we are
offered a dramatized version, in which words are substituted by actions. The verbal
exchange is replaced by meaningful gestures: sending an animal by the king, cutting off
and sending back the tongue by Bias.91

This well-known story belongs to the genre of “riddles of the superlative”92; but
what exactly is its meaning? The image of Bias answering Amasis’ order by cutting out
the tongue in silence is suggestive, especially in the subsequent accusation of Thales as
an enemy of rulers on account of his frankness. Does the gesture represent Bias as a
prudent and discreet sage, who knows when to speak and when to keep silent? An
examination of the context in which the anecdote appears in another Plutarchan treatise
indicates that this may be the case. In On talkativeness 506c it is Pittakos who is the
recipient of the animal sent by Amasis and is ordered to cut off “the fairest and foulest”
part (τὸ καλλιστὸν καὶ χείριστὸν κρέας). This anecdote is used by Plutarch within a
longer passage discussing the importance of silence and the ability to keep secrets. It is
followed by a quotation from Euripides, in which Ino says about herself that she knows
when to be silent and how to speak safely, and next by anecdotes about the secrecy of

91 The provenience and other versions of the story have been examined by Konstantakos 2004, 97-104. In
Plutarch’s corpus the anecdote appears four times (with Bias twice being the protagonist, and Pittakos
twice).

92 Konstantakos 2004, 97 and 126.
rulers and generals. Pittakos’ gesture, therefore, reveals his political shrewdness, by which he recognizes the dangers of an unbridled tongue.

One of the functions of the walk, therefore, is to differentiate between two kinds of wise men and their respective relations with political power; this distinction is both stated explicitly and hinted at in the story of the animal tongue and by Thales’ playful allusion to the proverb of the neighbors of Pyrrha. This distinction, understandably, could not be discussed openly during the symposion itself (Thales himself remarks that the topic is not appropriate for the symposion, SSS 147d-e); but by signaling it in the conversation preceding the banquet, Plutarch encourages his readers to keep this distinction in mind as they keep reading his dialogue. In fact, we find that it is reaffirmed by Plutarch in the course of the banquet conversations. For example, when the Sages are asked by Periander to provide advice to Amasis regarding ruling, the answers by Bias, Anacharsis, Kleobulos, Pittakos, and Chilon may be qualified as a real advice for a ruler (a ruler should conform to the laws, should be φρόνιµος, should not trust his associates, should make his subjects fear not him, but for him, should always have immortal thoughts). The answers of Solon and Thales are different. Solon advises that a ruler resign his position and establish democracy, while Thales does not even try to dress up his words as advice and simply states that he thinks that a ruler is happy if he manages to live till old age and dies a natural death – which is basically the same thought which was referred to by Neiloxenos in SSS 147b as especially offensive to despots. Periander’s reaction shows that he is not happy with the answers; though the advice was to be directed to Amasis, he reads it as directed against his own government. This tension
relaxes only after Aisopos’ intervention and his banter with Solon; Periander manages to recompose himself and direct the attention of the symposiasts towards Amasis’ letter again.

Thales’ independence may be seen also in the next scene, in which Neiloxenos talks about the questions that Amasis asked the Ethiopian king in the contest of wisdom: what is the oldest thing, the greatest, the wisest, the most beautiful, the most common, the most helpful, and the most harmful. The situation is delicate, for the Ethiopian king answered Amasis’ questions, and Amasis is not sure whether the answers are correct. Not to reveal Amasis’ ignorance, Neiloxenos says vaguely that the king accepted some of them, but rejected others. Thales tells him bluntly that all the answers of the Ethiopian king are unacceptable, for they contain διαμαρτίας μεγάλας καὶ ἀγνοίας (SSS 153b), and provides his own answers.93

The passages of the SSS quoted above suggest that in contrast to usual scholarly opinion which sees the sages in the SSS as basically interchangeable, Plutarch attempts to provide them with distinct personalities. Besides the general division between the Sages on the basis of their political views and their evaluation of autocratic regimes, he provides the Sages also with some idiosyncratic traits. Thales is energetic, an independent free-speaker, though at times he shows that he is capable of diplomatic gestures, as when

93 Plutarch’s decision to have Thales answer these philosophical questions, agrees with his evaluation of the Sages, expressed in the Life of Solon, 3.8: καὶ ὅλως έοικεν ἢ Θάλεω μόνον σοφία τότε περαίτερο τῆς χρείας ἐξικέσθαι τῇ θεωρίᾳ· τοῖς δ’ ἄλλοις ἀπὸ τῆς πολιτικῆς ἀρετῆς τούνομα τῆς σοφίας ύπήρξε.
he visits race-tracks, training quarters, and a park in Lechaion – all this, Diokles says, because he does not wish to seem contemptuous of Periander and his φιλοτιµμία. He is also a man with a good sense of humor; he laughs the most in the dialogue and likes to engage in friendly banter with other guests. Chilon in the SSS is a sort of a misanthrope, who decides to attend Periander’s symposion only after he is informed about every person who will be present, for he does not wish to sit at table with people who might turn out to be disagreeable companions (SSS 148a). It is not always clear what he means; e.g. in 150b he speaks in Spartan dialect: καὶ τύνη βραδὺς καὶ τρέχεις τὸν ἠµίονον, apparently in response to Aisopos’ fable about a mule, but the meaning of his words is incomprehensible.\(^\text{94}\) Neiloxenos gives an account of a rumor that Chilon broke off his friendship and xenia with Solon because Solon had said that the laws can be revised; and though Diokles rejects the rumor as ridiculous, it indicates that Chilon was known both for his reverence for the laws and for his intolerance towards those who thought differently (Chilon explicitly commends government based on obedience to the laws in 154e).

Solon is presented as a dignified statesman: he is the oldest and occupies the place of honor at the symposion (SSS 151e-f). When the Sages are asked to give Amasis advice on proper rule or to express their opinion on democratic government, Solon is asked to speak first. Unlike other Sages, he does not engage in banter, and when Pittakos wants to tease Solon, who abstains from wine in spite of his own poetical praise of

\(^{94}\) The reason for the incomprehensibility of Chilon’s statement may be also a corruption of the text. Defradas 1954, 97 provides some scholarly attempts to emend the sentence.
Dionysos, he addresses the question to Mnesiphilos, Solon’s friend and admirer, rather than to Solon himself. Mnesiphilos answers at length on Solon’s behalf, presenting the statesman’s views on wine and its function (SSS 156b-e). Solon’ speech about food is the longest utterance in the whole dialogue (SSS 159b-160c).

Bias, whom Amasis in his letter calls “the wisest of the Greeks” (SSS 151b), the friend of monarchs, is presented as a good-humored man, who engages in friendly banter with other participants of the symposion (SSS 150b-c is teased by Thales; 151c teases gently Neiloxenos). His opinions on political questions are moderate, as he does not show a preference either for autocratic or democratic government – whatever the government, he recommends that it is based on law (SSS 152a, 154e; see also 155d). Pittakos, who in ancient anecdotes was easily substituted by Bias and vice versa, was a ruler himself – ancient sources inform us that he was entrusted with the government by people of Mitylene, and that he ruled for 10 years, after which he renounced his position (Thales refers to this fact in SSS 147c). His involvement in the political affairs of the time is alluded to by a reference to Myrsilos, a tyrant of Mitylene, and to a brother of Alkaios (SSS 147b; 155f). He apparently does not like the idea of democracy; the best democracy, according to him, is the one in which bad men are not allowed to rule and good man are not allowed to refuse ruling (SSS 154e). He seems to be on friendly terms with Periander and Chersias, a poet (Periander’s court poet?) (SSS 164a-b).

95 Konstantakos 2004, 100.

96 For the political events at Mitylene and Pittakos’ relation to Myrsilos and Alkaios and his brother, see Forsdyke 2005, 42-48.
Kleoboulos, who is refused the title of a wise man in another dialogue by Plutarch, is also a problematic candidate for this title in the SSS. Plutarch represents him as a tyrant, a fact which is not mentioned by Diogenes Laërtios (Vit. 1.89-93). His advice to Amasis is that he should not trust any of his associates (SSS 152a), a maxim fitting a suspicious tyrant; his opinion of the best democracy is that it is a government in which the magistrates fear censure more than the laws (SSS 154e). According to Thales Kleoboulos’ rule became more moderate under his daughter’s influence (SSS 148d-e). In SSS 157a Kleoboulos distinguishes between “the wise” (σοφοί) and “the base” (φαύλοι), a distinction suggesting contempt for the latter. When Chersias suggests that they discuss the measure of property which is adequate for a man, he refuses to discuss it in reference to a wise man, maintaining that the law determines that (SSS 157a-d). He does not take part in the friendly exchanges between the banqueters.

Finally, Anacharsis the Scythian is a boisterous, colorful personality, wittily defending Scythian customs before his Greek interlocutors who like to tease him about them (SSS 150D-e, 154f-155c). He does not care much about the subtleties of Greek drinking culture and does not say no to heavy drinking (SSS 155f-156a).

By means of its dialogic format, the SSS brings the Seven Sages to life, imagining them as having distinct personalities and emphasizing their diverse political

97 In The E at Delphi 385e, Plutarch’s brother maintains that Kleoboulos and Periander envied the Sages (Chilon, Thales, Solon, Pittakos, and Bias) for their reputation, and strived to acquire the title of a wise men for themselves by means of power, friends, and favors.

views. Their personalities are revealed both through their words and through the way they interact with the other participants of the _symposion_. Some of the sages, like Thales and Solon, play a more prominent role in the dialogue, while others, like Pittakos and Kleoboulos, remain in the background; however, all are provided with distinctive characteristics. But the sages are not the only participants of the banquet, as Diokles observes at the beginning of the text (SSS 146c). The other characters include Neiloxenos, Aisopos, a doctor Kleodoros, Solon’s friend Mnesiphilos, a priest Ardalos, a poet Chersias, and two silent women, Melissa and Eumetis; in addition, there are three people who, while not taking part in the banquet, appear at some point of the dialogue: a silent shepherd, who witnessed the birth of a centaur; the offended Alexidemos (a son of the tyrant Thrasyboulos), who refused to stay for the _symposion_, and, finally, Periander’s brother Gorgos, who tells the story of Arion. Some of them remind us of Plato’s characters. Kleodoros, the doctor, reminds us of Eryximachos in Plato’s _Symposion_ on account of his profession, to which both he and others refer; some elements present in his speech about the importance of food in human life echo Eryximachos’ speech in the _Symposion_.

Mnesiphilos reminds of Sokrates’ associates, such as Aristodemos, who

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99 Eryximachos presents Healthy Love as a universal power which leads to bodily health, proper interpersonal relations, and proper relations between men and gods; it is also linked to good climate and prosperous agriculture (Plato, _Symp._ 186b-188e). Plutarch’s Kleodoros presents food as a condition for good relationships between men, and also a condition for the existence of the worship of gods (much of it would disappear together with agriculture). The earth without agriculture would become disorderly (SSS 158c-f). Then Diokles continues Kleodoros’ thought and speaks about connection between food and divination (divination is also mentioned by Eryximachos, _Symp._ 188c).
accompanies Sokrates to Agathon’s *symposion*; Plutarch makes him present Solon’s views to the company and shows him as being imbued with Solon’s ideas.

With the multitude and variety of interlocutors, the *SSS* is a crowded dialogue: it presents nineteen characters: sixteen participants of the *symposion*, two of whom are silent women, and three additional characters. This polyphony of characters is a remarkable feature of Plutarch’s dialogue, which sets it apart from Plato’s; Plutarch focuses more on multiplied *ethopoia* than on the articulation of a specific philosophical message. All the characters are, to a smaller or greater degree, characterized by Plutarch: if not by their words, than by their behaviors (e.g. Eumetis), by the words of other participants (e.g. Eumetis, Kleoboulos), or by their appearance (shepherd).

I will focus now on one specific example of characterization by behavior to get a better understanding of Plutarch’s dramatic technique. The host of the *symposion*, the Corinthian autocrat Periander, was a problematic figure for ancient authors: a tyrant, whose vices were described vividly by Herodotos, he was nonetheless sometimes placed among the Sevens Sages. In the *SSS* Plutarch retains, to certain extent, the ambivalence of the ancient tradition. Periander invites the wise men and associates with them, and the dialogue makes it clear that he is on friendly terms with some of them. On the other hand, his everyday behavior differs from the one he exhibits when accompanied by the wise men: Diokles informs us that the modesty of the banquet and of the clothes of the tyrant’s
wife were unusual. The SSS, then, shows Periander dressed-up for the occasion (SSS 150d: πρὸς τοὺς ἄνδρας ἐκαλλωπίζετο λιτότητι καὶ σωφροσύνῃ δαπάνης).

We may therefore assume that the words of Periander are equally fitted for the occasion, and that the tyrant does not reveal his true self in these utterances. But Plutarch allows the reader to see the personality of the tyrant by describing in the SSS his non-verbal reactions. There are three scenes which depict the emotions of Periander as they are revealed through his facial expressions and laughter, which reflect the instability and insecurity of the tyrant: the birth of a centaur; the discussion of autocratic regimes; and, thirdly, the advent of Periander’s brother Gorgos.

In the first instance, Thales, Diokles, and Neiloxenos are asked to come and inspect a hybrid creature which has been born in Periander’s stables. A servant sent by the tyrant says that Periander “seemed to be greatly agitated,” ἔοικε τεταράχθαι σφόοδρα (SSS 149c), for he feared that the birth might be a bad omen. Thales dismisses Periander’s fear lightly, by suggesting somewhat grotesquely that the creature came to being as a result of an intercourse between a shepherd and a horse. Periander reacts to Thales’ words with a loud laughter (ἐξεγέέλασε), and embraces him. The scene shows a rapid change of mood in the tyrant: from fear and agitation to excessive, loud laughter, which signals relief.

I disagree with Leão 2009, 519, who interprets Periander’s concern about Melissa’s clothing as a positive characterization of the tyrant.
Something similar happens in two other instances. After each of the sages tells his opinion about the autocratic rule, Periander, not pleased with the anti-tyrannical sentiments of some statements, shows his discontent both by his words and his countenance (SSS 152b: ὅμω ἐφεδρὸς ἄλλα συστήσας τὸ πρόσωπον). Aesop accuses the sages of merely pretending to be the advisors and friends of rulers, when in fact they criticize them, and teases Solon. Aesop’s banter relaxes Periander, who laughs and changes the subject of the conversation. Periander’s laughter, again, signals a mood change and relaxation of emotional tension.

The last scene in which we see Periander laughing is when Gorgos, his brother, appears. Gorgos was present at the beach when Arion, the miraculously saved *kitharodos*, was brought by dolphins to the shore. Before having Gorgos report the events to the banqueters, Plutarch makes him sit with Periander and give the account to the tyrant without other witnesses; other participants of the *symposion*, as well as the readers, do not hear his account, which, Diokles emphasizes, was intended for Periander only. Plutarch dramatizes the moment of the unheard conversation between the brothers by describing the changing facial expressions of Periander: as Gorgos talks, a series of emotions appears on the face of Periander. Diokles says that the tyrant looked like a person who “experienced many things” (SSS 160d: πολλὰ πάσχοντι πρὸς τὸν λόγον ὁμοίως ὤν): first he was vexed (ἀχθόμενος), then angry (ἀγανακτών), at times

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101 Babbitt’s translation “seemed much affected” (or Defradas’ “et il semblait fort ému”) does not render the exact Greek meaning; Plutarch’s emphasis, as the next sentence explains, is on the variety of the emotions he experienced during his brother’s account.
incredulous (ἀπιστῶν), and then amazed (θαυμάζων). Finally, he laughs and decides that Gorgos should repeat his account to the banquet participants. Again, laughter signals that emotional tension was released; it follows a sequence of unpleasant emotions.

These three situations, in which Periander’s laughter and facial expressions are described, reveal the intense emotions of the tyrant. There is only one other character in the dialogue who is presented in a state of such an intense emotional commotion. It is, nota bene, Alexidemos, the son of the tyrant Thrasyboulos, who was leaving the banquet when met by Thales; Diokles describes him as angry and agitated (SSS 148e-f: τεταραγμένος, cf. ἔοικε τεταράχθαι σφόδρα about Periander just few passages later, SSS 149c). Periander offended Alexidemos by paying more respect to the sages than to him; nevertheless, in his emotional responses, he resembles Alexidemos more than a composed wise man.

Periander is presented as a man of emotional instability and volatility, though attempting, at least in the presence of the sages, to restrain himself (as we can see during the exchange of opinions about autocratic regimes, when his face freezes: συστήσας τὸ πρόσωπον). These passages, which reveal the tyrant’s character, show Plutarch’s ethopoiia and dramatic technique. Periander’s personality is subtly disclosed by a series of episodes, dispersed throughout the dialogue, which are variations on the same theme: emotion. Plutarch’s other texts, such as On the control of anger or On tranquility of mind, identify emotional confusion as a soul’s sickness and recommend that one watch over his emotions constantly and subdue them to the power of reason.
I have referred to the SSS as a polyphonic work due to the number of interlocutors, who bring to the dialogue their personalities and worldviews. But the text’s polyphony is also evident in the multiplicity of parallel themes which are present in the dialogue. I have talked only of some of them: the motif of death and the Phaidon-references, the relation between wisdom and power (seen from the perspective of a tyrant and a wise man), the sages and their distinct outlooks, the human passions and emotional life of Periander. But there are many more: the relations between Greeks and barbarians (Egyptian and Scythian), gods and their worship, divine justice, human nature (body and soul relationship), to list just a few. The SSS is a collage in which multiple themes are sewn together, not haphazardly but with a plan, according to which certain threads appear again and again over the course of the dialogue. The thematic diversity of SSS is accompanied by the assortment of literary works with which Plutarch engages in the dialogue. Plato and the tradition of philosophical dialogue is one of them. Among other literary contexts activated in the reader’s memory are Herodotos’ Histories, to which the SSS alludes on several occasions, Aesop’s fables and the biographical tradition concerning him, the legend of the Seven Sages, Solon’s poetry, and the general tradition of sympotic writings.

At the end of my examination of the SSS I would like to return to the passage concerning the Egyptian sympotic custom of bringing a skeleton to a symposion which, I have suggested, can be read as reflecting on Plutarch’s composition of the dialogue. This metaliterary interpretation suggests a correspondence between a writer and a host, and between a symposion and a text. This image sounds familiar to the readers of Plutarch’s
other text, *On listening*, in which a speech is twice compared to a dinner (δείπνον, *On list.* 42f, 45d-e) and is called “a feast of reason” (λόγων ἔστιασις, 42f). In *On list.* 45e Plutarch discusses the proper behavior of a listener-guest who is κοινωνός τοῦ λόγου καὶ συνεργός τοῦ λέγοντος. It is tempting to read as a covert allusion to Plutarch’s audience also a passage in the *SSS* in which Thales insists that it is not only the host who has to make preparations for the *symposion*, but his guests as well. Thales says that people in Sybaris provide women with invitations a year in advance, for they need so much time to prepare clothes and gold; however, the true preparation of a guest takes much longer than a year, for it is much more difficult to discover the proper adornment of character (*SSS* 147e: ἥθει τὸν πρέποντα κόσμον). It is puzzling why Thales suddenly fuses the notion of a guest’s preparation for a *symposion*, for which the Sybaritans’ year seems to be excessive, with the lengthy process of personality formation. However, if we read the passage as Plutarch’s allusion to the audience, this becomes explicable: the ability of proper, nuanced reading requires the lengthy training; we may suppose that Plutarch would expect his readers to be both versed in literature and philosophically inclined, so that they may be able, as *symposion* guests, to participate in the serious and in the humorous, σπουδάσαι τι καὶ παιξαι,\(^\text{102}\) rather than simply being filled like a

\(^{102}\) Compare the beginning of Xenophon’s *Symposion*, where Xenophon announces his work as dealing with things said and done “in playfulness,” ἐν ταῖς παιδιαῖς, as contrasted with other, serious occasions. Plutarch, on the other hand, reformulates sympotic dialogue, which in itself is both serious and playful.
vessel (SSS 147f; cf. On list. 38f, 39a, 48c, where the word ἀγγεῖον is metaphorically used of the mind of a listener).

1.4. Conclusion

The two dialogues examined in this chapter – Dio’s Charidemos and Plutarch’s Symposion of the Seven Sages – differ greatly. Dio depicts a “contemporary” conversation of otherwise unknown interlocutors, who accidentally meet in an unspecified place. Plutarch presents us with a lengthy discussion of well-known figures, the detailed circumstances of which are provided (place, time, occasion). Dio creates a dialogue which oscillates between polarities (the two interlocutors in the frame conversation, the two accounts that constitute the speech of Charidemos); the figure of absent, difficult to grasp Charidemos who moves between them and creates a connection between them and problematizes the polarization. Plutarch composes a dialogue in which a variety of participants is mirrored by a variety of shifting moods and themes, which lacks a clearly identifiable core. Dio’s theme is death of a young man, Plutarch’s – sympotic gathering of famous wise men, though interestingly, symposion imagery enters Dio’s dialogue and the notion of death hovers over Plutarch’s.

The two dialogues have Plato’s texts, above all the Phaidon, in the background. They evoke Plato by their structure and themes, as well as by means of direct verbal echoes and images. Structurally, Plutarch is closer to Platonic models: his frame dialogue evokes more closely Platonic frame conversations, and he makes use of other Platonic literary techniques such as a peripatetic conversation and interruption of conversation
because of sudden appearance of somebody. But there is nothing mechanical in Plutarch’s employment of Platonic literary strategies. By fusing in the frame conversation Plato’s *Phaidon* and *Symposion*, he announces a mixed character of his text which moves between sympotic carelessness and gravity of death. Verbal echoes of the *Phaidon* and evocations of *Phaidon* imagery are a way of disrupting the sympotic spirit. In his depiction of the walk of Thales, Diokles and Neiloxenos, Plutarch explores the potential of a peripatetic conversation. It is, in a way, a second (after the frame conversation) introduction, which Plutarch uses to alert the reader to important themes, to signal the text’s concerns, to characterize some of the participants, and to reflect on his own literary strategies.

Dio’s *Charidemos* makes much more use of the *Phaidon*’s imagery. By locating the *Phaidon* in the background Dio creates an illusion that the two *logoi* which Charidemos presents are to be read as contradicting, serious worldviews. But as it is being inflated irreverently by Dio, the Platonic metaphor of human life as a prison becomes a somnambular vision bordering on absurd. Dio uses images to manipulate his readers’ emotional responses and to create a deceptive dichotomy between the first and the second *logos*.
Chapter 2: Interacting with Plato’s Republic

2.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I focused on the usage of the format of Platonic dialogic in Plutarch’s *Symposion of the Seven Sages* and Dio Chrysostom’s *Charidemos*. In this chapter I will examine two non-dialogic texts of these two authors: Plutarch’s *On listening* and Dio’s *Euboïkos*, focusing on their interactions with a particular Platonic text, namely the *Republic*. Scholarship on both *On listening* and the *Euboïkos* has identified numerous reminiscences of Plato’s *Republic* in these texts – allusions in form of verbal echoes, Platonic imagery, and direct quotations. However, there are no studies which would examine them in detail or attempt to clarify their significance.

My argument in this chapter is not only that the allusions to Plato’s *Republic* in the two texts which I examine are meaningful. I argue that the consistency with which they direct the reader to the *Republic* indicates that this particular Platonic dialogues is being chosen by both Plutarch and Dio as a fundamental point of reference. Allusions play here a double function. On one hand, they expand a meaning of a particular passage in which they are embedded by putting it in interaction with a Platonic passage. On the other, the repeated movement towards the *Republic* by means of recurrent allusions brings the text as a whole into a dynamic relation with the *Republic*.

2.2. Between φιληκοΐα and φιλοσοφία. Plutarch’s *On listening*
Modern editions of Plutarch’s *Moralia* open with three texts focusing on education. The first one, the spurious *On education of children*, discusses the upbringing of boys and urges paternal involvement in education. The second, addressed to Marcus Sedatus, is titled *How a young man should listen to poetry* (henceforth *How a young man*) and contains advice about the proper literary education of teenage boys.\(^{103}\) *How a young man* is followed by *On listening*, a text addressed to a young Nikander who has just reached adulthood; the focus of this text is philosophical education.\(^{104}\)

This order acknowledges the thematic affinity of the three works and arranges them according to the chronology of the educational process. *On listening*, with its focus on higher education, starts off where *How a young man* ends. In the last sentence of the latter text Plutarch says that the goal of the proper guidance of the boys’ education in poetry is to ensure their smooth transition to philosophy: δεῖ τῷ νέῳ κυβερνήσεως περὶ τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν, ἵνα μὴ προδιαβληθεῖς ἄλλα μᾶλλον προπαιδευθείς εὐμενής καὶ φίλος καὶ οἰκείος ὑπὸ ποιητικῆς ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν προπέμπηται (37b: “the young man needs good steering in his reading, so that provided with schooling rather than prejudice and filled with friendship, goodwill, and familiarity, he may be

\(^{103}\) The Platonic context of the text was examined recently by several scholar, see Whitmarsh 2001, 49-57; Zadorojnyi 2002, 297-314; Halliwell 2002, 296-302.

\(^{104}\) Scholarship on Plutarch’s *On listening* is not very abundant; useful remains Wyttenbach 1810, 303-413, of which much has been incorporated by Hillyard 1988, which is probably the most detailed examination of the text. Various aspects of the text have been recently examined by Korenjak 2000, 170-194, Castelnérac 2008, 429-444; Van der Stockt 2006, 1037-1046; Lauwers, 2008/2009, 15-24.
conveyed from poetry into the realm of philosophy”). This wording is echoed in the opening address to Nikander in *On listening*, where Plutarch mentions that the youth’s education was from the outset infused with philosophy and now allows him to approach philosophy with goodwill and familiarity (37f: εὐμενὴ καὶ οἰκεῖον ἥκειν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν).105 Childhood education, of which training in literature constituted an important part, is stressed as a phase which prepares boy for philosophical training; one of its goals should be to create young men who are “willing to listen to instruction,” εὐήκοοι τῷ λόγῳ (39b). While *How a young man* is addressed to a father, emphasizing his responsibility and supervisory role, *On listening* is addressed to Nikander, a young man himself, who now, having just acquired adulthood, becomes responsible for his own education and for his moral and intellectual development.

Before we turn to the detailed examination of Plutarch’s advice, some reflection on the character of philosophical education which awaits Nikander is necessary. The text offers little information concerning Nikander’s prospective training. Neither school location nor its affiliation is mentioned. In Nikander’s case the inception of formal philosophical studies follows immediately upon the transition from boyhood into adulthood and his choice of studies seems to have been a natural outcome of his childhood education, which aimed at familiarizing him with philosophy. The assortment of philosophers quoted or referred to by Plutarch in the work is characteristic of the

105 For the Greek text I am relying on Hillyard 1988; English translation comes from Babbitt 1927 unless otherwise stated. I have decided to refer to the text as *On listening*, which is closer to the Greek title, rather than *On listening to lectures* (Babbitt).
period’s eclectic spirit, but the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition is definitely favored. Interestingly, the text opens and ends with Peripatetics (Theophrastos in 38a, Hieronymos of Rhodes in 48b), which may suggest the profile of Nikander’s school. Epicurus, not surprisingly, is used by Plutarch as a negative example (45f, the only instance in On listening in which named philosopher is criticized); from among the Stoics, Kleanthes is named in one passage in which he is praised together with Xenokrates for his perseverance in studies, regardless of his intellectual slowness.

We can infer from Plutarch’s advice to Nikander that a substantial part of the youth’s training would consist of attending speeches, lectures, and all sorts of oral performances by teachers of philosophy and philosophers, which Plutarch calls ἀκροάσεις or more generally λόγοι. It is not clear how prominent the speech or lecture was as a medium in philosophical education at this time. There certainly were other forms of philosophical instruction available, allowing for more personal contact between philosophers and students, who frequently formed close, lifelong relationships, and there is a passage in On listening which presents a philosopher admonishing a student, presumably in a private conversation (39a). However, it is evident that Plutarch considered the ability of proper speech-listening as vital for a young student who was to participate in the exchange of philosophical ideas. Plutarch’s references to audience, its

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106 The Platonic-Aristotelian tradition is represented by Sokrates, Plato, Xenophon, Spintharos (a pupil of Sokrates), Xenokrates, Theophrastos, Hieronymos of Rhodes. Ariston mentioned in 42b was either a Peripatetic or a Stoic (for the discussion see Hillyard 1988, 125-6). For the connection between Peripatetics and Platonists in this period see e.g. Whittaker 1987, 110-114.
reactions, and speakers’ behavior, as well as frequent use of nouns ἀκοτής and ἀκός, indicate that his advice refers mainly to listening to lectures.\textsuperscript{107}

Though our information on the pedagogy and the mechanics of philosophical education of this period is scanty, our information about Plutarch’s own education, or later those of Gellius and Apuleius, suggests that students used to pursue philosophy under private teachers rather than in a highly institutionalized setting.\textsuperscript{108} Therefore we should not imagine Nikander attending lectures in a college-like setting, where a variety of instructors teach different subjects, working together towards an agreed upon program. Rather, the student would attend the lectures of his immediate philosophical tutor or tutors, and also listen to other philosophers and philosophical sophists who were giving

\textsuperscript{107} It is worth remembering, however, that Greek ἀκούειν has a broader meaning than English “to listen,” as it also frequently means “to read” (see Schenkeveld 1992). This is a consequence of the Greek habit of reading aloud, which blurs the distinction between reading and listening.\textsuperscript{107} The intimate connection of reading and listening may be seen in the scene from the Phaidros, in which Sokrates listens to Lysias’ speech read aloud to him by Phaidros; this scene is used by Plutarch as an illustration of proper listening (40e). Also, On listening itself was first delivered orally by Plutarch and only later written down and sent to Nikander (37c), what makes it interestingly self-referential.

\textsuperscript{108} The seminal work on the character of the Platonic school from the time of Antiochus of Ascalon is Glucker 1978, see esp. 256-280 on Plutarch’s education. More recently Lamberton 2001 examined Platonic biographies in an attempt to recover the structure of ancient philosophical schools. Though Lamberton’s sources are later than Plutarch (they date from 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} century CE), his observations are valuable for earlier period as well due to scarcity of earlier sources. For the education of Apuleius and Gellius, see Sandy 1997, 27, 190; Holford-Strevens 2003, 90-97.
speeches in the city. Plutarch expected that Nikander during his studies would encounter a variety of philosophical speakers, some dealing with serious philosophical problems and others offering little except for some well-rounded phrases. His advice was intended to show him how to benefit from listening to a good philosophical discourse and how not to get harmed by the speeches of the “so-called philosophers.”

In general, the examples and advices gathered in On listening reveal striking resemblance between philosophical education and the rhetorical training around the end of the first century CE. The philosophy teachers seem frequently to have specialized in one branch of philosophy, either in ethics, natural philosophy, mathematics or logic (On list. 43b-c); their lectures, ἀκροάσεις, might have been followed or interrupted by questions, and speakers might have invited students to propose problems, a format introduced by the sophists of the fifth century BCE and still popular in the imperial rhetorical schools. Plutarch dedicates a couple of chapters to warn his addressee not to let the pleasure of listening to philosophers’ speeches to become an end in itself, testifying that lectures in philosophy were frequently carefully arranged and composed in the Attic dialect (On list. 41c-42e), which by itself required considerable amount of stylistic attention.

There is much in this format of philosophical training that could trouble both a Platonist and a pedagogue in Plutarch, and the opening of the text bears evidence to the fact that he saw much danger in it. The first sentence of On listening specifies the topic of the text and the reasons for sending it to Nikander (37b-c):
Plutarch’s description of the topic (περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν) agrees with the title under which the text has been transmitted. Its generality is worth noticing: the object of ἀκούειν is not stated, a fact which apparently troubled the author of the Lamprias Catalogue or his source, who referred to it as “On listening to philosophers.” The second clause reveals Plutarch’s purpose for sending the essay to Nikander. Plutarch hopes that thanks to his advice Nikander will learn how to rightly listen (ὀρθῶς ἀκούειν) to someone who is trying to persuade him (τοῦ πείθοντος). The first expression introduces the idea that there is a proper – and consequently, an improper – way of listening. As we will see, this theme is extensively developed by Plutarch later in the text. The genitive τοῦ πείθοντος provides the missing object for ἀκούειν. However, its function is different than the Lamprias Catalogue’s “philosophers,” which specified a particular group of people. It encourages Nikander to perceive the relation between himself and the philosophers or teachers of philosophy whom he will encounter in a special way: not as a relation of

109 I have changed Babbitt’s translation, who renders τοῦ πείθοντος as „the voice of persuasion.”
instructor and student, or philosopher and his apprentice, but of the one persuading and the other being persuaded.\textsuperscript{110}

The opening paragraphs of On listening emphasize two aspects of persuasion. Firstly, it is connected with adulthood: Nikander has to learn how to listen to persuading speech now, after assuming the manly cloak, for from now on he is to be persuaded, not instructed; ὁ προστάαττων is replaced by ὁ πείθων (Plutarch’s distinction between prescribing and persuading is a variation on the traditional Greek distinction between force and persuasion, ἡ βία and ἡ πειθώ),\textsuperscript{111} The next sentence relates to this tradition by connecting adulthood and persuasion with freedom: as compulsion in the form of parental supervision is lifted, the youth is now free to make his own choices. This positive association of persuasion with adulthood and freedom is, however, counterbalanced by negative concepts, which emphasize the dangers that appear as the supervision of other people withdraws: anarchy and despotism of desires await the youths who were not properly educated and who fail to follow the guidance of reason (τὸ πείθεσθαι λόγῳ, 37d); they are in danger of being reduced to slavery and of losing their manliness, as Plutarch’s comparison with Herodotus’ undressed, immodest women vividly suggests. This is the other face of persuasion which, as S. Goldhill phrases it,  

\textsuperscript{110} Castelnérac 2008, 432 compares the role persuasion in Plutarch’s Life of Lykourgos and On listening and concludes that both texts “share the same concern about the part played by persuasion in education, because, to a certain extent, a fruitful education is based on the psychagogical power of the discourse.”

\textsuperscript{111} On the distinction between force and persuasion, and cunning and persuasion see Buxton 1982, 58-66.
aims at “persuasive seduction of the listener”; to be won over by it means “to be mastered, to be emasculated, to lose control.”\(^{112}\)

The introductory chapters of Plutarch’s text contain a clear reference to the Republic. In the description of the young man who fails to follow reason and is guided by emotions, Plutarch observes (37c-d):

\[\text{ἀναρχία μὲν γὰρ, ἢν ἐνιοί τῶν νέων ἐλευθερίαν ἀπαιδευμένη νομίζουσι, χαλασμένους ἑκείνους τῶν ἐν παισί διδασκάλισι καὶ παιδαγωγῶν δεσπότας ἐφίστησι τὰς ἑπιθυμίας ὡσπερ ἐκ δεσμῶν λυθείσας.}\]

Now absence of control, which some of the young men, for want of education, think to be freedom, establishes the sway of a set of masters, harsher than the teachers and attendants of childhood, in the form of the desires, which are now, as it were, unchained.

The wording here resonates with Plato’s description of the democratic soul in book 8 of the Republic, a book which presents the succession of political constitutions and dispositions of the soul to which they correspond. According to Sokrates, a democratic soul develops from an oligarchic one, when the son of an oligarch, reared without proper education (ἀπαιδεύτως, Rep. 559d), tastes pleasures and feeds his desires. They grow stronger and finally take in the “acropolis” of the youth’s soul, which, because of want of education, is empty of fair studies, practices, and true speeches, κενὴ μαθημάτων τε καὶ ἐπιτηδευμάτων καλῶν καὶ λόγων ἀληθῶν (Rep. 560b). As the unnecessary and useless pleasures are unleashed (561a: ἢ τῶν μὴ ἀναγκαίων καὶ ἀνωφελῶν

\(^{112}\) Goldhill 1999, 74.
ἡδονῶν ἐλευθέρωσίς τε καὶ ἄνεσις, the old values are deposed: insolence takes the place of good education, anarchy of freedom, shamelessness of courage, etc. (Rep. 560e).

Sokrates warns that unlimited freedom, which is so valued by the democratic soul, is the reason for its ruin, for “too much freedom seems to change into nothing but too much slavery, both for the private man and the city” (Rep. 564a: ἡ γὰρ ἁγάν ἐλευθερία ἐοικεν οὐκ εἰς ἄλλο τι ἡ εἰς ἁγάν δουλείαν μεταβάλλειν καὶ ἰδιώτῃ καὶ πόλει).

Plutarch alludes to this passage in his opening statements by reiterating both words (ἀναρχία, ἐλευθερία, ἀπαιδευσία) and images (unleashed desires and slavery). Reminiscences from the same Platonic passage appear also in the next chapters: in 38b Plutarch says that children should be protected against vile words until philosophy and good words (χρηστὶ λόγῳ) like watchmen (φύλακες) take charge of their souls. The image is clearly inspired by Plato’s depiction of the capture of the empty “acropolis” of the soul by desires – empty of μαθήματα, ἐπιτηδεύματα καλά, λόγοι ἀληθεῖς which are “the best watchmen and guardians,” ἀριστοὶ φρουροί τε καὶ φύλακες, Rep. 560b. The thought that good words instilled in the soul may prevent its degeneration is further developed by Plutarch, who holds on to the polis imagery: the young man who never gets a taste of instruction and speech (ἀκρόασις, λόγος) may be easily perverted and is like an untilled piece of land (On list. 38c). Desires which threaten a youth’s soul are not strangers or brought into the soul by the words of others, but are the soul’s autochthons, Plutarch says (On list. 38d: οὐ θυραίοι οὐδ’ ὑπὸ λόγων
This statement may seem to contradict what Plutarch has just said about the detrimental influence of vile words (On list. 38a-b), but his intention becomes clear when the text is read along with Rep. 559e, where Sokrates explains that the degeneration of the soul occurs when the desires within get help from the kindred ones from without.

Plutarch’s vivid description of dangers awaiting young men follows the ancient tradition which perceived the liminal period of adolescence as an especially tumultuous age, as a time of crisis, when desires and impulses may get hold of the youth’s soul. But there is some teasing ambiguity in Plutarch’s opening paragraphs. Ancient authors worried about troublesome adolescents lament their propensity towards drinking and their sexual debauchery, and in Plutarch’s proem there is an echo of these concerns in the sexual undertones of 37d, in which the Herodotean story of Gyges is alluded to. However, the opening notion of persuasion and the content of further chapters, which specify the emotions and desires which tear the listener’s soul, indicate that Plutarch uses the distinction between anarchy and freedom, desires and reason, being controlled versus being in control, not in reference to typical youthful behaviors, but in reference to the process of teaching and learning, speaking and listening. Alongside the dangers traditionally associated with youth, Plutarch identifies dangers involved in the educational process, when the outlook of a student is at risk of being shaped by bad teachers and his own irrational impulses.

While the proem’s cautionary tone draws general distinctions between reason and the desires, freedom and anarchy, the temperate and the tumultuous soul, further
chapters fill in the details. Plutarch presents the soul of a listener as being torn by various emotions which hinder his sound judgment; this “psychology of listening,” as it is sometimes called, consists of vivid images of different types of listeners. He begins with the description of a person filled with jealousy (φθόνος), which has its source in φιλοδοξία ἄκαιρος and φιλοτιµία ἄδικος (On list. 39d-40a); this kind of disposition, looking for slips in the speaker and belittling his strengths, makes the listener incapable of gaining any profit from listening, as it distracts his mind from the subject matter. The kind and gentle personality, on the other hand, is at danger of accepting false opinions because of its kindness and trust towards speakers (On list. 40f-41b); it is especially easily deceived by the style of speech, by the authority and popularity of the speaker and by the enthusiasm of the fellow listeners (On list. 41b-c). Plutarch’s description of the applauding and shouting audience, which influences an inexperienced young listener, echoes Sokrates’ account of the demoralizing role of the crowd at any popular gathering and the praise and blame distributed by it (Rep. 492b-c): in both cases a young man who is a part of the crowd is swept away by its reaction as if by the current (κατὰ ὑπὸν in the Republic, ὑπὸ ὑπεύματος in On listening).

The subsequent chapters treat the deceptive nature of speech (On list. 41c-42e). Plutarch warns against being charmed by skillfully composed speech. Elaborate style and impressive, theatrical delivery conceal ideas and blind the listener, providing empty pleasure. Pleasure, ἡ ἡδονή or τὸ ἡδύ, the omnipresent Greek philosophical category, is the key word in this excursus. A listener has to resist it in order to be able to evaluate the
argument; only after the speech’s usefulness and accuracy has been assessed can one allow himself to enjoy its style. The pleasure of listening should never be an end in itself, says Plutarch, criticizing the cheerfulness and joyful humming of a student who has left the philosopher’s lecture (On list. 42c: οὐ δεῖ δὲ τὸ ἣδυ τῆς ἀκροάσεως ποιεῖσθαι τέλος, οὐδ’ οἴεσθαι δείν ἐκ σχολῆς ἀπιέναι φιλοσόφου μινυρίζοντα καὶ γεγανωμένον). The phrase μινυρίζοντα καὶ γεγανωμένον is an echo of book 3 of the Republic, in which Sokrates describes a person excessively dedicated to the pleasure of music: καὶ μινυρίζων τε καὶ γεγανωμένος ὑπὸ τῆς ὀδής διατελῇ τὸν βίον ὅλον (Rep. 411a). This adaptation of the Platonic passage draws attention to the resemblance between the pleasure of listening to a speech and that of listening to music – the resemblance which was suggested by Plutarch earlier, in preceding passages, by means of musical vocabulary and examples (On list. 41c, 41d-e, 42a).

The self-contentment provided by pleasure blinds one to his true moral condition. The joyful and humming student is compared to a sick person using perfume instead of medicine (On list. 42c). This comparison reminds us of Plato’s discussion of sophistry and oratory in the Gorgias, in which the two are grouped together with cosmetics and cookery as branches of flattery imitating legislation, justice, gymnastics, and medicine (Gorg. 464b-465d). Not surprisingly, the chapters in Plutarch warning against the pleasures that accompany speech-listening introduce the figure of the sophist, who is criticized for making speech music-like in order to influence his speakers (On list. 41d). Sophists are said “to excite the listeners to Bacchic frenzy” (ἐκβασκχεύουσι), an
echo of Plato’s *Phaidros*, in which the term is used twice: first in 234d where Sokrates ironically describes his reaction to Phaidros’ reading of the speech of Lysias (*συνεκβάκχευσα*), and later in 245a, where the madness coming from Muses is said to excite the soul of a poet (*ἐκβακχεύεινσα*). In another passage Plutarch advises a mindful listener to leave all the stylistic embellishments of the speech as a pasture for “the sophist-playing drones” (*On list*. 42a, an echo of *Rep*. 564e).

While presenting the dangers of listening Plutarch acknowledges that speeches mislead, deceive, and lure incautious listeners, and that assessing their real merit is a complicated matter; the fact that they are delivered by a philosopher or a person with acknowledged authority should not lull one’s vigilance. His presentation is full of Platonic echoes, with the references to the *Republic* being predominant, especially in the opening paragraphs. The references to book 8 of the *Republic* and the description of democracy and democratic soul emphasize the role of education and the consequences of its lack and the importance of speech and being imbued with “good words,” which prevent the degeneration of the soul. But while Sokrates’ discussion of the types of constitutions and the corresponding types of soul moves between the political and the ethical (descriptions of regimes are followed by descriptions of human dispositions which resemble them), Plutarch dissociates the description of the democratic soul from the discussion of the constitutions and uses the political imagery for the sake of an ethical discourse. Though the connection between a regime and a corresponding individual is not clear in Plato (certainly the description of the democratic man is not a straightforward
description of a citizen of democracy) \(^{113}\), the political and the ethical are presented as interrelated and influencing each other. In Plutarch’s adaptation, the political imagery is used as a metaphor for the sake of ethical discourse, a movement justified by Plato’s overarching analogy of city and soul. However, the political imagery of the proem and the presence of the *Republic*, even though Plutarch never introduces political questions proper, emphasizes the link between ethics and politics, between individual and community, and in Platonic manner locates the issue of education at the nexus of the two.

Plutarch’s concept of “proper listening,” τὸ ὀρθῶς ἀκούειν, is a remedy for the shortcomings and dangers of the rhetorized philosophical education. He admits that there is little awareness that listening requires practice, as most people think of listening as a straightforward activity and practice speaking without mastering listening (*On list. 38d-e*). His remarks remind us of *Republic* 498a-b, where Sokrates criticizes the contemporary practice of philosophy: nowadays, Sokrates says, it is studied by youths, who take up the hardest part of it, namely making speeches (τὸ περὶ τοὺς λόγους); as they grow older, they leave philosophy for other activities such as running a household and making money. If they come back to philosophy later in life, they are satisfied with being listeners (ἀκροαταί). The order, Sokrates maintains, should be the opposite: the young men should pay more attention to their bodies and study only some philosophy in a form suitable for their age (presumably for the most part as listeners) and, as they advance in years, philosophy should take up more and more of their attention (the parallel

\(^{113}\) On the relation between a regime and soul type in the *Republic* see Ferrari 2003, 59-82; Blössner, 2007, 345-385.
with the contemporary practice which Sokrates criticizes suggests that this would be the time for making speeches). Remarkably, Sokrates treats here listening as a relatively undemanding, sideline philosophical activity (he calls it \( \pi \alpha \varsigma \xi \gamma \alpha \gamma \omicron \nu \), while Plutarch insists that it is a vital skill to be mastered, and, as we will see, a philosophical practice in itself.

In order to better understand the role of proper listening in Plutarch’s scheme of philosophical education it may be useful to examine closely the metaphor he employs to explain the relationship between good listening and good speaking. Plutarch argues that one does not learn both skills at the same time, like in ball playing, where one learns to throw and catch simultaneously. A more appropriate model is that of conception, pregnancy, and delivery. Proper reception of speech is the equivalent of conception and pregnancy (\( \tau \omicron \sigma \upsilon \lambda \lambda \alpha \beta \epsilon \iota \nu \) and \( \tau \omicron \kappa \alpha \tau \alpha \sigma \chi \epsilon \iota \nu \)), while speaking is an equivalent of giving birth to offspring (\( \tau \omicron \tau \epsilon \kappa \epsilon \iota \nu \)); the first two stages are necessary for the offspring not to be a wind-egg – a flawed speech with no weight and value whatsoever (On list. 38e). The metaphor of pregnancy has clear Platonic provenance. It appears in several Plato’s dialogues, though probably the closest parallel is to be found in the Theaitetos, in which the metaphor of wind-egg appears (Theait.151e, 157d, 161a). I will not venture to account here for the complexity of Plato’s use of the metaphor and its epistemological and dialogic implications,\(^{114}\) however I would like to draw attention to the shift of emphasis in Plutarch’s adaptation of it. In the Theaitetos Sokrates suspects that his young

\(^{114}\) Plato’s metaphor of pregnancy has been examined by Burnyeat 1977 and Sheffield 2001.
interlocutor is pregnant (*Theait.* 148e), but how it happened remains mysterious.\textsuperscript{115} The same feature of the pregnancy metaphor may be observed in the *Symposion*, where the processes leading to spiritual pregnancy are not explained; Diotima simply states that some people happen to be pregnant in the soul (*Symp.* 208e-209b). Sokrates remarks in the *Theaitetes* that if he encounters a young man who seems to him not to be pregnant, then he marries him off to some teacher such as Prodikos (*Theait.* 151b). M. F. Burnyeat observes, that “the ironical implication, which Sokrates refrains from spelling out, is not kindly: an empty mind, which has no conceptions of its own (cf. 148e), is fitted only to be sown with another’s seed,” and that Sokrates is drawing here a “contrast between putting ideas into the pupil’s mind and drawing them out from within.”\textsuperscript{116} Plutarch’s model is different. There is no “conception of its own,” but spiritual pregnancy happens exactly as a result of being filled by others with philosophical ideas. Listening to philosophical logoi is the necessary stage of philosophical training without which one remains barren – the process of listening is the equivalent to τὸ συλλαβεῖν in the pregnancy metaphor, and the immediate concern of the text in general.

However, having the mind filled with philosophical ideas like a vessel (the metaphor of the vessel is repeatedly used by Plutarch: *On list.* 38f, 39a, 39d, 47e) is not tantamount to being a philosopher. The conception, receiving the seed, must be followed by period of gestation (τὸ κατασχεῖν). This distinction is reiterated at the end of the text, where the pregnancy metaphor reappears: here Plutarch encourages Nikander to

\textsuperscript{115} Burnyeat 1977, 8.

\textsuperscript{116} Burnyeat 1977, 9.
receive the speaker’s words as a seed, which should be nourished and grown (On list. 48b-c: τὸν ἀλλότριον λόγον οἰνὸν ἀρχὴν καὶ σπέρμα λαβόντας ἐκτρέφειν καὶ αὐξεῖν). Though the further intellectual processing goes beyond the immediate concerns of the text, it is hinted at in the last sentences, which look forward to the next level of philosophical development, just as the last paragraph of How a young man looks ahead to more advanced philosophical education. The vessel metaphor, serviceable to Plutarch thus far, is now rejected: the mind is not like vessel which is to be filled, but like wood which needs somebody to kindle it, and then keeps the fire by itself (On list. 48c).

Plutarch finds the middle ground between drawing knowledge from within and being filled by others: an independent combination and elaboration of received ideas.

On listening, however, as we have said, focuses on the preliminary stage of philosophical development, namely that of receiving the ideas. This actually happens to be much more complex than filling a bottle, for a human soul, as Plutarch describes it, seems to be more of a whirlwind than an inanimate vessel. It is being torn by irrational desires and impulses, which tend to confuse one’s sound judgment (On list. 37e).

Listening, therefore, is a preliminary stage of philosophical training in a double sense. It prepares one for independent intellectual work by planting a seed in the form of philosophical ideas and, at the same time, it is a philosophical practice in itself by being an exercise in temperance and self-control. Plutarch’s advice characteristically oscillates between internal states and bodily behaviors. Chaos of the desires manifests itself in disorderly behaviors, both in shouting and clapping in applause and in frowning or
showing an irritated face; on the other hand, silence, proper posture, and face expression in a lecture room are more than savoir-vivre rules – they are exercises in self-restraint.

A similar oscillation may be observed in Plutarch’s treatment of goodwill and its external signs. Plutarch recommends receiving speakers with goodwill and friendliness, which are the opposite of envy and arrogance, and advises working on their proper expression (On list. 40b, 41a, 44a-45b). Gentleness of glance, serenity of countenance, and kindly disposition are recommended, and above all, praise. Plutarch’s insistence on praising speakers is noteworthy, especially as in Plato praise is rather problematic: in the hands of the multitude praise and blame are tools of moulding people into its likeness (Rep. 492b-c), in erotic eulogies praise is nothing other than flattery aiming at gratification, while agonistic encomia such as those delivered by Agathon’s guests in the Symposion promulgate falsehood; on top of this, Sokrates’ praise of others more frequently than not is a disguised censure. Plutarch is aware of the different faces of praise; in fact, he advises that one should praise a speaker reasonably and moderately or he risks being called an ironist, a flatterer or an ignorant man (On list. 44d), and in another text he warns against the detrimental effect that flatterer’s praise has on the person being praised. However in On listening praise is mostly seen in positive light as both an external sign of goodwill and its practice.

117 On praise in Plato, see Nightingale 1993.

118 See Plutarch, How to tell a flatterer from a friend 55e-58b. In 56d Plutarch uses the same Platonic reminiscence as in On listening 44f-45a.
Though praise is at best ambivalent in Plato’s dialogues, Plutarch finds a way to have Plato support his case. He suggests that one should actively seek anything praiseworthy in the speech, even if it was not very successful, for in every discourse delivered by a person bearing the name of philosopher there is something of value (On list. 44f). According to Plato (Rep. 474d-e) a man inclined to love is stimulated by all youths and calls the fair ones “children of the gods,” the dark ones “manly,” the hook-nosed “kingly,” the snub-nosed “fetching,” and the sallow “honey-hued” (On list. 44f-45a). In similar way, Plutarch says, the lover of listening and the lover of words (ὁ φιλήκοος καὶ φιλόλογος) will find in every discourse something meriting praise, just as Plato, though he have disapproved of many aspects of Lysias’ speech, nevertheless praised its style (On list. 45a).

Both of these references are problematic and confirm the ambiguous nature of praise in Plato. In the Phaidros Sokrates, asked whether he thinks that anyone could surpass Lysias’ speech, asks in surprise: “What? Are you and I to praise the discourse because the author has said what he ought, and not merely because all the expressions are clear and well rounded and finely turned?” (Phaidr. 234e). What Plutarch presents as Sokrates’ praise is more of a denigration of Lysias’ speech, which is said to offer nothing except smooth verbal flow; in the next sentence even the arrangement and invention are censured.

Plutarch’s use of the Platonic passage describing the attitude of an erotic man towards boys is also problematic. Sokrates says that an erotic man finds even faults of young boys commendable – in his unqualified acceptance he calls a sallow youth “honey-
colored,” a dark one “manly” etc. But Plutarch does not recommend praising blemishes of speech as if they were not flaws, but finding an aspect which is worthy of commendation. B. Hillyard, who noticed the incongruence, suggests that Plutarch saw “sufficient similarity” between his and Plato’s argument and used Platonic image regardless of its different meaning.\footnote{Hillyard 1988, 189.}

However, if we examine the context in which the image of an erotic man is used in book 5 of the Republic (474d-e), we will notice that Plato and Plutarch use it in a similar way. Sokrates describes an erotic man to Glaukon in order to explain who the philosopher is: that is the man who loves youth in all its forms and makes up every excuse so as to reject none of boys. Next comes a description of wine-lovers, who delight in every kind of wine, and lovers of honor, who are content with whatever honor is available for them. A philosopher, Sokrates says, is like these men - being a lover of wisdom, he loves learning in all its forms. A man who is finicky about his learning, especially when he is young and does not know what kind of knowledge is useful, is not a philosopher. The important characteristic of an erotic man – the one which enables Plato to compare a philosopher with him – is that he does not reject any boy, just as wine-lover rejects no wine. Plutarch’s use of the Republic passage is therefore consistent with Plato’s: a lover of listening is like an erotic man, for he does not reject any speech, but in each finds something of value; using Plato’s words, he is not finicky in this respect, just as Plato’s philosopher is not finicky about his learning.
The incongruence of Plutarch’s argument with the isolated Platonic quotation and, at the same time, the consistency with the context in which Plato uses it, suggest that Platonic image of an erotic man is used by Plutarch not for its inherent meaning, but rather serves as a pointer which directs the audience to the relevant pages of the Republic. This is all the more likely if we consider that both On listening and book 5 (together with book 6) of the Republic are concerned with education of a philosopher: On listening with the particular philosophical training of Nikander, the Republic with proper upbringing of philosophically disposed individuals.

However, it is remarkable that Plutarch does not use Plato’s image of an erotic man to elucidate the nature of philosopher but the disposition of lover of listening (ὁ φιλήκοος καὶ φιλόλογος). The term ὁ φιλήκοος in the Classical period is used only by Plato and Isokrates, and, interestingly, it appears in the discussion about the nature of philosopher in book 5 of the Republic, to which the image of an erotic man referred us, though with different meaning than in On listening: after Sokrates characterizes the philosopher as a lover of learning, Glaukon objects that then they will have to count many strange men among philosophers – such as lovers of sights (οἱ φιλοθεάμμονες) or lovers of hearing (οἱ φιλήκοοι), whom he describes as men loving all sorts of performances, but avoiding any more serious discourse (οἱ πρὸς μὲν λόγους καὶ τοιαύτην διατομήν ἐκόντες οὐκ ἄν ἐθέλοιεν ἐλθεῖν). Sokrates answers that the lovers of sights and lovers of hearing are not philosophers, but they are like philosophers:
they love sounds, colors, and shapes, but they are unable to see the beautiful itself, while the philosopher is the lover of the sight of the truth and beauty itself (Rep. 475d-476b).

The term Glaukon uses – ὁ φιλήκοος – is also used by Plutarch in the passage we are discussing, though manifestly in a different sense. In On listening ὁ φιλήκοος is a man taking pleasure in listening to speeches (besides ὁ φιλήκοος in 45a, Plutarch uses twice a cognate noun ἡ φιληκοΐα, 40b, 44b), rather than dramatic performances, as it was in Plato. Probably to mark the difference between Plato’s and his own usage of the word, in 45a Plutarch uses a phrase ὁ φιλήκοος καὶ φιλόλογος, in which the latter term specifies the meaning of the ὁ φιλήκοος, limiting it to “lover of (listening to) speeches,” somebody like Sokrates in the Phaidros, who calls himself τῶν λόγων ἐραστής (Phaidr. 228c).

Plutarch uses the two Platonic figures – that of the erotic man and of the lover of listening – which Plato uses to describe the nature of a philosopher. The passage of the Republic, from which they come, is sometimes called “Symposium in miniature” as the description of an erotic man used to illuminate the nature of the philosopher reminds one of Diotima’s “ladder of love” leading from love of beautiful bodies to love of beauty itself. This is partially correct, as the Republic does not present, strictly speaking, a progression of love (a “ladder”) in a way the Symposium does – Sokrates does not explain whether being the lover of listening enhances one’s chances to become philosopher. But

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120 The rare noun ἡ φιληκοΐα appears also in Isokrates, To Demonikos 18.

121 Ludwig 2007, 202 and 217.
by bringing the figure of the erotic man and the lover of listening, by retracing Sokrates’ steps, Plutarch makes his readers wonder what the relation between Plutarch’s “lover of listening” and the philosopher, the lover of wisdom, is. To answer this implicit question I will return to Plutarch’s pregnancy metaphor. I have argued that in *On listening* Plutarch is concerned with the preliminary phase of philosophical education, namely receiving the philosophical ideas through speeches. His distinction between conception and gestation and emphasis on the significance of independent intellectual work at the end of the text strongly underline that this is only the beginning of the philosophical development. In this case, becoming a “lover of listening” is a step towards philosophy, though it is by no means equivalent to being a philosopher. Without independent internal processing of the ideas, a “lover of listening” may become a sophist or an antiquarian, as Plutarch warns by the end of the text (*On list.* 48d: σοφιστικὴ ἔξις, ἱστορικὴ ἔξις).

We have seen that Plutarch opened his test with echoes of Plato’s description of the democratic man in the *Republic* 8; in the further text books 5 and 6 gain prominence – these are the books focused on the figure of philosopher, his nature, and education (*On list.* 38d-e: Rep. 498a; *On list.* 39f-40a: Rep. 492b-c; *On list.* 44f-45a: Rep. 474d-e, possibly also *On list.* 39a: Rep. 475d). By placing the *Republic* in the background of *On listening*, the particular issue of Nikander’s philosophical training is placed within a general discourse about the education, its aims and its challenges. Through these references more general questions, reaching beyond the practical advice given to Nikander, are introduced: can one “learn” philosophy, and what is the relationship between “learning” philosophy and becoming a philosopher? Is it possible to become
philosopher through listening to lectures? Who are the people who teach philosophy and does a student have any tools to distinguish between real philosophers and quasi-philosophers? *On listening* reveals that Plutarch dedicated much thought to these questions and that, aware as he was of the problematic format of the philosophical training, he believed that a student well-prepared by his childhood teachers was able to benefit from philosophical studies, which he perceived as a step further on the long way towards becoming philosopher. His approach differs from Plato’s, as we have seen – Plutarch clearly perceives listening to speeches and being imbued with ideas as an important stage in the process of becoming a philosopher – but Plutarch’s Platonic references are not polemical. Rather, Plutarch strives to negotiate between Plato and the contemporary reality and to root his pedagogic project in Platonic psychology. His innovative concept of proper listening is meant to empower the young Nikander, whom Plutarch tries to persuade that proper listening does not amount to passive absorbing of the speech, but consists of active and critical engagement with the speaker’s arguments.

### 2.3. Hunters and philosophers. Dio Chrysostom’s *Euboikos.*

On a stormy day a man, crossing the Aegean Sea in a small fishing boat, suffered a shipwreck and found himself alone on the inhospitable coast of southern Euboia. With no city in sight he wandered aimlessly looking for help. All of a sudden, the man noticed a deer on the beach, which must have fallen from a cliff, and afterwards he heard the barking of dogs coming from above. He went up the cliff and saw the dogs, running to and fro in search of their quarry. A moment later a hunter appeared; he
approached the shipwrecked man and asked whether he had seen the deer. The man showed him the animal on the beach. After removing the skin from the animal and cutting off the hind quarters the hunter invited the stranger to his hut. On the way the hunter told his guest about the modest and self-sufficient life he led. There were two families living together: two men, each of whom was married to the other’s sister, and their children. They lived in the mountains, hardly ever visiting the nearby city, and relied on hunting for their living. The hunter related also to the stranger one of his two city visits: he was summoned by the officials who believed that he should pay for living on land which was not his property, but belonged to the city. The hunter’s narration, not bereft of humor, emphasizes the difference between city life and country life. After reaching the huts, the hunter and his family entertained their guest, who shared their simple food and enjoyed their humble, but kind reception.

This story, considerably abbreviated here, comes from Dio Chrysostom’s *Euboïkos (Eub.)*; it constitutes about half of the text (chapters 1-80). The charming narrative, with a distinctive novelistic spirit, has appealed to generations of readers.

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123 W. K. Prentice made the Greek of the narrative available in a popular edition (still reprinted): Dio Chrysostom, *The Hunters of Euboea*, Boston 1897. Wilamowitz-Möllendorff 1902 included the first part of the speech (chapters 1-80) in his Greek reader under the heading “Fabeln, Erzählungen, Sprüche” (19-32); cf. also Wilamowitz-Möllendorff 1907, 4 where Wilamowitz enlists the *Euboïkos* among tales, “easy and amusing pieces, which are yet important as the beginnings of new literary kinds”). There was an attempt to read the text against the background of Greek New Comedy (Hight 1973). The connection of the speech
overshadowing the subsequent part of the speech, which contains Dio’s reflections on poverty, happiness, and the city life.\textsuperscript{124} Dio’s narrative about the hunter was explored by scholars from different angles. It has been read as Dio’s personal experience (Dio asserts that he narrates what he saw himself in the opening of the speech), and therefore as historical evidence for the life of Euboean peasants in the Roman period.\textsuperscript{125} Literary scholars, familiar with Dio’s taste for assuming different personae in his writings, are more cautious and treat the speech as a literary creation, shaped in a certain way to convey a political and philosophical message.\textsuperscript{126}

The presence of Platonic allusions in the speech is well known, though it has drawn relatively little scholarly attention. D. Russell lists some of Dio’s Platonic references in his commentary on the speech and suggests in passing that the reminiscences from the \textit{Republic} in the narrative about a hunter are somehow related to Dio’s concern with the \textit{Republic} in the later chapters, where the dialogue is openly

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\textsuperscript{124} In scholarly literature the loose connection of the two parts of the speech has been pointed out, and some attempts have been undertaken to explain it. To the most radical is Desideri 1978, who speculated that the two parts may have been composed at a different time (223) and Russell 1992, who suggested that early editors of Dio’s speeches might have combined versions originating in different circumstances (12).

\textsuperscript{125} Hughes, 1996, 91-100.

\textsuperscript{126} Ma, 2000; also other contributors in this volume touch upon the \textit{Euboikos} on several occasions, e.g. Brenk 2000, 270-5 comments on the Cynic undertones in Dio’s idea of self-sufficiency in the speech.
referred to (Eub. 129-32).\textsuperscript{127} M. Trapp, in his article “Plato in Dio,” dedicates some paragraphs to the *Euboïkos*, in which he states that the speech is Dio’s imitation and competition with Plato. He believes that Dio’s explicit reference to the *Republic* in Eub. 130-1 is not an innocent comment on Plato, but the author’s way of drawing attention to his “imitation of aspects of Platonic style and thematic.” The reference is, according to Trapp, polemical, as Dio indicates that, while approaching the same theme as Plato, he has “managed the presentation at least rather better.”\textsuperscript{128} This is an attractive suggestion, but it raises a number of questions which Trapp does not explore further. It is not clear what exactly is the field of Dio’s competition with Plato; after all, Dio is neither concerned with the construction of the ideal constitution (as he clearly states in Eub. 124-5), nor with the question of justice, around which the *Republic* is structured (in the *Euboïkos* the term δικαιοσύνη makes only one appearance – in chapter 130, in which Dio characterizes Plato’s *Republic* as the text about “the just man and justice”). However, Trapp’s notion that the *Euboïkos* is Dio’s polemic with a particular work of Plato is worth further investigation, as it encourages us to read Dio’s literary allusiveness not merely as a self-indulgent strategy but as a purposeful technique, which enriches the meaning of the text.

Russell’s indication that Dio’s references to the *Republic* found in the two parts of the speech should be considered as somehow related, and Trapp’s notion that the *Euboïkos* is Dio’s polemic against the *Republic*, raise the intriguing possibility that there

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\textsuperscript{127} Russell 1992, 127. \\
\textsuperscript{128} Trapp 2000, 219-23.
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is more significance to the Platonic reminiscences in the text than is usually granted. However, a closer examination of the speech is required in order to gain better insight into the relation between the two texts and the two parts of the oration.

I will begin with a short overview of the speech structure. The first 80 out of 152 chapters are taken up by the hunter story (summarized by me at the beginning). The opening sentences of the Euboikos present the subsequent narrative, on one hand, as an account based on a real event, and, on the other, as a casual story, told by a wanderer, who had many experiences and indulges in recalling them (Eub. 1). However, in chapter 81, which comes immediately after the narrative, Dio reveals that the story was not so casual after all, but was told for a specific reason. It was an example, παράδειγµα, both of Dio’s lifestyle and of the life of the poor: of their words, deeds, and dealings with each other (λόγων τε καὶ ἔργων καὶ κοινωνιῶν τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους). There is a patent inconsistency between the opening of the text, which presents the forthcoming narration as the casual story-telling of a loquacious wanderer, and chapter 81, which claims that it is told purposefully, according to a specific plan and for a specific reason. This inconsistency suggests that the reader was purposefully misled at the beginning by the author, who now encourages him to re-read and re-think the narration within the framework of his argument as a whole.

The second part of the speech consists of three main segments (82-102, 104-124, 133-152), which differ thematically. They are separated by passages in which, as in chapter 81, Dio reflects on the purpose and nature of his work (103, 124-32). Chapters 82-102 elaborate on the theme of poverty and happiness: poverty is not an impediment to
an honest and happy life. The flow of the argument in this section is for the most part
directed against poets, who, complains Dio, extol wealth and present poverty as misery
(*Eub.* 82 on Euripides, *Eub.* 83-96 on Homer). Poets, Dio says, are prophets and
spokesmen of the multitude (οἱ πολλοί), their προφῆται καὶ συνήγοροι (*Eub.* 101).

Chapter 103 marks a thematic transition: γεωργικὸν μὲν δὴ πέρι καὶ
κυνηγετικὸν τε καὶ ποιμενικὸν βίον τάδε, “enough about the life of the farmer, the
hunter, and the shepherd.” Russell notices the oddity of this sentence – Dio has hardly
discussed the life of a farmer, or a shepherd (though the fathers of his hunters were
shepherds before they had turned to hunting);¹²⁹ thus, the three figures (the farmer, the
hunter, the shepherd) have to be perceived as representing the rural poor in general,
whose life and occupations were the main theme of both the story about the hunter and of
chapters 82-102. In chapter 103, Dio moves to a different theme, namely the life of poor
people living in towns and cities. Dio admits that city life is much more challenging for
the poor than country life. People living in cities have to have a paid job, for they need
money, but if they choose the wrong one, it will lead to their degeneration. The best
solution for them would be to move out of the city and live in the country (*Eub.* 107-8);
however, if it is not possible, then they should choose a job which brings no injury.
Harmful work includes different types of cosmetic services (*Eub.* 117-8), acting,
especially in performances intended to raise laughter (*Eub.* 119), and working as paid

lawyers or public heralds, who announce rewards for turning in thieves and runaways (Eub. 123).

This discussion of suitable and unsuitable occupations is followed by chapters 124-32, in which Dio again comments upon the structure and the purpose of the speech. I will examine this passage in more detail shortly, for this is the section in which Dio refers openly to Plato. As two other passages of similar nature (81 and 103), these chapters also mark a change of subject: paragraphs 133-152, which constitute the last section of the speech, turn to the questions of prostitution, debauchery, and adultery.

This general overview of the second part of the Euboïkos complements the sketch of the narrative part of the speech with which I opened this chapter. The three passages which draw attention to the structure and the purpose of the speech (81, 103 and 124-32) indicate that there is certain plan beneath the appearance of stylistic and thematic incoherence. Chapter 81 in particular connects the story about the hunter with the second part of the speech.

I will begin the examination of the Platonic presence in the Euboïkos with chapters 124-132, which contain a clear reference to Plato and to the Republic. After listing a number of jobs which should not be performed by poor people living in a city, Dio acknowledges that these jobs may be useful for the city; however, he does not intend to explore the question of who could perform them, because he is not concerned with constructing the best politeia, or a politeia better than others; his aim is only to prove that poverty is not an evil (124-5). This passage emphasizes that the Euboïkos is to be read
within the Greek tradition of philosophical-political writings, though it treats the problem from a different angle.

In chapter 127, Dio apologizes for the length of his discourse (as he does also at *Eub.* 81 and 103) and says that it is not purposeless, for ordinary people (μέτριοι) and their occupations are worthy of diligent research. He defends his digressive style and argues that all the seemingly casual digressions are in fact pertinent and relevant to the general theme of the work (*Eub.* 128). His work resembles that of a hunter, who is ready to abandon the track if he finds another, fresher one (*Eub.* 129). Therefore, Dio should not be criticized; and similarly, one should not blame a man, who, intending to illustrate the question of justice and the just man with the example (παράδειγµα) of a polis, has not stopped until he has enumerated all kinds of constitutions and their variations. Though Dio does not provide the name of this philosopher, he clearly means Plato and his *Republic*, and in particular chapters 368c-9a of the dialogue. However, the defence of Plato immediately turns into criticism, as Dio adds that while Plato should not be blamed for the length of the political discussion in the *Republic*, he may be rightly censured if his discussion of the city has failed to fulfill its purpose. Dio suggests that Plato’s discussion of polis did not shed light on the question of justice and the just man, and even that it had no relation to it (οὐδὲν ὄντα πρὸς τὸ προκείµενον τὰ εἰσηµένα), questioning Plato’s parallel between city and soul and the basic premise of the *Republic* that ethical issues can be illuminated by political discourse.

It may be argued that the reference to Plato and the *Republic* is one of Dio’s disjointed digressions, and I may be accused of overemphasizing its significance.
However, it is worth remembering that it comes immediately after Dio’s explanation that his seemingly disconnected digressions are all in fact relevant to the main theme (Eub. 128-9). Thus, Dio openly encourages his readers to keep looking for connections between the outwardly unrelated passages and the general focus of the text, and entitles us to look at the Republic as the significant background for his own undertaking.

An interesting resemblance between Dio’s presentation of the structure of the Republic and the structure of the Euboïkos may be noticed. The Republic’s political discourse is called by Dio a παράάδειγµα, a model, which is supposed to illuminate the ethical question of justice. The same expression – παράάδειγµα – is used by Dio in reference to his story about the hunter, which was narrated in order to present the true face of poverty (Eub. 81). If this is a purposeful parallel, than it suggests that the story about the hunter is better integrated with the whole text than is usually recognized, and that the structure of the speech was more diligently planned by Dio.

This leads me to an examination of the Platonic allusions present in the narrative about the hunter. It has been noticed by scholars\textsuperscript{130} that several elements of the story remind one of Sokrates’ description of the primitive community in book 2 of the Republic, the City of Pigs, as it is sometimes referred to, after Glaukon’s dismissive reaction; I will use here the more neutral term “the First City” (this is the first community imagined by Sokrates in the dialogue, and also the initial stage of the development of a civic community). In book 2 of the Republic Sokrates turns to political discourse in order to illustrate the question of justice which, as he claims, is easier to discern in a

\textsuperscript{130} E.g. Russell 1992, 127.
community than in an individual (Rep. 368e-369a; this passage is alluded to by Dio in Eub. 130). The First City Sokrates describes is a simple community, in which people congregate because they are not self-sufficient. They specialize in different fields, choosing occupations according to their skills and innate potential: they become farmers, house builders, merchants, weavers, and other craftsmen. Sections 372a-c provide a description of the simple life which the citizens of this city lead. They make bread and wine, clothes and shoes; they build their houses. They work both in summer and winter, clothed appropriately to the season. Their food consists of barley and wheat (θρέψονται δὲ ἐκ μὲν τῶν κριθῶν ἀλφίτα σκευαζόμενοι, ἐκ δὲ τῶν πυρῶν ἄλευρα). During meals they place their barley-cakes and loaves of bread (μάζας γενναίας καὶ ἄρτους) on reeds and leaves (ἐπὶ κάλαμον τινα παραβαλλόμενοι ἕ̄φυλλα καθαρά). They feast (εὐωχήσονται) together with their children, reclining on beds of rushes, strewn with yew and myrtle (κατακλινέέντες ἐπὶ στιβάδων ἐστρωµμέένων μίλακί τε καὶ μυρρίναις); they enjoy their food, drink wine and, garlanded, praise the gods. They also have some relishes and desserts, as Sokrates, urged by Glaukon, ascertains: salt, olives, cheese, and vegetables (ἄλας, ἐλάς, τυρόν, βολβοῦς, λάχανα, ἐψήματα); figs, chickpeas, and beans; also roasted myrtle berries and acorns (τραγήµατα σύκων καὶ ἐρεβίνθων καὶ κυάμων; μύρτα καὶ φηγοὺς σποδιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ πῦρ). They do not produce children beyond their means, and live healthy till old age, when they hand down their lifestyle to their children.
There are several echoes in Dio’s speech of this Platonic passage. The lifestyle of the hunters was begun by their fathers, who died old and healthy (Eub. 20), and who have handed down their manner of life to their children; the narrative suggests that it will be continued by the next generation as well (a daughter of one of the hunters marries the son of another, having “a poor man for a husband, a hunter as ourselves,” Eub. 70).

Besides meat, which the hunters enjoy in large quantity because of their occupation, their diet resembles the one of the citizens of Sokrates’ primitive city: they eat barley-cakes and wheat-bread (Eub. 17: μάζα, 76: ἀρτοὺς καθαρούς), though bread is considered more of a luxury (cf. Eub. 57, where the hunters offer their guests bread, while they eat millet). Millet is absent in Plato, and is Dio’s own addition; a typical peasant food, it is considered by the hunters as the most important of all the grains they cultivate (Eub. 45).

They make their own wine (Eub. 46), and feast reclining on beds of boughs and skins (Eub. 65: κατακλιθέντες ἐπὶ φύλλων τε καὶ δεμάτων ἐπὶ στιβάδος ψηλῆς) surrounded by their wives and children; remarkably, Dio uses in the description of the feast which he enjoyed with his hosts the verb εὐωχούμεθα (Eub. 65, cf. Plato’s εὐωχήσονται αὐτοί τε καὶ παιδία). The hunters have a garden yielding fruit and vegetables (λάχανα, δένδρα), and among their snacks we find also Plato’s beans and roasted chickpeas (Eub. 45: κυάμων; 76: ἐρεβίνθους φρυκτούς). After eating meat, they clean the table with leaves and put clean ferns on it (Eub. 75, the daughter of the hunter καταψήσασα φύλλοις ἀπὸ τῶν κρεών, ὑποβαλλούσα καθαρὰν πτερίδα, cf. with Plato’s φύλλα καθαρὰ). When one of the women thinks about wedding
preparations, she says that they have enough ἀλφιτὰ καὶ ἀλευρα, a phrase which is
directly derived from Plato’s ἐκ τῶν κριθῶν ἀλφιτὰ, ἐκ τῶν πυρῶν ἀλευρα.

Though it would be difficult to argue that any of the expressions quoted above,
if taken in isolation, constitutes a significant, meaningful reference, such considerable
density of verbal reminiscences and images relating to a specific passage of the Republic
(and in a text which openly evokes the Republic), can hardly be accidental. The critical
reference to Plato in 130-1, discussed above, suggests that the image of Sokrates’ First
City is not evoked by Dio for the purpose of showing erudition, but that it constitutes one
of the key elements of Dio’s polemical interaction with Plato and the Republic.

There are, certainly, some conspicuous differences between Dio’s hunters and
Plato’s First City. The main occupation of the members of Dio’s community is hunting.
Hunting is absent from Sokrates’ First City; it appears at the next stage of political
development, in the Feverish City into which the First City degenerates, and is associated
with a growing need for a luxurious lifestyle. In Dio, meat does not count as luxurious
food any more, but is the staple nourishment of the hunters’ families, which keeps them
from starvation. However, in other respects the life of Dio’s community is even less
civilized than that of the inhabitants of Sokrates’ First City: they do not have olives or
olive oil (Eub. 56), millet is more important in their diet than wheat, and they apparently
make no, or very little, use of money (Eub. 44; the citizens of Sokrates First City used
monetary exchange in the marketplace).

If Sokrates’ description of the First City constitutes the essential backdrop for
Dio’ account of the life of the hunters, then the presence of a pig in Dio’s story must be a
joke. As we remember, Sokrates’ uncivilized First City is scornfully rejected by Glaukon, who asks (Rep. 372d): Εἰ δὲ ύόν πόλιν, ὦ Σώκρατες, κατεσκεύαζες, τί ἂν αὐτὰς ἀλλὸ ἢ ταῦτα ἔχομεν (‘if you were furnishing a city of pigs, Sokrates, on what else would you fatten them than this?’). Sokrates later ironically points out that in fact there were no pigs in this city for there was no need for them; they are introduced only later, in the Feverish City. In Dio’s story, the hunters also do not need pigs, though they keep a small number of cows and goats (Eub. 47); however, one of the sons, who wants to get married, has got a pig in secret and is raising it to be sacrificed on that occasion. In a truly comical manner, Plato’s imaginary pig becomes in Dio a real animal. The conversation about the process of fattening the pig and about the pig’s diet (the boy had to feed the pig with barley, as chestnuts were not enough), bringing the pig to the hut in order to check if it is fat enough (Eub. 72-74) – all these elements point to the Republic.

The resemblances between Dio’s account of the hunters’ life and Sokrates’ First City suggest that Dio’s narrative was consciously shaped by him to resemble the Platonic model. Dio’s reference to Plato and the Republic in chapters 130-1 indicates that there is more competition and disagreement in this strategy than imitation. In order to identify the character of Dio’s polemic against Plato, it is necessary to examine the context of the description of the First City within the Republic.

The interpretation of the role the First City plays in the Republic is, however, complicated. The passage describing the primitive community is notoriously ambiguous,
and scholars differ in the assessment of its significance.\textsuperscript{131} Glaukon finds Sokrates’ description ridiculous, and mockingly and scornfully describes it as a life suited for animals. He rejects the First City because of its crude character and wants Sokrates to talk about civilized people, who recline on couches, eat from tables, and have sophisticated relishes and desserts. Answering his request, Sokrates describes a luxurious city, which he calls the Feverish City (\textit{Rep. 372e}: φλεγµμαίνουσα πόλις). The Feverish City expands because of the expansion of the appetite of its citizens. It acquires perfumes, courtesans, and war – but also painting, music, and poetry. Although the First City is abandoned by Sokrates and his interlocutors, Sokrates seems to be fond of it: he calls it “healthy” and “true” (ἀληθινή πόλις, υγιής), thus contrasting the “good” First City with the “bad” Feverish City.

This neat polarization of the two cities, however, is questioned by scholars who believe that Sokrates’ positive evaluation of the primitive \textit{polis} is ironic. They point out that there is no rational component in the city; there is neither need nor place for philosophy, and it is unclear where to look for justice in this city (\textit{Rep. 371e-2a}).\textsuperscript{132} Some scholars also wonder whether the First City is a genuine possibility at all, as it seems to be founded upon an un-Platonic notion of human nature – a notion which is based on the belief that the appetitive aspect of a human being can be moderate without the rational


\textsuperscript{132} Dorter 2006, 65.
control. On the other hand, it has been observed that the principles upon which the First City is founded anticipate the growth and decay which we observe in the Feverish City. The First City is built solely in order to fulfill the corporeal needs of its citizens, and the presence of money, trade, and merchants implies its potential for degeneration. Also, the principle of specialization, upon which the community is based (one man, one occupation), is connected with the appetitive desire, for it ensures that “things are produced in greater quantity, of better quality, and more easily” (Rep. 370c). Upon this reading Sokrates’ characterization of the First City as “true” and “healthy” must be ironic, for the model is not only unreal and unappealing (to Glaukon at least), but has an inbuilt tendency towards degeneration.

Remarkably, all these “flaws” of the First City are “corrected” in Dio’s account about the life of the hunters. Unlike Sokrates and Glaukon who make “a city in speech” (Rep. 369c), Dio claims in the opening sentences that he presents a community which really exists and which he himself has experienced. Throughout the account, the narration is interrupted by the narrator’s enthusiastic comments emphasizing the happiness and ethical prowess of the hunters and their families; these comments complement the vivid description and aim at persuading the reader that the austere and humble life is both happy and fitting for a human being. Dio also introduces the rational and ethical

133 Barney 2001, 220.
135 Dorter 2006, 64.
component, missing from Plato’s description of the First City, whose inhabitants silently attend to their corporal needs. His hunter is strikingly eloquent, able to persuade the mob in the city he visits regardless of his lack of experience in public speaking; the description of his city visit shows him an honest man, and a man of sound judgment. He is also a good and thoughtful interlocutor and a generous person, ready to share whatever he possesses with others. Dio offers a comprehensive presentation of the small community and its inhabitants by including their words, deeds, and associations with others (Eub. 81).

Specialization, money, and trade, with their demoralizing potential, are absent from the hunters’ community. Dio’s hunters are capable of providing all the necessary things by themselves: they obtain their food, build their houses, wear animal pelts; not only do they not need to buy things, but they have a surplus of meat and vegetables, which they send to their grown-up daughter, the wife of a rich man, who lives in a village. They have some vines and make enough wine for their daily use (and not more, therefore on special occasions, such as for a wedding, they may need to go to the village to obtain some). No specialization means self-sufficiency: Dio’s hunters do not have to rely on other people in order to fulfill their basic needs; there is no need for money or trade. This allows the hunters to live in a small, family-based community, which does not grow or degenerate as the Republic’s First City.

Plato’s most basic community is called polis, “a city,” and from the very beginning, even at the time when it is very small, it is characterized by division of labor, to use the modern term, and the marketplace; this is a consequence of Sokrates’ initial
premise that people congregate because they are not self-sufficient. Dio, on the other hand, presents not a *polis*, but a rural community, which is self-sufficient and does not need trade. This rural community is explicitly contrasted with a *polis* in the account of the hunter’s visit to the city, and the distinction between the country and the city is re-emphasized in the second part of the speech (*Eub.* 105-6). In the *Republic* the city is presented as the most basic form of human community and a remedy for human fragility; according to Dio, the city is the cause of the moral decay of the poor, who lose the ability to live a self-sufficient and natural life.

Dio’s ethical concern is evident in the *Euboïkos*, though we probably should label the text “rhetorical philosophy,” as there is neither a rigorous investigation of ethical questions nor a clear conceptual apparatus. Dio’s ethical vocabulary contains a number of imprecise expressions such as “living seemly” (*Eub.* 81: τὸ ζῆν εὐσχημόνως), “life befitting free men” (103: ζωὴ προεπούσα ἀνδράσιν ἐλευθέροις), or “living life according to nature” (81, 103: κατὰ φύσιν). The last phrase, of clear Cynic and Stoic provenience, explains the lack of a theoretical ethical apparatus: the good life is tantamount to the natural life, and it is to be found not by means of theoretical investigations but by recovering human nature. Dio recovers it for his reader, taking him beyond city walls and beyond the artificial conditions of urban life. The *Euboïkos* is built upon an optimistic concept of human nature: a human being in his natural state is good; it is his environment that leads to his degeneration.

We can now try to answer why Dio might have considered Plato’s *Republic* a failed undertaking. His critical remarks in chapter 131 point out that Plato’s strategy of
illuminating an ethical question through political discourse was unsuccessful, as the latter had no relevance whatsoever to the former. By explaining the ethical through the political, a human being through a city, Plato wanted to explain the natural through the artificial and corrupt.

The narrative about the Euboean hunter is marked by density of reminiscences from the Republic, and chapters 124-31 openly identify this particular dialogue of Plato as the point of reference. In the rest of the chapter I will examine other passages of the Euboikos which relate to the issues discussed in the Republic: first, the section in which Dio criticizes poets and their views about poverty in chapters 82-103 (both poverty and poetry are discussed in the first three books of the Republic), and next the final chapters of the speech, which are dedicated to the theme of prostitution, adultery, and sexual licentiousness in general. Prostitution is not discussed in the Republic, except for the passing mention of a “Corinthian girl” in 404d. However, there are some reminiscences of the Republic in Dio’s treatment of the subject, and I will argue that their function is to point to the absence of this theme from the traditional political philosophy.

I have discussed previously chapter 81, in which Dio reveals that the narrative about the hunter is intended as an illustration of the life of the poor, an illustration which would support Dio’s claim that poverty is not an evil. Subsequent chapters, which explore the theme of poverty further, scrutinize a number of poetic passages, which, according to Dio, extol wealth and present poverty as a source of misery (Eub. 82-102), propagating views which are unworthy (ἀνάξιον: Eub. 97). The views of poets mirror these of the multitude, which fears poverty and believes it is an evil (Eub. 100).
Plato’s criticism of poetry in the *Republic* creates an obvious background for that of Dio. Both Plato and Dio in their discussion of poetry focus on the relation between the multitude and poets, but while Plato focuses on the question of death, Dio focuses on that of poverty. Both claim that the multitude and poets misunderstand the issue, and fear something which is not to be feared (fear of death in the *Republic*, 386a-388d, fear of poverty in the *Euboïkos*), and both label the views of poets as “unworthy” (*Rep.* 388d, *Eub.* 97: ἀνάξιον). Chapter 98, in which Dio explains his decision to argue against poets, contains a probable allusion to Plato:

> λέγομεν δὲ ταῦτα μεμνημένοι τῶν ποιητῶν, οὐκ ἄλλως ἀντιπαρεξάγοντες ἐκείνοις οὐδὲ τῆς δόξης ζηλοτυποῦντες, ἢν ἀπὸ τῶν ποιημάτων ἐκτήσαντο ἐπὶ σοφία· οὐτῶν ἐνεκα, φιλοτιμούμενοι ἐξελέχχειν αὐτούς, ἀλλὰ παρ’ ἐκείνοις μάλιστα εὑρίσκειν ἡγούμενοι τὴν τῶν πολλῶν διάνοιαν (...)

And in advancing these views we cite the poets, not to gainsay them idly nor because we are envious of the reputation for wisdom that they have won by their poems; no, it is not for these reasons we covet the honour of showing them to be wrong, but because we think that it is in them especially that we shall find the thought and feeling of men generally (...).

The wording reminds of Dionysios of Halikarnassos’ censure of Plato’s treatment of sophists and Homer in the *Letter to Gnaeus Pompeius*: Plato, says Dionysios, criticized sophists because of ambition and love of honor, ἀπὸ φιλοτιμίας, for τὸ φιλότιμον was a part of his character. This aspect of Plato’s character is best seen, according to Dionysios, in his envious treatment of Homer (διὰ τῆς πρὸς Ὁμήρου ζηλοτυπίας).

Plato’s censure of Homer in the *Republic* was frequently received with indignation by the
ancients, and Dionysios repeats here typical anti-Platonic arguments, to which Dio in the passage quoted above seems to allude as well.

If we compare Dio’s treatment of poetry with that of Plato, some interesting differences will become noticeable. In the Republic Plato focuses on the influence poets have upon opinions of people, who are exposed to it from early childhood. His main concern is the role that poetry plays in education and in the formation of formation; the main postulate was that the contents and form of poetry should be supervised. According to Dio, a poet does not shape the worldview of the multitude, but merely expresses it:

παρ’ ἐκεῖνοις μᾶλιστα εὐφήσειν ἠγούμενοι τὴν τῶν πολλῶν διάνοιαν περὶ τε πλούτου καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀθαυμάζουσι, καὶ τί μέγιστον οἶοντι σφισί γενέσθαι ἀν ἄφ’ ἐκάστου τῶν τοιούτων (Eub. 98). Dio says that a poet is a “prophet” of the multitude, for he presents clearly its hidden sentiments, dressing them up in meter (Eub. 101: φανερὰς καὶ μέτρους κατακεκλειμένας εὐφήσοντες τὰς τῶν πολλῶν δόξας). Therefore, poetry is useful for philosopher, who needs to know the views of the multitude in order to scrutinize and correct them. Thanks to poetry, a philosopher does not have to take each man aside and question him separately (Eub. 100: οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκαστόν ἀπολαμβάνοντα ἐλέγχειν τοῦ πλήθους, οὐδ’ ἀνερωτάν ἄπαντας ἐν μέρει, evoking Sokrates questioning individuals), but he can argue against the views of the multitude in general by arguing against the views expressed by poets. Dio’s approach to poetry treats the literary heritage as a platform for philosophical and
ideological discussion, for agreement and disagreement, for reflection, polemics, and self-definition.

I will now move to the last section of the speech, chapters 133-52. Their emotional tone distinguishes it from the rest of the speech; accordingly, it has been called “a tirade against prostitution and sexual license,” and “a virulent attack on prostitution, pederasty, adultery, and sex before marriage,” and read as the evidence of Dio’ views on sexual behavior, and on homoeroticism in particular. However, reading this part of the Euboïkos without consideration for the more general themes of the text distorts its meaning; the statements concerning sexual relations should not be separated from the context and overemphasized. I will offer a reading more attuned to the general themes of the text and argue that identifying proper sexual relations and chastising homoerotic relations is not Dio’s main concern in this section.

In chapter 132 Dio introduces his next theme as a bold one (χρὴ θαρροῦντας διαπερᾶναι). His self-encouragement reminds of book 5 of the Republic, in which Sokrates needs to be encouraged by Glaukon before he ventures on the exposition of the “three waves” (Rep. 450c-451b). The theme which requires boldness from Dio is prostitution, or more specifically, brothel-keepers and the institution of brothel, as the

136 Russell 1992, 150.
137 Scholarly opinions on Dio’s evaluation of homoerotic relations vary: Russell and Swain believe that in the Euboïkos Dio strongly disapproves of male homoeroticism, while Houser 1998 argues that Dio rejects hedonism and sexual license in general, but presents no disapproval of homoerotic relations quia homoerotic.
repetition at the beginning of the next sentence emphasizes (πεφι γε πορνοβοσκών και πεφι πορνοβοσκίας). Prostitution, though flourishing in ancient cities, was not a theme of special interest for ancient philosophers; pimps and brothels come up in Greek and Roman comedies (to which Dio alludes in Eub. 143) rather than in philosophical discourse. This explains Dio’s words of self-encouragement in 132. In the Republic prostitution is referred to in book 3, in which Sokrates discusses the upbringing of the guardians. In a passage concerned with proper discipline, food, and gymnastics, Sokrates warns against excessive pleasure, which is associated with insolence and licentiousness, ὕβρις and ἀκολασία (Rep. 403a),\(^{138}\) and somewhere between the Sicilian cuisine and Attic cakes, Sokrates mentions “a Corinthian girl”: ψέγεις ἄρα καὶ Κορινθίαν κόρην φίλην εἶναι ἀνδράσιν μέλλουσιν εὗ σώματος ἔξειν (Rep. 404d: “then you also blame a Corinthian girl’s being the mistress of men who are going to have good bodies”). The passage is remarkable for its euphemistic wording and for treating prostitution as an impediment for developing good bodies by the adolescents who are to become guardians.

Dio’s concern is also ὕβρις and ἀκολασία (Eub. 133), however, not merely that of the prostitute clients, but especially that of brothel-keepers. Dio’s remark that this job should not be taken up by anyone, poor or rich, connects the argument against prostitution with the previous discussion of the suitable and unsuitable occupations.

Prostitutes, captured in war or purchased, and then exposed in filthy booths, are

\(^{138}\) Dio’s condemnation of prostitution and his attitude towards sexual desire in the speech is discussed by Houser 1998 where also references to earlier literature on the subject may be found.
considered as victims, forced by circumstances to lead shameful life against their will. Dio depicts their misery with compassion, but concisely, and then moves to discussion of the detrimental effect that prostitution has upon polis in general. In 136-7 he firmly states that neither law-givers nor magistrates should tolerate or legalize prostitution in cities, “whether in the cities which are to be governed on the highest level according to virtue, or in the cities of the second, third, fourth, or any other class,” μὴ δὴ ἐπιτρέπειν τὰ τοιαῦτα κέρδη μηδὲ νομοθετεῖν μήτε ἀφαντά μήτε νομοθέτην μήτε ἐν ταῖς ἀκρωσ ὑπὸ ἀρετὴν οἰκήσισμέναις πόλεσιν μήτε ἐν ταῖς δευτέραις ἢ τρίταις ἢ τετάρταις ἢ ὑποκαπνίσουν. The phrase ἐν ταῖς ἀκρωσ ὑπὸ ἀρετὴν οἰκήσισμέναις πόλεσιν refers to the opening of book 8 of the Republic, where Sokrates summarizes his exposition of the best politeia, which he calls ἡ μελλούση ἀκρος οἰκεῖν πόλις (Rep. 543a); consequently, the other types of cities refer to different forms of political governments, enumerated by Sokrates in the next chapters (Rep. 543c-d: timocracy, oligarchy, democracy, tyranny). Dio emphasizes that his interest is not theoretical, i.e. he is not concerned with constructing the best government (as he did in Eub. 125), moreover, unlike the earlier sections of the speech, this one has a specific political message urges magistrates (ἀφαντα, νομοθέτην) to undertake specific actions to ban prostitution from the existing cities, whatever their political structure.

Prostitution, according to Dio, is allowed in cities because of two reasons. First, it is justified by the tradition: it belongs to “old habits” παλαιὰ ἔθη (Eub. 137); Dio rejects this claim by arguing that tradition should not be used as justification for
accepting an evil. Second, Dio says that the law-givers of old legalized prostitution, for they believed that it prevents adultery (i.e. illegitimate sexual relations with free-born, married women) and therefore protects family. Dio not only erases the traditional distinction between prostitution and adultery by referring to the former as μοιχεία (Eub. 139), but argues that existence of legal prostitution leads to general licentiousness and ultimately to seduction of married women, maidens, and boys, all victims of dissolute men, who grow weary of legal sex and pursue the forbidden pleasures.

The theme of demoralization of boys comes at the end of the speech (Eub. 149-152), which leads D. Russell to the conclusion that Dio treats homosexuality as “the culminating evil.” However, it is not the homosexuality per se that Dio is concerned with (though he clearly rejects it as being against nature), but seduction of young boys by “this lecherous class” (τὸ ἀκόλατον γένος), i.e. the clients of prostitutes, which leads to the boys’ depravation. From the time of Plato, boys and their proper education held a special position in political philosophy: they represent the future of the community, and their education is given much thought. Dio assumes this perspective when he asks what education and training boys might obtain in the community which neglects the perils of prostitution (Eub. 149), and when he refers to them as “prospective rulers, judges, ad generals.” (Eub. 151). If the misery of low-status women involved in prostitution, described in 133-4, is not a powerful enough argument to ban prostitution, then Dio reaches for the argument which observes the traditional concerns of political philosophy:

139 This rationale for accepting prostitution was ascribed to Solon.

he shows that the marginalized problems of the low social strata eventually destroy the heart of *polis* by demoralization of the prospective ruling class.

The coherence of the *Euboïkos* is frequently called to question, and indeed there are four easily discernable parts: the story about the hunter, the discussion of the views of poets on poverty, the advice on suitable and unsuitable occupations of the urban poor, and finally the discussion of prostitution. These sections differ not only in their subject matter, but also in their format: there is a narrative, a philosopher’s inspection of poetical passages, a set of practical advice, and an emotional harangue against certain social practice. These parts are separated by three passages in which Dio discusses his argumentative strategies and formats, comments on what has been said and announces what subject he will treat next. Although it is not impossible that different parts of the speech were primarily composed for different occasions, the speech in the form we have it now shows marks of conscious arrangement, with diversity, both formal and thematic, and digressiveness being employed as valuable literary strategies.

As a way of closing my examination of the *Euboïkos* and its relation to Plato’s *Republic* I will offer some reflections on the hunter figure and its symbolic significance.\(^{141}\) In chapter 129 Dio suggests that his digressive discourse imitates the hunter’s habit: a hunter does not always stick to the trail, but if he finds a more fresh track, he follows it, and returns to the former path only after catching the quarry (see also *Rep.* 394d). In this image, hunting serves as a model for philosophical investigation. This comparison is elaborated in Plato’s *Republic* where in a memorable, vivid passage

\(^{141}\) On a hunter figure in ancient novel, see Paschalis 2005.
Sokrates envisions himself and his interlocutors, Glaukon and Adeimantos, as huntsmen chasing the idea of justice:

Όσον, ὦ Γλαῦκων, νῦν δὴ ἡμᾶς δεῖ ὁσπερ κυνηγέτας τινᾶς θάμνων κύκλῳ περιβάλλει. Θανάτῳ ἢ διαφύγῃ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀφανισθείσα αἴδηλος γένηται; φανερὸν γὰρ δὴ ὅτι ταύτῃ πη ἐστίν· ὁρὰ οὖν καὶ προθυμοῦ καταδεῖν, ἐάν πως πρώτος ἠμοῦ ἤδης, καὶ ἐμοὶ φράσεις. (...) Ἐποιεῖν εὐδάμενος μετ᾽ ἐμοῦ. (...) Καὶ μὴν δύσβατός γέ τις ὁ τόπος φαινεῖται καὶ ἐπίσκοπος· ἐστὶ γοῦν σκοτεινὸς καὶ δυσδιερεύνητος. ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὁμοὶ ἴτεόν. (...) Καὶ ἐγὼ κατιδών, Ιοῦ ioú, εἶπον, ὦ Γλαῦκων· κινδυνεύομεν τι ἔχειν ἰχνος, καὶ μοι δοκεῖ οὐ πάνυ τι ἐκφευξεῖσθαι ἡμᾶς.

So then, Glaukon, we must, like hunters, now station ourselves in a circle around the thicket and pay attention so that justice doesn’t slip through somewhere and disappear into obscurity. Clearly it’s somewhere hereabouts. Look to it and make every effort to catch sight of it; you might somehow see it before me and could tell me. (...) Follow, and pray with me. (...) The place really appears to be hard going and steeped in shadows. At least it is dark and hard to search out. But, all the same, we’ve got to go on. (...) And I caught sight of it and said, Here! Here! Glaukon. Maybe we’ve come upon a track; and, in my opinion, it will hardly get away from us. (Rep. 432b-c).142

Sokrates’ hunting image refers to a particular style of hare hunting, described by Xenophon, in which hunters first identify the tracks of a hare, than try to figure out in which direction they lead (they are usually confusing, for a hare runs all over the place trying to find a hiding place). Xenophon informs that the tracks usually lead to a thickly

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142 Transl. Bloom.
shaded place (σύσκιος τόπος) in which the hare hides. The hunters should then place their nets around this place and startle the hare so that it runs into the net.\textsuperscript{143} Sokrates dramatizes the image: the darkness is emphasized (δύσβατος, ἐπίσκιος, σκοτεινός, δυσδιερεύνητος), the difficulty of the task, and the uncertainty of the outcome. Plato presents hunting, and consequently philosophical research, as a task of utmost concentration and nerves.

Dio’s image presents us with an utterly different kind of hunting, and consequently, an utterly different image of philosophy. There is no drama here: the hunter follows easily discernable tracks. He does not worry that his quarry will escape – he even leaves his tracks if he finds fresher ones in order to follow them, and after getting his quarry, he comes back to the previous ones. This image resonates with the presentation of hunting in the first part of the speech, where it appears again and again to be a rather relaxed activity: the deer at the beginning of the speech jumps off a cliff and lies in water; the fathers of the hunters turn to hunting because it offers a relatively easy and convenient way of living; the winter hunt is easy, as the tracks are easily discernable and one can catch animals in their lair; the son of the hunter catches a hare in a net without difficulty (\textit{Eub.} 3-5, 16, 18-19, 71-2).\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{143} Xenophon, \textit{Cyn.} 8.

\textsuperscript{144} There may be some reminiscences from Xenophon’s \textit{Cynegeticus} here. Xenophon remarks that deer ὑπτούσι δὲ καὶ εἰς τὴν θάλατταν, ἐάν κατέχωνται, καὶ εἰς τὰ ὕδατα ἀπορούμενα· ὅτε δὲ διὰ δύσπνοιαν πίπτουσι (9.20; I follow the edition of Delebecque 1970). He also talks about hares enjoying
In Dio’s comparison the hunter is not preoccupied with chasing one particular animal, but is happy to change his direction if he finds fresh tracks. Interestingly, Dio “imitates” the hunter not only in his speaking and writing style. His visit to the hunters’ place is, in fact, such a change of direction. He tells the hunter that he was traveling on some urgent business (Eub. 7: ὑπὸ σπουδῆς τινος), nevertheless he changes his plan and spends several days with the hunters to celebrate the wedding of their children and enjoy their company.

As the first half of the Euboïkos is concerned with a real hunter, Dio’s image, which brings together the figure of the philosopher and of the hunter, gains a special significance. Dio encourages the reader to “imitate hunters” (Eub. 129: μιμούμενοι τοὺς κυνηγέτας), and though the encouragement is formally limited to hunter’s habit of hunting, it reminds the reader of the Euboean peasants whose life Dio presented. And while in Dio’s comparison a philosopher becomes a hunter, in the narrative the hunter comes close to being a philosopher.

2.4. Conclusions.

The two texts analyzed in this chapter reveal a similar literary technique: they consistently refer to a particular Platonic text, namely the Republic. In both texts, through consistent of allusions to the Republic the authors enter a dialogue with Plato’s ethical full moon and playing in its light (5.4); cf. Eub. 71-2 - the hunter’s son catches a hare apparently on a full-moon night: ἡ σελήνη τηλικαύτη τὸ μέγεθος ἡλίκη οὐδεπώποτε ἐγένετο.
and political ideas. Understanding of the meaning of the text and the meaning of allusions is a hermeneutical process: when we recognize allusions to the *Republic*, we begin to read the text as acquiring some of its meaning from the interaction with the Platonic dialogue, which in turn allows us to interpret other elements of the text as also pointing to the *Republic*. For example, interpreting a pig kept by a hunter’s son in the *Euboïkos* as a humorous reference to the *Republic*’s First City would be a stretch, to say the least, if the whole description of hunters’ life was not modeled on Plato’s account of it. A consistency of allusions to a particular text strengthens their significance.

In Plutarch’s *On listening*, the *Republic* becomes an important background for reflections on philosophical training. The advice about “how to behave in the lecture room” is underpinned by the Platonic ethics and psychology; consequently, *On listening* transcends its immediate, specific purpose, and addresses more general and universal issues of the function and limits of philosophical education, the nature of philosophy, and the process of becoming a philosopher. Dio’s *Euboïkos* touches upon several themes of the *Republic* – the ideal community, the problematic character of poetry, the origins of demoralization of society, the analogy of city and soul, and, through the figure of the hunter, the nature and function of philosophy, though Dio’s stance towards Plato is far more polemical than Plutarch’s. The latter, even while deviating from Plato, still operates with Platonic concepts and uses Platonic imagery to emphasize the Platonic provenience of his thought. Dio, on the other hand, while discussing several problems treated in the *Republic*, numerously emphasizes his disagreement with Plato.
The use that Dio and Plutarch make of the Republic tells something interesting about the reception of the dialogue in the imperial period. Plato’s Republic is well-known for its ambiguous oscillation between the ethical and the political, reflected in the overarching analogy of city and soul. Though it is easy to forget over the course of the dialogue, the extensive political discourse filling the pages is developed by Sokrates for the sake of illuminating the ethical question – the question of justice of an individual. How exactly one should understand the correspondence between Sokrates’ discussion of the ideal city, with its intricate institutions, and the mechanics of the human soul, is a problematic issue, much debated by modern scholars. In her book on Plato and reception of his dialogues by the Middle Platonists, J. Annas argued that Plato’s Republic was read in antiquity as an ethical work rather than political.\footnote{Annas 1999, 72-95. Annas views were objected by other scholars, e.g. Long 2000, 339-357, esp. 349-51.} If we follow Annas’ distinction between the ethical and political aspect of the Republic and consider Plutarch’s On listening and Dio’s Euboïkos as examples of reading Plato in the Second Sophistic, we will notice that Plutarch and Dio explore different aspects of the dialogue. Plutarch uses the political imagery for the sake of an ethical discourse, while Dio, with his focus on a community, seems more interested in Plato’s treatment of political questions (which he finds unsatisfactory). However, we should be careful not to distinguish too sharply between Dio’s political and Plutarch’s ethical reading of the Republic; in fact, we can venture to say that the Republic was appealing to both authors precisely because it explored, though never actually sorted out, the complex relationships of ethics and
politics. In On listening, Plutarch, by means of the Republic’s political imagery, anchors his reflections on philosophical education in the tradition which perceived education, and philosophical education in particular, as the crucial theme of political philosophy. For Dio, the political and the ethical concerns are intimately connected: a badly governed city leads to moral degeneration of its citizens, while the welfare of the community relies on the virtue of its inhabitants.

146 Long 2000, 357 observes that Annas’ decisive detaching of ethics from politics is misguided: “I don’t think we can achieve an adequate grasp of ancient ethics even as theory if we detach it, as this book does, from all considerations of social and political actualities.”
Chapter 3: Ailios Aristeides, rhetoric, and anti-platonic tradition

3.1. Introduction.

In the Euboikos, Dio signals his disagreement with Plato, and presents an alternative way of approaching political philosophy. In this chapter I turn to a more direct confrontation between a Second Sophistic author and Plato. Ailios Aristeides, born in 117 CE, belongs to a different generation than Plutarch and Dio Chrysostom, both born around year 40-45 CE. Unlike Plutarch and Dio, Aristeides does not call himself a philosopher, but an orator. In the Letter to Kapiton he says that since youth “a terrible passion and a marvelous love” was instilled in him for the ancients, especially for Plato and Demosthenes, and argues that, although not a philosopher himself, he acquired a good understanding of Plato (Kap. 6-7). Aristeides’ identity as an orator is made explicit and contrasted with that of philosophers; unlike Dio, who keeps changing his personas, Aristeides emphasizes the stability and solidity of his personality.

In this chapter I examine Aristeides’ To Plato: In Defence of Oratory, in which Aristeides, as an orator, answers Plato’s accusation of rhetoric. I suggest that we look at the speech as a specimen of oratory, consciously shaped with an eye on the audience’s

\(^{147}\) For an overview of Aristeides’ life and works, see Behr 1968a, Swain 1996, 254-297. Recently a collection of articles was dedicated to Aristeides, with contributions examining texts, life, and personality of “the humourless rhetor”: Harris and Holmes 2008.
reaction. From this perspective I will examine Aristeides’ presentation of Plato, his use of anti-platonic arguments, as well as his own self-presentation.


Among his numerous works there are three texts discussing Plato, sometimes referred to as the Platonic discourses: To Plato: In Defence of Oratory (Defence), To Kapiton, and To Plato: In Defence of the Four.\textsuperscript{148} In the first text, which will be my main focus in this chapter, Aristeides defends oratory against Plato’s criticism of rhetoric articulated in the Gorgias. This work, and especially his references to Plato’s travels to Sicily, met with criticism from contemporary Platonists. To Kapiton, a short text addressed to a Pergamene Platonic philosopher, is Aristeides’ defense of the arguments and methodology employed in the Defence\textsuperscript{149} The third Platonic discourse, the Defence of the Four, is also focused on the Gorgias, but now Aristeides defends the four prominent Athenian statesmen criticized by Plato’s Sokrates: Miltiades, Themistocles, Pericles, and Cimon.

Aristeides’ Defence is structured as a defence speech. In the prooimion (1-19) Aristeides expresses his belief that popular reverence of the authors of the past puts him

\textsuperscript{148} Throughout the chapter I refer to the Greek text of the Aristeides’ Defence of Oratory in the edition of Behr 1978. For the English translation, I use Behr 1986 with occasional minor changes.

\textsuperscript{149} Kapiton was not the only one offended by Aristeides’ treatment of Plato. Porphyry is known to have written against Aristeides and his polemic against Plato; his text, no longer extant, might have been a source of Olympiodoros’ criticism of Aristeides (Behr 1968b).
in a losing position in his discussion with Plato; therefore, he begins his text by addressing his audience’s prejudices. The first twelve paragraphs argue that excessive respect for the past is not only irrational but also harmful, as it restrains the growth of culture and the search for the truth. The second part of the prooimion (13-19) introduces Aristeides’ reasons for defending oratory against Plato’s criticism in the Gorgias and justifies his undertaking. The prooimion ends with an invocation to Hermes, Apollo, and the Muses.

The prooimion is followed by a lengthy quotation from the Gorgias, in which Sokrates deprives rhetoric of the status of art and calls it a branch of flattery, along with sophistic, cookery and cosmetics (Defence 22; Gorg. 463a-465c). In chapters 33-134 Aristeides discusses at length the first part of Plato’s charge against rhetoric, namely that it is not an art. Drawing heavily from Plato’s Phaidros and Sokrates’ defence of divine madness, Aristeides maintains that even if rhetoric is not an art, this should not be used as a criticism against it. He contrasts inherently human arts with god-inspired phenomena such as oracles and poetry and emphasizes the superiority of the latter. Turning to rhetoric, Aristeides explains that in its case the divine influence takes the form of an innate gift. The opposition between the human and the divine becomes the opposition between art and nature (113-130). Nature, Aristeides maintains, is not only superior to art, but the prerequisite for the discovery and development of art.

Chapter 135 comes as a surprise: after the lengthy argumentation seemingly defending rhetoric as a divinely inspired practice, greater-than-art, Aristeides turns to argue that Plato was wrong in depriving rhetoric of the status of art. Still, Aristeides
emphasizes that his strategy is more than an exercise in arguing on both sides of a question: “I neither retract anything which has been said nor do I concede to Plato that oratory has no share of art, but I shall now discuss “the extent of its art” – for I shall use Plato’s own expression” (Defence 137). Clearly then, the excursus that imagines rhetoric as among the divine-inspired practices remains somehow valid, regardless of Aristeides’ argument, now developed in chapters 138-177, that rhetoric is an art.

In chapters 178-203 Aristeides refutes Plato’s argument that rhetoric aims at pleasure. Chapter 204 marks a transition from the refutation of Plato’s arguments to a presentation of Aristeides’ own understanding of rhetoric. Rhetoric, Aristeides says, is of all human things “greatest, first, and most perfect, and if it is possible to say so, the greatest thing to be prayed for” (Defence 204: μέγιστον καὶ πρῶτον τῶν ἐν ἄνθρωποι καὶ τελεώτατον καὶ πέρας, εἰ οἶον τ’εἰπεῖν, εὐχῆς ἄξιον). Aristeides begins his exposition with a myth explaining how rhetoric was discovered as a remedy for violence and injustice (205-211). Both legislation and the art of justice are dependent on rhetoric. Oratory, according to Aristeides, is not a shadow of a part of politics, as Plato claimed, but holds all the parts of politics together (234). It partakes in all four virtues: it was discovered for the sake of justice (δικαιοσύνη) and by intelligence (φρόνησις); and it leads both the soul of orator and the city led by him towards moderation (σωφροσύνη) and courage (ἀνδρεία) (235).

The smooth, quasi-philosophical argumentation of this part of the Defence. yields to a more belligerent tone as Aristeides refutes arguments against rhetoric based on the actions of unjust men (237-260). The vividness of this part of the speech, with its
personalization of rhetoric, direct address of Plato, rhetorical questions, and kaleidoscopic examples contrasts with the calmness of the previous paragraph. Next Aristeides turns to the question of suffering injustice and argues that being wronged is an evil and that rhetoric has the power to prevent both the orator and other people from suffering it (261-306). As such, oratory stands in opposition to tyranny (307). The next chapters argue against associating oratory with tyranny and flattery (307-314) and then briefly discuss Plato’s criticism of Miltiades, Themistokles, Kimon, and Perikles (319-343).

In chapter 344, Aristeides argues that Plato himself believed that “good rhetoric” is possible. He discusses the nature of rhetoric and elucidates it by telling the myth of Prometheus (382-402). In chapters 429-437, Aristeides describes a man who “does not easily appear before the people with his oratory and engage in political disputes,” alluding, as it seems, to his own practice of oratory, and observes that contemporary rhetorical practice differs from that in earlier periods due to the change in government and political life. At the end of the speech Aristeides “forces” Plato to “recant” by quoting passages which, as he believes, agree with the notion of rhetoric presented in the Defence and pronounces Plato to be “the father and teacher of orators” (465).

Aristeides’ main polemical strategy consists of finding inconsistencies in Plato’s works and in showing the philosopher “refuted by his own statements” (50: αὐτὸν καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτοῦ λόγων ἐξελεγχόμενον; also 203, 277). The Platonic corpus is treated by Aristeides as an exposition of Plato’s doctrine and therefore expected to

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150 For discussion of this passage consult Flinterman 2002.
present coherent views. Words of Sokrates and other main speakers in the dialogues are interpreted as indicative of Plato’s own views. Aristeides’ project in the Defence is to defend rhetoric against Plato but “without losing Plato”; hence Aristeides insists that Plato, while rejecting rhetoric in the Gorgias, held a more favorable opinion of it in other dialogues. Aristeides contrasts Plato’s criticism of rhetoric in the Gorgias with views of rhetoric presented in other Platonic texts, especially the Phaidros (438, 459). As L. Pernot observed, Aristeides’ aim in both Defences is to protect his cultural heritage against an attack launched from within by Plato, whose own texts constituted a fundamental part of this very heritage. According to Pernot, Aristeides attempts to construct “une image idéale de l’hellénisme,” which could accommodate all the vital elements of Hellenic culture: philosophy, rhetoric, and political history.

Recent scholarship has pointed out two interpretative problems in the Defence. J.-J. Flinterman, in his examination of Aristeides’ self-presentation as the ideal orator in the Defence, observed that there is a striking inconsistency between Aristeides’ understanding of rhetoric as, by definition, tied to the public, civic life of a community, and his self-presentation as an orator practicing his art in relative isolation (Defence 429-433). Flinterman does not really solve the problem. He argues that sophistic oratory as practiced by Aristeides, though bereft of its social, civic function, nevertheless remained

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152 On the technique, see Tarrant 2000, 132.


“a medium for the affirmation of elite mentality” and therefore was still useful.\textsuperscript{155} True as that is, it does not explain why Aristeides, while insisting on the civic and engaged nature of rhetoric, presents his own rhetorical practice as withdrawn.

Another interpretative problem has to do with Aristeides’ ambiguous attitude to Plato. It has been observed that the \textit{Defence} keeps oscillating between admiration and hostility towards the philosopher.\textsuperscript{156} Plato is repeatedly called a slanderer and accused of quarrelsomeness and jealousy. On the other hand, Aristeides expresses his respect for the philosopher and calls him the father of rhetoric, which, coming from Aristeides, was the highest praise possible.\textsuperscript{157} Flinterman describes Aristeides’ treatment of Plato as that of an iron fist in a velvet glove, and argues that the orator’s praising of Plato was a defensive strategy, anticipating the anger of contemporary Platonists, rather than an expression of sincere sentiments.\textsuperscript{158}

In my reading of the \textit{Defence} I will address both issues: the apparent inconsistency between Aristeides’ ideal of rhetoric and his self-presentation, and the ambiguous treatment of Plato. I propose that we look at both Aristeides’ self-presentation and his presentation of Plato as consciously shaped, playing a specific function within the speech, connected both to Aristeides’ understanding of rhetoric and to the defence-speech format of the text. I will begin my examination of the \textit{Defence} by looking at how

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\textsuperscript{155} Flinterman 2002, 203.
\textsuperscript{156} Geffcken 1928, 105.
\textsuperscript{157} Flinterman 2000-2001, 38 observes that Aristeides’ “appropriation” of Plato, though seemingly a compliment, was likely to infuriate Platonic philosophers.
\textsuperscript{158} Flinterman 2000-2001, 38.
\end{flushright}
Aristeides uses standard anti-platonic arguments so that we can understand better his attitude towards both the anti-platonic tradition and Plato. Then I will analyze his understanding of rhetoric and its relation to his self-presentation in the Defence.

Aristeides’ polemic against Plato is regularly discussed by scholars concerned with the ancient anti-platonic tradition. It has been observed that Aristeides used many standard anti-platonic arguments, circulating in anti-platonic texts for centuries before him.\textsuperscript{159} Düring has seen Aristeides’ criticism of Plato as a “recycling” of the old conflict between Plato and orators, and called his two Defences “a pale and verbose continuation of the fight which Isocrates and his school fought.”\textsuperscript{160} However, Aristeides’ reference to traditional anti-platonic arguments should not blind us to the fact that arguing against Plato in the fourth century BCE was a different endeavor than criticizing Plato in the second century CE, when engaging with Plato entailed also engaging with the history of his reception and with his particular status in the literature and culture.

Aristeides uses a variety of rhetorical strategies aimed at diminishing the weight of Plato’s refutation of rhetoric and strengthening his own position, not all of them relating directly to Plato’s arguments. A careful reader of the Defence will find there many charges against Plato which have their origins in earlier anti-platonic sources, which Aristeides mentions in a casual way. For example, Aristeides reminds his readers that among Sokrates’ associates there were Kritias and Alkibiades, two of the most

\textsuperscript{159} Geffcken 1928, 105-8; Düring 1941, 162-163; Flinterman 2000-2001, 46-49.

\textsuperscript{160} Düring 1941, 162-3. On orators discussing Plato’s criticism of rhetoric in the Gorgias see Tarrant 2000, 129-133.
pestilential men in the Greek history (335); that neither Sokrates nor Plato was a leader and they did not lead their community toward what is best (πρὸς τὸ βέλτιστον, 331). 

There are also some instances in which Aristeides distances himself from anti-platonic arguments as the same moment as he raises them. Such is the case of Plato’s Sicilian travels. In Defence 144 Aristeides refers to Plato’s image of the helmsman in Gorgias 511d-512a in order to argue that the fact that rhetoric “aims at things” is a sign of its use of reason and a mark that it is an art. He describes how a helmsman uses his art to carry people over to Aigina, Pontos, and to Egypt – all three mentioned by Plato in the Gorgias – and then adds Sicily “with which you were once not unacquainted” (τὴν οὐδὲ σοί ποτε ἀήθη Σικελίαν). This casual remark introduces the theme of Plato’s Sicilian travels which Aristeides discusses later in more detail (280-298, 324-5, 362). That Aristeides’ discussion of Plato’s involvement in Sicily was immediately recognized by his readers as an anti-platonic gesture is indicated by the letter to Kapiton (9), in which we read:

خوفσθα, ὡς ἔγω πυθανομαι, δυσχεραίνειν ὃτι ἦν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις μνήμη τῆς εἰς Σικελίαν ἀποδημίας αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὃτι τοῦ βίου δὴ καθάπετσθαι τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐν τούτοις ἐδοκούμεν· ἐχοῖν δὲ ἀρα τούτο μὲν χωρίς που εἶναι, τὸν λόγον δὲ ἔλέγχειν, καὶ ταύτα γε οὐκ ἔραστοῦ μόνον τὰ ἐγκλήματα, ἀλλὰ καὶ σωφρονόντος περί λόγους.

You said, as I learn, that you were angry because in my argument mention was made of his journey abroad to Sicily, and because in this we seemed to attack Plato’s life. But [you say] this

161 Geffcken 1928, 106-7.
ought to have been kept apart, and the refutation should have been of his argument, and not only a partisan would complain about this, but anyone who acts with moderation in his arguments.

Kapiton understood Aristeides’ mention of Plato’s Sicilian travels as an attack on Plato’s life; bringing Sicily into the discourse, Aristeides says, is painful to comrades of Plato (Kap. 16: ἀνιαρόν τοῖς Πλάτωνος ἑταίροις). But Aristeides maintains that he is blameless and argues that he did not refer to Plato’s journeys to Sicily in order to slander him; in fact, he was aware that his reference to Sicily may be understood as an attack on Plato and to prevent misunderstanding he clearly distanced himself from such position (Defence 295, Kap. 10-15). He claims that he referred to Plato’s involvement in Sicilian politics because it fitted his view that even Plato himself did not treat seriously the argument that suffering injustice is of no consequence.

The fact that Aristeides explicitly distances himself from the anti-platonic interpretation of Plato’s Sicilian travels does not necessarily mean that his mentioning of Sicily was really innocent. In fact, there are several indications that Aristeides is not really sincere in the Letter to Kapiton. In chapters 280-1 he says:

Φέρε δὴ προσέστω κἀν τούτοις ἐρώτησις, οἷον εἰ τις ἦμετα αὐτὸν, ἤνικα εἰς Σικελίαν ἐπλεί τὸ δεύτερον ἢ τρίτον, ἤτοι σύμπλος ἢ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ κυβερνήτης, σὺ δὲ δὴ τοῦ χάριν ἡμῖν ὥς Πλάτων εἰς Σικελίαν πλείς; ἢ εἰ μή τότε, ἄλλ᾽ εἰ τις οἰκάδε αὐτὸν ἐπανελθόντα ἦμετο τὰς τῆς ἀποδημίας καὶ πλάνης αἰτίας καὶ τί δὴ μαθὼν τὸ τρίτον αὖθις περὶ Χάρυβδιν ἐπραγματεύσατο, περὶ ἢν Ὀδυσσεύς οὐ πλέον ἡ δίς, τί ἄν ἀπεκρίνατο αὐτῷ; εἰ γὰρ τὸ βέλτιστον ἀληθὲς εἶναι δοίημεν, ἐφ᾽ Ἡμοσσθένης, ὡσπερ ἀνάγκη δούναι Πλάτωνι γε, ἔτεραν αὐτῷ περὶ ἄν ἀμφισβητοῦμεν οὐ λείπει τοῦτο ἀπόκρισιν. Διὰ τὰ ὅτι, οἶμαι, ἃν φῆσαι, μάλλον δ᾽ εἶπεν, Δίωνος χάριν ἄνδος
Here also let us add a question: for example if someone asked him, either a fellow passenger or the helmsman himself, when he was sailing to Sicily for the second or third time: please, why are you sailing to Sicily, Plato? Or if not then, if someone asked him when he returned home, the cause for his journey abroad and his wandering and what possessed him to be bothered with Charybdis three times, while Odysseus did it no more than twice, what would he answer him?

“For, if we should grant that his best answer were the true one,” said Demosthenes, as it is surely necessary to grant to Plato, still no other answer is left to him in the matter of our dispute. Why?

Because, I think, he would say, or rather he did say that he sailed for the sake of Dion, a comrade and guest, wishing to set in order his affair with Dionysios and not to neglect it.

In this carefully structured passage there are three literary allusions. The image of a helmsman evokes Plato’s discussion of his art in *Gorgias* 511d-512a (Aristeides links Plato’s Sicilian travels with this particular Platonic passage also in *Defence* 144 and 362); then Plato’s travels are compared to Odysseus’ wandering; finally, Aristeides quotes Demosthenes words from the *Fourth Philippic*. All three references indicate that Plato’s travels to Sicily are problematic. In the passage from the *Gorgias* to which Aristeides alludes, Sokrates envisions a helmsman who is aware that the fact that he ensured a safe travel for his passengers does not mean that he really benefited them; the question naturally arises over what the outcome of Plato’s Sicilian travels was. In the next sentence Aristeides imagines Plato approached by someone about his travels to Sicily after he came home from the third and last one; from the perspective of this

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162 The attribution of the *Fourth Philippic* to Demosthenes was recently defended by Worthington 1991 and Hajdù 2002.
fictitious character, Plato’s journeys resemble Odysseus’ wanderings rather than well
planned and executed actions; the phrase τί δή μαθών, “why on earth,” indicates that
Plato’s motives are difficult to comprehend. Finally, Aristeides explicitly refers to
Demosthenes’ Fourth Philippic, in which the orator addresses a certain Aristomedes who
was a proponent of a peace with Philip. He asks Aristomedes why he chose the turbulent
life of a public figure rather than the peaceful life of a private person (10.70-71):

Καίτοι λοιδοφίας εἰ τις χωρίς ἔροιτο, εἰπέ μοι, τί δή γιγνώσκων ἀκρίβως,
Λιστόμηθες (οὐδεὶς γὰρ τὰ τοιαῦτ᾽ ἀγνοεῖ) τὸν μὲν τῶν ἰδιωτῶν βίον ἀσφαλῆ καὶ
ἀπράγμονα καὶ ἀκίνδυνον ὄντα, τὸν δὲ τῶν πολιτευομένων φιλαίτιον καὶ
σφαλερὸν καὶ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἥμεραν ἀγώνων καὶ κακῶν μεστὸν, οὐ τὸν ἥσυχον,
ἀλλὰ τὸν ἐν τοῖς κινδύνοις αἰεῖ; τί ἄν εἴποις; εἰ γὰρ ὁ βέλτιστον εἰπεῖν άν ἐχοι,
τούτο σοι δοήμεν ἀληθὲς λέγειν, ὡς ὑπὲρ φιλοτιμίας καὶ δόξης ταῦτα πάντα ποιεῖς,
θαυμάζω τι δήποτε σαυτῷ μὲν ὑπέρ τούτων ἀπαντά ποιητέον εἶναι νομίζεις καὶ
ποιητέον καὶ κινδυνευτέον, τῇ πόλει δὲ προέσθαι ταῦτα μετὰ φιλοτιμίας
συμβουλεύεις.

Now if someone asked without intention to slander you: “Tell me, Aristomedes, as you know
perfectly well (there is not a person who does not know that) that the life of private men is safe
and free from trouble and danger, while that of statesmen is liable to censure and perilous, full of
trials and hardships every day, why do you choose not the safe but the dangerous one?” What
would you say? If we admitted your best possible answer to be the true one – that you do all
these things for fame and reputation – why then, while finding it necessary for yourself to do all
this for these reasons, to undergo toil and danger, at the same time you advise the state to give up
these things and remain idle.

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Comparison of *Defence* 280-281 with these words of Demosthenes shows that Aristeides carefully chose his reference. His interaction with Demosthenes’ passage is not limited to the direct quotation. Aristeides’ comparison of Plato to Odysseus, the remark about the Charybdis, and the verb ἐπαιγματεύσατο (in contrast to Demosthenes’ ἀπράγμων) rework Demosthenes’ motif of toil and danger. But above all, Aristeides appropriates Demosthenes’ rhetorical strategy. Though Demosthenes is hostile to Aristomedes and his pro-Macedonian politics, he announces that he will speak without the intention of offending him. When Demosthenes talks about Aristomedes’ motivations for choosing the political life, he “generously” accepts the best possible explanation; however, as Hajdú observes, Demosthenes’ use of the potential mood and of ὡς signals that he doubts Aristomedes’ positive motivation\(^\text{163}\); thus, the positive motivation of Aristomedes is rejected by Demosthenes at the same time as he pretends to accept it. Aristeides imitates Demosthenes’ gesture: while accepting, for the sake of argument, Plato’s best possible explanation of his travels to Sicily, he signals that he is not committed to it.

Thus, though claiming that he distances himself from anti-platonic arguments regarding Plato’s Sicilian travels, Aristeides leaves the interpretation of Plato’s motivation open; and as he compares his dealings with Plato with Demosthenes’ imaginary conversation with Aristomedes, he hints that he doubts Plato’s positive motivation. Aristeides’ strategy of simultaneously distancing himself from anti-platonic tradition and subscribing to it is reminiscent of Dionysios of Halikarnassos’ *Letter to*

\(^{163}\) Hajdú 2002, 432.
Gnaeus Pompeius, who at the beginning explicitly distances himself from Zoilos and his attacks on Plato, but later enlists Zoilos as one of his predecessors.⁶⁴

We may observe a similar strategy in the case of other anti-platonic arguments. In 26-27, after quoting a passage from the Gorgias, Aristeides says that he will inspect the strength of the argument rather than its exposition: καὶ μὴ δεῖς μήτε ἀγροικίαν μήτε ψυχρότητα καταγνῷ τοῦ λόγου (...) ἔπειτ’ οὐ τοῦ φορτικοῦ χάριν εἴρήσεται, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἀποδείξεως ἦν οὐδαμοῦ τούτως εἶναι φαμεν (“let no one condemn the argument for boorishness and frigidity (...) My argument will be made not from lack of taste, but for proof, which we claim is lacking in these arguments”).

Aristeides announces that he will not engage in the stylistic evaluation of Plato’s text, but at the same time he signals that there are people who find fault with Plato’s style. In fact, the terms Aristeides uses - ἡ ψυχρότης, τὸ φορτικόν – we find in Dionysios of Halikarnassos criticism of Plato’s style (Demosthenes 29).

Aristeides, therefore, introduces anti-platonic arguments without committing to them or taking responsibility for them. He “reminds” the reader of charges raised against Plato by others, while at the same time maintaining that he will not use them in his argument – however, he never really explicitly rejects them. From this perspective, Aristeides’ way of distancing himself from standard anti-platonic arguments is another example of what Flinterman called a “defensive” strategy – it allows Aristeides to maintain before those enraged by his criticism of Plato that he did not intend to attack the

⁶⁴ See Introduction, p. 24-25.
philosopher. What Aristeides says – and what he does not say – is carefully thought through and planned with an eye on the anticipated reaction of the audience. Aristeides’ praises of Plato and lack of clear commitment to the anti-platonic arguments are read as consciously shaped elements rather than reflections of Aristeides’ real positive feelings towards Plato.

But Aristeides’ negative presentation of Plato is also a part of a rhetorical strategy, to some extent dependent on Aristeides’ choice of genre. As a fictitious defence speech, the Defence is modeled on judicial speeches, in which the speaker’s self-presentation and his presentation of the opponent are two crucial elements. They are tied closely: the orator’s treatment of his opponent inevitably reflects his own character and therefore is carefully structured. Recent studies of Attic rhetoric emphasize that in his speeches an orator strives to present himself as the embodiment of two crucial virtues, courage and self-restraint (ἀνδρεία and σωφροσύνη) and his opponent as failing in these two aspects. Aristeides explicitly associates courage and self-restraint with rhetoric in chapter 235: courage characterizes an orator because he does not yield to an enemy, and self-restraint because he chooses a life of κόσμος rather than a life of ἀταξία. Aristeides’ Defence constantly negotiates between these two virtues. He presents his polemic against Plato as “a bold act” (19: τόλµμηµα) and refers to the courage needed for undertaking such a project (14). His at times aggressive language

emphasizes that he does not fear Plato’s authority or his admirers. However, Aristeides is cautious not to get to the point where courage and boldness become violence. With the strategy of alluding to anti-platonic arguments and announcing that he will not embrace them, Aristeides shows his self-restraint and distinguishes his civilized polemic against Plato from an unmitigated attack.

The praise of Plato and the reviling of Plato are two rhetorical strategies by means of which Aristeides’ creates his own authority. In his treatment of Plato, he is courageous and values truth above everything else. Yet he remains in control, and his indignation at Plato’s treatment of rhetoric does not blind him with anger. I will now argue that Aristeides’ self-fashioning is not simply a generic mirroring of Attic orators’ posture, but is intimately tied to Aristeides’ specific agenda, namely defending rhetoric. I will first turn to the format of the Defence in order to understand better the frame which shapes Aristeides’ polemic against Plato, and then to both Aristeides’ concept and practice of rhetoric.

Aristeides signals that his text is a defence speech by referring to court terminology at the beginning and end of the text. Fictitious defence speeches, so popular among Second Sophistic orators and sophists, are epideictic by nature, but mirror judicial speeches in format, terminology, and argument. Aristeides’ prooimion clearly announces the mixed epideictic and judicial nature of the text:

Οἶμαι δὲιν ὄστις μὲλλει τὰ δέοντα ἐρεῖν, ἢ ψήφου κύριος ὀρθῶς ἔσεσθαι, μὴ τούτῳ σκοπεῖν μηδὲ βασκαίνειν εἰ τινὶ τῶν πρὸτερον καὶ δόξαν ἐχόντων ἐτέρως εἰρήσθαι

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I think that whoever will make a correct pronouncement or will rightly cast his vote must not take into consideration or be disparaging if someone of past renown happens to have held a different opinion on the same subject, but rather now must seek and wish to prevail the question which reasonably is everywhere most significant: on which side is the truth to be found.

The opening verb of the *prooimion*, οἶµαι – “I think” – immediately and boldly draws attention to Aristeides. Careful distinction between the orator and his audience, signaled by pairs of verbs (ὅστις μέλλει τὰ δέοντα ἐρεῖν vs. ψήφου κύριος όρθῶς ἐσεσθαί; σκοπεῖν vs. βασκαίνειν; ζητεῖν vs. συμβούλεσθαι νικάν), emphasizes the rhetorical character of the work and encourages the reader to imagine the speech as orally performed. The verb νικάν, „to win,” introduces the agonistic spirit characteristic to oratory.

In the proem, Aristeides alternates between the contest and court imagery, between jurors and umpires, defendants and contestans (1-5). The examples of musical, tragic, and athletic competitions and the recurring motif of victory emphasize the literary ambitions of Aristeides: his goal is both the truth and the crown. The oscillation between court and contest imagery emphasize that the *Defence* stands at the meeting point of epideictic and judicial oratory.

In chapters 14-18, Aristeides explains why he has undertaken the defence of rhetoric. He argues that he thought that it was not appropriate for rhetoric not to have a chance to speak in its own defence, though it speaks so often in defence of other people;
therefore he has decided to help it as one helps his parents. In the *Defence* rhetoric
defends itself by means of Aristeides’ words; Aristeides becomes the embodiment of
rhetoric itself.

To understand the significance of Aristeides’ using of the defence format, we
need to examine his concept of rhetoric. In chapter 205, Aristeides claims that in order to
understand the greatness of rhetoric one should consider its nature (φύσις) by looking
back at its origins – “for what great purposes it was first discovered” (ὑπὲρ τίνων καὶ
πηλίκων τὸ κατ’ ἀφχάς ἐυφέθη). Aristeides maintains that men fall into two
categories: the stronger, who can use force in order to assure the greater share for
themselves, and the weaker, who are not able to stop them. It is to stop the unjust use of
force that people, or rather the gods on their behalf, discovered rhetoric “as a surety of
equality and justice for all” (207: τοῦ δὲ ἢσου καὶ δικαίου πᾶσιν ὁσπερ ἐνέχυρον).
Rhetoric, Aristeides says, is a safeguard for justice, φυλακτήριον δικαιοσύνης,
guarantee that matters are not decided “by force, weapons, anticipation, numbers, size, or
any other inequality; but that reason should calmly determine justice” (210). Rhetoric is
by nature joined with reason and justice; it makes use of persuasive argument for the sake
of justice.

Aristeides’ concept of rhetoric is further presented in a myth about Prometheus,
which Aristeides narrates in chapters 394-9 and which rewrites the myth told in Plato by
Protagoras (*Protagoras* 320d-322d). Aristeides says that at the beginning, after human
beings and animals had been born, men were capable neither of creating a community nor
of defending themselves against animals, which were superior to them in terms of strength, swiftness, or self-sufficiency. As the human race was perishing, Prometheus decided to act as an ambassador (πρεσβευτής) on behalf of mankind. He went to Zeus, who was much impressed by his just remarks (ὅ δὲ Ζεὺς τοῦ τε Προμηθέως ἁγασθεὶς δίκαια λέγοντος) and decided to send Hermes to bring rhetoric to the human race. Prometheus ordered Hermes not to divide rhetoric among all men, but to select the best, the most noble and those with the strongest natures (τοὺς ἀρίστους, καὶ γενναιοτάτους καὶ τὰς φύσεις ἔφοβως ἀρεσκομεστάτους), and hand rhetoric as a gift to them, so that they could save (σῴζειν) with it both themselves and others. The gift of rhetoric, which Aristeides associates with reason (398: λόγου νικήσαντος, 398: πρόβλημα ποιησάμενος ἀντ’ ἄλλου φυλακτηρίου τὸν λόγον), enabled men to come together as communities, to defend themselves against animals, build cities, establish laws, discover politics, and recognize and revere gods.

Aristeides’ selective distribution of rhetoric, which is to be offered only to the best and noblest, stands clearly in opposition to the “democratic” distribution of justice (ἡ δίκη) and shame (ἡ αἰδώς) in the Protagoras version of the story (Protagoras 322c-d). S. Saïd, in her interpretation of Aristeides’ transformation of the Prometheus myth, argues that while the Protagoras myth, with its emphasis on the equal distribution of justice and sense of shame among all men was the charter myth of democratic Athens, Aristeides’ version turns it “into a justification of the Roman Empire and the power of the
civic elite.” She points out that Prometheus is the archetypical ambassador, while Zeus acts like a good emperor; the best and noblest who obtain the gift of rhetoric represent the members of the elite; the dynamics between them is “a mirror of contemporary reality.” However, the association of Aristeides’ “best and noblest,” upon whom the gift of rhetoric is bestowed, with the contemporary imperial elite, is not precisely correct. Throughout the speech Aristeides is very cautious not to assign rhetoric as he understands it – the combination of justice, reason and speech – to any particular social group. A true rhetor, Aristeides maintains, is as rare as the bird of India (Defence 425-6).

Aristeides’ attribution of justice to the ideal orator raises the question of where the orator’s knowledge and sense of justice come from, especially in the context of polemics against Plato. Throughout the Defence justice is never treated as problematic or requiring close examination. Aristeides’ myth of Prometheus qualifies the ability to distinguish what is just and what is unjust as a divine gift. A true orator simply knows what is just and acts accordingly. In this respect Aristeides is faithful to Protagoras’ understanding of justice, although unlike the sophist, who argued that the sense of justice is common to everyone as granted indiscriminately to all by Zeus, Aristeides maintains that the number of the recipients of the gift is very restricted.

The notion of the divine provenance of rhetoric reminds us of Aristeides’ lengthy argument that, if rhetoric were not an art, that would not be a good reason to refute it (33-134). Aristeides then compares rhetoric to oracles and poetry, which draw upon divine inspiration. In the field of rhetoric he identifies divine influence with innate

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gifts. Although in chapter 135 Aristeides turns to argue that rhetoric is an art, he remarks that he does not retract anything from what he said before. Rhetoric is greater-than-art for one cannot simply learn it unless he is endowed by gods – a divine gift is the necessary foundation upon which it may be developed.

For Aristeides, then, rhetoric is not a mere art of words or persuasion, but a sense of justice and order which expresses itself by means of persuasive speech. Prometheus is a model orator because his words are just, δίκαια; he is able to persuade Zeus because he has a deep sense of justice and is able to express it. These qualities also allow him to instruct Hermes how to divide the gift of rhetoric among men. Aristeides’ Prometheus does not have to be a trickster because he is an orator.

In both 205-211 and 394-9 Aristeides associates rhetoric with reason and justice. He sees it as a divine gift that curbs the use of force in human societies. The purpose of rhetoric is to defend and save those who are weak. Aristeides’ depiction of the ideal orator is intimately linked with his notion of rhetoric. Aristeides distinguishes sharply between an orator and a multitude: an orator knows what is best and is superior to a multitude in judging matters; the multitude changes opinions constantly, “if indeed understanding nothing about truth should be called having as opinion” (Defence196). Aristeides’ distrust of the multitude and its judgments is recognizably Platonic; what distinguishes Aristeides from Plato is the trust that there are some people, namely orators, who possess the ultimate knowledge of what the right and the wrong; this knowledge is not attained by study or reflection, but is a divine gift. An orator is the leader of the multitude: the relationship between them resembles the one between a leader of chorus
and a chorus, a helmsman and sailors, a general and soldiers (Defence 191-2). An orator does not attempt to say what the multitude would approve of but speaks according to his understanding of what is best and just; when he uses conjecture it is not in order to figure out what to say, but in what way (Defence 186). The orator’s understanding of justice makes him a ruler, patron, and teacher of the multitude (Defence 190).

Aristeides presents an orator as operating in a public space: he is imagined above all as a member of an embassy or as a defender in a court (180); he is needed whenever a conflict arises. He makes it possible to solve conflicts in a peaceful and just way through persuasion; therefore, he is an enemy of tyranny and force (307). Aristeides emphasizes that the orator, in order to be efficient, has to be courageous and moderate (235). His speech is bold and glorious, and he has a deep sense of pride (186, 113). He resembles Homer’s Phoinix or Hesiod’s Zeus-cherished kings, speaking with authority and assurance in the midst of the people (387-392).

We can observe that what Aristeides defends in the Defence is not exactly what Plato criticized in the Gorgias. Plato criticized rhetoric as practiced by Gorgias and his contemporary sophists. Aristeides nowhere defends Gorgias and other interlocutors of Sokrates. What he postulates is that there exists a proper practice of rhetoric, however rare it is, and argues that Plato was wrong to deny rhetoric value because he had not met a true orator.

It is time now to examine Aristeides’ own rhetorical practice in a relation to his vision of rhetoric. It has been observed that his ideal rhetoric, actively engaged in the political and civic life of the community, fits better the rhetorical practice of the fourth
century BCE than of the second century CE. But it must be noticed that Aristeides’ vision of rhetoric, at least in his intention, is a-historical. He believes that in its essence rhetoric remains unchanged and retains its nature regardless of historical circumstances; its existence is inherently linked with the existence of any human community and interpersonal relations, with the existence of speech, reason, justice, and laws. Although he is conscious that political circumstances and, consequently, the political and social function of an orator change constantly, he believes that the idea of rhetoric that he defends retains its validity for his own times.

This connection between Aristeides’ ideal rhetoric and the nature of rhetorical practice in the second century CE will become clear when we consider Aristeides’ own rhetorical practice. First we need to examine the passage in the Defence which, according to scholars, shows the discrepancy between the art of the ideal orator and Aristeides. In chapter 430, Aristeides presents us with what is interpreted as his self-description:

Εἰ τοίνυν τις καὶ τοιούτος ἐγγένετο ὅν τὴν οἰκομακὴν ἔχων εἰς μὲν δήμους ἡμαῖς μὴ εἰσεῖναι, μηδὲ περὶ πολιτείας ἀμφισβητεῖν ὡς ἐνὸς ἐτέρως ἔχοντα τὰ πράγματα, καὶ ταύτα ὅποι ἐν ὑστάτοις ἢν δώξει ἄνεκα καὶ τιμῶν καὶ ἐπικαίρων φιλιμιμών, αὐτὸς δὲ ἐόρ διὸ τοίς λόγοις χρήστο, τὴν αὐτῶν φύσιν καὶ τὸ ἐν αὐτοῖς καλὸν τετιμηκώς, καὶ θέσιν ἤγεμόνα καὶ προστάτην ἐπιγραφάμενος τοῦ τε βίου καὶ τῶν λόγων, οὐδὲ τούτῳ χαλεπῶν πρὸς Πλάτωνα ἀντειπεῖν.

If someone should be of such nature so that he does not easily appear before the people with his oratory and engage in political disputes, since he sees that the government is now differently

constituted, although as far as reputation, honor, and important distinctions are concerned, he is not among the last, but if he should speak in solitude, and show honor to oratory’s nature and the beauty in it, and should enlist god as the leader and patron of his life and speech, not even this man would find it hard to answer Plato.

Behr believed that this passage is Aristeides self-presentation and an explanation of his inactivity during the incubation at Pergamon; the mention of the patron-god would be a direct allusion to Aristeides’ relation with Asklepios. Behr’s interpretation is influenced by his dating of the speech to 145-147 CE, i.e. to the period of Aristeides’ illness and stay in Pergamon, which has been rightly questioned by Flinterman. As Behr, however, Flinterman believes that this passage is Aristeides’ straightforward self-portrait, his “emotional outburst,” in which he presents himself as preferring “a life of solitary dedication to his art.”

However, there are really no reasons why we should interpret the passage as Aristeides’ self-presentation, even though some elements of this depiction remind us of Aristeides (but also, more generally, of his ideal orator). Aristeides says that it is possible to successfully practice oratory in isolation, though it is some sort of extremum (“even he,” says Aristeides); and chapter 432 shows that his depiction of a solitary orator is fashioned for the sake of argument against Plato’s association of rhetoric with flattery: how can rhetoric be tantamount to flattery, if one can practice it successfully in isolation, without any regard for the audience?¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Also, we can notice that Aristeides’ speeches indicate that he himself did not avoid speaking in public and on public matters, apparently finding it possible to cherish the spirit of civic oratory in the Greece
Aristeides’ image of a solitary orator, therefore, has a specific argumentative function, and should not be unreservedly accepted as orator’s emotional confession of his own life choices. A more fruitful approach to understanding the nature of Aristeides’ rhetorical practice is to look at the very character of the Defence. After all, as Aristeides indicates at the beginning of the speech, the speech is rhetoric’s own defence, in which Aristeides plays the role of a spokesman; therefore, it is reasonable to suppose that Aristeides not only defends rhetoric by means of argument, but also provides an exemplary speech, inspired by the spirit of true rhetoric.

Indeed, chapters 14-19 characterize Aristeides’ undertaking in terms reminiscent of his presentation of the nature of rhetoric. In chapter 16, Aristeides calls rhetoric “the art of words,” λόγων τέχνη, and announces that he will prove that it is not devoid of justice, τὸ δίκαιον. In the next sentence he says that oratory provides men with λόγος σώζων, “a saving speech,” and it would be unreasonable if it were not allowed to use it in its own defence. Through Aristeides’ speech, oratory is able to defend itself, and therefore to defend what is just, σώζειν τὰ δίκαια. From the very start Aristeides characterizes his undertaking as a just defence. Both justice and defending are crucial elements of his vision of rhetoric. The defense-speech format of Aristeides’ text, therefore, is highly significant: is intimately linked to his understanding of rhetoric as an art which saves and defends by means of just, persuasive speech. Aristeides also

under Roman rule. On the role Greek sophists played in politics of the Roman Empire, see Bowersock 1969 and Bowie 1982.
emphasizes that his undertaking is of great importance for the community. While defending rhetoric, he acts on behalf of other men, τῶν ἄλλων ἔνεκ᾽ ἀνθρώπων, so that they are not misled in their opinions concerning the greatest matters (τὰ μέγιστα); he saves his contemporaries who are in danger of being deprived of rhetoric. He believes that his speech will warn people before being too credulous when they listen to the words of distinguished, recognized authors and will reveal that by slandering oratory they deprive themselves of “the most beautiful things” (τὰ κάλλιστα).

The prooimion characterizes Aristeides’ undertaking in even more general terms, as a battle for the vitality of the contemporary literary culture. He points out that once texts enter the magical circle of the literary canon they cease to be a subject of a critical assessment but become an object of reverence instead (cf. for example Defence 2: τὸν χρόνον σεμνύνειν, 5: τὰ ὄνόματα ἀντὶ τῆς ἀληθείας θαυμάζειν, 11: αἰδεῖσθαι vs. φρίττειν). The authority of authors of the past such as Plato not only hinders proper evaluation of contemporary literary production, which is a priori treated as inferior, but also influences contemporary authors themselves who do not believe that they may attain the same excellence. The first sentence of the text draws a distinction between an orator and his audience (ὅστις μέλλει τὰ δέοντα ἐρεῖν vs. ψῆφου κύριος ὁρθῶς ἐσεσθαι; σκοπεῖν vs. βασκαίνειν; ζητεῖν vs. συμβουλεύσθαι νικάν) and indicates that both are intimidated by the greatness of the past. By choosing the defence format and presenting his polemic against Plato as a battle for the cultural values of
community, Aristeides presents his rhetorical text as a practice of substantial civic significance, and therefore as consistent with his vision of ideal rhetoric.

Courage and self-restraint, together with justice and reason, are the two virtues that Aristeides associates with rhetoric. He shows that he possesses both. His defence is a “bold act” (19): and he does not fear to stand against Plato and his admirers. But at the same time, he presents himself as a man of self-restraint. I have already argued that Aristeides’ references to anti-platonic tradition emphasize that the orator acts with moderation and does not use every argument possible. Among Aristeides’ works, the *Defence of Oratory* and *Defence of the Four* are the two texts with the highest occurrence of the terms σωφρονείν, σωφροσύνη, etc.

Aristeides emphasizes several times that the true orator, inspired by the spirit of true oratory, is very rare. He argues that Plato, in fact, agrees with him in this matter. In 344 he quotes Plato, who in the *Gorgias* admitted that the existence of a good orator, caring for his fellow citizens rather than for his own gain, is not utterly impossible (*Gorgias* 502e-503a). Then Aristeides cites with special emphasis another passage from the end of the *Gorgias* which, as Aristeides claims, “reveals” and “uncovers” everything:

ἐτι τούνν σαφέστερον ἐπὶ τελευτῆς τοῦ διαλόγου τὸ πᾶν ἀποκαλύφας
ἐκπέφαγκεν· οὐ γὰρ ύφ’ ἡμῶν γε ταύτα παρεμβέβληται «Ἀλλὰ γάρ, ὦ Καλλίκλεις,
ἐκ τῶν αὐτῶν εἰσὶ καὶ οἱ σφόδρα πονηροὶ γιγάντευοι ἄνθρωποι· οὐδὲν μὴν καλύει
καὶ ἐν τούτοις ἀγαθοῦς ἄνθρας ἐγέγνεσθαι, καὶ σφόδρα γε ἀξίων ἀγαθοῖς τῶν
γιγνομένων (...) ὠλίγοι δὲ γίγνονται οἱ τοιούτοι, ἐπεὶ καὶ ἐνθαδὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι
γεγόνασιν, οἶμαι δὲ καὶ ἔσονται καλοὶ κάγαθοι ταύτην τὴν ἀρετὴν τοῦ δικαίως

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diadikaîzeîn <א> δ' τις ἐπιτρέπη, εἰς δὲ καὶ πάνυ ἐλλογίμος γέγονεν καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἄλλους Ἐλλήνας Ἀριστείδης ὁ Λυσιμάχου.

Still more clearly at the end of the dialogue he has uncovered and revealed everything. For these things have not been inserted by us: “But, Kallikles, from this same group are men who become very evil. Yet nothing prevents good men from also arising among them, and we should admire those who do arise. (...) Such men are few. They have existed here and elsewhere, and, I think, in the future there will be “fair and good men” with this virtue of justly handling whatever one entrusts to them. One very honorable man, even in the view of the other Greeks, was Aristeides, the son of Lysimachos.”

Aristeides will next insist that even if Aristeides the statesman was the only orator practicing true rhetoric, the art should not be despised, but honored. He imagines that if Plato had written before the birth of Aristeides, the only true orator, he could have thought that practicing true oratory was impossible – but even then he would have been wrong (352). He repeats twice the phrase “before Aristeides’ birth” (πρὶν Ἀριστείδην γενέσθαι) which makes the reader realize that Plato indeed wrote before Aristeides’ birth – before the birth of Aristeides the orator; suddenly Plato’s mention of Aristeides seems to refer to both Aristeides the statesman and Aristeides the orator. In chapter 354, Aristeides comes back to Plato’s statement that there were in the past and there will be in the future good men practicing oratory. Aristeides says that Plato “predicted” the future and calls this prediction “an extraordinary thing” (τούτι γὰρ ἐστὶν ὑπερσφυὲς τὸ καὶ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων προλέγειν ὡς ἔσονται). It is impossible to interpret Plato’s casual “there probably will be some good orators in the future” as a prediction – unless Aristeides means that what Plato actually predicted is his, Aristeides’ coming to world.
Finally, a few words should be said on Aristeides’ depiction of Plato as an orator. Throughout the speech Aristeides oscillates between hostility and admiration towards Plato; ultimately, as the end of the speech, he comes to agreement with Plato and calls him “the father and teacher of orators” (*Defence* 465). In the light of Aristeides’ idea of oratory, it is clear that this is not merely an honor paid to Plato’s literary skill. A passage from *To Plato: In Defence of the Four* in which Aristeides describes his reading of the *Gorgias* reveals what aspect of Plato’s writing Aristeides found most appealing (627):\(^{169}\)

\[\text{ἐγὼ μὲν οὖν ὡς μέχρι τής ὕπτορικῆς κατέθει καὶ τούς τυράννους ἠλεγχὲν καὶ τάλλα διεξήρετο, εἰπόμην ὡσπερ εἰκός ἦν, εἰδὼς μὲν ὅτι οὐδὲν τούτων ἠλεγχὼς ἐστὶ ὕπτορικῆς, ἀλλ’ ἔχων τὸν δικαιότατον λόγον ἀντιθέειν, ὡμᾶς [γε] τῆς γε τόλμης ἡγασάμην καὶ τὴν δεινότητα καὶ τὴν εὐπορίαν ἑθαύμασα, καὶ εἰ χρὴ κατ’ αὐτὸν εἰπεῖν οἷον λέοντος σκιρτῶντος ἔννοιαν τίνα ἑλαμβάνον καὶ μόνον οὐκ ἑθεώμην τὸν ἄνδρα ἐν τοῖς λόγοις.}\]

Then while Plato ran down oratory and refuted tyrants and discussed his other points, I followed along, as was reasonable, realizing that none of this is actually a refutation of oratory, and having the most just argument to counterpose. Still I admired his daring, and I marveled at his oratorical power and facility, and if it is fitting to speak in his manner, I had a notion, as it were, of a prancing lion, and I almost saw the man in his words.

Aristeides admires, above all, Plato’s daring and bravery with which he refutes tyrants and his opponents, and his mastery of language. While comparing Plato to a prancing lion, the image used by Plato in the *Republic* for Thrasymachos, depicts Plato as a

\(^{169}\) I quoted the passage already, though for different purpose, in the Introduction, p. 27.
passionate and vehement adversary. There are several points of contact between this description of Plato and Aristeides’ image of the ideal orator: bravery, verbal mastery, and opposing tyranny.

3.3. Conclusions.

Aristeides presents his polemic against Plato as faithful to the spirit of true rhetoric, assigning oratory the utmost importance for the well-being of human communities. Acting on behalf of people does not mean necessarily speaking on strictly political matters in the agora or making a speech in a real court. The introductory passages of the Defence emphasize the importance of a free discourse in the realm of literature and culture and identify excessive reverence towards the past as a danger. As an orator, Aristeides defends the freedom and acts against the tyranny of tradition.
Conclusion

In the five case studies which constitute my dissertation we have seen Plutarch, Dio Chrysostom, and Ailios Aristeides in interaction with Plato on different levels. In the closing remarks, I would like to reflect on diversity of their approaches, and then offer some general reflections on Plato’s presence in the literary texts which I have examined.

I will begin with looking back at the second chapter in which I have focused on Dio’s *Euboïkos* and Plutarch’s *On listening*. My argument was that the two texts engage in a dialogue with political and ethical thought of Plato’s *Republic*. Both authors approach issues discussed by Plato in the *Republic* and by means of literary allusions signal the extent of their agreement and disagreement with Plato. By placing the *Republic* in the background of their texts, Dio and Plutarch acknowledge the weight of philosophical questions posed by Plato. Their attitude to Plato differs. Dio explicitly signals his independence from Platonic approach, while Plutarch presents himself as a follower of Plato; the first draws his philosophical authority from the position of censuring Plato, the latter from showing that his philosophical position is backed-up by Plato’s authority. But their strategy of reshaping Platonic ideas and restructuring them so that they reflect their own philosophical views is similar.

As we move now to the first chapter, which examined two dialogues by Dio and Plutarch: *Charidemos* and the *Symposion of the Seven Sages*, we will notice a conspicuous difference. The authorial voice is dispersed through the voices of dialogue’s
narrators, conversation participants, and other characters introduced into the discourse (the wandering magician and peasant in the *Charidemos*). As the authorial voice becomes elusive, so does the philosophical message of the text. This is reflected in the character of the two dialogues’ interaction with Plato, which does not take a form of agreeing, disagreeing, or reformulating the philosopher’s ideas. There is something ludic in both dialogues and in their employment of allusions to the *Phaidon* to manipulate the reader’s emotional responses.

Although Plutarch does mention Plato by name several times in *On listening*, in general the texts examined in two first chapters interact with Plato indirectly, through allusions and echoes rather than quotations. Aristeides, on the other hand, though not unfamiliar with the art of allusion (as we have seen in his alluding to Demosthenes’ *Fourth Philippic*), confronts Plato face-to-face. This is the strategy of an orator, who faces his opponent directly. His long quotations from the *Gorgias* are designed not only to show his thorough familiarity with the Platonic text but also his integrity as an opponent, who gives voice to the adversary.

Finally, I would like to offer some general reflections on the presence of Plato and his philosophy in the texts I have examined. These are literary texts, the authors of which interact with Platonic philosophical ideas and place Plato’s philosophy in the background; by blending the literary with the philosophical, the authors tread on the road of what we may call “popular philosophy.” Unpacking this category, we may notice that, unlike Plato, the three authors examined offer little reflection on philosophical implications of the language employed. The ethical vocabulary, e.g. the notions of justice
and virtue, is not scrutinized nor called to question. In some cases the terminology used by an author reveals his philosophical provenance. Both Plutarch and Dio found their ethical terminology, and therefore their ethical and political reflections, upon particular notions of human nature, which are rooted in certain philosophical traditions (Platonic, Stoic, Cynic). They are not scrutinized nor explicitly named; rather, they constitute a fixed starting point for further reflection and argument. Aristeides’ ethical vocabulary seems to rely on a common-sense, everyday usage (which at this point is not untainted by Plato and by philosophy). Although Aristeides insists that the multitude has no understanding of justice and virtue, with which the true orator is provided by means of a divine gift, he never shares with his readers his special ethical insight.

The fundamental and unsettling questions, which usually are the starting point of Plato’s dialogues, and the problematization of the relation between language, thought, and reality, are absent here. Consequently, Plutarch’s and Dio’s texts tend to rely on images and examples rather than on rigorous arguments; they attempt to influence a reader, to suggest and imply rather than argue in a disciplined manner; they are more intellectually stimulating than revelatory. From this perspective, the indirect interaction with Plato, who is hinted at and alluded to rather than openly brought in as an interlocutor, is indicative of a more general pattern of movement of thought.


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