

Hellenic Philosophers as Ambassadors to the Roman Empire:  
performance, parrhesia, and power

by

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For Momma

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

The popular image of the philosopher in antiquity was remarkably consistent across several centuries, changing little from classical times to the late antique period. The philosopher was defined by his freedom of speech (παρρησία), self-control (ἐγκράτεια), and independence (αὐτάρκεια). The ancient philosopher, no matter what his school, was committed to an end of ‘happiness’ (εὐδαιμονία), which was defined in a strictly self-centered way that is unfamiliar, even counter-intuitive, to the modern mind—and certainly not, at least on the face of it, conducive to civic engagement and activism. Attitudes towards the proper balance between action and contemplation, societal engagement and seclusion, varied across schools somewhat, but the demand that the philosopher be uncompromising and impassive in the face of societal authority was a constant. To what extent intellectuals presented a façade to conform to and uphold this stereotype is a legitimate question: the outward “performance” of being a philosopher was essential to one’s reputation, and involved many elements not necessarily related to one’s theoretical achievements. The threadbare philosopher’s cloak (τριβώνιον),<sup>1</sup> the beard, the emotional poise, the nonchalance in the presence of powerful officials, these all constituted a particular pose that identified a philosopher, and adversaries were quick

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<sup>1</sup> Still worn by Themistius in his official meetings with the emperor in the fourth century CE (*Or.* 34.14).

to notice and accuse deviations from the ideal. Depending on the school (the Cynics, for example), the performative demands could be quite extreme. This image of an aloof and solitary sage fits strangely with another aspect of the philosopher's image that persisted throughout antiquity and continually reasserts itself even in philosophical schools valuing seclusion above action:<sup>2</sup> the duty of the philosopher to represent and engage with his polis as an advisor or ambassador in the business of practical political matters. From the earliest development of the polis to the late Roman empire, Hellenic communities often chose philosophers as ambassadors when important issues were at stake.<sup>3</sup> The role of an ambassador or advocate presents special difficulties for, and contradictory demands on, the stereotypical philosopher as we have described him: the philosopher's parrhesia must be coupled with an attitude of supplication or practical negotiation, the self-centered conception of eudaimonia must give way to an identification of one's self and well-being with the safety of his community, and the aloof sage must reach out to compromise with a political authority or enemy. The ancient philosopher was "a man who, by a heroic effort of the mind, had found freedom from society,"<sup>4</sup> and the ambassadorial role counteracted that freedom. This makes the study of the philosopher-ambassador a particularly useful lens for examining the relationship between philosophy and power and its development under the Roman empire.

Greek philosophy was tied closely with civic activity from the very beginnings of both philosophy and the polis. Thales' political contributions to Miletus are well

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<sup>2</sup> On politically active Epicureans see Habicht (1988 11-12), Vatai (123), and Sedley (1997 41-53): whether an Epicurean should participate in political matters could depend on how widely he defined his circle of "friends." For political Neoplatonism, see O'Meara.

<sup>3</sup> Mahaffy, 94ff; Griffin 1989, 2-3; Vernant, 58-60; Habicht 1988, 12-13; Brown, 65-9

<sup>4</sup> Brown, 62



documented,<sup>5</sup> and throughout antiquity all of the Seven Sages were remembered for political as well as intellectual achievements. R. Martin, in his study of the Seven Sages in the Greek tradition, has found that they were defined chiefly by their political involvement, poetic authority, and what he calls their “performance” of wisdom.<sup>6</sup> This last term connotes their behavior while imparting wisdom rather than their words: they conducted themselves like “Zen masters” who trigger a “flash of illumination” by means of their cryptic utterances.<sup>7</sup> The image of the sage was thus established very early, and the traditional concern with the performative aspects of being a ‘wise man’ is already present in these archaic exemplars (or at least is emphasized by their first chroniclers in slightly later times). The presocratics were in general politically active and influential, combining ethereal and abstruse contemplation of the cosmos with aggressive political engagement.<sup>8</sup> In fact, these two activities, which seem diametrically opposed, may have actually been quite closely related in archaic thought: the image of nature developed by the presocratics, B. Sandywell argues, was closely related to the image and structure of the polis, and presocratic ideas about cosmological hierarchies were “facilitated by one very particular development which served as a homology for both the microcosm of moral order and the macrocosm of the universe itself” namely, the rise of the polis.<sup>9</sup> In light of this association, political advice and management would seem suited to a natural

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<sup>5</sup> Tell, 80-81; Herodotus, 1.170; DL 1.25

<sup>6</sup> Martin, 113-8

<sup>7</sup> Martin, 116

<sup>8</sup> On Pythagoras see Vatai (36-59); on the tradition of presocratics as writers of law codes for poleis, see Tell (90), on Pythagoras, Parmenides and Heraclitus—who turned down a request of his polis to write laws (DL 9.23 & DL 9.2); on Empedocles, see Tell (81-2) and DL 8.65-6 and 8.70-72; on Anaximander as leader of a colony for Miletus, and possibly drafter of the colony’s constitution, see Aelian, *Var. Hist.* 3.17; on Philolaus as aspiring to the tyranny of Croton, see DL 8.84; on Zeno of Elea’s possible conflict with a tyrant (named Demylus, Nearches or Diomedon, depending on the source), see Plutarch, *Adversus Colotem*, 1126d and DL 9.26.

<sup>9</sup> Sandywell, 122

philosopher and investigator of the cosmos, and it would further give the philosopher a reputation for special insight into civic order that was not dependent on the fact that he was simply a wealthy or educated citizen—his opinion on such matters would be respected as a philosopher's.

For the sophists of the fifth century, political engagement was integral to their authority and role as philosophers. While the sophistic movement has sometimes been analyzed as a development quite distinct from the presocratic enlightenment,<sup>10</sup> much recent scholarship has tended to emphasize the continuity between the presocratics and the sophists,<sup>11</sup> and, in their political activities, ambassadorial appointments became an especially important part of how they carried on the tradition of the 'wise man' in politics. H. Tell has examined the particular association of the sophists of the fifth century with diplomacy and 'concord' (ὁμονοία) between cities and factions, and concludes that

...it seems as if they owed much of their authority to their ability to successfully mediate between conflicting interests and to resolve inter-poleis disputes. When analyzed in conjunction with their efforts to promote concord, we can detect structural homologies with the kinds of activities championed by Lycurgus and Solon, namely, involvement in legal and diplomatic affairs, facilitated by their reputation for wisdom, to prevent civil strife and promote concord.<sup>12</sup>

Famous sophists who served as ambassadors include Gorgias of Leontini, Hippias of Elis, and Prodicus,<sup>13</sup> and the whole sophistic movement trended towards an interest in politics that was not merely connected with the study of rhetoric, but with lawgiving and serious

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<sup>10</sup> de Romilly, 1

<sup>11</sup> Kerford 1981, 175-6 and passim; Barnes 1982, 448-471

<sup>12</sup> Tell, 89

<sup>13</sup> Diodorus, 12.53; Plato, *Hippias major*, 281a, 286a; Philostratus, *Vit. Soph.* 1.11; on Thrasyarchus as an ambassador, see White.

thought about both political theory and practice.<sup>14</sup>

Beginning with Plato's depiction of Socrates, a complication arises. The popular image of the philosopher in antiquity described in my introductory comments, with its emphasis on austerity and self-sufficiency, was based largely on the cultural memory of Socrates, from whom all subsequent philosophical schools traced their development in one way or another. Plato's insistence on Socrates' negative interaction with the Athenian polis was problematic given the surrounding tradition in the ancient world of the wise man's duty to act on behalf of his polis. *The Apology* is the primary text for the representation of Socrates both as a patriot concerning his polis and a determinedly apolitical philosopher. Plato's Socrates is emphatic about his desire to avoid political involvement, and his belief that it would have endangered his life and interfered with his vocation as a philosopher to pursue political business (23b; 31d-e; 36b-c). However, he also underlines his military service and seriousness regarding his political duties in the Boule, where acted courageously on behalf of fellow citizens—as well as for the sake of his own ethical standards (28e-29a; 32b-e). In fact, his description of himself in the *Apology* as a “gadfly” who has been “attached to this city by a god” (προσκειμένον τῇ πόλει ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ὥσπερ ...δεομένῳ ἐγείρεσθαι ὑπὸ μύωπός τινος), and his assertion that he shows true care for his fellow citizens in conversing honestly with them, gives even his explanation of his outsider status a patriotic and civic interpretation (30d-e; 36c-d).<sup>15</sup> The passages concerning his conduct in the Boule and his military service became very important for some later philosophers in justifying their political activities in

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<sup>14</sup> de Romilly, 213-33

<sup>15</sup> According to D. Villa, “Socrates’ originality is found in his introduction of moral individualism and intellectual sobriety as the critical standards of justice and civic obligation. With this innovation, he invents the possibility of a conscientious, moderately alienated citizenship” (2).

the face of accusations of worldliness and excessive influence.<sup>16</sup> In truth, Socrates may have been a more politically interested and active citizen of Athens than Plato allows,<sup>17</sup> and Plato's insistence the true philosopher could not excel in actual, practical politics<sup>18</sup> may have affected his portrayal of Socrates in this text. Plato also tried to project this idea backwards in time, to some extent, by denying that the presocratics were involved in politics.<sup>19</sup> For Plato, practical politics was the realm of the sophist, whom he was also at pains to distinguish from the philosopher, and the political theory which constituted so much of his work usually was presented in an imaginary, dream-like space, with a strong tone of pessimism about actual applications and practical business within the polis. This confusion of expectations and attitudes towards the philosopher in politics that we find in Plato, and in his depiction of Socrates, creates problems, for a Platonist especially, in deciding how to interact with power and how to present his interaction with power and authority, and to some extent the issue becomes a dilemma for all subsequent philosophers looking to the image of Socrates. How four particular Platonic philosophers negotiate the difficulties presented by this inconsistency will be a large issue in this dissertation.

In spite of this Socratic/Platonic pessimism about the efficacy of the philosopher in real, practical politics—and the fact that some disapproval attached to the philosopher-politician as a consequence of Plato's opinions on the subject—philosophers remained involved in politics throughout the rest of antiquity, often chosen as ambassadors or for

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<sup>16</sup> See Themistius at *Or.* 34.10, 34.20, 17.215b; Plutarch *Mor.* 796d-e

<sup>17</sup> Wood, 3-31

<sup>18</sup> *Theatetus*, 173b-177c; on the idea of Plato as a fundamentally 'anti-political' philosopher, see O'Meara (7); on Plato's ideal of the "Just City" as being "against nature" and therefore only theoretical, see Strauss (126-7).

<sup>19</sup> Tell, 87n223; Plato, *Hippias Major*, 281c

other representative positions. During the Hellenistic age, philosophers seem to have been extremely active politically, although the sources are scarce for this period,<sup>20</sup> and as late as the reign of Constantius II and his immediate successors, philosophers were still taking on embassies.<sup>21</sup> Philosophers' dealings with the Hellenistic monarchs have much in common with how they interacted with the Roman government, and although I will begin my dissertation with Carneades, Critolaus, and Diogenes' embassy to Rome in 155 BCE, I do not intend to imply that there was a sharp break between the Hellenistic dynasties and the Roman empire in terms of how they interacted with the philosopher in politics.<sup>22</sup> In general, philosophers used their prestige and influence on behalf of their poleis under the Hellenistic kingdoms in the same way that they used it under the Romans of the republic and early empire. The break comes rather in the second century CE as philosophers become more absorbed into the Roman government and power structure,<sup>23</sup> gradually becoming advocates for the imperial government to their communities rather than representatives of the polis to the imperial government. This transition will be an overarching theme of this study and culminate in my analysis of the

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<sup>20</sup> Habicht 1988, 12-13; Vatai, 116-129

<sup>21</sup> Aside from Themistius, discussed in this dissertation, philosopher ambassadors around this time included Eustathius of Cappadocia (from the imperial court to Shapur II) in 358 (Eunapius, *Vit. Philos.*, 456; Penella 1990, 140), Olympiodorus of Thebes to the Huns in 412 (O'Meara 24-5), a philosopher named Iphicles (to Valentinian I on behalf of Epirus) (Ammianus 30.5.9-10; Brown, 65); see Brown (65-9) for the persistence of this tradition in Late Antiquity.

<sup>22</sup> On the debate about whether Greeks in the Roman empire adhered primarily to a "Greek" or "Graeco-Roman" identity, see Veyne and Bowie. For the most part, I will assume a wider Graeco-Roman culture in which all felt they had 'insider' status, and in which the "Romanness" of Roman officials (in their interactions with philosophers) was less important than their status as political superiors. However, it is clear that the special status of Greek culture in the ancient world enabled Greeks to hold to their Greek identity in a particular way. As Veyne puts it, "On pouvait à la fois mépriser Rome, être fier d'être grec et soutenir l'ordre impérial. Être xénophobe, patriote hellénique et 'collaborateur.'" He attributes this partly to the fact that "les Hellènes étaient un de ces peuples, comme il s'en trouve d'autres dans l'histoire, qui ont la plus haute idée d'eux-mêmes...ils se considèrent comme le seul peuple civilisé, la civilisation grecque étant la civilisation tout court..." (164-5).

<sup>23</sup> Breebaart dates the beginning of philosophers' entrenchment as propagandists for the imperial government at around the time of Trajan: "philosophers threw the whole weight of stock arguments about right and judicious ruling into the somewhat empty vessels of Roman administrative practice, and the government was grateful enough to recognize the value of such and ideological assistance" (70).

career and ambassadorial role of the late fourth century philosopher and statesman Themistius.

A brief note on my terminology and objective is in order here. This dissertation is less about political theory than about the actual performance of the philosopher in politics, and his diplomatic role in particular, especially with consideration of how philosophers enacted and presented their potentially compromising interactions with powerful figures and excused, justified, or celebrated those interactions. When I use the term “performative” of philosophers’ actions, I refer to the enactment of the popular image of the philosopher, whether manifested in dress, behavior, or in those outward aspects which identify the philosopher as a philosopher, and which lend prestige or authority to his actions or words. For example, when Themistius says that he always wore his ragged *τριβώνιον*, even when dining with the emperor (*Or.* 34.14), this could be seen as an honest expression of his ideals, or as a performative gesture (considering that Themistius was actually very wealthy). “Wearing the plain garb of a philosopher amidst the gorgeous robes of court was, of course, in one sense modest,” say P. Heather and D. Moncur, “In another, it was a deliberate act of self-publicity, signaling that he had risen quite above all such worldly vanities.”<sup>24</sup> Given that philosophers’ ideal of self-presentation emphasized their independence (*αὐτάρκεια*) and frankness (*παρρησία*), interactions with powerful figures could threaten their façade, and the perfect conduct in such situations required a combination of delicacy and almost theatrical nonchalance. In his monograph on philosophers’ self-presentation during the imperial period, J. Hahn argues convincingly that philosophers during the Second Sophistic faced extremely rigorous standards of behavior that were quite different from those of sophists and other

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<sup>24</sup> Heather & Moncur, 12

intellectuals. They were more akin to our modern notion of a priest, and they had to exhibit exemplary conduct of a particular sort at all times.<sup>25</sup>

The challenges to his dignity that the philosopher faced in dealing with Roman officials in particular cannot be overstated. “The attractions of holding a high post in the Roman imperial government were manifold,” J.E. Lendon writes in his book length study of the ethos of Roman government, *Empire of Honour*, “Who would not be overjoyed to ruin, flog, or execute his more irritating acquaintances?”<sup>26</sup> The characters of Roman proconsuls were, of course, variable and it was a matter of great importance to the nobles in the province what sort of person received the post.<sup>27</sup> However, the philosopher had a certain amount of leverage just by virtue of his special status, even when dealing with an emperor. Just as the philosopher must give a “performance” before political authority figures that both maintains his own dignity and accomplishes his goals, so a ruler or official must give a performance of his own in dealing with philosopher ambassadors and suppliants. The stereotypical ‘tyrant’ in ancient thought was always intolerant of philosophers and their characteristic (at least ideally) independence and frankness. Philosophers could be expected to take advantage of this in their dealings with Roman officials. “Philosophical writers,” D. Fields has noted, “often treat a ruler's reactions to frank criticism as a touchstone by which to judge whether he is a ‘real’ king or merely a

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<sup>25</sup> “Für den Philosophen als Vertreter der *ars vitae* ergab sich ganz allgemein eine zweifache Aufgabe: Er hatte zunächst in der Verbesserung und Vollendung der eigenen individuellen Lebensführung, darüber hinaus—als *magister artes vitae*—in der Propagierung der Lebenskunst gegenüber seinem Umfeld seine Aufgabe zu sehen” (Hahn, 54).

<sup>26</sup> Lendon, 176

<sup>27</sup> Plutarch reflects in one of his essays on the anxiety that a difficult governor could cause. Taking the view of the benefits of an exile, he says οὐδὲ προσηρτήμεθα θύραις ἡγεμόνος· οὐδὲν νῦν μέλει, ὅστις ὁ κεκληρωμένος τὴν ἐπαρχίαν ἐστίν, εἰ ἀκράχολος εἰ ἐπαχθής. (“I wait upon no governor; I care not now who has obtained the province, whom he is quick to anger or in other ways oppressive”) (*Mor.* 604b-c, Trans. De Lacey, 549).

‘tyrant.’”<sup>28</sup> Referencing Fronto’s letter to a governor advising him to treat provincials with honor, Lendon points out that “[a] governor treated his subjects with deference not least because men like Fronto, in whose hands his reputation lay, were watching.”<sup>29</sup> In addition to treating philosophers with respect, there were other concerns. Just as a philosopher must avoid flattery and obsequiousness at all costs, so an emperor, or any governor, must avoid any appearance of susceptibility to flattery, or trickery.

Parrhesia was perhaps the signature virtue of the philosopher, one he could never be seen to fail to uphold, and it would have been especially difficult to uphold under the conditions imposed by meetings with imperial officials or with the emperor. This requirement of philosophers was also very much connected to the memory of Socrates. “Of all the philosophers, Plato's Socrates and Diogenes the Cynic (also known as ‘Socrates gone mad’) are most iconic for their connections to parrhesia,”<sup>30</sup> writes D. Fields, and this virtue, parrhesia, was closely connected in the popular imagination to a philosopher’s taking political risks, mainly because of the heavy price that Socrates paid for his parrhesia at Athens. While parrhesia was an important prerogative of any well-off man during the Roman period, at least in theory, and associated with his manliness, independence<sup>31</sup> and so forth, the philosopher’s parrhesia was always expected to go hand in hand with a sort of philosophical challenge to political authority.<sup>32</sup> In living up to this ideal the philosopher in politics was, of course, constrained by the realities of managing officials, and we shall see a certain defensiveness among three of the philosopher-

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<sup>28</sup> Fields, 93

<sup>29</sup> Lendon, 204

<sup>30</sup> Fields 37

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-92

<sup>32</sup> On Socrates’ parrhesia as fundamentally a challenge to the Athenian polis and its requirement of self-imposed limits on free expression, especially in *The Apology*, see Saxonhouse (110-11).



ambassadors examined in this dissertation over how they deal with this issue (the evidence for Carneades' views is too scarce here to make any precise determination about how he portrayed this challenge). Philo, as we shall see, asserted his parrhesia after the fact, in publishing the *Legatio ad Gaium*. Plutarch, who was much closer to Roman officials than our previous philosophers, redefined parrhesia as having 'good' and 'bad' forms, and condemned needlessly 'risky' frankness (*Mor.* 68a-b).<sup>33</sup> Themistius continually asserted his devotion to parrhesia as a way of legitimizing and decorating his panegyric and expressing his closeness to whatever regime he was tied to at the moment—a solution that was less than satisfactory to some of his critics.

The question of what sort of formal speeches these ambassadors were expected to make during their actual audiences with Roman officials is also an important one, and the evidence for what was actually said varies a great deal between the four philosophers that I shall examine in this study. The expectation, at least during the Roman period, seems to have been for a fairly flattering speech, but our evidence for this comes from Menander Rhetor, a late source. However, there is evidence that Menander Rhetor's formulation of a πρεσβευτικὸς λόγος was already in vogue at least by the early second century,

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<sup>33</sup> Discussing tactful and helpful parrhesia at court, Plutarch says “[B]adly answered Antiphon, when the question was up for discussion in the presence of Dionysius as to ‘what is the best kind of bronze,’ and he said, ‘The kind from which they fashioned the statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton at Athens.’ For the offensiveness and bitterness of such retorts profits nothing, their scurrility and frivolity gives no pleasure... By employing [this kind of frankness] men eventually bring about their own destruction, since they are ‘dancing on the edge of the pit.’ For Antiphon was put to death by order of Dionysius, and Timagenes lost his place in Caesar’s [Augustus’] friendship because, while he never indulged in any high-minded utterance, yet in social gathering and in discussions, for no serious purpose at all... he would on every possible occasion put forward friendship’s cause as an artful excuse for railing” (Trans. Babbitt, 361). κακῶς δὲ καὶ Ἀντιφῶν, παρὰ Διονυσίῳ ζητήσεως οὔσης καὶ λόγου “ποῖος χαλκὸς ἄριστος,” “ἐκεῖνος,” εἶπεν, “ἐξ οὗ Ἀθήνησι κατεσκεύασαν τὰς Ἄρμοδίου καὶ Ἀριστογείτονος εἰκόνας.” οὔτε γὰρ ὠφελεῖ τούτων τὸ λυπηρὸν καὶ πικρὸν οὔτε τέρπει τὸ βωμολόχον καὶ παιδιῶδες... ὧ χρώμενοι προσαπολλύουσιν αὐτούς, τὴν περὶ τὸ φρέαρ ὄρχησιν ἀτεχνῶς ὀρχούμενοι. καὶ γὰρ Ἀντιφῶν ἀπέθανεν ὑπὸ Διονυσίου καὶ Τιμαγένης ἐξέπεσε τῆς Καίσαρος φιλίας, ἐλευθέρᾳ μὲν οὐδέποτε φωνῇ χρησάμενος, ἐν δὲ τοῖς συμποσίοις καὶ τοῖς περιπάτοις ἐκάστοτε πρὸς οὐδ’ ἠντινοῦν σπουδῆν... αἰτίαν φιλίας ὥσπερ σόφισμα λαιδορίας προφερόμενος.

possibly as far back as the Hellenistic period,<sup>34</sup> and it is easy to see how a philosopher might despise its obsequious and blatant flattery. (While Themistius shows himself quite comfortable with the format, he is somewhat defensive about the potential accusations of un-philosophical, flattering speech.<sup>35</sup>) Concerning a speech *περὶ πρεσβευτικοῦ*, Menander says:

If you must represent your city on an embassy when it is in difficulty, you should say the sorts of things already stipulated for the *στεφανικός λόγος* [a speech to the emperor given on presenting him with an *aurum coronarium*], but all throughout it you should emphasize the emperor's love of mankind, and that he is compassionate and merciful towards ones in need, and that this is why the divinity sent him, because he knew that he would be merciful and do good for mankind ....and speaking piteously you will say “on account of these things we beseech you, we beg you, we fall before your knees, and we supplicate you. Recognize the voice of an ambassador that speaks for the whole city, for the children and the women and men, and the old men, all shedding tears, and calling on you to pity them.” Then you can expect to nod to him, signaling that he make a decision. (423-4)

Ἐὰν δὲ ὑπὲρ πόλεως καμνούσης δέη πρεσβεῦσαι, ἐρεῖς μὲν καὶ ταῦτα ἃ προεῖρηται ἐν τῷ στεφανωτικῷ, πανταχοῦ δὲ τὸ τῆς φιλανθρωπίας τοῦ βασιλέως αὐξήσεις, καὶ ὅτι φιλοικτίρμων καὶ ἐλεῶν τοὺς δεομένους, καὶ ὅτι διὰ τοῦτο ὁ θεὸς αὐτὸν κατέπεμψεν, ὅτι ἤδει αὐτὸν ἐλεήμονα καὶ εὖ ποιοῦντα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους.... ἐλεινολογησάμενος ἐπάξεις ὅτι διὰ ταῦτα ἰκετεύομεν, δεόμεθα, πρὸ τῶν γονάτων πίπτομεν, τὰς ἰκετηρίας προτείνομεν· νόμιζε γὰρ τὴν τοῦ πρεσβευτοῦ φωνὴν εἶναι πάσης τῆς πόλεως, δι' ἧς [νόμιζε] καὶ παῖδας καὶ γυναῖκας καὶ ἄνδρας καὶ πρεσβύτας δάκρυα προχέειν, παρακαλεῖν σε πρὸς ἔλεον. εἶτα ἀξιῶσεις ἐπινεῦσαι αὐτὸν δεχθῆναι τὸ ψήφισμα.

In the immediately preceding instructions for a *στεφανικός λόγος*, the speaker is instructed indulge in unrestrained and comprehensive praise in order to render the audience well disposed to the ambassador's appeals,

If he is from a noble family, after the preamble you may praise his descent, but if

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<sup>34</sup> Schodel, 55

<sup>35</sup> Vanderspoel 1995, 78, 4, 162, 168-9

not, just go straight to his fortune instead of his family, saying that the divine power took pity from above on humankind and...brought about your birth for the good fortune of the whole world.

ἐὰν μὲν σχῆ γένος εὐδόκιμον, μετὰ τὸ προίμιον ποιήσῃ τοῦ βασιλέως τὸ ἐγκώμιον ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους. εἰ δὲ μή γε, εὐθύς ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης ἀντὶ τοῦ γένους, ὅτι θεὸς κατοικτεῖρας ἄνωθεν τὸ ἀνθρώπινον γένος καὶ ...τὴν σὴν παρήγαγε γένεσιν ἐπ' ἀγαθῇ μοίρᾳ τῆς οἰκουμένης.

The treatise goes on to give instructions for effusive praise of the emperor's upbringing and learning, his skills in war and peace, and so on. The extent to which a philosopher, as opposed to a sophist or any other type of politician, would have been expected to give the 'standard' diplomatic speech is unclear, but we see Themistius using Menander's formulae to some extent in the fourth century, and we see its prevalence earlier, perhaps, in Plutarch's defensiveness about praising and conciliating those in power,<sup>36</sup> and in Philo's praise of the many virtues and mercies of Roman rule in the *Legatio ad Gaium* (which are interlaced throughout to soften the invective against Gaius himself). In general, embassy speeches were probably rather short, and might be interrupted with questions, or followed up with questions at the end, as we see in Gaius' curt responses to Philo's embassy in the *Legatio* (351-67).<sup>37</sup> The emperor, or official, was then supposed to make a short speech or some remarks to the ambassador in answer, and then follow that up with a consultation, a decision, and a letter in response to the embassy.<sup>38</sup> The whole process presented more than a few threats to a philosopher's dignity and self-presentation, and in this dissertation I attempt to explore as much as possible how four different philosophers in very different circumstances managed and portrayed their

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<sup>36</sup> Fields analyzes the "tension between the ethical ideal of frankness and the many socially determined restrictions on how parrhesia is put into practice among elites" in Plutarch's *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* (152). She argues convincingly that this treatise is about maintaining political as well as personal relationships. See also n32 above.

<sup>37</sup> Schodel, 59

<sup>38</sup> Millar, 217-8

interactions with power, and why they felt compelled to take on such embassies on behalf of their fellow citizens.

I begin this study with the embassy of Carneades, Critolaus, and Diogenes to Rome on behalf of Athens in 155 BCE, an important event in Roman intellectual history and one of the most famous philosopher-led embassies in antiquity. Carneades seems to have made a much bigger impression on the Romans than his colleagues, and my chapter focuses primarily on his contribution. I first investigate what is known about the circumstances that triggered the embassy, the Athenian sack of Oropus, and the Roman imposition of a fine of 500 talents on Athens in response. Then I will describe what is known about the Romans' reaction to the major event of the philosophers' embassy, Carneades' famous presentations both for and against justice, delivered on consecutive days, which caused such a stir that Cato the Elder urged the quick departure of the three philosophers on the grounds that they would corrupt their younger listeners. I also look at the embassy in the context of the tension between philhellenic partisans and their opponents in the 'culture wars' of second century BCE Rome over the introduction of Greek philosophy. Next, I examine the evidence for the actual content of the speeches of Carneades *in utram partem* on justice, fragments found in Cicero's *De Re Publica* (3.8-28) and Lactantius' *Divinae Institutiones* (5.14-19).<sup>39</sup> All the while, I consider the central paradox of the whole episode, what could Carneades have possibly argued in an actual supplication before the senate that would not have compromised his customary sphinx-like façade? For an extreme skeptic like Carneades, this aspect of the embassy would have presented a special challenge, but he does not seem to have compromised on his skeptical stance, and for the rest of antiquity his embassy was remembered as the visit of

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<sup>39</sup> The fragments are collected in Ziegler.

a formidable outsider, rather than a suppliant. The fine was reduced to 100 talents as a result of the embassy.

Philo's embassy to Gaius on behalf of the Jewish community of Alexandria, and his literary preservation of it in the *Legatio ad Gaium*, is taken up in my second chapter. After an examination of the circumstances of the Jewish community at Alexandria and the pogrom that triggered the embassy, I argue that in writing the *Legatio*, Philo was both able to assert his own parrhesia in response to Gaius' indifference and ridicule, and make a case to a wider audience that he was unable to make on the original embassy. It is also likely that the *Legatio* itself is an embassy brief written for delivery to Claudius, who was acting as arbitrator of the disputes between Jewish and Greek Alexandrians after the death of Gaius. The possible extent of Philo's political career is also discussed, and his ambivalent view of political action and privileging of the contemplative life. Despite this privileging of contemplation over action in his writings, he and his family were very politically active in their community, and he was probably selected for his embassy after many years of political service. I also look closely at the rhetoric of the *Legatio* to examine how Philo appeals to a Roman imperial audience in the text while at the same time maintaining a philosopher's judgment and detachment—in other words, how he preserves his stance as a plain-speaking, uncompromising exemplar of parrhesia.

Next, I consider the career and political stance of Plutarch, who represents a turning point in my study of how philosophers became increasingly absorbed into the Roman imperial administration. Plutarch's role as an ambassador for his community is examined from several angles, including his ideal standards of 'philosophical' behavior in dealing with powerful officials, his view of himself as very much an ambassador for

the Romans to the unruly elements in his city as well as a representative of his city to the Romans, and his opinions on Roman politics and administration. I also detail Plutarch's somewhat defensive and compromised definition of parrhesia, and relate this to his responsibilities as a politician embedded in the Roman imperial hierarchy and required to frequently deal with imperial officials—both on trips to Rome and in Greece. Plutarch is perhaps the first Platonist to view political engagement and action as an absolute duty, rather than as an unpleasant distraction from contemplative philosophy, and this informs his view of the responsibility of the philosopher to promote concord and the well being of his fellow citizens, all opinions very much related to his own role as an ambassador. The chapter concludes with a close reading of several of his political essays from the *Moralia*, which illustrate my conclusions about his political role and its difficulties.

Finally, my last chapter looks at how the fourth century statesman and philosopher Themistius consistently uses the persona of the philosopher-ambassador in his portrayal of his relationship with the city of Constantinople and its senate. It is an important part of his self-presentation as a philosopher involved in politics—and of his defense of a political involvement with the Roman imperial government that is actually much more extensive than any traditionally thought proper for a Greek philosopher (and certainly much more extensive than any thought proper by Hellenic philosophers in Themistius' own time). He was not, however, an actual ambassador for the Constantinopolitans, since the senate he ostensibly spoke on behalf of actually represented a much wider, imperial constituency, rather than a civic assembly, and since he was actually more a representative of the emperor to the senate than the senate to the emperor. In this way he represents the culmination a trend I have been tracing throughout

this dissertation: the Hellenic philosopher-ambassador's development from an independent advocate for his community, with a special status in the presence of Roman power, to a much more powerful, but ultimately co-opted, symbolic figure with little autonomy. I conclude this chapter with a close reading of Themistius' *Oration 34*, 'In response to those who have found fault with him for accepting the office [of the urban prefecture]' (Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιασαμένους ἐπὶ τῷ δέξασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν), which explicates my thesis concerning his defense and presentation of his career in politics.

In discussing how each of these philosophers conducted and portrayed their ambassadorial duties, a pattern will emerge of forceful and energetic philosophical advocacy degenerating into impotent panegyric, even as Greek philosophy and philosophers become progressively more powerful and influential in the imperial government. As philosophers became more absorbed into the Roman power structure, their role as civic representatives became more of a sham, but it was a sham that they maintained to the end. After all, this public service, which so many philosophers had performed throughout Greco-Roman history, was an honorable part of a full philosophical life.

## Chapter II

### Carneades: 'Culture wars' in second century BCE Rome

The embassy to Rome in 155 BCE of the Skeptic Carneades, the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon, and the Peripatetic Critolaus of Phaselus seems to have had more of the atmosphere of a festival or celebrity tour than a serious political mission.<sup>40</sup> The great interest and excitement surrounding the visit make this embassy unique in the history of philosophers' diplomacy. It occurred just at the time when Hellenistic schools of philosophy were becoming important among the elite at Rome, and the impressiveness of the Skeptic Carneades made the event especially memorable. The purpose of the embassy was to argue before the senate against a fine imposed on the city of Athens as punishment for sacking the neighboring city of Oropus, formerly an Athenian territorial possession, but now a subject of Rome on the same footing as Athens. Carneades' famous public appearances in Rome during his stay, in which he argued on consecutive days first for and then against the existence of justice,<sup>41</sup> were so effective and remarkable that they quickly became the stuff of legend.

Only one scholar that I have come across, however, has even mentioned in passing what I consider to be the central conundrum in the study of this episode: What

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<sup>40</sup> The ancient sources for the embassy are collected by Mette (39-148).

<sup>41</sup> Aside from the collection of sources in Mette, the main source for the "fragments" of Carneades' presentation is K. Ziegler's Teubner edition of the *De Re Publica* (Ziegler 1964), although some disagree with some of his inclusions, as I will discuss below.



could Carneades possibly have argued in his presentation before the senate?<sup>42</sup> As I discussed in my introduction, the position of the philosopher presenting a plea to a powerful figure was always complex and somewhat compromised, given the anxiety about proper conduct and philosophical integrity in the presence of power (some felt a philosopher's dignity and autonomy could not be maintained in such a situation, and that diplomatic interaction was primarily the purview of pandering rhetors rather than true philosophers), and here was a man who prided himself on holding absolutely no positive beliefs,<sup>43</sup> whose reputation rested on his maintaining a mysterious, sphinx-like façade and a strict doctrine of ἐποχή on central ethical questions, so that even his most diligent student and dedicated chronicler couldn't guess at his ultimate views on the telos of all philosophical striving,<sup>44</sup> walking into a situation where he was required to present some sort of argument to beg the indulgence of the senate on behalf of his city, and his city's case was not even a very strong one. Clearly a petitioning appearance before the senate would be fraught with dangers for someone who had to maintain a reputation such as his. Of course, one could say that he could have presented, as he was accustomed to in his school, a defense or proposal of some particular view which he did not necessarily claim to hold, or a disquisition *in utram partem*, as he did in his public lectures at Rome, but would that really be appropriate for an embassy making a formal request of the senate? How could it be?

The issue of what he actually said before the senate was avoided in antiquity just

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<sup>42</sup> Wilkerson wonders briefly about this: "One could argue, of course, that Carneades, like Hume in the eighteenth century, left his skepticism behind when he entered public life...but there is no historical evidence that he did so..." (140). He goes on to conclude that the antithetical speeches for and against justice were delivered before the senate. However, as I will discuss below, this does not seem likely to me.

<sup>43</sup> Long, 99-100

<sup>44</sup> Cicero, *Acad. post. (Lucullus)*, 139

as it is avoided by modern scholars, and the embassy was usually described only with reference to the public lectures for and against justice.<sup>45</sup> This silence has even led some to speculate that the speeches *in utram partem* on justice *were* actually the presentation before the senate, an unlikely possibility I will discuss below.<sup>46</sup> Of course, one reason scholars have avoided the issue is that we really can never know *what* he actually said, and so perhaps the question may seem irrelevant. But I think it is a question worth keeping in mind throughout this chapter, as it goes to the heart of many issues I will discuss: the ambiguous position of these three eminent philosophers as both suppliants and intellectual authorities (how could their address incorporate both the humility appropriate to the situation and the hauteur appropriate to their status?), the iconic reputation of Carneades as a philosopher and the difficulty of reconciling this reputation with existing arguments put in his mouth by Cicero in his account of the speech in the *De Re Publica* (how could such an intellectual giant have used these tired arguments?), and how the senate and Romans in general actually would have viewed this trio of scholarchs (beyond the philhellenic party that we already know adored them, how did they appear?). I will return to this conundrum briefly at the conclusion of this chapter, and while I may have to maintain a doctrine of ἐποχή myself about how Carneades actually addressed the senate, and to a great extent about his public speeches in Rome (which are problematic to reconstruct), there is no doubt that he succeeded marvelously in his mission and emerged from the embassy not only with a concession for his city from the senate, but with a lasting reputation in the Roman mind for almost superhuman rhetorical and philosophical excellence.

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<sup>45</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt, 393

<sup>46</sup> Wilkerson, 134-5

This chapter will begin with a sketch of the status and political clout of philosophers in second century BCE Athens and relate Athens' choice of philosophers' for the embassy to Rome to the associations already established on behalf of the city between philosophers and Hellenistic monarchs. I will then move on to a brief look at what is known about the three philosophers chosen for this embassy. Next, the conflict between Athens and Oropus that triggered the embassy is examined, and in particular the 'special relationship' between Athens and Rome that enabled the Athenians to expect the senate to intervene on their behalf. This 'special relationship' was very much grounded in a cultural as well as political alliance, making the choice of philosophers a significant gesture to the Romans' developing appreciation of Greek philosophy at this time. The 'culture wars' between philhellene and traditional Romans, and the philhellenes' deferential, and even somewhat 'starstruck' attitude to the philosophers on the embassy, is an important part of the whole affair, and I read the sources for evidence of this aspect of the embassy as well. Finally, I move to a thorough look at the supposed fragments of Carneades' presentations for and against Justice and consider the problems they present, as well as how Carneades' may have dealt in the speech with the problems of the philosopher-ambassador outlined in my introduction: i.e. maintaining the persona of an independent and provocative thinker while in the situation of a suppliant on behalf of his community.

The choice of philosophers, none of whom were born Athenian citizens, as ambassadors for the city was not without precedent, of course, but it is worthwhile to discuss in more detail what expectations were in choosing them. In recent centuries, the glamour of the city's philosophical scene had attracted the admiration and envy of

Hellenistic monarchs. Habicht has described the honor paid by Hellenistic monarchs to major philosophers in Athens,<sup>47</sup> and it seems that these monarchs felt that how they related to Athenian philosophers reflected significantly on their own character and regime. Obviously, the Athenians hoped they could expect this reverential attitude towards their philosophers from the Romans as well.<sup>48</sup> In addition, they may have felt it would be flattering to the Romans, on some level, to be treated with in the same way that they approached Greek kingdoms, especially since the Romans were still, at this time, somewhat unsure of how to position themselves vis-à-vis Greek culture.<sup>49</sup>

The fact that *three* philosophers were sent is another curiosity.<sup>50</sup> This is unprecedented, as far as I can tell, in philosophical diplomacy, and since Carneades was the one who, at least by all ancient accounts, was by far the most famous of the three for excellence in speaking—to the extent that he overshadowed the other two almost entirely in later memory—the question arises: why were all three needed for the embassy? There is some evidence, as I will discuss below, that Critolaus and Diogenes had a reputation for rhetorical expertise as well, and had perhaps a better reputation in antiquity as philosophers than they would seem to from the surviving literature, but they were still clearly eclipsed by Carneades even in 155 BCE.

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<sup>47</sup> Examples include the Peripatetic Straton being honored by Ptolemy II, the Peripatetic Lykon by Eumenes I and Attalus I of Pergamon, and the Seleucid Antiochus, Pyrtanis, also a Peripatetic, by Antigonos Doson, Arcesilaus by Eumenes I, Lakydes by Attalus I, Zeno by Antigonos Gonatus, Sphairos and his interaction with foreign kings, and Chrysippus' invitation to Alexandria (Habicht 1988, 17); see also Habicht 1997, 110. Carneades also may have taught two Pergamene princes (Ferguson, 300). The inscription on a statue base is the source of this speculation: Καρνεάδην Ἀζηνέα / Ἄτταλος καὶ Ἀριαράθης Συναλήττιοι / ἀνέθηκαν (Syll.<sup>3</sup> 666). It is assumed to have been set up by the princes of those names, and it is also of interest because it shows that Carneades was a citizen by the time it was set up in the 170s BCE (because he is assigned to the deme Azenia), on which more below.

<sup>48</sup> J.L. Ferrary says that “L’ambassade de 155...avait des précédents dans l’histoire d’Athènes, et l’on constate une fois encore que les cités modelaient leurs relations avec le Sénat sur l’exemple de celles qu’elles avaient entretenues avec les rois hellénistiques...” (2007, 31).

<sup>49</sup> Walbank 1972, 145-68

<sup>50</sup> Ferrary (2007, 31) is the only one to discuss this specifically as unprecedented, but he does not speculate as to why it was the only time, or why all three were chosen this time.

Perhaps the answer lies in intra-city politics and competing philosophical allegiance. Including all three would be necessary if the assembly were divided philosophically or shared a commitment to various schools. We see, for example, that they had no trouble leaving out the Epicureans, even though Epicureans were somewhat politically active in the city,<sup>51</sup> were already present and claiming adherents in Rome,<sup>52</sup> and were happy to proselytize whenever possible. This was probably because political authorities in the city were not supportive of the Garden, and its emphasis on pleasure was too controversial for the average citizen to accept, let alone send as representative of Athens to another state. Even in slightly later times, when the ephebes were required to attend philosophical lectures as part of their training, the Epicureans were excluded from fulfilling this ‘distribution requirement.’<sup>53</sup> In addition, the Garden’s social life had a hermetically sealed quality that would have probably taken them out of contention anyway.<sup>54</sup>

Needless to say, the position of the philosophers at Athens, and especially the scholars of the three major sects, was extremely prestigious. Although there is some evidence, at times, of an ongoing tension between the democratic leadership and the philosophical schools,<sup>55</sup> there is no doubt that even average people were impressed by the

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<sup>51</sup> Habicht 1988, 12; the political inactivity of Epicureans is something of a myth (or perhaps an ideal that many could not live up to): depending on how you interpret ‘taking risks for friends,’ it could include politics. For an interesting look at this issue see Sedley (1997).

<sup>52</sup> Athenaeus tells us (*Deip.* 12.547a) about the expulsion of two Epicurean teachers from Rome: Καλῶς ἄρα ποιοῦντες Ῥωμαῖοι οἱ πάντα ἄριστοι Ἀλκαῖον καὶ Φιλίσκον τοὺς Ἐπικουρείους ἐξέβαλον τῆς πόλεως, Λευκίου τοῦ Προστομίου ὑπατεύοντος, δι’ ἃς εἰσηγοῦντο ἡδονάς. This is in either 173 or 155 BCE; in either case it shows Epicureans active at Rome before the embassy.

<sup>53</sup> Habicht 1997, 110

<sup>54</sup> Habicht 1988, 5-6

<sup>55</sup> J.P. Mahaffy (1896, 143-6) has a thorough discussion of ‘Sophocles Law,’ which banned any philosophical school that did not have a permit from the *demos*: “This was accepted as a decree of banishment, at least by the Peripatetic school” (143).

philosophers' glamour and fame.<sup>56</sup> Philosophical schools were also, probably, an important pillar of the city's economy at this period, given the number of rich foreign students and visitors they attracted.<sup>57</sup> The philosophers themselves were major celebrities, accustomed to addressing large audiences forcefully and persuasively. This is true especially of the second century BCE. Hahn observes that at this period,

philosophers ...spent their time, not in scientific study or in solving philosophical puzzles...nor in presenting and discussing their ruminations with a small group of like-minded followers, but instead in presenting and defending their core principles in public lectures and in debates with rival philosophers or the general public.<sup>58</sup>

Carneades himself was famous for his loud and rapid speaking style.<sup>59</sup> Speaking well was, of course, an essential aspect of conducting an embassy, and it is interesting that in fifth century BCE Athens, actors, as well as rhetors and philosophers, were chosen for state embassies also.

Carneades was considered by the ancients to be one of the most important philosophers who ever lived.<sup>60</sup> For modern scholars his work is more difficult to assess since he wrote nothing and the work of his most famous student and chronicler, Clitomachus, has not survived. He was famous for his all-round knowledge and

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<sup>56</sup> See Sedley 1980, 2: "The intellectual fervor [at Athens]...can be imagined from the involvement of the Athenian public. When one philosopher, Stilpo [a Megarian Cynic] visited Athens, men would run from their work to catch a glimpse of him. For Theophrastus' funeral it was said that the entire population turned out. Public honors were heaped upon Zeno the Stoic."

<sup>57</sup> Ferguson, 106 -7; he speculates that 'Sophocles Law' was repealed due to the economic ramifications of the loss of the schools and their students.

<sup>58</sup> Hahn 2007, 53

<sup>59</sup> See Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Att.* 6.14.10); see also Diogenes Laertius (4.63) on Carneades as μεγαλοφωνότατος, and Cicero *De Or.* 2.161: *Carneadi vero vis incredibilis...dicendi...*; see also Plutarch (*De garr.* 513c: Καρνεάδην... ὁ γυμνασιάρχος ἐκέλευσεν ὑφεῖναι τὸ μέγεθος τῆς φωνῆς--ἦν γὰρ μεγαλοφωνότατος...)

<sup>60</sup> Strabo, *Geog.*, 17.3.22: ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ Καρνεάδης—οὗτος δὲ τῶν ἐξ Ἀκαδημίας ἄριστος φιλοσόφων ὁμολογεῖται...; see also Plutarch (*De Alex. Fort. Virt.* 4.64): Πυθαγόρας ἔγραψεν οὐδὲν οὐδὲ Σωκράτης οὐδ' Ἄρκεσίλαος οὐδέ Καρνεάδης οἱ δοκιμώτατοι τῶν φιλοσόφων. According to Diogenes Laertius (4.64), τελευτῶντος δ' αὐτοῦ φασιν ἔκλειψιν γενέσθαι σελήνης, συμπάθειαν ὡς ἂν εἴποι τις αἰνιττομένου τοῦ μεθ' ἥλιον καλλίστου τῶν ἄστρον. The collection of fragments in Mette is the best source for general assessments of his reputation in antiquity.

philosophical acumen, his eloquence, and for developing a theory of the pithanon in sense impressions, which reconciled maintaining the skeptical doctrine of ἐποχή with living a normal life and responding to the senses, and was the first to distinguish logical from causal necessity.<sup>61</sup> In antiquity, his speaking style was considered flashy enough to be almost sophistic, and Philostratus claimed him as a “partial” sophist (Καὶ Καρνεάδης δὲ ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ἐν σοφισταῖς ἐγράφετο, φιλοσόφως μὲν γὰρ κατεσκεύαστο τὴν γνώμην, τὴν δὲ ἰσχὺν τῶν λόγων ἐς τὴν ἄγαν ἤλαυνε δεινότητα [*Vit. Soph.* 1.486]).<sup>62</sup> This opinion has a modern equivalent in the work of Wilkerson, who has concluded that: “in the instance of Academic skepticism an essentially rhetorical concept did service in the interest of skeptical epistemology.”<sup>63</sup> However, ancient sources are unanimous that he was a serious thinker and seeker after truth as well as a rhetorical genius. Not much is known about the details of his biography, but he had come to Athens from Cyrene, his father’s name was either Epikomos or Philokomos,<sup>64</sup> and he did eventually become an Athenian citizen,<sup>65</sup> probably sometime *after* the embassy to Rome. About the only personal incident Diogenes Laertius records is a dispute with one of his students over a mistress,<sup>66</sup> almost surely included because it makes a humorous contrast with his supremely intellectual image throughout antiquity. As far as the literature that has survived to this day indicates, the embassy was perhaps the most notable incident in

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<sup>61</sup> Long, 103, 97-99

<sup>62</sup> See Bowersock (2002, 160) for discussion. Diogenes says that rhetors would cancel their lectures in order to go and hear him speak (DL 4.62).

<sup>63</sup> Wilkerson, 132; Minar has defended him from the charge of sophism, saying that his “moral earnestness” is not in doubt, “in spite of his occasional use of sophistical arguments” (70). He stresses that the procedure of arguing *in utram partem*, from the time of Arcesilaus onwards, was not considered a game, but rather the best way of seeking after actual philosophical truths.

<sup>64</sup> DL 4.62

<sup>65</sup> *Syll.* 3 666: In the 170s BCE two members of the royal family of Pergamon, Attalos and Ariarathes, set up a statue of him, and the inscription on the base names his deme as Azenia, proving he had full citizenship by this time.

<sup>66</sup> DL 4.63.

his very illustrious career. He was middle-aged and already very famous at the time of the embassy to Rome.

Diogenes of Babylon came to Athens from Seleucia on Tigris, and was probably over 80 years old at the time of the embassy.<sup>67</sup> Very little of his philosophical work survives,<sup>68</sup> although he is well represented in the papyri at Herculaneum. In fact, he is the philosopher most often mentioned in these papyri, apart from Epicurus. D. Obbink has speculated that the embassy promoted interest in him at Rome, and that this is indicated by his frequent mention in the literature from Herculaneum<sup>69</sup>:

It is tempting to ascribe some of Diogenes' prominence in the books from Herculaneum to the pivotal position he occupied in the transmission of Greek philosophical and literary culture to Republican Rome. This is at least suggested by the common interest in him exhibited by Cicero and the resident alien Philodemus. Diogenes himself had visited Rome within recent historical memory [in 155 BCE], an event alluded to more than once by Cicero... The prominence of Diogenes of Babylon in Philodemus' writings suggests the former's pivotal importance at a time when the Stoa was about to undergo radical changes. This was a time that coincided with the transmission of much of Greek philosophy to Roman culture...<sup>70</sup>

Obbink's point about the "radical changes" the Stoa was making in order to appeal to more mainstream students (and moderate or back away from some of the more radical positions of Zeno)<sup>71</sup> is important as well, as many scholars agree that Diogenes is a transitional figure in the history of Stoicism, and points the way towards Panaetius and Posidonius in his interest in reconciling Stoic values with those of the Academy and the Peripatos. Erskine has concluded that "[Diogenes] and Panaetius, for Cicero, represented

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<sup>67</sup> His dates are c. 240-152 BCE.

<sup>68</sup> The fragments are collected by von Arnim (1903, 210-243). However, this collection is unreliable when it comes to the Herculaneum papyri, in which he is mentioned frequently.

<sup>69</sup> Obbink, 83

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 83-4

<sup>71</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt, 381



a turn to more practicality than the earlier Stoa.”<sup>72</sup> There is evidence, for example, that he divided the soul into parts.<sup>73</sup> His views on legal and moral responsibilities in the sale of personal property, preserved partially by Cicero at *De Officiis* 3.54-5, seem to also represent a certain kind of practicality, although one that Gisela Striker has called morally ‘hair-raising.’<sup>74</sup> (The arguments that Cicero puts in his mouth there will be discussed later in connection with their use in the “Speech of Carneades” as it is preserved in *Rep.* 3.) He was an influential teacher as well.<sup>75</sup> As a speaker, is there any evidence that he could compete with Carneades? Not really. He may have authored a treatise on rhetoric,<sup>76</sup> but according to Cicero’s Crassus (*De Or.* 2.159), he was uninspiring: *genus sermonis adfert non liquidum, non fusum ac profluens, sed exile, aridum, concisum ac minutum, quod si qui probabit, ita probabit, ut oratori tamen aptum non esse fateatur...*: “[he was] introducing a kind of diction that is not lucid, copious and flowing, but meagre, spiritless, cramped and paltry; and, if any man commends this style, it will only be with the qualification that it is unsuitable to an orator”).<sup>77</sup> If this were actually the case, it is surprising that he was chosen to take part in the embassy. Other sources were more sympathetic in assessing his style: Aulus Gellius reports (*Noctes Att.* 6.14.8) that his speaking was considered *modesta et sobria*. It is more likely that he was a skilled speaker, even if not on Carneades’ level, especially considering his possible importance in establishing a newer, more moderated, Stoicism at Rome, and the embassy of 155 was

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<sup>72</sup> Erskine, 205

<sup>73</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt, 355 n4

<sup>74</sup> Striker, 266

<sup>75</sup> Wellmann says that “Zahlreiche namhafte Vertreter des Stoicismus sind aus seiner Schule hervorgegangen: Antipatros von Tarsos, sein Nachfolger: Boëthos von Sidon; Panaitios von Rhodos; Mnesarchos und Dardanos von Athen; Apollodoros aus Seleukeia am Tigris. Diese Männer (mit Ausnahme des Antipatros) werden *Ind. Stoic. Herc.* col. 51 ohne Zweifel als Schüler des D[iogenes] aufgezählt” (Wellmann, col. 774).

<sup>76</sup> Atherton, 397

<sup>77</sup> trans. Sutton, 313

an important step in his popularization there.

The least is known about Critolaus. He was probably a very old man when the embassy took place (his dates are not precisely known). Again, modern scholars can find out very little about him,<sup>78</sup> although he was considered somewhat important in the history of the Peripatos, and was generally thought to have been the most important leader of his school in a period of its decline.<sup>79</sup> He seems to have taken an interest in rhetoric, although he denied it was a science,<sup>80</sup> and is most frequently cited in connection with rhetoric,<sup>81</sup> although no titles of any works are recorded for him. He was considered a witty debater, and some *bon mots* are recorded, calling the Stoics *ὀνοματομάχους* or “word warriors” for example.<sup>82</sup> Hahm notes in this regard that

[a]llusions to Critolaus and his associates are relatively infrequent compared to those of other philosophers of the time, but it is worth noting that the majority are polemical or found in polemical contexts in which Critolaus is cited as the source of an argument. Critolaus’ status as a polemicist is apparent from the earliest references to him and his successors in the rhetorical works of Philodemus and Cicero.<sup>83</sup>

The ancients seem to have had a favorable view of his speaking style, when they mention

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<sup>78</sup> His fragments are collected in Wehrli (45-74). Hahm (2007) gives a very full treatment of what is known about his views. Also useful is von Arnim (1922).

<sup>79</sup> Hahm 2007, 50: “In the midst of this decline [of the school] one man stands out as a noteworthy exception. Even Cicero’s gloomy characterization of the school at his time recognized Critolaus as rising above the crowd (Cic. *De fin.* 5.14)...”; von Arnim (1922) says he returned the school to scientific research: “In der Geschichte des Peripatos nimmt K[ritolaus] eine hervorragende Stellung ein, insofern er die von seinen Vorgängern Lykon und Ariston vernachlässigten philosophischen Forschungen wieder aufnahm, an Stelle des von jenen gepflegten dialektisch-rhetorischen Betriebes” (col. 1931).

<sup>80</sup> Hahm (2007), 56; in fact, he seems to have been a bit hostile to the study of rhetoric as a science of persuasion: καθάπερ οὖν οὐκ ἂν εἴποιμεν τὴν τοιχωρυχικὴν εἶναι τινα τέχνην παραινῶσαν τὸ οὕτω δεῖν τοῖχον διορύττειν καὶ τὴν κλεπτικὴν τὸ “οὕτω καθήκειν κλέπτειν καὶ βαλαντιστομεῖν” ψευδῆ γὰρ ἔστι ταῦτα καὶ οὔτε καθήκοντα οὔτε θεωρήματα—οὕτως οὐδὲ τὴν ῥητορικὴν ὑποληπτέον ἔχειν τεχνικὴν... ἀμέλει γὰρ τοὶ καὶ οἱ περὶ Κριτόλαον τὸν Περιπατητικὸν καὶ πολὺ πρότερον οἱ περὶ Πλάτωνα εἰς τοῦτο ἀπιδόντες ἐκάκισαν αὐτὴν ὡς κακοτεχνίαν μᾶλλον ἢ τέχνην καθεστηκυῖαν (Wehrli, frg. 32).

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 54-5; see also Wehrli, 53-8

<sup>82</sup> Wehrli, frg. 24; Critolaus was accusing them of quibbling over the use of εὐλάβεια vs. φόβος when it came to fear of the law. This is similar to the attitude that “Carneades” takes to the Stoics in certain parts of his speech in Cicero’s *Rep.*, as we shall see below.

<sup>83</sup> Hahm 2007, 54

him. Von Arnim summarizes the ancient assessment:

Nach Gell IV 14, 10 hielt auch K[ritolaus] während seiner Anwesenheit in Rom öffentlich Vorträge über Philosophie, deren Stil Gellius als *scita et teretia* bezeichnet. Auf den Stil des K[ritolaus] bezieht sich auch Cic *de fin.* V 14: *Critolaus imitari voluit antiquos et quidem est gravitate proximus et redundat oratio.*<sup>84</sup>

One would expect the scholar of the Peripatetics to have a good command of rhetoric, and he seems to have been a good speaker, if not quite as impressive as Carneades. What we know for certain is that he was a good enough speaker to be one of the three philosophers the Athenians called upon to intercede at Rome on their behalf in an important crisis—when the city was fined five hundred talents for her treatment of the Oropians.

The dispute between Athens and Oropus that led to the embassy should be examined here in some detail,<sup>85</sup> especially since the position of the Athenian petitioners was not a particularly strong one, either in terms of customary definitions of ‘justice’ or their own political situation vis-à-vis Rome and the rest of Greece. The Athenians’ miscalculation in their treatment and attempted appropriation of Oropus happened in an environment of uncertainty about the level of Roman interest and continued involvement in Greek affairs<sup>86</sup> combined with euphoria over the partial recovery of several of their old imperial territories after nearly fifty years of faithful alliance with Rome.<sup>87</sup> Recently recovered territories included Delos, Lemnos, Imbros, Scyros, and the Boeotian city of

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<sup>84</sup> von Arnim 1922, col. 1930

<sup>85</sup> The main ancient sources for the conflict are Pausanias (7.11.4-8—which is possibly based on Polybius’s lost account, or possibly on a later source), and an inscription, *Syll.* 675, found at Oropus and dated to 150 BCE, which I will discuss below. Polybius account is lost, but he refers to it at 32.11.5-7. The many other scattered references to the philosophers’ embassy do not examine the original Oropian/Athenian conflict in any detail.

<sup>86</sup> Gruen 1984, 325ff passim, esp. 330-343; Ferguson, 325

<sup>87</sup> Habicht (1997, 194-219) gives a good summary of how their alliance with Rome developed from 200-167 BCE.

Haliartus, all of them given to Athens by the senate around 167 BCE as a reward for their loyalty during the Third Macedonian War.<sup>88</sup> But a brief narrative of the dispute with Oropus is in order here. The bare facts are as follows.

The beginnings of the conflict are not certain, but it seems to have begun in either 158 or 157 BCE.<sup>89</sup> Oropus had been independent since 171 BCE, and previous to that a member of the Boeotian Confederacy for at least 117 years.<sup>90</sup> Before that, it had been an Athenian territory at various times during the fourth and early third centuries BCE.<sup>91</sup> Located on the border between Boeotia and Attica, it was technically considered part of Boeotia, but had been originally founded by Ionians from Eritrea on Euboea.<sup>92</sup> There was an important shrine to Amphiaraus there, at which the Athenians had instituted an athletic festival to be held every five years, starting in 329 BCE.<sup>93</sup> For whatever reason, the Athenians seem to have felt they had a claim. They sacked Oropus, and the Oropians appealed to the Achaean League for remedy. Pausanias claims that the Athenians did this because of poverty after the Third Macedonian War, but this is extremely unlikely.<sup>94</sup> The Oropians appealed to the Roman senate, who referred the case to the Sicyonians for arbitration. An Athenian delegation failed to show up for the arbitration in Sicyon, and

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<sup>88</sup> Polybius 30.20; see also Walbank (1979, 443-4). Polybius reproaches the Athenians for making an opportunistic grab for the territory of Haliartus at this time: *δῖς περὶ μὲν τῶν κατὰ Δῆλον καὶ Λῆμον οὐκ ἂν τις ἐπιτιμήσειε διὰ τὸ καὶ πρότερον ἀντιπεποιθῆσθαι τῶν νήσων τούτων, περὶ δὲ τῆς τῶν Ἀλιαρτίων χώρας εἰκότως ἂν τις καταμέμψαιτο.* (Polybius 30.20.2-3).

<sup>89</sup> Walbank 1979, 532; Walbank gives a detailed analysis of the possible chronology of the conflict here.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 531

<sup>91</sup> Habicht 1997, 264

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 264

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>94</sup> Paus. 7.11.4: *Ἀθηναίων δὲ ὁ δῆμος ἀνάγκη πλέον ἢ ἐκουσίως διαρπάζουσιν Ἰωρωπὸν ὑπήκοόν σφισιν οὔσαν. πενίας γὰρ ἐς τὸ ἔσχατον Ἀθηναῖοι τηρικαῦτα ἦκον ἅτε ὑπὸ Μακεδόνων πολέμῳ πιεσθέντες μάλιστα Ἑλλήνων.* On the unlikelihood of this statement, see Gruen (1976, 51-2); although see also following note on possible financial troubles for Athens at this time.

so the Sicyonians fined the Athenians five hundred talents, an enormous amount,<sup>95</sup> as punishment for their treatment of Oropus. The Athenians then decided to appeal to the Roman senate to cancel the fine. They sent the “philosophers’ embassy” of 155 BCE to petition the senate, and the fine was reduced to one hundred talents. Following the partial success of this embassy, the Athenians somehow shortly ended up with a garrison stationed in Oropus, and were accused of abusing the Oropian people again. The Oropians appealed to the senate and to the Achaean League a second time, and this time they reportedly bribed the Achaean general Menalkidas to take military action on their behalf, or so says Pausanias.<sup>96</sup> An inscription found at Oropus, however, and dated to 150 BCE, thanks “Hiero of Aegeira” for interceding for them with the Achaean League.<sup>97</sup> The Athenians then fled the advancing Achaean military force and sacked Oropus again on the way out. According to the inscription just mentioned, the Oropians then expelled any remaining Athenian settlers, or perhaps Athenian sympathizers in their own population,<sup>98</sup> and were again independent, at least until 146 BCE.

One thing that becomes obvious from the preceding narrative is that there was a great deal of uncertainty at this period about how Rome, as an imperial power, would react to such skirmishes between Greek states.<sup>99</sup> The Athenians clearly believed that they could act with impunity, not only sacking Oropus initially but ignoring the trial in Sicyon

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<sup>95</sup> As Habicht (1997, 265n4) notes, this was more than 460 talents, which was the entire amount Athens demanded from their naval allies under the leadership of Aristeides. Athens financial situation was not necessarily strong at this time either, in spite of its recently acquired territories. According to Ferguson (329-30), Athens was probably actually losing money at this time on the administration of Delos, since the Romans had only returned it to them on the condition that it remain a free port.

<sup>96</sup> Paus. 7.11.7; Menalkidas was *strategos* in 151/0 BCE.

<sup>97</sup> *Syll.* 675; see also Walbank (1979, 532), Gruen (1976, 52), and Habicht (1997, 265-8). The two claims are not mutually exclusive, however, as both men could have been involved in urging Achaean military action against Athens on behalf of Oropus.

<sup>98</sup> *Syll.* 675 II 18-19, which describes them as Ἀθηναίους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς ἀντιπρεσβεύοντας ἡμ[ῖν]. See Walbank for this analysis (1979, 532).

<sup>99</sup> See Gruen (1984, 325-343) for a more detailed discussion with excellent documentation.

that was designated by Rome to arbitrate the case,<sup>100</sup> while at the same time their victims, and other Greek states as well, presumably expected Rome to take an interest on their own side, or at least take some action to maintain stability. Gruen has documented a pattern of “Senatorial reluctance to take an active role” in disputes between Greek states, instead assigning them for local arbitration, and the Greeks’ consequent confusion when Rome “did not behave like a conventional hegemonical power” and took a hands-off approach to these sorts of situations, alternating this indifference with harsh intervention at other times.<sup>101</sup> Gruen, referring to a comparison drawn by Polybius (24.11-14) between the Achaean statesmen Aristaenus, who takes a more obsequious attitude to Roman power, and Philopoemen, who wants to stand up for Achaean rights against Rome, observes that in Polybius’ account

Philopoemen conceded the discrepancy in power between Rome and Achaea and the eventual submission to Roman dictates: but to stand up for one's rights, he argued, would impress Romans who respected oaths, treaties, and justice; and thus Achaea could, at least, postpone rather than hasten the inevitable [i.e. the loss of her sovereignty].<sup>102</sup>

Polybius wrote this around the time of the Athenian conflict with Oropus and the embassy of the philosophers, and there seems to have been a general tendency to ‘testing’ the Romans during this period. The Athenians would have had particular reason to believe they could get away with it.

Another thing that comes through clearly from the narrative of the Athenian/Oropian conflict is the bravado and confidence of the Athenian state, and its fairly blatant and ongoing attempts at this time to reestablish at least some of its old

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<sup>100</sup> Although Pausanias claims they were simply late: Σικυώνιοι μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἀφικομένοις ἐς καιρὸν τῆς κρίσεως Ἀθηναίοις ζημίαν πεντακόσια τάλαντα ἐπιβάλλουσι. (Paus. 7.11.5).

<sup>101</sup> Gruen 1984, 108, 330-1

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 331

empire in Greece. The “special relationship” that Athens had cultivated with Rome over the course of the second century BCE has already been sketched out above. Habicht, in his recent monograph on Hellenistic Athens, has an excellent and thoroughly documented discussion of Athenian/Roman relations during this period: Athens’ unceasing support of Rome through three wars leading to more and more support for Athens from Rome, and these gradual gains finally culminating in the Athenian recovery of several of her old territories.<sup>103</sup> When discussing the conduct of the Athenian embassy, this political environment is important to consider. The Athenian state’s behavior towards Rome at this period does not seem to have been very deferential, and the confidence and aggressive rhetoric that seems to have characterized the embassy reflects this. In 155 BCE Athens was a culturally dominant city, territorially renewed, confident in its alliance with Rome and perhaps looking towards future gains from that relationship. However, the Romans still controlled their prospects for the future, and the critical question in their dealings with the senate was how best to gain Rome’s good will and, at the same time, respect.

Although they were technically supplicants on behalf of a client state, the reception of the philosopher-ambassadors seems to have been “stage-managed” and promoted by just a few prominent Roman philhellenes as a grand occasion, at a time when the transplantation of Greek philosophy was still in a fairly precarious position at Rome, however fashionable it was with certain elites.<sup>104</sup> As recently as 161 teachers of philosophy and rhetoric had been expelled from Rome, and just around the time of the

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<sup>103</sup> Habicht 1997, 194-219

<sup>104</sup> I have borrowed the term from Morford (14): “The senatorial setting for the embassy was extraordinary, with the leading roles taken by prominent Roman philhellenes and (evidently) a stage-managed favorable reception for the ambassadors.”

embassy in 155, two Epicurean teachers were banished.<sup>105</sup> Cicero,<sup>106</sup> and most modern scholars as well,<sup>107</sup> considered the furor surrounding the ambassadors, and especially Carneades, as a crucial turning point in Roman intellectual history. Ancient testimonia certainly describe it as such, and especially emphasize Cato the elder's response to the speeches of Carneades as symbolic of his "Roman" character and of the clash between the new philosophically based ethical thinking and old Roman values.<sup>108</sup> Some modern scholars have rejected the idea of any true cultural clash at the time of the embassy.

Gruen has said that

[t]he event did not betoken a mighty confrontation between the cultures. Rather the reverse. The success of the philosophers discloses a markedly increased zeal for Greek learning among the Roman intelligentsia by the mid second century.<sup>109</sup>

Still, it was the ancient view that the embassy represented a cultural turning point, and even Gruen acknowledges here that it was a time of cultural change, with "markedly increased" interest in Greek philosophy.

Who were these philhellenes, students of philosophy, and historians that not only ostentatiously welcomed these three philosophers to Rome, but also socialized and conversed with them? The evidence is sketchy, but some individual names are clearly prominent. Scipio Aemilianus' family had immersed him in Greek culture from an early age, and he later became a patron of Polybius and Panaetius. M. Morford has described how Scipio's "prestige (*autoritas*) and rank (*dignitas*) were crucial to the success of

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<sup>105</sup> Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Att.* 15.11.1; Athenaeus, *Deip.* 12.547a

<sup>106</sup> *Tusc.* 4.1-7

<sup>107</sup> See, for example, Ferrary (2007, 17-46), Morford (14-33), Ferguson (333ff), Capelle (86-113), and many others. Capelle refers to the many young fans of Carneades' lectures as the "jeunesse d'orée" (86).

<sup>108</sup> Plutarch, *Cat. Mai.*, 22; Pliny the Elder, *NH* 7.112; see also Astin (174-8) for detailed discussion of Cato's reaction to the embassy.

<sup>109</sup> Gruen 1990, 176



Greek intellectual innovations at Rome.”<sup>110</sup> Gaius Acilius, a prominent Senator who wrote histories in Greek,<sup>111</sup> served as the philosophers’ translator at their appearance before the senate, Plutarch tells us, and Plutarch’s account implies that Cato was especially irked that so important a man would specifically request to act as their translator, a somewhat menial task.<sup>112</sup> A person despised by Cato, the “extreme philhellene”<sup>113</sup> Aulus Postumius Albinus, was *praetor urbanus* that year, and so in charge of introducing the ambassadors to the senate.<sup>114</sup> An anecdote I will discuss in a moment seems to depict him waiting along with the ambassadors as they attend on the senate and flattering them.<sup>115</sup> Another Roman who wrote histories in Greek, P. Rutilius Rufus, also attended their speeches, and may have recorded the philosophers’ arguments, or at least summaries of them.<sup>116</sup> According to Cicero (*De Or.* 2.155), Scipio Aemilianus, C. Laelius, and L. Furius Philus all attended the ambassadors’ lectures eagerly. The enthusiasm of all these philhellenic Romans to be associated with the ambassadors comes through clearly in the anecdotal evidence, and it shows that the ambassadors were courted by, rather than simply admitted to, Roman high society. J.P. Mahaffy has captured the attitude of the philhellenic party well: “They now had a grand opportunity of airing their

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<sup>110</sup> Morford, 16-7

<sup>111</sup> Walbank (1979, 544) gives a detailed list of references.

<sup>112</sup> *Cat. Mai.*, 22: Acilius insisted on being the translator, Plutarch says: καὶ τοὺς πρῶτους λόγους αὐτῶν πρὸς τὴν σύγκλητον ἀνὴρ ἐπιφανῆς σπουδάσας αὐτὸς καὶ δεηθεὶς ἡρμῆνευσε Γάιος Ἀκίλιος...; see also Astin (176).

<sup>113</sup> Astin, 164: “Postumius, an extreme philhellene, had gone so far as to write a history in Greek in the preface of which he asked his readers to excuse him if, as a Roman, he had not fully mastered the Greek language and method.”

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 176

<sup>115</sup> Cicero, *Acad. post. (Lucullus)*, 137

<sup>116</sup> Walbank 1979, 544; Aulus Gellius *Noctes Att.* 6.14.8-10

Greek and displaying their *humanitas* while showing the philosophers the curiosities of the city.”<sup>117</sup>

The anecdote reported by Cicero at *Acad. post.* 137 illustrates the situation perfectly. Aulus Postumius Albinus was accompanying Carneades and Diogenes before their appearance in the senate. It is unclear whether this was a formal part of their introduction or if he was simply showing them around.<sup>118</sup> Albinus gestured at the cityscape before them and said *Ego tibi, Carneade, praetor esse non videor <quia sapiens non sum> nec haec urbs nec in ea civitas*. Carneades replied, pointing at Diogenes, *Huic Stoico non videris*.<sup>119</sup> The joke hinges on the Stoic belief that the only true city was a city of sages. (The *quia sapiens non sum* is almost always excised because it seems like a lame addition that ruins the joke, which would hinge on Carneades’ shifting of Albinus’ playful accusation away from his own skeptical stance towards the sensory world, and onto the Stoic’s dogmatic insistence that only sages are true citizens. Obbink and Vander Waerdt have a different interpretation of the joke that retains this part of the text.<sup>120</sup>) The picture is striking, a prominent politician, proudly pointing out the

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<sup>117</sup> Mahaffy 1906, 96; Ferguson (334-5) also has a thorough discussion of the influence of the philhellenes and their attempts to pull the culture in their preferred direction.

<sup>118</sup> It depends on the exact meaning of *ad senatum in Capitolio starent* (*Acad. post.* [Lucullus], 137). Obbink & Vander Waerdt (390 n51) say that this does not mean, as some have thought, ‘to wait in attendance upon’: “not ‘waiting attendance upon’ but ‘standing around in front of,’ perhaps waiting to go in or go away.” They give corroborating examples from Cicero.

<sup>119</sup> Although we have only the Latin version of the joke in Cicero, the conversation was surely in Greek, and the joke revolves around important concepts and buzzwords in Stoicism, i.e. the polis and *politeia* (in Stoicism, the community of the wise, and the idea of community in general, was much more prominent than in other schools), and the *sophos*, or sage, a figure who was idealized in Stoicism to an extreme not seen in other schools before. In this way, the joke would attack some of the most basic and worrisome paradoxes within the Stoic school dealing with the possibility of true community and the impossibility of true wisdom, just as it first seems to attack the untenability of the New Academy’s strict doctrine of ἐποχή with regard to sense impressions.

<sup>120</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt think the joke hinges on a misunderstanding of Carneades’ views, perhaps due to the fact that he has been lecturing *in utram partem*: “...the joke thus turns on a scenario in which the hapless praetor puts his question to Carneades, [because] ...Carneades had quoted or summarized Diogenes doctrine in public discourse, probably in his first speech in praise of justice... Since Carneades had cast his arguments in Stoic terms (without, of course, committing to them...) Postumius [Albinus] might well have

magnificence of his city, while at the same time irreverently belittling it in an attempt to ingratiate himself with the philosophers. We will see in the following chapters how this deference makes a sharp contrast with the treatment of philosopher ambassadors under the principate.

One question that seems appropriate to ask at this fairly early stage in the transmission of Greek philosophy to Rome is how many of Carneades' listeners actually would have fully understood Carneades' speeches themselves?<sup>121</sup> We tend to assume an ability on the part of ancient Roman listeners to understand all spoken Greek, but Carneades' speaking style was *violenta et rapida*,<sup>122</sup> and it is believed that he customarily set up complicated antitheses in his speeches.<sup>123</sup> Could a large number of the audience simply have been pretending to follow him?<sup>124</sup> Especially since good knowledge of Greek was such a class marker? It is true that Roman noblemen learned Greek from native speakers, and so perhaps they could be expected to understand the spoken word no matter how difficult the presentation, but this may not be realistic—especially for a complicated philosophical speech. Many years later, Cicero, whose Greek was excellent and who surely represented better than average attainment in understanding Greek philosophy, had his friend Atticus “check” his Greek when he composed works in that language. (Atticus had lived in Athens for over 20 years and was said to speak Greek

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had good reason for thinking that Carneades shared...Stoic views...” (392-3). This is possible. I do disagree with them that “Cicero immediately concludes from the story that Carneades was practically a Stoic.” I believe that the *ille noster* in the next sentence, which they quote to support this statement (*sed ille noster est plane, ut supra dixi, Stoicus, perpauca balbutiens*) is meant to be Antiochus of Ascalon (who has also just been mentioned), not Carneades. It would be completely uncharacteristic for Cicero to call Carneades “practically a Stoic.” Barnes (78-9) also thinks that that *ille noster...perpauca balbutiens* refers to Antiochus.

<sup>121</sup> Mahaffy (1906, 96 n2) concludes that they could understand it well because they, unlike modern students, had native speakers as teachers. Few scholars ever even consider this question, however.

<sup>122</sup> Aulus Gellius *Noctes Att.* 6.14.10; see also Cicero (*De Or.* 161): *Carneade vero vis incredibilis...dicendi et varietas...*

<sup>123</sup> Wilkerson, 135-6

<sup>124</sup> Mahaffy 1906, 96

exactly like an Athenian.) If the speech were extremely difficult for most of the audience to understand, could this have increased its appeal and impressiveness somehow? Recall here that a translator was used for the ambassadors' appearances before the senate. Was that simply to satisfy tradition, or because it was necessary?

The most remarkable aspect of the speech 'against justice' of Carneades as it is reported in Cicero is that it uses the Romans' own imperialism and expansionism as proof that adherence to justice in international relations is not desirable. The fact that Athens was reasserting her own imperialism in a small way in the interference in Oropus suggests that such an argument would be a fairly bold defense, i.e. a comparison of their own "crime" with Rome's own policies. Scholars have wondered whether this whole line of argument was a bold criticism of Rome, a justification of Rome's foreign conquest, or even "an adaption of Greek philosophy to a theory of Roman imperialism,"<sup>125</sup> and I will treat the competing interpretations in my discussion of the passage below. In any case, if this were truly a part of his argument, it would definitely represent a threat to traditional Roman thought, and the philhellenic party would have been welcoming a subversive set of ideas into the heart of Rome's most important social circles.

The question of where the speeches for and against justice were delivered should be dealt with briefly here, as such accusations made before the senate itself would perhaps be more surprising. The ancient sources seem to agree that the speeches were delivered before the public,<sup>126</sup> and were separate from the presentations before the senate.

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<sup>125</sup> See Gruen (1984, 342) for an overview of this issue.

<sup>126</sup> Plutarch, in (*Cat. Mai.* 22.2) emphasizes that the main audiences for the philosophers' lectures were the young and the learned: εὐθύς οὖν οἱ φιλολογώτατοι τῶν νεανίσκων ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄνδρας ἴεντο καὶ συνῆσαν ἀκροώμενοι καὶ θαυμάζοντες αὐτούς; neither he nor Cicero imply that the speeches *in utram*

However, these same sources never mention any details of the appearance before the senate, and they generally “fail to distinguish between successfully impressing Romans in rhetorical/philosophical display and obtaining a diplomatic concession from the Senate,” as Obbink and Vander Waerdt put it,<sup>127</sup> raising the possibility that the rhetorical display of Carneades *was* part of his official appearance before the senate. Wilkerson has argued that these speeches did in fact take place before the senate.<sup>128</sup> He notes that the speeches were “long remembered in considerable detail” as if they were recorded by the senate, while a speech to the public would not be remembered so well (he is assuming, as many scholars do, that Cicero’s account of the speech in *Rep.* 3 is very closely based on what Carneades actually said, a problematic assumption as we shall see), and he adds that the presence of Cato the Censor at the lectures would be unlikely unless they were given before the senate. Finally, he thinks that the subject matter of the speeches, international justice, would have been appropriate for an address to the senate. However, he does not deal adequately here, in my opinion, with how speeches *in utram partem* would have been appropriate for a supplication of the senate. In addition, the speech as we have it in Cicero may have little to do with what Carneades actually said, and therefore not based on any senatorial record at all. Overall, I am unconvinced that the speech against justice could have been given before the senate as part of his official mission. The ancient sources are too emphatic on this point.

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*partem* took place in the senate; Aulus Gellius, (*Noctes Att.* 6.14.9) implies that public speeches happened *before* the senate appearance: *et in senatum...introduci [sunt] ...sed ante ipsi seorsum quisque ostentandi gratia magno conventu hominum dissertaverunt...*

<sup>127</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt, 393

<sup>128</sup> Wilkerson, 134-6; however, this would have been before the senate began keeping verbatim records of speeches.

We must examine the “fragments” which we have for Carneades’ famous speech against justice carefully here, as they are problematic in many ways and their authenticity is variously accepted.<sup>129</sup> The only sources for the actual content of his oration are the in the speech of Philus (supposedly recalling and repeating the arguments of Carneades) in Cicero’s *De Re Publica* (3.8-28), much of which is lost and fragmentary, and a discussion of Carneades’ philosophy in the *Divinae Institutiones* of Lactantius (5.14-19). Lactantius’ summary of Carneades’/Philus’ arguments is based on Cicero’s speech for Philus in the *De Re Publica*, and so the arguments presented in the *Divinae Institutiones* are generally assumed to be faithful enough to supplement the missing parts of the speech of Cicero’s Philus. I will deal with the problematic aspects of this speech as I attempt to summarize its argumentation. There are distinctly ‘Roman’ touches and historical anomalies that could never have been a part of Carneades’ original speech,<sup>130</sup> and we must also remember that Cicero has a clear agenda in resurrecting the speech, ultimately intending it to support his own arguments in *Rep.* 3,<sup>131</sup> and that he reverses the order of the

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<sup>129</sup> The norm is to accept the speech as more or less Carneades’; for this approach to the speech see Long (104-6), Schofield (167ff), Annas (156ff), Morford (15), Hammond (118), and Walbank (1965, 13). Glucker rejects most of the speech as evidence for Carneades’ arguments (2001, 57-82). Ferrary is also suspicious of the speech, and has written on it extensively. He feels that, although most scholars accept and work from the fragments in Ziegler’s Teubner edition, a sequence of arguments can hardly be constructed from it (Ferrary 1977, 129). Both Glucker (2001) and Ferrary believe Carneades’ original speech must have been primarily directed at the Stoics. In dealing with Ziegler’s edition, I have decided only to discuss only the fragments that mention Carneades; Ziegler includes many possible fragments that dimly echo arguments in the speech but make no mention of Carneades or the speech of Philus. Gruen (1984, 342 n132) has also objected to some of Ziegler’s inclusions.

<sup>130</sup> I will discuss these as they arise below, but in general they are references to such things as the *Lex Voconia*, which precedes the embassy, but which Carneades is unlikely to have mentioned, as well as events of 154 BCE (the Roman ban on growing the olive or vine north of the Alps) and events of Philus’ consulship of 136 BCE, which Carneades, of course, could not possibly have mentioned (Büchner, 282; Glucker 2001, 58).

<sup>131</sup> See Morford (22-3) for this analysis: “The actual date of the composition of the *De Re Publica* was 54-1, and Cicero [in Philus’ speech] is reflecting on the consequences of the moral relativism of people like Carneades in the light of the collapse in his own day of the republican constitution, which by then was clear for all to see. Like Cato in 155, he answered Greek logical rigor with Roman common sense, affirmed in Laelius’ appeal to the universal ‘natural law’ of justice, which Carneades had demolished a century earlier.”

speeches for and against Justice in his discussion: Carneades defended Justice on the first day and refuted it on the next, while Cicero gives us Laelius' defense of Justice (which is also fragmentary and which I will discuss in passing below) the last word, placing it after Philus' attack.

At the beginning of *Rep.* 3.8, after a lacuna of several pages, Philus complains that he has been asked to “undertake a defense of wickedness” (*improbitalis patrociniū suscipere*). He agrees to take on the “filthy”<sup>132</sup> task for the sake of finding and digging up the “gold” that is knowledge of Justice (*me...oblinam sciens; quod quoniam qui aurum quaerunt*—see Plato's *Republic* 1.336e, this will be the first of several possible references to Books I and II of the *Republic*),<sup>133</sup> and sets his speech up as a direct translation into Latin of what Carneades argued in his attack on Justice (*atque utinam, quem ad modum oratione sum usurus aliena, sic mihi ore uti liceret alieno. nunc ea dicenda sunt L. Furio Philo, quae Carneades, Graecus homo ...[dicebat]: “And I wish, just as I am going to present another's argument, that I could also make use of another's tongue! For Lucius Furius Philus must now report what the Greek Carneades... said”*).<sup>134</sup> There follows a lacuna of around thirty lines, and so we must look to Lactantius to supply some of the content for the opening of the speech. The fragmentary opening of Philus ends thus (in my summarization):

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However, we must remember that Cicero's view of Carneades is quite positive overall, and that Laelius' reply, which I will discuss briefly below, is extremely fragmentary.

<sup>132</sup> Translations of *Rep.* 3 are taken from Keyes (1928).

<sup>133</sup> εἰ μὲν χρυσίον ἐζητοῦμεν, οὐκ ἂν ποτε ἡμᾶς ἐκόντας εἶναι ὑποκατακλίνεσθαι ἀλλήλοις ἐν τῇ ζητήσῃ καὶ διαφθεῖρειν τὴν εὖρεσιν αὐτοῦ... ; Hahn (1999, 181) is the most complete source on the Platonic allusions in the speech, but they have been noticed by many: Glucker (2001), Ferrary (1977) Rudd, xvii, and others. We shall see several echoes of Plato's *Republic*, which will call into question the speech's authenticity as a record of Carneades' arguments, or perhaps indicate, in some cases, that he was using sophistic arguments of the kind advanced by Thrasymachus and Glaucon in the first two books.

<sup>134</sup> Trans. Keyes, 191-3

[Lacuna]...Plato and Aristotle were most nearly qualified to define justice—unlike Chrysippus, of whom we can't expect as much because he merely twists words without examining the things themselves (*nam ab Chrysippo nihil magnum nec magnificum desideravi, qui suo quodam more loquitur, ut omnia verborum momentis, non rerum ponderibus examinet*),<sup>135</sup> but they were ultimately unable to do so adequately because Justice is various among different peoples. (3.12-13)

If we follow Lactantius, the lost opening of the speech was probably a summary statement of Aristotle's and Plato's views on Justice, which Carneades had perhaps argued for the previous day: *Carneades autem, ut Aristotelem refelleret ac Platonem iustitiae patronos, prima illa disputatione collegit ea omnia, quae pro iustitia dicebantur ut posset illa, sicut fecit, evertere* (*Div. Inst.* 5. 15).<sup>136</sup> However, it is not clear from this statement that Plato and Aristotle's views were the only ones he (Carneades, and so, Philus) set up for refutation, or that he restated their positions at the beginning of the second speech against justice.<sup>137</sup>

There are, however, some objections to this reconstruction. J. Glucker, in his study of this passage, is unpersuaded that Carneades would have directed his attack at the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, largely because Carneades was most famous for refuting and attacking the dogma of the Stoics. "To the best of my knowledge, nowhere else in our sources do we find a reference to Carneades arguing against Plato and Aristotle," he states. On the other hand, Glucker notes, "his chief and constant enemies were the Stoics, and especially...Chrysippus" and he quotes the famous assertion of Carneades from Diogenes Laertius 4.62: εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν Χρύσιππος, οὐκ ἂν ἦν ἐγώ. (Although he does not mention here that this line may have been only partly serious, as it was a parody of the

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<sup>135</sup> Glucker 2001, 64

<sup>136</sup> See also Lactantius, *Epit. Div. Inst.*, 55: *Plato et Aristoteles, de iustitia multa dixerunt...nec immerito extitit Carneades, homo summo ingenio et acumine, qui refelleret istorum orationem, et iustitiam...everteret.*

<sup>137</sup> Glucker 2001, 71



saying εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν Χρύσιππος, οὐκ ἂν ἦν στοά.)<sup>138</sup> In addition, he claims that for Carneades to argue against Plato, in particular, would have been to imply that Plato was a dogmatist, and this is something Carneades would never have been willing to do.<sup>139</sup> However, we have very few fragments of Carneades, of which these corresponding passages in Cicero and Lactantius are important ones, and we do not have other information about how he used Platonic (or Aristotelian) material in his speeches.<sup>140</sup> We also know that he was famous, in any case, for always arguing both sides of an issue, not for avoiding confronting the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, or any other philosopher. In addition, the fact that the fragmentary opening of the speech refers back to Plato and Aristotle, as well as Chrysippus, is strong evidence that the speech was on some level refuting arguments associated with them or their works. Glucker acknowledges this,<sup>141</sup> but thinks this mention of Plato and Aristotle must have been restricted to this part of the opening and that, even if it does reflect the content of Carneades' original speech against Justice, it didn't have anything to do with the speech Carneades gave on the first day, in defense of Justice—which he thinks must have been entirely referencing the arguments of the Stoics in order to set them up for refutation in the following speech. The reference to Chrysippus is completely consonant with what we know about his preoccupation with refuting the Stoics, and perhaps this makes the passage more likely to be a genuine report of Carneades' opening. Also, even if he were primarily interested in demonstrating that Stoic dogma was manifestly ridiculous, it wouldn't be as impressive to refute only

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<sup>138</sup> Long, 94; DL 7.183 & 4.62

<sup>139</sup> Glucker 2001, 60-1

<sup>140</sup> Also, Obbink & Vander Waardt (357-8, 381) found that Diogenes of Babylon, Carneades primary opponent at this time, incorporated many Platonic and Aristotelian concepts into his reasoning, and so perhaps that would make it more likely that Carneades would have practiced arguments against those ideas.

<sup>141</sup> Glucker 2001, 64ff

Stoicism as it would be to refute Platonic and Aristotelian arguments as well. Cicero said elsewhere that it was Carneades' custom to make "the best arguments seem ridiculous" (*qui saepe optimas causas ingenii...ludificari solet*), and surely as an Academic Skeptic Cicero would include the arguments of Plato among these *optimas causas*.<sup>142</sup>

Returning to the speech, opening arguments are presented. Again, I summarize:

Peoples differ in religion. Piety to some is impiety to others. This assertion is supported by a catalogue of exotic religious practices from around the known world, including human sacrifice. (3.14-15)

Glucker feels we are in "Stoic territory" here.<sup>143</sup> Catalogues of exotic barbarian customs were apparently collected and discussed by the Stoics, especially Chrysippus, to show that natural law cannot be the same as human law. A. Erskine also associates this sort of examination of foreign customs with Chrysippus and his belief that "all existing laws and constitutions were mistaken..." also noting we know that "[Chrysippus] compiled a collection of differing burial customs of peoples, described by Cicero as *nationum varii errores...*(Cic. *Tusc. Disp.* 1.108, *SVF* 3.322)."<sup>144</sup> If Chrysippus is the inspiration for these arguments, then it could indicate a focus on the arguments of the Stoa in the original speech, since Carneades may have been referencing their own arguments to defeat them. However, if this were his approach, why would he use this argument in a way that the Stoics could so specifically answer (i.e. by saying that it proves their point that *natural* or *true* law is not the same as human law)?<sup>145</sup> Also, since,

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<sup>142</sup> See fragment in Keyes (192; Nonius, p. 263. 14).

<sup>143</sup> Glucker 2001, 67

<sup>144</sup> Erskine, 68-9

<sup>145</sup> Glucker 2001, 73-5: "If Carneades is to refute the Stoics, it is hardly enough to 'state the opposite': he has to show that the Stoic conceptions themselves are flawed, inconsistent, lead to absurdities, and the like..." then he sums up: "Instead of accusing Carneades of...lame refutations of the Stoics, we would be accusing Cicero of the same error."

as Glucker recognizes, catalogues of exotic barbarian customs probably go all the way back to Ionian logography and the sophists, we cannot be sure this is a reference to Stoic thought at all.<sup>146</sup>

The argument continues:

Many obviously unjust practices have been adopted by various nations. Spartans have claimed all the land they can touch with their spears as their own, Athenians have declared by oath that all lands that produce grain and olives are their own, and we Italians, who are most just (*iustissimi homines*), have declared that no one north of the Alps can grow the vine and the olive—as a subsidy for our own farmers. [Other similar examples are given.] These actions are considered wise. So Wisdom is clearly different from Equity (*ut intellegatis discrepare ab aequitate sapientiam*). (3.15-16)

This section continues the catalogue of unjust customs by coming a bit closer to home. There is an obvious problem with taking this passage as evidence for Carneades argumentation in 155 BCE. For one thing, the Roman law against growing vineyards and olive trees north of the Alps dates from 154 BCE.<sup>147</sup> Also, the Italians are referred to as “we, truly the most just men” (*nos vero iustissimi homines*). However, even if Carneades would not have phrased it precisely this way, the sarcasm implied in that description of Romans in this particular context could perhaps reflect Carneades’ treatment of Rome in his speech, especially if he did deal with Roman imperialism in his remarks, for which I will discuss the evidence below. It is perhaps significant that Athenian customs are mentioned here as well. Athens’ injustice comes up again shortly in the speech, and if Carneades focused on the injustice of Athens’ imperial past, this could be an interesting twist, since he was defending Athens on a similar charge imperialistic and proprietary

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 66: Glucker acknowledges that these arguments /examples could have been found in a number of places, but seems to favor a Stoic origin, saying he does not think “Philus’ collection of examples from the differing [laws of peoples]...at *Rep* 3.14-16 derived from a Platonic or Aristotelian source—nor does it answer a Platonic or Aristotelian argument—known to us.” Summing up this portion of the speech, he says, “Thus, much of the content of Philus’s speech seems to be directed against Stoic positions.” (67).

<sup>147</sup> Büchner, 282

behavior towards Oropus.<sup>148</sup> However, the assumption that the speech reflects Carneades' arguments is starting to seem fairly shaky.

Justice is not only various throughout the world, but changes frequently in one place. Example: The Voconian Law [174 or 169 BCE] limited women's previous inheritance rights at Rome in one stroke, and this law is very unjust to women (*ipsa lex...in mulieres plena est iniuriae*). (3.17) [A lacuna of at least 15 lines follows this passage]

Again, the idea of the mutability of justice is completely plausible as a Skeptical Academic argument, I think, but the example of the Voconian Law is unlikely to have come from Carneades.<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately, the manuscript breaks off in the middle of this part.

[Following the lacuna] If laws are different everywhere, which laws should a wise man obey? (*si iusti hominis et si boni est viri parere legibus, quibus?*) Furthermore, all these laws are imposed by fear of punishment, not natural justice. So, humans are not just by nature. Some say that even though laws vary, the wise man will know what is truly just (*dicunt natura autem viros bonos eam iustitiam sequi*). It has been said that it is just to give everyone that which is due to each (*...tribuere id cuique, quod sit quoque dignum*). But then what is "due" to each living thing? What about giving animals their rights? Both Pythagoras and Empedocles said it was a crime to harm an animal... [a long lacuna begins here] (3.18-19)

Glucker feels this passage is surely in "Stoic territory" as well,<sup>150</sup> and the discussion of the wise man's innate knowledge of the correct law is certainly reminiscent of the Stoic sage. But one sees here references to Book I of Plato's *Republic*,<sup>151</sup> the Pythagoreans, and Empedocles as well. This would correlate well with the image of Carneades as a determined Skeptic who argued against all previous philosophers and

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<sup>148</sup> Erskine, 191

<sup>149</sup> Büchner, 282; Glucker 2001, 58

<sup>150</sup> Glucker 2001, 67; Ferrary (1977, 140-1) interestingly thinks that this may have begun a *sorites* type argument, and that that agrees with what we know about Carneades style of argument: "Carnéade en est-il l'auteur, ou l'a-t-il emprunté à Chrysippe [he cites *SVF* III 373], le détournant de son sens, et faisant un sorite contre la justice de ce qui n'était qu'une objection contre son extension aux animaux? Cette dernière hypothèse est séduisante, car elle s'accorderait bien avec ce que nous savons des méthodes polémiques de Carnéade."

<sup>151</sup> 331e: τὸ τὰ ὀφειλόμενα ἐκάστῳ ἀποδιδόναι δίκαιόν ἐστι

rejected any instance of dogmatic thinking. Needless to say, however, a dialogue with Plato, and especially with ideas put forward in Plato's *Republic*, would not be out of place in Cicero's own *De Re Publica*, which perhaps increases the likelihood that this section is primarily Ciceronian rather than Carneadean.

We must look to Lactantius to supply what probably followed in Philus' speech:

Peoples make laws for their own advantage (*pro utilitate*), that is why laws are various and changeable over time. There is no natural Justice, therefore, or if there is, then holding to it will injure one's own interests and protect the interests of others, which is not wise. All nations that hold empires, including the Romans, cannot be considered just unless they give back others' land and possessions and return home to poverty (*Omnibus populis qui florent imperio, et Romanis quoque ipsis, qui totius orbis potirentur, si iusti velint esse, hoc est, si aliena restituant, ad casas esse redeundum, et in egestate ac miseriis iacendum*). (Lactantius *Div. Inst.* 5.17)

Much has been made of this report of Philus' arguments by Lactantius, and of whether or not Carneades would have dared to make this argument in front of a Roman audience. The scholarship on this question is very divided. Some commentators are positive that Carneades would have never said anything like this in front of a Roman audience, and that Cicero has added these arguments, either to reflect on contemporary controversies about the growth of the Roman empire, or for some other reason. Ferrary has contended that it is doubtful a Roman audience of the second century BCE would have been receptive to such an argument, and that the arguments about imperialism were a concern of Cicero's contemporaries.<sup>152</sup> Gruen agrees: "Carneades was a member of an Athenian embassy seeking favor from the senate. A deliberate insult to Roman character

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<sup>152</sup> Ferrary 1988, 356-7: "...il est douteux que les Romains dans leur majorité aient été disposés à apprécier pareille justification de leur empire...[et l]es Philosophes envoyés par les Athéniens ne pouvaient remplir leur mission qu'en recourant à la *captatio benevolentiae* et à la *deprecatio*, et c'est ce don't on est bien éloigné avec le discours de Philus." Ferrary also discusses how philosophical arguments about imperialism were fashionable in Cicero's time (362-3).

would be impolitic in the extreme.”<sup>153</sup> Glucker, Forte and Astin endorse this view,<sup>154</sup> but Obbink and Vander Waerdt have warned against assuming that Carneades would be insulting the Romans to say such things: he was considered such a side-show, so to speak, and so uncommitted to anything he argued, that he may have been able to say anything without offense.<sup>155</sup> Others maintain that he did in fact say something similar to this, and perhaps that it was so discomfiting to the Roman listeners<sup>156</sup> that a “philosophy of empire” had to be formulated by Panaetius in response to it (or to sentiments like it prevailing in philosophical circles). This is the opinion of Erskine<sup>157</sup>, and Walbank.<sup>158</sup> Another view is that Carneades did say something like this, but that he was himself promulgating a “philosophy of empire,”<sup>159</sup> and that the example of the Romans giving up their possessions and returning to their city to live in “huts” (*casas*) is a *reductio ad absurdum*, proving that Roman Imperial power is sensible.<sup>160</sup> Another question to consider when speculating on whether or not Carneades would have made arguments like

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<sup>153</sup> Gruen 1984, 342; he reiterates this view more recently (1990, 175).

<sup>154</sup> Glucker 2001, 58-9; Astin, 300; see also Forte, who says, “Though Fuchs believes that...[Carneades] was attempting to undermine Rome’s claim[s]...it is more likely that the speeches were epideictic orations. Carneades would not have risked offending the Romans...” (70). See also Zetzel (299) who concludes that these references to the Roman empire had to be Cicero’s invention.

<sup>155</sup> Obbink & Vander Waerdt, 394

<sup>156</sup> Fuchs agrees the speech was an uncomfortable challenge to Rome: “Bedeutungsvoll ist schon die Wahl des Gegenstandes, an dem sich das scheinbar freie Spiel des Geistes entfaltetete. Die Gerechtigkeit, die von Karneades der Betrachtung unterworfen wurde, war ein Begriff, der im Denken der Römer bisher unangetastet als einer der höchsten und verbindlichsten Werte gegolten hatte und bei seiner beherrschenden Stellung geradezu als ein Wahrzeichen der römischen Geistesart aufgefaßt werden können. Denn in zwei sittlichen Leistungen sahen die Römer seit alten Zeiten die Grundlage und die Gewähr für ihre Herrschaft: in der ehrfurchtvollen Unterordnung unter den Willen der Götter und in der gewissenhaften Beobachtung des Rechtes” (3).

<sup>157</sup> Erskine, 192

<sup>158</sup> Walbank 1965, 12-14

<sup>159</sup> Capelle sees this as a philosophy of empire, but looking back at the Greek world more than the Roman present: “Karneades hat also bereits theoretische Verteidigungen imperialistischer Politik gekannt. Her wird man aber—aus allgemeinen zeitgeschichtlichen Gründen—noch nicht an Verteidigungen des römischen Imperialismus denken dürfen. Vielmehr denkt Karneades hier an theoretische Rechtfertigungen von griechischem Imperialismus aus älterer Zeit...” (87 n1); see also Mahaffy (1906, 95) for the idea that the speech endorsed Roman imperial power.

<sup>160</sup> Gruen (1984, 342) speculates that this is the case—if the speech of Philus as we have it reflects the actual speech of Carneades.

this about empire, or Roman conquests, is the extent to which Romans actually thought of themselves as a true “empire” at the time the speech was given. There is some evidence that most Romans would have seen their military interventions as simply defensive, and necessary to secure their interests.<sup>161</sup>

In my view, although we can never know what Carneades actually said in this speech, it is not out of the question that he addressed issues of interstate justice and empire, especially since he (at least in Cicero’s formulation) addressed issues of Athenian imperial abuses as well.

[Following the long lacuna] The different classes of people want to hold power and tyrannize over the other classes entirely, that is why a mixed constitution, as recommended by Scipio, is best: because none of them should hold total power. The justice of the mixed constitution results from mutual fear and weakness, and so weakness is the mother of this justice (*etenim iustitiae non natura nec voluntas, sed imbecillitas mater est*). (3.23) [long lacuna follows]

Aside from the mention of a mixed constitution, this is very reminiscent of Glaucon’s speech at *Republic* 2.359a in its depiction of government and law as being founded on mutual fear and suspicion.<sup>162</sup> It also recalls Thrasymachus at 1.338dff.<sup>163</sup> Carneades is extremely unlikely to have mentioned Rome’s mixed constitution in his speech, and Glucker is bothered by the idea that Carneades would have made reference to Glaucon’s arguments in this way, both because it goes against his theory that Carneades was primarily referencing the Stoics in his speeches, and because, if he was intending to “refute” Plato, as Lactantius claims (*ut Aristotelem refelleret et Platonem iustitiae patronos*), why would he quote these arguments of Glaucon, who was playing the devil’s

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<sup>161</sup> Saunders, 212; Hammond, 117

<sup>162</sup> Hahn 1999, passim; Ferrary 1977, 149-50; Capelle, 88ff

<sup>163</sup> τίθεται δέ γε τοὺς νόμους ἐκάστη ἢ ἀρχὴ πρὸς τὸ αὐτῇ συμφέρον, δημοκρατία μὲν δημοκρατικούς, τυραννὶς δὲ τυραννικούς, καὶ αἱ ἄλλαι οὕτως: θέμεναι δὲ ἀπέφηναν τοῦτο δίκαιον τοῖς ἀρχομένοις εἶναι, τὸ σφίσι συμφέρον, καὶ τὸν τούτου ἐκβαίνοντα κολάζουσιν ὡς παρανομοῦντά τε καὶ ἀδικοῦντα... (1.338e).

advocate in this section of the dialogue?<sup>164</sup> Of course, we must remember that Cicero/Philus is playing a devil's advocate here as well: all of these references to *The Republic* in this speech on Justice are starting to seem a bit suspect, especially if we remember that the ancient name for Plato's *Republic* was *On Justice*.<sup>165</sup> (Aristotle's four lost books *On Justice* are also mentioned in what we have of the *exordium*.) Glaucon's speech is itself also, of course, reminiscent of serious positions put forward by the Sophists and echoed in speeches in Thucydides and Polybius. Returning to the possibility that this section could faithfully represent Carneades' arguments, if Carneades considered Plato a true "skeptic," then any of his arguments would be fair game for criticism or advocacy.<sup>166</sup> Also, the contention that Carneades argued only, or primarily, with regard to the Stoics' conception of Justice/natural law in his speech seems unlikely to me: as a skeptic it would have made more sense to argue with a variety of schools and positions, and we do have reference in the "remains" of the speech to Pythagoras, Empedocles, Epicureanism, as well as Plato and, very briefly at the beginning, Aristotle. I realize that my reasoning is somewhat circular here: references to all these philosophers in the speech as we have it from Cicero proving that Carneades argued with a variety of schools because Cicero says he did. But it just makes more sense that he would have argued against more than one school if he wanted his defense of injustice to be really impressive. After all, as a Skeptic he was opposed to all dogmatic thinking, and a full demonstration of his unique ability to refute dogma would almost require the

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<sup>164</sup> Glucker 2001, 81-2

<sup>165</sup> Guthrie says, "The double title may possibly be Plato's own" (434 n1)—i.e. "The Republic, or On the Just Man/On Justice (Πολιτεία ἢ περὶ δικαίου ) (DL 3.60).

<sup>166</sup> Erskine, 189; Glucker acknowledges this view (2001, 57 n1) and admits that he said as much in his earlier *Antiochus and the late Academy* (1978, 48-52), but he is now unconvinced that Carneades would ever attack Socrates or Plato, and his article argues that the Stoics were the overriding target.



consideration of other theories about justice besides those of the Stoics.

[Follows long lacuna] Wisdom urges us to take as much as we can (*sapientia iubet augere opes, amplificare divitias, proferre finis...imperare quam plurimis, frui voluptatibus, pollere, regnare, dominari...*), Justice to keep our hands off of others' things. The first option leads to wealth and happiness, and the second to poverty and misery. Did our people grow an empire through Justice or through Wisdom? (3.24) [Lacuna of at least 30 lines]

Again, there are obvious problems with taking this as a report of Carneades' speech. Not only are the Roman people referred to as "we" again (*noster hic populus*), but also there is a reference to a supposed tomb inscription for successful Roman generals (*finis imperii propagavit*), that Carneades could not have known about or mentioned at the time of his original speech. Moving to the argumentation, the first sentence here (*iubet augere opes & etc...*) causes Glucker some consternation. Why would Carneades put this image forward? This is not the Stoic ideal of the sage at all!<sup>167</sup> Therefore, it is another "lame"<sup>168</sup> argument that would raise no problems for a Stoic interlocutor: setting up this conflict between justness and self-interest would not be relevant to Stoic conceptions of justice. (Glucker's contention that the speech exclusively focused on refuting Stoic concepts therefore becomes more problematic.) Once again, here, we see a possible reference to Plato's *Republic*. This time, it is in the speech of Thrasymachus, the choleric opponent of Socrates in Book I (343ff). There could be good allusive and artistic reasons for Cicero to have Philus/Carneades play the role of Glaucon and Thrasymachus in this speech, as I mentioned above. Of course, this idea of wisdom (*iubet augere opes & etc...*) could come from other sources as well, as it is a fairly commonplace idea from the fifth century onwards, found in the Sophists, Thucydides, and elsewhere.

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<sup>167</sup> Glucker 2001, 72

<sup>168</sup> *ibid.*, 73-4

[Follows lacuna] Athenians and Arcadians, perhaps afraid [of the possible claims of prior inhabitants to their land], claimed to have arisen from the earth, just as mice spring up in the fields (*commenti sunt se de terra tamquam hos ex arvis musculos extitisse*). (3.25)

If Carneades used an argument like this, it is significant that he brings up Athens again, this time with regard to its claims to its own territory, especially when you consider the weak territorial claim on Oropus that the ambassadors were arguing before the senate.

Philus continues:

Epicureans (who are not deceptive in their arguments as some are—*non sunt in disputando...malitiosi*) would reply to this argument that the anxiety that results from taking things not rightfully yours cancels out any enjoyment they might bring. [Lacuna of at least a page follows] (3.26)

The Epicurean school was not represented on the embassy, but Epicureans were beginning to establish their ideas in Rome just at this time, so it might make sense for Carneades to address their primary objection to his thesis. Two Epicurean teachers were exiled in 155 (or possibly 173 BCE),<sup>169</sup> which would mean they must have had at least a few followers among the city's philhellenes. We notice here also a jab at the Stoics that echoes the one in what is left of the *exordium* (*nam ab Chrysippo nihil magnum ...desideravi, qui suo quodam more loquitur, ut omnia verborum momentis, non rerum ponderibus examinet*: "For I expected nothing great or remarkable from Chrysippus, who has his own particular method of discussion, examining everything on the basis of meanings of words rather than by weighing of facts").<sup>170</sup> This accusation of sophistry in argumentation was probably Carneades' characteristic charge against the Stoics.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Athenaeus, *Deip.* 12.547a

<sup>170</sup> *Rep.* 3.12; trans. Keyes, 193

<sup>171</sup> According to Hahn (2007, 67), it was a characteristic charge of Critolaus and perhaps many others against them.

[Following lacuna] Take two men, one virtuous but hounded and miserable, the other wicked but wealthy and celebrated. Which would you rather be (*quis tandem erit tam demens, qui dubitet, utrum se esse malit*)? The same is the case with nations as with individuals. During my consulship [136 BCE], I carried a resolution in the senate overturning a treaty with Numantia. Of the two who had made the treaty, one defended it and one supported my resolution to overturn. The one who supported my motion had more loyalty (*fides*), but the other had more prudence (*prudencia*)... (3.27-28) [Here, a long lacuna begins, ending what we have of Philus' speech in *De Rep.* We must look to Lactantius to supply the examples that were used to close the speech.]

This could be taken as an attack on the Stoics,<sup>172</sup> and their belief that virtue is the only good, but once again there is a pretty clear parallel in a speech of Glaucon in *Republic II*.<sup>173</sup> The correspondence of Philus/Carneades with Plato's Glaucon is becoming rather pronounced, even given the meager fragments that we have of the speech. The Numantine treaty incident, of course, could not have been a part of Carneades' original speech, and we must chalk it up as another Ciceronian example that may have some, or no, relationship to any examples may have Carneades used.

Last, Philus seems to have discussed some examples relating to individual rather than interstate justice, at least according to Lactantius (*tum omissis communibus ad propria veniebat*),<sup>174</sup> and then moved on to how being just can even threaten your own life! (*transcendebat ergo ad maiora, in quibus nemo posset sine periculo vitae iustus esse*):

If a man is selling a runaway slave or a faulty building, he is not wise to tell the purchaser but not just if he doesn't. If he knows that something is being sold below its true price, and buys it without telling the seller, he is wise, but if he tells

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<sup>172</sup> Glucker (2001, 82-3) does not take it that way, however, and recognizes this as an allusion to Plato. He believes therefore that it must be interpolated, since Carneades would have primarily attacked the Stoics.

<sup>173</sup> 360e-362c

<sup>174</sup> Jean Louis Ferrary (1977, 128-56, 148-50) thinks that Carneades primary concern was individual justice and ethical behavior, and that he was unlikely to have addressed interstate matters in themselves: Carnéade... s'intéressait avant tout au problème moral de l'individu aux prises avec le conflit de l'intérêt et de la justice; s'il analysait la conduite des États c'était, à l'exemple de Platon dans la République, qu'il espérait y découvrir, plus visible parce que grossi, le principe de la conduite des individus" (149).

the seller its true price, he harms himself while at the same time being just. Acting with Justice is not only unwise, but can even endanger your life: if in a shipwreck you see a weaker man with a plank, and you do not take it from him, you will die, and so that is not wise. If your army is fleeing before the enemy, and your horse is lost, and you see another with a good strong horse, you must take it, even if that is not just, otherwise you will die. (*Div. Inst.* 5.18)

Some of these examples parallel a debate depicted between the Stoics Diogenes of Babylon and his student Antipater, as well as puzzles put forward by the Stoic Hecato, in Cicero's *De Officiis* (3.54-5, 89-92).<sup>175</sup> The content of this speech becomes ever more suspect here as evidence for Carneades' presentation! However, it could reflect reference to Stoic ideas in Carneades' speech: Dyck, in his commentary on the *De Officiis*, has suggested that Diogenes may have taken the positions he is reported to take there (in his debate with Antipater)—i.e. that self-interest in these situations is actually just—in response to supposed arguments of Carneades that are reflected in the Philus/Carneades speech.<sup>176</sup> Schofield has also discussed this possibility in more detail.<sup>177</sup> Annas argues against this position, and says: “[T]he use of striking examples on its own proves nothing about dependence...”<sup>178</sup> Whatever the case, Lactantius certainly treats these arguments as coming from Carneades, and he is relying on a full text of the *De Re Publica*.<sup>179</sup> It is here we reach the end of our remains of the Philus/Carneades defense of injustice.

The vast majority of Laelius' speech (3.32-41) in response support of justice is lost. It probably cannot be taken to reflect Carneades speech in support of justice in his

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<sup>175</sup> Glucker 2001, 66

<sup>176</sup> Dyck, 562-4; Dyck says of the Diogenes/Antipater exchange: “The similarity [of Lactantius' report of this part of the Philus/Carneades speech] to our passage is not just the use of the same example...the same arguments relating to morality and *stultitia* are invoked; they are merely divided between the two speakers. If we should see the historical Diogenes behind the stand attributed to him here, possibly...he formulated his position to answer this point of Carneades” (562).

<sup>177</sup> Schofield (1999, 167-72) says that “[t]he suggestion is that he worked with these examples not from choice but because they were forced on him—by Carneades.”

<sup>178</sup> Annas, 157

<sup>179</sup> *Div. Instit.* 5.17.14: *adeone ergo iustitiam, o Furi, vel potius o Carneade, cuius est illa tota oratio tam inanem...putas?*

previous day's lecture in any way, since Lactantius attributes it entirely to Cicero/Laelius and he was working with the full text of the *De Re Publica*.<sup>180</sup> Also, more obviously, as Büchner notes, the order of the speeches for and against Justice is reversed, and you can't expect a speech *in response* to repeat arguments that were knocked down in the Carneades speech *against* Justice.<sup>181</sup> Cicero has clearly set up his "Carneades" speech for refutation, and so we can expect Laelius' arguments to be fairly effective, but Lactantius says of Laelius' speech that it did not succeed entirely (*M. Tullius non potuerit refellere; nam cum faciat Laelium Furio respondentem pro iustitiaque dicentem, inrefutata haec...*).<sup>182</sup>

What philosophical approach does the speech of Laelius, as we have it, take? It is extremely fragmentary, but there do seem to be some stoicizing elements.<sup>183</sup> True law is in accord with nature, he says (...*est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quae vocet ad officium iubendo, vetando a fraude deterrat*) (3.33). Other fragments seem to suggest that arguments similar to the theory of natural slavery were advanced in support of Roman power.<sup>184</sup> A common view is that Panaetius' arguments inform this reply, while others find more evidence in the fragments for the influence of Antiochus of Ascalon,<sup>185</sup> an Academic Cicero would have perhaps

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<sup>180</sup> *Div. Inst.* 5.16

<sup>181</sup> Büchner 1984, 282

<sup>182</sup> *Div. Inst.* 5.16: he admits here that it is Cicero himself, not Laelius, who fails to fully refute Carneades.

<sup>183</sup> It should be noted here that Laelius was a student of Diogenes of Babylon (Morford, 23; Cicero, *De fin.*, 2.24).

<sup>184</sup> See Ziegler (98-9): *an non cernimus optimo cuique dominatum ab ipsa natura cum summa utilitate infirmorum datum?*

<sup>185</sup> For Panaetius as the inspiration of Laelius' response see Hammond (118) and Walbank (1965, 13). Saunders (211) points out that Scipio, who apparently offered another response after Laelius, has been named as especially suited to discuss government because of his frequent discussions with Panaetius and Polybius (at *De Rep.* 1.21.34). See Strasburger (44-5) for an opposing view. He believes that there is no evidence of Panaetius' influence here, and that the views advanced represent many other philosophers' views, notably Aristotle and Plato. For more from this perspective see Ferrary (1974, 760): "...le caractère stoïcien de la définition de la loi fournie par Laelius n'a cessé d'être souligné... Nous pouvons cependant

been favoring at this point in his career.<sup>186</sup> In conclusion, it is too fragmentary to evaluate, and probably has no relationship whatsoever to Carneades defense of Justice in his first lecture.

A close examination of the evidence from Cicero seems creates more doubts than certainties about the content of Carneades' speeches at Rome. And so, the central problem in the study of this episode—what could Carneades have said before the senate?—extends to the speeches *in utram partem* on justice as well: what could he have said that was so impressive? The rehashing of Glaucon's arguments that we find in the fragments surely would not have had so much shock-value for his audience, so perhaps it was his *violenta et rapida* style and his vigor and charisma in lecturing which so captured people's imagination for years to come? On the other hand, what fragmentary arguments could ever have been preserved that would satisfy us as authentic products of the greatest skeptical mind in antiquity? Could Cicero have simplified or diminished Carneades' arguments in order to be able to argue against him more effectively in the person of Laelius? Cicero shows great respect for Carneades throughout his work, so it is difficult to imagine this as a motive.

We can only know that Carneades did somehow overcome the awkward situation that the embassy imposed on him: he was able to somehow sacrifice his stance of arguing *in utram partem* when he was before the senate, presumably, and make a successful appeal while maintaining his skeptical integrity. He was able to impress the Roman

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nous demander si, comme dans le cas de la formule *nullum bonum nisi honestum*, Cicéron ne considérait pas comme avant tout platonicien ce qui nous apparaît comme éminemment stoïcien...[et] remonte en effet à Platon et à Aristote, et les formules stoïciennes ont leur origine dans la pensée de ces deux philosophes. Antiochus, qui a tant emprunté aux stoïciens, n'aurait-il pas repris leur définition de la loi, en la présentant comme d'inspiration platonicienne?" He believes Antiochus was the main inspiration.

<sup>186</sup> For more on this controversial topic, a good place to start would be Gucker (1988).

public immensely and earn a lasting memory for dignity, eloquence, and knowledge, leaving them with the impression that he and his fellow ambassadors had come to Rome not to ask for something, but to offer something. Our next ambassador, as we shall see, will have a more difficult time negotiating the treacherous and potentially compromising mission of the philosophical ambassador.

### Chapter III

#### Philo of Alexandria: Embassies within embassies

In the *Legatio ad Gaium*, a rare instance of a first-hand account of a philosopher-ambassador's encounter with a Roman emperor, Philo of Alexandria depicts his audience with Gaius as a "farce" (καὶ γὰρ τὸ πρᾶγμα μιμεία τις ἦν [359]). He has been sent to the imperial court as part of a five-member delegation to protest against the loss of the Jewish community's civic rights at Alexandria,<sup>187</sup> and Gaius is so dismissive and disrespectful that the delegation is reduced to literally running after him as he inspects a luxurious residence at Campania and gives orders for its further decoration. Meanwhile, the members of the opposing Greek-Alexandrian delegation are openly exulting in Gaius' attitude.

The spiteful sycophant Isidorus observed that Gaius enjoyed being given superhuman titles and said, "My lord, you will hate these Jews here, and the rest of their compatriots too, even more when you learn of their ill-will and disloyalty towards you. When everyone else was offering sacrifices of thanksgiving for your recovery, these people alone could not bring themselves to sacrifice. When I say 'these', I include the other Jews as well." At that we cried out unanimously, "Lord Gaius, we are being maligned. We did sacrifice, and hecatombs at that.

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<sup>187</sup> The question of what the delegations were actually arguing for/against is very fraught, and I will briefly discuss it later in this chapter. Some believe that they were arguing over rights of equal citizenship which the Jews had lost during the riots at Alexandria in 39 CE, (for a thorough discussion of this argument see Ritter [124, 133-5]), while the more common view is that they were contesting over some partial form of citizenship that Alexandrian Jews had prior to these riots, centered on their *'politeuma'*, including residency and religious freedoms (see for example Gruen [2002, 73-5] and Guterman [1951, 123 n.1]), and some have even speculated that they were requesting of Gaius citizenship rights that they did not have in Alexandria even before the riots (Balsdon 1976, 134-5). Claudius' *Letter to the Alexandrians* (P. Lond. V 1912), discussing the Jews "residence in a city not their own" (ἐν ἀλλοτρίας πόλει--line 95), strongly argues against the view that they were full citizens prior to the riots, in my opinion.



And we did not just sprinkle the blood on the altar and take the meat home to use for feasting and merry-making, as some people normally do, but we allowed the whole offering to be consumed in the sacred flame. And it is not only once but three times already that we have done this: the first time was at your accession, the second was on your recovery from that serious illness from which the whole world suffered at the same time, and the third was in anticipation of your victory in Germany.” “Granted,” said Gaius, “that this is true and that you have offered sacrifices. But it was to another God, even if it was on my behalf. What is the good of that? You have not sacrificed to me.” Violent trembling seized us immediately as we heard this remark following on his earlier one, and it affected us all over so that there was no concealing it. While saying this he was going over the mansions, inspecting the men’s quarters, the women’s quarters, the ground floor, the upper storeys, and everything, criticizing some of the fittings as inadequate, and suggesting and ordering other more expensive ones himself. Then we were driven along and followed him upstairs and downstairs, while our opponents mocked and railed at us just as in farces on the stage. Indeed, the whole affair was a farce. The judge had taken upon himself the role of accuser, and our accusers that of a corrupt judge who has an eye to hostility and not to the facts of the case. When it is the judge himself, and a judge possessed of such great power too, who accuses the person on trial, the only thing to do is to say nothing. Silence is a kind of defense, particularly in the case of people who could not answer any of the questions or demands, because their customs and Laws bridled their tongues and closed and sewed up their mouths. After giving some of his instructions about the buildings, he asked us an important question, “Why do you not eat pork?” At this inquiry our opponents again burst into such violent peals of laughter, partly because they were really amused and partly because they made it their business as flatterers to let his remark seem witty and entertaining, that one of the servants attending Gaius was annoyed at the scant respect being show to the emperor, in whose presence it was not safe for people who were not his intimate friends even to smile quietly. We replied by saying, “Different people have different customs, and we are forbidden to use some things, just as our adversaries are forbidden to use others.” Someone then said, “For instance, many people do not eat lamb, which is a very ordinary kind of food.” At that Gaius laughed and said, “Quite right too. It is not nice.” While they fooled and joked at our expense in this way, we were at our wit’s end. Then, after some time Gaius said mockingly, “We should like to know what political rights you recognize?”<sup>188</sup> We began to give an explanation, but as soon as Gaius had a taste of our pleading and realized that it was cogent, even before we had produced our

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<sup>188</sup> This question, βουλόμεθα μαθεῖν, ἔφη, τίσι χρῆσθε περὶ τῆς πολιτείας δικαίους, has been translated in different ways by different commentators: “I want to know what rights you enjoy in respect of the citizenship” (A.H.M. Jones, 200; Gruen (2002) gives same translation, essentially; Goodenough says that Gaius asked them to “...speak on the Jewish ideas of justice” (Goodenough, 18), Colson translates it as “We want to hear what claims you make about your citizenship” (181); Ritter translates it as “What lawful rights/claims do you have regarding ἡ πολιτεία”? (Ritter, 153) So, was Gaius asking about the rights they ‘recognize,’ the rights they ‘enjoy,’ or was he asking about their ideal of justice? Philo’s description of the ambassadors’ answers to this question is not detailed clearly enough to understand exactly what the question demanded.

strongest arguments, he cut us short, rushed on ahead into the large room, went round it, and gave orders for its windows all round to be filled again with transparent stones rather like colorless glass, which let the light through but keep out the wind and the heat of the sun. Then he walked on slowly and asked us more calmly, "What are you saying?" But when we began to marshal our next arguments, he ran back into another room and gave orders for some old paintings to be hung there. In this way our rights were rent asunder, dismembered, and almost completely broken up and shattered....[then] God took pity on us and turned Gaius' heart to mercy. He became gentler and merely said, "I think that these men are not so much criminals as lunatics in not believing that I have been given a divine nature." With that he left us and told us to go away too. (355-367, trans. E. Mary Smallwood)<sup>189</sup>

If we look at this account as a highly literary and polemic one, rather than as a

<sup>189</sup> I will use M. Smallwood's translation of the *Legatio* (Smallwood 1970) throughout this chapter, unless otherwise noted. The Greek: γανύμενον δὲ ταῖς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν προσήρῃσει θεασάμενος ὁ πικρὸς συκοφάντης Ἰσίδωρος ἔτι μᾶλλον ἔφη, δέσποτα, μισήσεις τοὺς παρόντας καὶ τοὺς ὦν εἰσιν ὁμόφυλοι, ἐὰν γινῶς τὴν εἰς σὲ κακόνιοιαν αὐτῶν καὶ ἀσέβειαν· ἀπάντων γὰρ ἀνθρώπων ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας τῆς σῆς θυσίας ἀναγόντων εὐχαριστηρίους, οὐχ ὑπέμειναν οὗτοι μόνοι θύειν· ὅταν δὲ οὗτοι λέγω, καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἰουδαίους συμπαραλαμβάνω. ἀναβοησάντων δὲ ἡμῶν ὁμοθυμαδὸν κύριε Γάιε, συκοφαντούμεθα· καὶ γὰρ ἐθύσαμεν καὶ ἐκατόμβας ἐθύσαμεν, οὐ τὸ μὲν αἷμα τῷ βωμῷ περισπείσαντες τὰ δὲ κρέα εἰς θοίνην καὶ εὐωχίαν οἴκαδε κομίσαντες, ὡς ἔθος ἐνίοις ποιεῖν, ἀλλ' ὀλόκαυτα τὰ ἱερεῖα παραδόντες τῇ ἱερᾷ φλογί, καὶ τρίς, οὐχ ἅπαξ, ἤδη· πρῶτον μὲν ὅτε διεδέξω τὴν ἡγεμονίαν, δεύτερον δὲ ὅτε τὴν βαρεῖαν νόσον ἐκείνην ἦν πᾶσα ἡ οἰκουμένη συνενόσησεν ἐξέφυγες, τρίτον δὲ κατὰ τὴν ἐλπίδα τῆς Γερμανικῆς νίκης, ἔστω φησὶ ταῦτα ἀληθῆ, τεθύκατε, ἀλλ' ἑτέρω, κὰν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ· τί οὖν ὄφελος; οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε. φρίκη βύθιος εὐθύς κατέσχευ ἡμᾶς ἐπὶ τῷ προτέρω καὶ τοῦτο ἀκούσαντας, ἡ καὶ μέχρι τῆς ἐπιφανείας ἀνεχύθη. καὶ ταῦθ' ἅμα λέγων ἐπήει τὰς ἐπαύλεις, ἀνδρῶνας κατανοῶν, γυναικωνίτιδας, τὰ ἐν ἐπιπέδω, τὰ ὑπερῶα, ἅπαντα, αἰτιώμενος ἐνίας ὡς ἐλλιπεῖς κατασκευάς, ἐτέρας ἐπινοῶν καὶ προσδιατάττων πολυτελεστέρας αὐτός. εἶτα ἡμεῖς ἐλαυνόμενοι παρηκολουθοῦμεν ἄνω κάτω, χλευαζόμενοι καὶ κατακερτομούμενοι πρὸς τῶν ἀντιπάλων ὡς ἐν θεατρικοῖς μίμοις· καὶ γὰρ τὸ πρᾶγμα μιμεία τις ἦν· ὁ μὲν δικαστὴς ἀνελήφει σχῆμα κατηγοροῦ, οἱ δὲ κατήγοροι φαύλου δικαστοῦ πρὸς ἔχθραν ἀποβλέποντος, ἀλλ' οὐ τὴν φύσιν τῆς ἀληθείας. ὅταν δὲ αἰτιᾶται κρινόμενον δικαστὴς καὶ τοσοῦτος, ἀνάγκη σιωπᾶν· ἔστι γὰρ πῶς καὶ δι' ἡσυχίας ἀπολογεῖσθαι, καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς οὐδὲν ὦν ἐπεξίτηι καὶ ἐπεπόθει δυναμένου ἀποκρίνασθαι, τῶν ἐθῶν καὶ νομίμων τὴν γλῶτταν ἐπεχόντων καὶ τὸ στόμα κλειόντων καὶ ἀπορραπτόντων. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἕνια τῶν περὶ τὰς οἰκοδομὰς διατάξατο, μέγιστον καὶ σεμνὸν ἐρώτημα ἠρώτα· „διὰ τί χοιρείων κρεῶν ἀπέχεσθε; πάλιν πρὸς τὴν πεῦσιν γέλως ἐκ τῶν ἀντιδίκων κατερράγη τοσοῦτος, τῇ μὲν ἡδομένω τῇ δὲ καὶ ἐπιτηδεύοντων ἕνεκα κολακείας ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὸ λεχθὲν δοκεῖν σὺν εὐτραπελίᾳ καὶ χάριτι εἰρησθαι, ὡς τινὰ τῶν ἐπομένων αὐτῷ θεραπόντων | ἀγανακτεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ καταφρονητικῷ ἔχειν αὐτοκράτορος, ἐφ' οὗ καὶ τὸ μετρίως μειδιάσαι τοῖς μὴ πάνυ συνήθεσιν οὐκ ἀσφαλές. ἀποκριναμένων δὲ ἡμῶν, ὅτι νόμιμα παρ' ἑτέροις ἕτερα καὶ χρήσις ἐνίων ὡς ἡμῖν καὶ τοῖς ἀντιδίκους ἀπείρηται, καὶ φαμένου τινὸς ὡς πολλοὶ γε καὶ τὰ προχειρότατα ἀρνία οὐ προσφέρονται, γελάσας εὐ γε εἶπεν, ἔστι γὰρ οὐχ ἡδέα. τοιαῦτα φλυαρηθέντες καὶ κατακερτομηθέντες ἐν ἀμηχάνοις ἦμεν. εἶτα ὁπὲ ποτε παρασεσυρμένως βουλόμεθα μαθεῖν ἔφη, τίσι χρήσθε περὶ τῆς πολιτείας δικαιοῖς. ἀρξαμένων δὲ λέγειν καὶ διδάσκειν, ἀπογενεσάμενος τῆς δικαιολογίας καὶ συνεὶς ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν εὐκαταφρόνητος, πρὶν ἐπενεγκεῖν τὰ ἐχυρώτερα, συγκόψας καὶ τὰ πρότερα δρομαῖος εἰς τὸν μέγαν οἶκον εἰσεπήδησε καὶ περιελθὼν προστάττει τὰς ἐν κύκλῳ θυρίδας ἀναληφθῆναι τοῖς ὑάλω λευκῇ παραπλησίως διαφανέσι λίθοις, οἱ τὸ μὲν φῶς οὐκ ἐμποδίζουσιν, ἄνεμον δὲ εἴργουσι καὶ τὸν ἀφ' ἡλίου φλογμόν. εἶτα προελθὼν ἄνευ σπουδῆς μετριώτερον ἀνηρώτα· τί λέγετε; συνείρειν δὲ ἀρξαμένων τὰ ἀκόλουθα, εἰστρέχει πάλιν εἰς ἕτερον οἶκον, ἐν ᾧ γραφὰς ἀρχετύπους ἀνατεθῆναι προσέταπτεν. οὕτω τῶν ἡμετέρων σπαραττομένων καὶ διαρτωμένων καὶ μόνον οὐ συκοπτομένων καὶ συντριβομένων δικαίων...ὁ δὲ [θεὸς] λαβὼν οἶκτον ἡμῶν τρέπει τὸν θυμὸν αὐτοῦ πρὸς ἔλεον· καὶ ἀνεθεῖς πρὸς τὸ μαλακώτερον, τοσοῦτον εἰπὼν „οὐ πονηροὶ μᾶλλον ἢ δυστυχεῖς εἶναι μοι δοκοῦσιν ἀνθρωποὶ καὶ ἀνόητοι μὴ πιστεύοντες, ὅτι θεοῦ κελήρωμαι φύσιν, ἀπαλλάττεται προστάξας καὶ ἡμῖν ἀπέρχεσθαι.

word-for-word ‘report’ of the meeting,<sup>190</sup> we can see some key anxieties about philosophical engagement with powerful figures on display here. For one thing, there is the issue of flattery, always a grave concern for philosophers making political pleas. Gaius’ observation that the Jews in Alexandria did not worship him as a god, but rather only offered prayers on his behalf (ἔστω, φησί, ταῦτα ἀληθῆ, τεθύκατε, ἀλλ’ ἐτέρω, κὰν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ· τί οὖν ὄφελος; οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ τεθύκατε [357]), is a clear accusation of the ambassadors’ refusal to flatter him personally, and in a clever way Philo juxtaposes his refusal to flatter the emperor with the Jewish community’s refusal to worship any god but the one true god. Since Philo is often interested in underlining the similarities between Judaism and philosophy, especially Platonism, this parallel resonates with many other parts of the treatise,<sup>191</sup> as well as much of the rest of his writing.<sup>192</sup> The flattery of the

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<sup>190</sup> There is some disagreement about how ‘historical’ vs. how ‘literary’ Philo’s account is. For a view that he is reporting the facts just as they happened, see for example Johnson (47-50, 102), Smallwood (1970), Schürer (396), and A.H.M. Jones, (202-3). For arguments that his accounts are highly embellished and literary, see for example Zeitlin (1965, 22-31), Bond (24), and Alexandre (158-9).

<sup>191</sup> See part of the eulogy of Augustus at section 156: [Augustus] ἠπίστατο οὖν καὶ προσευχὰς ἔχοντας καὶ συνιόντας εἰς αὐτάς, καὶ μάλιστα ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἐβδόμαις, ὅτε δημοσίᾳ τὴν πάτριον παιδεύονται φιλοσοφίαν. The sympathetic legate of Syria, Petronius, had “some glimmerings of Jewish philosophy” (Smallwood’s translation): ἀλλ’ εἶχέ τινα καὶ αὐτός, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐναύσματα τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς φιλοσοφίας ἅμα καὶ εὐσεβείας... (245); see also the description in ‘Agrippa’s Letter to Gaius’ (sections 276-329) of how Augustus reacted to learning that the Temple at Jerusalem contained no images, and how this showed his philosophical education: πυθανόμενος τὰ περὶ τὸ ἱερόν καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀφίδρυμα ἐν αὐτῶ χειρόκμητον, ὁρατὸν ἀοράτου μίμημα φύσεως (“visible imitation of the invisible nature”), ἐθαύμαζε καὶ προσεκύνει, φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἄκροισ χεῖλεσι γευσάμενος ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ πλεόν ἐστιαθεῖς καὶ σχεδόν τι καθ’ ἐκάστην ἡμέραν ἐστιώμενος, τὰ μὲν μνήμαις ὧν ἡ διάνοια προμαθοῦσα τὰ φιλοσοφίας ἀνεπόλει, τὰ δὲ καὶ ταῖς τῶν συνόντων ἀει λογίων συνδιατιθήσει...(310); also in Agrippa’s letter, we see that Augustus was a “philosopher second to none” who knew how important it was that the invisible divine principle be worshipped, and so instituted sacrifices in his own name at the Temple of Jerusalem: ἀλλὰ γὰρ ὁ τοσοῦτος ἡγεμὼν καὶ φιλόσοφος οὐδενὸς δεύτερος ἐλογίσαστο παρ’ ἑαυτῶ, ὅτι ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς περιγείοις ἐξαίρετον ἀπονευμῆσθαι τόπον ἱερόν τῶ ἀοράτῳ θεῶ μηδὲν ὁρατὸν ἀπεικόνισμα περιέξοντα πρὸς μετουσίαν ἐλπίδων χρηστῶν καὶ ἀπόλαυσις ἀγαθῶν τελείων (318).

<sup>192</sup> Sandmel (1984, 14) says that Philo “interpret[ed Jewish] Scripture as a huge repository of Platonism and Stoicism.” The view that the Jewish religion was philosophical was not unusual among Graeco-Roman intellectuals. See Johnson (121): “Many Romans spoke of the ‘obstinate superstition,’ as Tacitus does, deriding the ways of the followers of Judaism. There were others who spoke highly of the Jews and their religious teachings. These references generally relate to the philosophical aspects of Judaism. For example, as early as 300 BC... Theophrastus described the Jews not so much as religious but as ‘being philosophers by race’” (*De Pietate*, apud: Porphyrius *De Abstinencia*, 2.26.6-11). Hengel says of the diaspora Jewish community that (95): “[their] non-sacrificial [at least apart from the

Greek-Alexandrian ambassadors opposing Philo's delegation is presented as almost obscenely theatrical and embarrassing, even though it was probably fairly normal behavior for a meeting with such an important person. (One should notice in connection with this point that the Greek-Alexandrians refer to Gaius as δέσποτα and Philo's delegates call him κύριε Γάιε. [355, 356])<sup>193</sup>

In addition, he specifically refers to being silenced, losing his parrhesia, an important concern to the philosopher in such a situation. He says that “silence is a kind of defence” (ἔστι γάρ πως καὶ δι’ ἡσυχίας ἀπολογεῖσθαι) when “the judge himself... a judge possessed of such great power too... accuses the person on trial” (ὅταν δὲ αἰτιᾶται κρινόμενον δικαστῆς καὶ τοσοῦτος) (360). The word *hēsuchia* here has an added resonance, referring both to the literal ‘silence’ and to the peaceful life of the philosopher who turns his back on public affairs and worldly troubles—a position Philo endorses elsewhere in his writings, as I will discuss below. Considering that the treatise itself is almost an apologia for the unsuccessful embassy, as well as a plea for religious freedom, the graphic depiction of how he and his group felt muzzled in the presence of Gaius serves an important function in the overall rhetorical project of the piece. This episode comes near the end of a long narrative covering their efforts to get an audience with Gaius, and while the original version of the *Legatio* ended with a “palinode” that is now

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Temple at Jerusalem], verbal form of worship with a strongly ethical stamp must have looked to the world of the time very like philosophy. It is no coincidence that the earliest Greek accounts, like those of Theophrastus, Hecataeus, Megasthenes, Clearchus of Soloi and even Strabo (or his informant, perhaps Posidonius), depict the Jews and their lawgiver Moses as barbarian philosophers. Jewish apologists down to Philo and Josephus could take up this point and declare that the ethical monotheism proclaimed in the Jewish *proseuchae* was the true philosophical religion.” He also points out monotheistic tendencies in much of Greek philosophy from earliest times (96).

<sup>193</sup> At 208 Philo addresses Gaius as *despota* sarcastically: τί λέγεις, ὦ δέσποτα; προειληφώς οὐκ ἀνεξομένους, ἀλλ’ ὑπερασπιούντας τοῦ νόμου καὶ προαποθανουμένους τῶν πατρίων πολεμοποιεῖς; “What do you say, master? Is it because you are sure that the Jews will not tolerate this [i.e. the statue of Gaius in the Temple] but will take up arms in defence of the Law and die for the sake of their traditions that you declare war?” (See Williamson, 15).

lost, this scene occurs just before that palinode, and was surely the climax of the work and the turning point that led into that palinode. I will discuss later what I think the ‘palinode’ probably narrated (the downfall and regret of Gaius).

Finally, there is the anxiety about being an object of ridicule—the most degrading position for an eminently serious intellectual such as a philosopher. Eusebius says of the meeting that ὅπως τε ἐπὶ τοῦ Γαίου καταστάς ὑπὲρ τῶν πατρίων νόμων, οὐδέν τι πλέον γέλωτος καὶ διασυρμῶν ἀπηνέγκατο (“when he appeared before Gaius in behalf of the laws of his fathers he received nothing but laughter and ridicule”) (*HE* 2.5.1). Gaius seems to be “toying” with the delegates, E. Gruen has said, and Philo downplays the fact that Gaius is not being very respectful of the opposing Greek-Alexandrian ambassadors as well. “Gaius had treated it all as a piece of theatre, and one can well imagine, though we do not get this from Philo’s vantage point, that the Hellenistic envoys were treated with the same levity as the Jews.”<sup>194</sup> In any case, by raising the issues of flattery (κολακεία), parrhesia, and ridicule (διασυρμός), we can see Philo’s confrontation with Gaius laying out for us the archetypical confrontation between the philosopher and the tyrant.

In this chapter, I will first explore the historical background of this embassy and the evidence concerning the audience of the treatise called the *Legatio ad Gaium*. I will then examine how the *Legatio* is designed rhetorically to not only excuse and avenge the failure of Philo’s embassy to Gaius, but also function as a *legatio* in its own right and makes an appeal to an imperial audience, and perhaps to his fellow Jews as well.

Philo and Josephus are the main sources for the civil strife that led to the embassy, and Philo’s *In Flaccum* and *Legatio ad Gaium* give the most detailed account of the anti-

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<sup>194</sup> Gruen 2002, 67

Jewish violence and rioting that occurred in Alexandria around 38-40 AD.<sup>195</sup> Scholars disagree about why such violence should have arisen so suddenly in the well-integrated and prosperous society of first century Alexandria.<sup>196</sup> Theories concerning the true “cause” of the pogrom are various.<sup>197</sup> A quick review of the facts is in order, divorced as much as possible from the literary and rhetorical presentation that necessarily frames Philo’s narrative.

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<sup>195</sup> Primary sources on the riots include chiefly *In Flaccum* 41-54; *Legatio ad Gaium*, 132-7; Josephus, *JA* 18.8; Claudius’ *Letter to the Alexandrians* (P. London 1912).

<sup>196</sup> See D.R. Schwartz (2009a, 18-19): “[A]lthough the Jews retained a strong national identity, they came to be well integrated into Hellenistic Alexandria, both as a community and at the individual level. Indeed, the three hundred years of Jewish life under the Ptolemies seem to have been remarkably quiet and irenic... Anyone looking for ‘the Jewish question,’ or even just for Jewish troubles, in Ptolemaic Alexandria, will find precious little.” Balsdon (1934, 111) points out that although Greek cities had seen some persecution of Jewish communities, nothing “...approaching in horror the pogrom which broke out in Alexandria in AD 38” had happened before and it marked a turning point, the beginning of a new century of “hideous massacre” of Jews.

<sup>197</sup> Various instigating factors have been proposed. Some feel that there was a dramatic rise in the Jewish population in Alexandria around this time (Ritter 124, 174). Levine (51) points out that diaspora communities seem to have been growing a lot at this time. Claudius’ *Letter to the Alexandrians*, a response to the second embassy sent by the Jews and Greeks in Alexandria after the death of Gaius, specifically restricts the Jewish community from “bring[ing]...in or admit[ing] Jews who come down the river from Egypt or from Syria, a proceeding which will compel me to conceive serious suspicions” about their goodwill. (μηδὲ ἐπάγεσθαι ἢ προσείεσθαι ἀπὸ Συρίας ἢ Αἰγύπτου καταπλέοντας Ἰουδαίους, ἐξ οὗ μείζονας ὑπονοίας ἀναγκασθήσομε λαμβάνειν) (l. 96-8). Another commonly held view in older scholarship is that the Greek population was jealous of its status vis-à-vis the Jewish population. According to this theory, the elevation of the Jewish community as an independent body by the Romans made the Greek Alexandrians feel stateless and slighted. According to D.R. Schwartz (2009a, 20), “[be]cause the Greeks were now no longer masters of Alexandria, the Jews were no longer their guests, and the Greeks could no longer go on being gracious hosts. Or, to put it another way, if during the Ptolemaic period there had been three social strata in Alexandria--Alexandrians, Hellenized foreigners (including Jews), and the Egyptians (non Hellenized ‘natives’)-- the addition of a fourth stratum on top of the pile, Romans, squashed the others together and required them to scramble to protect their differential status.” Others trace the violence to a conflict between the Jewish population and the native Egyptian population, rather than the Greek population. Gruen (2002, 63ff.) elaborates on this theory convincingly. He finds a pattern in the literature of excessive hostility between the native Egyptians and the Jews, and points out that Josephus says at *Contra Apionem* 2.69 that native Egyptians were a main contingent in the violence. However, it is also true that Claudius’ *Letter to the Alexandrians* clearly frames the conflict as one between Greeks and Jews, citing Jews’ unlawful (?) attempts to enter certain “Greek” institutions, such as the gymnasium and ‘cosmetic games.’ (μηδὲ ἐπισπαιεῖν γυμνασιαρχικοῖς ἢ κοσμητικοῖς ἀγῶσσει) (l. 92-3). Finally, some have traced the origins of increased anti-Semitism at this time to the importance of certain Greek freedmen at the Imperial court under Tiberius and Gaius. The notorious anti-Semite Apio (of Josephus’ *Contra Apionem*) was a favorite of Tiberius and Gaius, and Gaius employed Helicon, an Alexandrian, and Apelles of Ascalon, both eastern Greeks hostile to Jewish interests (Johnson, 173; Balsdon 1934, 135; Aberbach & Aberbach, 69-78). Philo certainly underlines the presence of anti-Semitic advisors around Gaius as a major problem (*Legatio* 165-178, 203-6).

The trouble began while Avilius Flaccus was prefect of Egypt, a man who may not have been on good terms with Gaius, possibly because of his close friendship with Tiberius and his allegiance to Tiberius' nephew Gemellus (*In Flacc.* 9, 158). When Gaius was declared emperor in 37, Philo says that Flaccus become anxious about his position because of his connection to the exile of Gaius' mother and friendship with Macro—another confidante of Tiberius (*In Flacc.* 8-15).<sup>198</sup> The extent to which Flaccus was actually responsible for the violence or could have averted any of it is debatable, although Philo presents him as almost completely at fault (*In Flacc.* 35, 43, *Leg.* 132).<sup>199</sup> Shortly after Gaius' accession, Herod Agrippa I, a close friend of Gaius and a person who will figure prominently in the *Legatio*, stopped to visit in Alexandria on his way from Rome to Judaea in 38, and the enthusiasm with which Jewish Alexandrians received him enraged many of the Greek Alexandrians, although why is unclear (*In Flacc.* 26-9).<sup>200</sup> Around this same time, a contingent of the Greek Alexandrians decided that portraits of Gaius must be installed in every Jewish meeting-house, or *proseuchê* (*In Flacc.* 41-2; *Leg.* 134-5). These were primarily religious meeting places, and so the imposition of icons on them would be a serious offense to the Jews. Philo insists that the Greeks were doing this to flatter Gaius, because they knew he wanted to be declared a god.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Smallwood 1970, 15

<sup>199</sup> Most modern scholars question Philo's characterization of Flaccus and his supposed control over or instigation of the pogrom. Balsdon (1934, 129) says that "...an irresponsible section of Alexandrian 'nationalists'...pestered him until in despair he became their creature..." Gruen (2002, 59), on the other hand, has pointed out "...Philo...has Flaccus 'allow' the [violent anti-Semitic] activity. Plainly he did not initiate it, and surely he did not want it. In a little noted episode, Flaccus actually summoned leaders of the Jewish community to a parley in hopes of a reconciliation between them and the rest of the city. Philo, of course, adds that that was only his 'ostensible' purpose. But the editorial comment can be ignored." Colin, in his essay "Philon d'Alexandrie et la 'lâcheté' du préfet d'Egypte," has questioned the extent to which Roman imperial governors would have been able to oppose popular measures or uprisings in the cities they governed (284-5).

<sup>200</sup> Balsdon speculates that Herod's visit "aroused in the Greeks a variety of emotions, indignation, jealousy--as they recollected the disappearance of their own kingdom--scorn, and amusement..." (1934, 131).

<sup>201</sup> This view used to inform earlier scholarship on Gaius. Here is Goodenough: "Conscious of the mad

Therefore, he claims, Gaius was responsible for this outrage, because the Greek-Alexandrians supposedly knew that he considered Jews his enemies for their refusal to worship him (*Leg.* 115-120).<sup>202</sup> However, even Philo cannot claim that Gaius actually ordered the *proseuchai* to be violated, or that he condoned the violence against the Jews at Alexandria in any way, so Gaius doesn't seem to have been truly involved. (Philo is projecting the later attempted desecration of the Temple at Jerusalem backwards, probably, and reinforcing his overall rhetorical project in the *Legatio* to portray Gaius as a sort of cosmic enemy of the Jewish people.) Meanwhile, Herod Agrippa was a great friend of Gaius and in a good position to advocate for Jews throughout the empire, so, during Agrippa's visit to Alexandria, Philo and some other Jewish leaders in Alexandria gave Herod Agrippa a letter to send to Gaius congratulating Gaius on his accession to the principate, a letter which had apparently been given to Flaccus and withheld from the emperor by him (*In Flacc.* 97-103). This letter also apparently contained a petition to Gaius regarding the infringement of Jewish rights at Alexandria under Flaccus, although this is not clear (*Leg.* 179). Philo also says that Flaccus was a model prefect at the beginning of his tenure (*In Flacc.* 2-5).<sup>203</sup> Flaccus was soon then recalled to Rome soon after the worst of the violence against Jews at Alexandria (*In Flacc.* 109-115).<sup>204</sup> It is not clear why, and Philo is cryptic about it, implying that he was arrested for conspiring

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Caligula's desire for divine honors, the Alexandrian mob had insisted that Jews put up cult statues of him in their synagogues" (1). This causal relationship between Gaius' attitude and the pogrom is generally rejected today. See the following note.

<sup>202</sup> Smallwood, in her commentary on the *Legatio*, notes that this claim "manipulat[es] the chronology and ante-dat[es] Gaius' demand for divine honors and his consequent hostility towards the Jews" (1970, 3).

See also Bilde, 72; Gruen 2002, 57

<sup>203</sup> We must be cautious how seriously we take Philo on this period of Flaccus' career in the *In Flaccum*, however, since it was common in ancient invective to start out with praise of how a person showed promise in their earlier life, so as to highlight their horrible downfall. The beginning of the *Legatio ad Gaium*, which is essentially an invective tract against Gaius, begins also with a narrative of Gaius early life, which focuses on his promise and how the empire rejoiced in his accession to the throne.

<sup>204</sup> This was probably in 38.



against Gaius' succession (*In Flacc.* 108-9), but the timeframe suggests he could have been recalled because of the widespread civil unrest at Alexandria.

The worst of the pogrom itself followed a declaration issued by Flaccus that all of the Jews of the city were “aliens” and “foreigners” (ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας ἡμᾶς ἀπεκάλει) (*In Flacc.* 54). Again, it seems to have been triggered in some way by Agrippa's visit and procession through the city. During the following violence, many of the *proseuchai* were destroyed, the Jews, who lived throughout the city, were rounded up and sequestered in one small part of town, where they starved, and Jews found elsewhere were beaten and killed (*In Flacc.* 65-72; *Leg.* 128-131). Philo suggests that the violence was the result of pandemonium and mob rule (*In Flacc.* 41; *Leg.* 121, 128), but since the original declaration against the Jews happened in the theatre (*In Flacc.* 41), it is likely that it was some sort of formal meeting of the city assembly that initiated the bloodbath.<sup>205</sup> In addition, the systematic rounding up of all the Jews throughout the city and the enforcement of a sort of Ghetto/prison for them suggests a very organized effort that would have involved city officials.<sup>206</sup> It is unclear from Philo's and Josephus' accounts whether the Jews resisted violently, as they are both usually anxious to assert that the Jews were almost entirely peaceful towards Roman authority.<sup>207</sup> However, the

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<sup>205</sup> Ritter, 126

<sup>206</sup> Discussing the pogrom, Ritter says, “All of this suggests somewhat ordered behavior on the part of the *ochlos*. The Jews were not thrown out of the city, but were evacuated from four of the five quarters and contained within a specific area, apparently in the fifth quarter. Many Jews were left untouched” (146).

<sup>207</sup> See for example *In Flacc.* 48 (Jews are ‘naturally peaceful,’ [πεφυκότες εὐ πρὸς εἰρήνην]), 94 (the Jews are ‘peaceful to all’ [πότε δ’ οὐκ εἰρηνικοὶ πᾶσιν ἐνομίσθημεν;], *Leg.* 161 (the Jewish nation is naturally peaceful because of its laws [τούς τε ἄνδρας ὡς εἰρηνικοὺς τὰς φύσεις καὶ τὰ νόμιμα ὡς ἀλείφοντα πρὸς εὐστάθειαν]), see also *Leg.* 230, 312. Endorsement of a non-violent, passive attitude towards Roman authority is typical of both Philo and Josephus. H.K. Bond has characterized Josephus' literary depiction of Rome thus (52): “God was behind Augustus' success at Actium, he is behind the Empire, shaping its destiny... Revolt against Rome is therefore revolt against God... the Jews should... quietly put their trust in God rather than attempt... to alter his guidance of history by taking up arms; the passive protest against Gaius' statue [during his attempted violation of the Temple] illustrates the effectiveness of non-violence and trust in God (*BJ* 2.184-203).” (Meanwhile, Tacitus' brief account of the incident says that during the

Jewish community was quite large,<sup>208</sup> and there are some clues in the text that they were fighting back more actively than Philo or Josephus would imply. For example, the attackers seem to have avoided storming *proseuchai* in more heavily Jewish areas, perhaps because the Jews in those neighborhoods would respond with violence (*Leg.* 134).<sup>209</sup> Also, there was a search of all Jewish homes for weaponry, according to Philo, and he boasts that none was found, but the search does indicate it was possible there were plans for violent resistance to the pogrom (*In Flacc.* 90-91).<sup>210</sup> Claudius' *Letter to the Alexandrians* implies that both sides had been violent in the conflict.<sup>211</sup> Although Philo insists that the Jewish community was completely nonviolent, the *Legatio* does contain some subtle 'threats,' some believe, that would make a possible Jewish revolt uppermost in the mind of the reader. I will discuss this more in my analysis of the *Legatio* below.

Despite Philo's insistence on Gaius' responsibility for the anti-Jewish violence in Alexandria, he seems to have had nothing to do with it, and even possibly been the one who moved to stop it and recall Flaccus for allowing the situation to get out of control.<sup>212</sup>

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Temple controversy the Judaeans *did* take up arms [*Hist.* 5.9].) As I shall explore below, Philo takes a similar stance in the *Legatio*, which is either proof that it was written for a Roman audience, or shows his actual thinking on Roman rule. That he prefers to depict the Jewish community as completely nonviolent is clear, although there are subtle hints of the threat that his people could pose to the authorities if they chose to, as I shall also discuss below.

<sup>208</sup> It was perhaps 7% of the entire population of the empire? Almost every large city in the east had a Jewish community, usually well integrated (Balsdon 1934, 121; Levine, 51).

<sup>209</sup> προσευχὰς ὅσας μὴ ἐδυνήθησαν ἐμπρήσει καὶ κατασκαφαῖς ἀφανίσει διὰ τὸ πολλοὺς καὶ ἀθρόους πλησίον οἰκεῖν Ἰουδαίους ἕτερον τρόπον ἐλυμήναντο μετὰ τῆς τῶν νόμων καὶ ἐθῶν ἀνατροπῆς· εἰκόνας γὰρ ἐν ἀπάσαις μὲν ἰδρύοντο Γαίου, ἐν δὲ τῇ μεγίστῃ καὶ περισημοτάτῃ καὶ ἀνδριάντῃ χαλκοῦν ἐποχούμενον τεθρίππῳ.

<sup>210</sup> Balsdon 1934, 133

<sup>211</sup> Τῆς δὲ πρὸς Ἰουδαίους ταραχῆς καὶ στάσεως μάλλον δ' εἰ χρὴ τὸ ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν τοῦ πολέμου πότεροι μὲν αἴτιοι κατέστησαν... οὐκ ἐβουλήθην ἀκριβῶς ἐξελέναι... ἀπλῶς δὲ προσαγορεύω ὅτι ἂν μὴ καταπαύσῃται τὴν ὀλέθριον ὀργὴν ταύτην κατ' ἀλλήλων αὐθάδιον ἐγβιασθήσομαι δῖξαι ὅν ἐστιν ἡγεμῶν φιλόανθρωπος εἰς ὀργὴν δικαίαν μεταβεβλημένος. ("As for the question which party was responsible for the riots and feud—or rather, if the truth must be told, the war—with the Jews... I was unwilling to make a strict inquiry... and I tell you once and for all that unless you put a stop to this ruinous and obstinate enmity against each other, I shall be driven to show what a benevolent prince can be when turned to righteous indignation" (lines 73-81; trans. Hunt & Edgar, vol. 2, 78-9).

<sup>212</sup> *Leg.* 115-120, 133

Erich Gruen has gone so far as to call Gaius behavior with respect to the events at Alexandria “exemplary.”<sup>213</sup> Gaius’ later attempted desecration of the Temple undoubtedly prompted Philo to blame him for all anti-Semitic violence around this time, as well as his desire to portray him as the archetypical tyrant. But I will have more to say later about Philo’s characterization of Gaius in the *Legatio*.

In the aftermath of the arrest of Flaccus (38-9 CE), both the Jewish community and the Alexandrian Greek community sent delegations to Gaius, the former asking for the restitution of their civic rights (what this might mean I will come to in a moment), and the latter arguing, probably, that the Jews should be considered “aliens” and “newcomers/foreigners” (ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας) in the city (as per the decree of Flaccus in *In Flacc.* 54). The interview with Gaius (as described at the opening of this chapter) was inconclusive. In the meantime, angered by a demonstration in Jamnia, a small town in the area of Gaza, in which a group of Jews had torn down a cult statue of himself that was put up by some non-Jewish citizens, Gaius decided to retaliate by erecting a statue of himself as Zeus Epiphanes in the Temple at Jerusalem (*Leg.* 200-206).<sup>214</sup> This decision was announced while Philo’s embassy was attending on Gaius for several months in Italy before he deigned to interview them (*Leg.* 184ff). Gaius was apparently dissuaded by Agrippa<sup>215</sup> from carrying out this plan, and then was assassinated shortly thereafter.

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<sup>213</sup> Gruen 2002, 57; see also Bilde, 72: “Gaius could in fact be said to have been responsible for the termination of the...persecutions [at Alexandria]. Likewise, we know, again from Philo, that Gaius did not harm the Jewish delegation from Alexandria, who when in Italy refused to obey the emperor’s command to worship, but only dismissed the Jews with a joke (*Leg.* 367).” See also Charlesworth (118).

<sup>214</sup> See also Josephus *BJ* 22.184-203 and *AJ* 18.289-300; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.9.5; Smallwood 1957, 1-17; Bilde, 74; Bilde points out that destroying the statue of Gaius would be considered a political act that demanded some retaliation, whether Gaius took it personally or not.

<sup>215</sup> Philo and Josephus differ on how this happened. According to Josephus, Gaius, in a moment of generosity asked Agrippa to request any gift we wanted most, and Agrippa asked that the Temple be spared (*AJ* 18.289-300). Bond has noted that this account has the sound of a folktale (24) as has Smallwood (1970, 32). Philo says that Agrippa’s “Letter to Gaius,” quoted at length in the *Legatio*, convinced Gaius to

With their embassy left unsettled, the matter of the Alexandrians' situation was left to Claudius, also a close friend of Herod Agrippa. He saw embassies from Alexandria in 40 AD and issued a letter in response, which essentially reaffirmed Jewish civic rights in Alexandria and expressed that they were under imperial protection.<sup>216</sup> It is unclear if Philo was on this second embassy, but, as I will discuss further below, some scholars have speculated that the *Legatio* was written for presentation on this second embassy.<sup>217</sup> There is also a mention of the chief ambassador for the Alexandrian Greeks (on this second embassy in 40) in Claudius' letter, a Stoic philosopher and Egyptian priest named Chaeremon,<sup>218</sup> as well as a confusing reference to Claudius' having to deal with separate embassies sent by the Alexandrian Jews,<sup>219</sup> from which scholars have reached differing conclusions about whether or not the Jews of Alexandria sent two separate delegations on this second embassy with the emperor in 41 and why they might have done so,<sup>220</sup> which I will deal with briefly later in this chapter. Finally, there is evidence that Claudius had Isidorus and Lampo, two of the most important ringleaders in the anti-semitic violence of 38, as well as the leaders of the Alexandrian delegation that

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postpone the attack on the Temple, but that he still had designs on sneaking a statue to the Temple and was only stopped by his assassination (*Leg.* 330-337). Tacitus does not mention any intervention from Agrippa, and just says that Gaius' assassination stopped the project (*Hist.* 5.9.5).

<sup>216</sup> *Letter to the Alexandrians* (P. Lond. 1912) lines 82-88

<sup>217</sup> Goodenough, 19; Johnson, 46; Taylor, 39-41; Royse, 54

<sup>218</sup> *Letter to Alexandrians* (P.Lond. 1912) line 17

<sup>219</sup> καὶ Ἰουδαίους δὲ ἀντικρυς κελεύω μηδὲν πλῆρω ὧν πρότερον ἔσχον περιεργάζεσθαι μηδὲ ὥσπερ ἐν δυσεὶ πόλεσιν κατοικοῦντας δύο πρεσβείας ἐκπίμπειν τοῦ λοιποῦ, ὧ μὴ πρότερόν ποτε ἐπράκθη... "I explicitly order the Jews not to agitate for more privileges than they formerly possessed, and not in the future to send out a separate embassy as if they lived in a separate city, a thing unprecedented..." (l. 88-93; trans. Hunt & Edgar, 87).

<sup>220</sup> Ritter (162) argues that it was just an Alexandrian and a Jewish Alexandrian embassy. For the argument that there were two embassies see Balsdon (1934, 144), and H.S. Jones (25-6, 31), who thinks that the 'two embassies' of Jews were probably an orthodox and a Romanized embassy opposing each other on certain matters.

opposed Philo's own in 39, executed around this same time.<sup>221</sup> Flaccus was exiled by Gaius in 39, and executed while in exile on the island of Andros. Philo represents him as lamenting his cruelty to the Jews in his final days, but this is of course unlikely (*In Flacc.* 168-71).

A word about the legal position of Jews in Alexandria prior to the riots.<sup>222</sup> There is much scholarly disagreement here. While they were well integrated culturally and economically, there is a variety of opinion on their political status. Philo tells us that the purpose of the embassy was to argue 'for their civic position' (ἀγωνίσασθαι τὸν περὶ τῆς πολιτείας ἀγῶνα) (*Leg.* 349), but it is arguable what their rights were. (He was apparently responding to the fact that they had been declared 'aliens' during the pogrom.) They clearly had some civic institutions of their own, in particular a gerousia with uncertain jurisdiction. Most scholars envision a Jewish *politeuma* within the city of Alexandria that was very independent,<sup>223</sup> while it is also possible that they held Alexandrian citizenship in addition.<sup>224</sup> The latter view is uncommon, and Claudius' *Letter to the Alexandrians* strongly implies that they were never citizens.<sup>225</sup> Certainly, some Jews, such as Philo's brother and nephew, must have been Roman citizens given the prominent imperial offices they held (alabarch and governor/general). Did this Roman citizenship entitle them to Alexandrian citizenship? Or were they still excluded from city institutions? The whole situation is debatable, but the scholarly consensus is that the Jewish *politeuma* was separate in general, and selected Jews held citizenship.

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<sup>221</sup> See D.R. Schwartz (1990, 96-99) for a detailed discussion of the *Acta Isidori (et Lamponis)*, which seem to depict their trial in a semi-fictionalized way.

<sup>222</sup> This is a fraught subject with conflicting reports. See Stern for a good overview of sources, Ritter for an opinionated but thorough survey of the evidence, and Gruen (2002) for another good survey.

<sup>223</sup> Goodenough, 3; Balsdon 1934, 125; Gruen 2002, 74-5; Guterman, (123 note 1) says they were probably officially classified as "peregrini."

<sup>224</sup> Ritter (ix, 133-5) has gathered the research on this question.

<sup>225</sup> See line 95, discussing the Jews' "residence in a city not their own" (ἐν ἀλλοτρίᾳ πόλει)

Some have even speculated that Philo was using the opportunity of an audience with Gaius to argue for citizenship rights that the Jews did not have previously,<sup>226</sup> but this seems unlikely given their precarious situation at the time of the embassy. While Philo is not specific about their mission, it is more likely that they were simply arguing for the reinstatement of religious and civic protections that had been lost under Flaccus.

It is my position in this chapter that, whatever his citizenship status at Alexandria, Philo was first and foremost a Hellenic philosopher who considered himself and his own people fully integrated into Graeco-Roman society and who would therefore approach his embassy with the concerns about self-respect and avoidance of flattery typical of any philosopher confronting a powerful figure. The extent to which Philo was primarily a “Jew” or a “Hellene” has been debated extensively in modern scholarship, with differing scholars defining his identity in different ways.<sup>227</sup> It is true that almost all his surviving works deal with the Torah rather than more traditional topics of Greek philosophy, but this could have more to do with what Church fathers chose to preserve than with general body of work.<sup>228</sup> Given the fact of his ethnicity, it could be objected that his was not a

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<sup>226</sup> H.S. Jones (30) interprets the Claudius' *Letter to the Alexandrians* this way. See also Balsdon (1934, 128, 135). Gruen (2002) disagrees: “The essential matter obviously was to secure some reaffirmation of their rights to carry out customary practices without fear of disruption or physical danger. Philo's vague references to the 'civic status of Jews' (*politeia*) must have this primarily in view. Gaius' flippant response, 'we would like to know what sort of civic rights you enjoy,' presupposes such a presentation” (66). See Ritter (152) for the view that they had full citizenship before the riots and are arguing for their reinstatement as full citizens.

<sup>227</sup> The literature on this is too extensive to go into here. Some good discussions of his work and life as being essentially or mostly Greek are Sandmel (1984), Runia, and Leisegang (“Er lebt nicht in der jüdischen Gedankenwelt...”). For the view that he was more influenced by Judaeon culture see Cohen, Wolfson. On his lack of knowledge of Hebrew see Sandmel (1978). For the view that he is a perfect fusion of the two cultures, see Levine. The question of whether he was ‘Judaeon’ or ‘Greek’ probably would have puzzled Philo himself. The Jewish community throughout the empire was very diverse and integrated into their surrounding societies.

<sup>228</sup> Roysse points out that these works existed but weren't preserved as well: “The third and final group [of Philo's works] consists of philosophical works that treat traditional themes of Greek philosophy. These are the two treatises *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (Every Good Man Is Free) and *De aeternitate mundi* (On the Eternity of the World), and the two dialogues preserved completely only in Armenian translation: *De animalibus* (On Animals) and *De providentia* (On Providence). These texts demonstrate that Philo was

“typical” philosophical embassy, and that he was more in the position of a foreigner supplicating the Roman state for protection. I strongly disagree. The Jewish community in Alexandria was extremely Hellenized; in addition, the Jews in Alexandria (or at least the wealthier ones) considered themselves deeply entwined with the Roman world and close allies of Rome. We don’t know that much about the facts of Philo’s biography. We have almost no detail about his personal life<sup>229</sup> and the embassy to Gaius is the only political assignment he writes about in his surviving works. He was probably a Roman citizen, although we cannot be sure.<sup>230</sup> His family had friendly connections to both the Roman imperial house and Herodian royalty.<sup>231</sup> He came from a section of his community that was supportive of imperial power, and that would have had most reason to feel betrayed by the actions of Gaius towards the Temple and the pogrom at Alexandria.

The *Legatio*, written in 41 after the death of Gaius, moves through several separate narratives before coming to the actual report of the embassy, including (8-113) a lengthy biographical section depicting the early stages of Gaius’ life and the earliest indications of his evil character, (141-161) a eulogy of Tiberius and Augustus as ideals of kingship and as friends to the Jewish nation, (120-131) a relatively brief account of the pogrom at Alexandria (which he more fully—and slightly differently—described in the *In Flaccum*), (184-329) the attempt of Gaius to install a statue of himself as Zeus

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fully at home discussing Greek philosophy, with little or no reference to the Bible and Judaism...[and some other non-biblical works] are preserved only in fragments or are completely lost” (34).

<sup>229</sup> For a collection of the quotes from his works that give clues to his own biography, see Winston (77ff.).

<sup>230</sup> For arguments about this issue, see Foster (25-32).

<sup>231</sup> His brother was Alexander the Alabarch, a prominent Alexandrian (an ‘alabarch’ was probably a customs official), and his nephew, Alexander’s son, was Tiberius Julius Alexander, who became an important military leader and provincial governor under Claudius, Nero, Vespasian and Titus, and helped Titus to sack Jerusalem in 70). The family had connections with Herodian royalty by marriage, and Alexander the Alabarch was a favored manager of Egyptian estates of Antonia, the mother of Claudius.

Epiphanes in the Temple at Jerusalem, and the pleas of Jewish protestors and King Herod Agrippa against this violation of the Temple. The description of the audience with Gaius (349-372) that follows Agrippa's intercession on behalf of the Temple was then followed by a 'palinode,'<sup>232</sup> which is now entirely missing.

The *Legatio* and the *In Flaccum* are the only two historical works of Philo that have survived. Whether and how they fit together as part of a larger project has been a source of disagreement for scholars. The two works have structural and thematic approaches in common: both narrate historical events with a reference to divine judgment and God's vengeance on those who persecute the Jewish people; both recall the events of the pogrom in graphic detail, both begin with a lengthy section praising how the central figure started his reign and what high hopes everyone had for him (a trope of ancient biography), and then follow his downfall, and both probably ended with the central figure's lamentation and repentance of his treatment of the Jews (we know that the *In Flaccum* ends this way, but the 'palinode' of the *Legatio* is completely lost). It is commonly believed that they are both parts of a lost series that dealt with Jewish persecutions during the principate of Gaius.<sup>233</sup> The key evidence relating to this comes from Eusebius, who says,

Philo has given us an account, *in five books*, of the misfortunes of the Jews under Gaius...[and] how when he appeared before Gaius on behalf of the laws of his fathers, he received nothing but laughter and ridicule, and almost incurred the risk of his life (*HE* 2:5.1; trans. McGiffert, 108).

καὶ δὴ τὰ κατὰ Γάϊον οὗτος Ἰουδαίοις συμβάντα πέντε βιβλίους παραδίδωσιν  
...ὅπως τε ἐπὶ τοῦ Γαίου καταστάς ὑπὲρ τῶν πατρίων νόμων, οὐδέν τι  
πλέον γέλωτος καὶ διασυρμῶν ἀπηνέγκατο, μικροῦ δεῖν καὶ τὸν περὶ τῆς  
ζωῆς ἀνατλάς κίνδυνον.

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<sup>232</sup> The last sentence of the treatise reads: λεκτέον δὲ καὶ τὴν παλινωδίαν. "I must now proceed to the palinode." I will speculate later in this chapter on what I think it contained.

<sup>233</sup> Sandmel 1984, 7; Johnson, 45 n3; Frick 186



He also says that,

Philo himself, in the work *On the Embassy* which he wrote, describes accurately and in detail the things which were done by him at that time...[also] he relates that at Rome in the reign of Tiberius, Sejanus, who at that time enjoyed great influence with the emperor, made every effort to destroy the Jewish nation utterly; and that in Judea, Pilate, under whom the crimes against the Saviour were committed, attempted something contrary to the Jewish law in respect to the temple, which was at that time still standing in Jerusalem, and excited them to the greatest tumults (*HE* 2:5.6-7; trans. McGiffert, 109).

καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Φίλων ἐν ἡ συνέγραψεν Πρεσβεία τὰ κατὰ μέρος ἀκριβῶς τῶν τότε πραχθέντων αὐτῷ δηλοῖ... δὴ οὖν κατὰ Τιβέριον ἐπὶ μὲν τῆς Ῥωμαίων πόλεως ἱστορεῖ Σηιανόν, τῶν τότε παρὰ βασιλεῖ πολλὰ δυνάμενον, ἄρδην τὸ πᾶν ἔθνος ἀπολέσθαι σπουδῆν εἰσαγροχέναι, ἐπὶ δὲ τῆς Ἰουδαίας Πιλᾶτον, καθ' ὃν τὰ περὶ τὸν σωτῆρα τετόλμητο, περὶ τὸ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ἔτι τότε συνεστὸς ἱερὸν ἐπιχειρήσαντά τι παρὰ τὸ Ἰουδαίους ἐξόν, τὰ μέγιστα αὐτοὺς ἀναταράξαι.

The *In Flaccum* begins with the somewhat mysterious sentence, Δεύτερος μετὰ Σηιανόν Φλάκκος Ἀουίλλιος διαδέχεται τὴν κατὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐπιβουλήν... “After Sejanus, Avillius Flaccus took up the persecution of the Jews” (*In Flacc.* 1). This, in combination with the preceding testimonium of Eusebius, has led some to postulate a larger work, which included our *In Flaccum*, the *Legatio ad Gaium*, as well as works on Pontius Pilate<sup>234</sup> and Sejanus.

However, that the ancient title of the *Legatio ad Gaium* seems to have named it as part of a series “On Virtues” seems odd in this respect. Smallwood notes that four out of the five manuscripts give the title of the work as Φίλωνος ἀρετῶν ἀ ὃ ἐστὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ πρεσβείας πρὸς Γάιον (“Philo’s On Virtues Part One, or The Embassy to Gaius”), and

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<sup>234</sup> But at 299 of the *Legatio* Philo does briefly mention Pilate and a controversy at Jerusalem over his installation of aniconic shields in the governor’s residence—they would have been offensive because they would have had inscriptions dedicated to Tiberius as divine (Bond 37-41). This could be what Eusebius is referring to, since he would be likely to magnify even brief episodes related to Pilate because of his connection with the crucifixion.

Eusebius says (*HE* 2:18.8) that Philo wrote about τὰ περὶ τῆς Γαίου θεοστυγίας αὐτῶν γραφέντα, ἃ μετὰ ἡθους καὶ εἰρωνείας Περὶ ἀρετῶν ἐπέγραψεν (“Gaius’ hatred of the gods... which, with ironical reference to its character, he had given the title ‘On Virtues’”). Although the work is historical, such a “philosophical” title suggests that it could be grouped rather with the *De Vita Contemplativa* (of which the manuscript tradition most often gives the title Περὶ βίου θεωρητικοῦ ἢ ἰκετῶν, ἀρετῶν τὸ δ’ οἷ “On the Contemplative Life or On the Suppliants, On Virtues Part Four”)<sup>235</sup> and not as a historical work along with the *In Flaccum*. Taylor notes the connection between the titles and argues that they were part of a series, which was presented to Claudius at the “second” embassy that was sent to Rome after Gaius’ assassination. I will come to the evidence for the *Legatio* having been presented at Rome in a moment, but what makes Taylor’s argument so ingenious that she notes that Chaeremon, an Egyptian priest and Stoic philosopher mentioned as having been a presenter for the Greek-Alexandrian delegation in the so-called *Letter to the Alexandrians* of Claudius, also wrote a treatise on the Egyptian priesthood that seems to have portrayed it as an ascetic and philosophical organization in much the way that *De Vita Contemplativa* describes the religious community of the Therapeutae. This would set up an opposition between the *De Vita Contemplativa* and this lost work of Chaeremon, both perhaps presented to Romans on the embassy to show the authors’ people in the best possible light;<sup>236</sup> perhaps a rhetorical competition not only between Jewish and Greek Alexandrians, but between Platonic and Stoic thought and life as well. However, we have no other evidence besides these titles that the *Legatio* is closely connected with the *De Vita Contemplativa*, and other scholars

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<sup>235</sup> Taylor, 34

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 44-5

have dismissed the connection.<sup>237</sup>

As previously mentioned, many have argued that the *Legatio* was probably written for presentation to Claudius on the second embassy to Rome regarding the Alexandrian conflict.<sup>238</sup> Eusebius says that Philo

read in the presence of the whole Roman senate during the reign of Claudius the work which he had written, when he came to Rome under Gaius, concerning Gaius' hatred of the gods, and to which, with ironical reference to its character, he had given the title *On the Virtues*. And his discourses were so much admired as to be deemed worthy of a place in the libraries (*HE* 2.18.8; trans. McGiffert, 121).

κατὰ Γάϊον ἐπὶ τῆς Ῥώμης ἀφικόμενος, τὰ περὶ τῆς Γαίου θεοστυγίας αὐτῶ γραφέντα, ἃ μετὰ ἠθους καὶ εἰρωνείας Περὶ ἀρετῶν ἐπέγραψεν, ἐπὶ πάσης λέγεται τῆς Ῥωμαίων συγκλήτου κατὰ Κλαύδιον διελθεῖν, ὡς καὶ τῆς ἐν βιβλιοθήκαις ἀναθέσεως θαυμασθέντας αὐτοῦ καταξιωθῆναι τοὺς λόγους·

Many aspects of the work seem designed to appeal to a gentile-Roman audience, including the eulogies of Augustus and Tiberius, the lengthy praise of the Roman gods<sup>239</sup> (in a section that castigates Gaius for considering himself a deity), and the tendency to blame a few isolated figures for the riots rather than any defect of Roman administration (these were figures, incidentally, whom Claudius had probably already punished—i.e. Lampo and Isidorus). The praise of the ideal emperor as a careful judge in the law courts (350)<sup>240</sup> may have appealed especially to Claudius.

It is a paradox of the *Legatio ad Gaium* that although it is centered on the actions of an ‘evil’ emperor and a philosopher’s confrontation with that emperor, this narrative is cleverly framed by a very positive view of kingship, and of Roman kingship in particular.

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<sup>237</sup> Kamesar 2005, 596; some see the title ‘On virtues’ as a reference to God’s protection of the virtuous Jews (Frick, 186; Runia, 139). Runia and Roysse think that Philo’s *Quod omnis probus liber sit* 75-91 made a ‘Vita activa’ to go with the *Vita contemplativa* (Runia, 139; Roysse, 53).

<sup>238</sup> Taylor, 39-41; Goodenough, 59-60; Roysse, 54

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 40; Johnson, 45; Smallwood (1970, 192-3) disusses and then dismisses the theory that the praise of Graeco-Roman gods here is an interpolation.

<sup>240</sup> However, this could be coincidental since lawgiving is an important function of the Platonic philosopher king, and Philo is here giving, partly, a treatise on ideals of governance.

While we find defiance and accusation of Gaius and the officials held responsible for the pogrom and the attack on the Temple, we also find flattery of the Julio-Claudian regime in general, but carefully presented either in the mouths of others, or, in the case of the eulogies of Augustus and Tiberius, as accusations against his contemporary Alexandrians' excessive flattery of the unworthy Gaius. In several passages, which I will now turn to, we see Philo negotiate a clever route between flattery and compliant, between supplication and praise, finding a complex solution to the problem of balancing philosophical hauteur with adulation of Roman power. Most importantly, there is a characteristically Middle Platonist philosophical justification of Julio-Claudian imperial authority.

The issue of kingship was central to a Platonist engagement with power and idealization of government. Philo demonstrates a Platonic enthusiasm for the 'ideal king' throughout his work,<sup>241</sup> and in the *Legatio* we have the clearest equation anywhere in his writings of ideal Platonic rule with the Roman Imperial family. The 'eulogies' of Augustus and Tiberius, Macro's admonitory speech to Gaius, the characterization of the Syrian governor Petronius as a good and 'philosophical' Roman imperial official, the 'natural' and impulsive respect shown by M. Vipsanius Agrippa during his visit to the Temple at Jerusalem in 15 BCE, and Livia, Augustus, and Tiberius' protection of the

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<sup>241</sup> Levy points out that for Philo, Moses is a great hero for political as well as religious reasons: "...Moses...is at the same time a philosopher, a sage, a legislator, a high priest, and a prophet (*Mos.* 2.2-7). Precisely because he combines wisdom and political power in himself, Moses is not only a legislator, he is the incarnation of the law (*nomos empsychos*), as are the patriarchs (*Abr* 3-5)" (170). See Williamson for Philo's correlation of Moses with the Platonic philosopher rex (55). See also Sandmel (1984): "...[A] philosopher-king is a *nomos empsychos kai logikos*, a law made incarnate and vocal. Abraham was such a figure, an embodiment of the law of nature...Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were each a *nomos empsychos* [for Philo]" (20). He elaborates how this attitude applied to the government of his own day: "Philo's theories about government presuppose kingship, this on the basis of Scripture...He sets four requirements about the king: One, the king is to judge the people in full accord with the laws. Two, he is to delegate minor matters to subordinates. Three, he is to rule people for their benefit. Four, he must have recourse in ambiguous cases to men learned in the laws" (28).

Temple, all seem to show an instinctively beneficent disposition on the part of the Roman emperors towards all mankind and an even, ‘philosophical’ temperament.<sup>242</sup> I shall deal with each of these in turn. Smallwood describes how “Philo’s political ideal seems to have been the Roman government as he himself experienced it during the earlier part of his life—the carefully disguised and benevolent rule of a monarch over a so-called ‘democracy.’”<sup>243</sup> All of these passages convey a similar attitude of reverence for Roman rule. (In the context of Middle Platonism we should remember that the conception of the Roman emperor as the all-powerful Platonic philosopher-king is fairly common,<sup>244</sup> and we shall find it in Plutarch’s work as well. In the milieu of both Philo and Plutarch, there is a strong connection between an upper-class background and devotion to this philosophical ideal of empire. Philo’s stance on this issue would have offended many poor and non-Hellenized Jews, as I will discuss below—Just as Plutarch’s view would have alienated many of his fellow Greeks.)

The admonitory speech of Naevius Sutorius Macro<sup>245</sup> to the youthful and reckless Gaius, which comes early in the treatise, during the section recounting Gaius’ youth and early rule, has been described as a “Philo...expounding his own philosophy of kingship and using Macro as the mouthpiece for his thoughts [i.e. for Claudius], which it would

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<sup>242</sup> Williamson (13) discusses how Petronius and Augustus are depicted as philosophical and therefore disposed to Judaism.

<sup>243</sup> Smallwood 1970, 182; Goodenough, 103-5; Goodenough says that “...[Philo] saw no other salvation for society except that it have an emperor who was literally the fulfillment of Hellenistic dreams of the ideal king. The Jews were at one on at least this point with their Greek neighbors” (105).

<sup>244</sup> Centrone, 560

<sup>245</sup> Goodenough, 19, 103-5; Goodenough says of the *Legatio*, “It has the most elaborate formulation of what was the function of a proper ruler, and what effect he should have upon his subjects and realm, though such formulation Philo himself never expresses in his own name, but always puts into the mouth of another, such as Macro...[and] without writing a passage in which he presumes to play the part of Macro and advise the ruler, or speak out unsolicited on matters beyond his province, he has written what in the end is a treatise almost directly concerned with the province of rulership, and certainly one which leaves the clearest impression of his ideas.” (19).

have been impertinent for him to voice in his own person.”<sup>246</sup> Macro becomes the “philosopher advisor” of the young king, and in this role he is very much the creation of Philo’s own literary imagination and very different from the characterization of Macro in Tacitus. He advises Gaius to learn self-control just as he is beginning on his career of wickedness and in doing so he eulogizes the Julio-Claudians. Macro says that:

...[T]he *princeps*, [is] a kind of shepherd and herdsman... Jealousy has never got control of the whole habitable world, or even large sections of it... but like a poisonous snake, it hides by creeping into small places such as a single individual or a single house, or, if it is feeling very bold, a single city. [*Philo seems to concede here that it did take over the whole city of Alexandria—but only in spite of Julio-Claudian leadership.*] It does not approach the larger circle of a nation or a country, particularly since the family of you Augusti began its effective rule over the world at large. For your family has banished all the evils which used to flourish... while it has brought those benefits and blessings which had been, as it were, in exile back from the limits of earth and sea to the world which we inhabit (44-49).

...τῆς ἡγεμονίας, καθάπερ ποιμένα τινὰ καὶ ἐπιστάτην ἀγέλης... φθόνος γὰρ οὐδέποτε πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐκράτησεν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τὰς μεγάλας αὐτῆς ἀποτομάς... ἀλλ’ ἰοβόλου τρόπον ἐρπετοῦ φωλεύει βραχέσιν εἰσερπύσας χωρίοις ἀνδρὶ ἐνὶ ἡ οἴκῳ ἐνὶ ἡ, εἴ ποτε πολὺς ἄγαν πνέοι, πόλει μίᾳ· πρὸς δὲ μείζονα κύκλον ἔθνοὺς ἢ χώρας οὐ πρόσσεισι, καὶ μάλιστα ἀφ’ οὗ τὸ ὑμέτερον γένος τὸ Σεβαστὸν ὄντως ἤρξατο πρυτανεύειν τῶν πανταχοῦ πάντων. ὅσα μὲν γὰρ εὐημέρει τῶν βλαβερῶν καὶ ἐν μέσοις ἐξητάζετο... τὰ δὲ τρόπον τινὰ φυγαδευθέντα τῶν λυσιτελῶν καὶ ὠφελίμων κατήγαγεν ἀπὸ περάτων γῆς καὶ θαλάττης εἰς τὴν καθ’ ἡμᾶς οἰκουμένην·

If the *Legatio* was indeed written for presentation to Claudius and the senate, such language could simply be rhetorically useful flattery, but in any case it begins to set the *pro-Imperial* framework upon which to build this narrative of Imperial failure. The tension between this ideal of rule and the character of Gaius will be a central theme of the piece. “But Gaius was a quarrelsome and cantankerous person,” Philo continues (following “Macro’s speech” to Gaius), “and turned his mind in the opposite direction, as

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<sup>246</sup> Smallwood 1970, 182

if that was what he had been encouraged to do” (52: ὁ δὲ φίλερις καὶ φιλόνεικος ὢν ἐπὶ τάναντία τὴν διάνοιαν ἔτρεπεν, ὥσπερ εἰς ἐκεῖνα παρακληθεῖς).

Philo places lengthy eulogies of Augustus and Tiberius just after his narration of the defilement of the *proseuchai* and abuse of the Jewish community at Alexandria under Flaccus (141-161). The eulogy of Tiberius (141-142; 159-161) is perhaps surprising since there seems to have been an expulsion of Jews from Rome under his rule<sup>247</sup> (although Philo seems to have somehow blamed any anti-Semitic activity under Tiberius on Sejanus),<sup>248</sup> but, as when Philo implies earlier that Gaius’ time on Capri with Tiberius was “moderate and healthy” (14: εὐκολωτέραν καὶ διὰ τοῦτο ὑγιεινότεραν), we should probably understand it as an effort to create a stronger contrast between Gaius and Tiberius by whitewashing Tiberius’ image, rather than as evidence that Tacitus was exaggerating about Tiberius’ life on Capri, as Smallwood has speculated.<sup>249</sup> The eulogy of Augustus is even longer, and both, of course, emphasize their favorable treatment of Jews throughout the empire.

The clearest proof that...[Augustus] was never elated or made vain by extravagant honours lies in his refusal ever to be addressed as a god, in his annoyance if anyone so addressed him, and in his approval of the Jews, who, as he knew very well, eschewed all such language on religious grounds”... “[Tiberius]... regard[ed] as a sacred trust both the Jews themselves, since they were of a peaceful disposition, and their Laws, since they were conducive to public order (154, 161).

μη ταῖς ὑπερόγκοις τιμαῖς δεθῆναι καὶ φουσηθῆναι ποτε πίστις ἐναργεστάτη τὸ μηδέποτε θεὸν ἑαυτὸν ἐβελῆσαι προσειπεῖν, ἀλλὰ κἂν εἰ λέγοι τις δυσχεραίνειν, καὶ τὸ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἀποδέχεσθαι, οὓς ἀκριβῶς ἦδει πάντα ἀφοσιουμένους τὰ τοιαῦτα. ... Τιβέρεως ... παρακαταθήκην ἔχειν τοὺς τε ἄνδρας ὡς εἰρηνικοὺς τὰς φύσεις καὶ τὰ νόμιμα ὡς ἀλείφοντα πρὸς εὐστάθειαν.

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<sup>247</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.85; Suet. *Tib.* 36; Dio Cass. 57.18.5a; the date of the expulsion is uncertain (Bond, 86).

<sup>248</sup> *Legatio* 160; according to Bond, “[i]t is possible that Philo has deliberately portrayed Sejanus as anti-Semitic in order to highlight Tiberius’ leniency towards the Jews” (23).

<sup>249</sup> Smallwood 1970, 164; Bond, 27

These eulogies arise out of an accusation by Philo against an imagined Greek-Alexandrian interlocutor (140) that he, the Greek-Alexandrian, is flattering and fawning over Gaius in a way that he never did towards Augustus and Tiberius, or even the Ptolemies (in particular by insisting that the *proseuchai* be dedicated to Gaius, which never happened with a previous ruler in Egypt) (140ff). In this way, he frames his flattery of the Julio-Claudians with an accusation against those excessively flattering Gaius.

The character of Petronius, the legate of Syria, who plays a key role in the narrative of Gaius' attempt to install his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem, is another portrait carefully drawn to show the basic humanity and reason of Roman rule. He hesitates to carry out the plan at first for fear of the consequences, as the real Petronius undoubtedly would have,<sup>250</sup> but he is also depicted as someone instinctively deferential and respectful of the Jewish religion. Philo says:

He had himself, apparently, some glimmerings of Jewish philosophy and religion. He may have studied it in the past because of his interest in culture...or his mind may have been so disposed through some voluntary, instinctive, and spontaneous inclination of its own towards things worthy of serious attention. It seems that God puts into good men's hearts good resolutions, through which they will benefit themselves while conferring benefits on others—which is what happened to Petronius (245).

ἀλλ' εἶχέ τινα καὶ αὐτός, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἐναύσματα τῆς Ἰουδαϊκῆς φιλοσοφίας ἅμα καὶ εὐσεβείας, εἴτε καὶ πάλαι προμαθῶν ἕνεκα τῆς περὶ παιδείαν σπουδῆς

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<sup>250</sup> Zeitlin (1967, 179) describes Petronius' situation thus: "Petronius was not happy over this order. He knew that the Judaeans would not allow the erection of a statue in the temple; that if it were done, it would bring about the decimation of the Judaeans. He was apprehensive lest the Parthian Judaeans, who lived across the Euphrates and were known as warriors, come to the aid of their coreligionists, and he become embattled on two fronts. Moreover the peace treaty between the Parthians and Rome was still shaky. Should he withdraw his army from the Euphrates to fight the Judaeans, the status quo might no longer hold...further...the Judaeans...[might] destroy the entire harvest, and the immense supplies of food needed for the emperor and his huge retinue would be unavailable [when Caligula visited, as he said he might]." This is indeed the situation that Philo describes at (209-213), but for Philo it is rhetorically important to attribute his hesitation also to sympathy for the Judaeans and discomfort with the assignment, even though it is likely he was motivated by practical concerns about the operation.



εἴτε καὶ ἀφ' οὗ τῶν χώρων ἐπετρόπευσεν... εἴτε καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν οὕτω  
διατεθεὶς αὐτηκόω καὶ αὐτοκελεύστω καὶ αὐτομαθεῖ τιμὴν πρὸς τὰ σπουδῆς  
ἄξια φύσει. τοῖς δὲ ἀγαθοῖς ἀγαθὰς ὑπηχεῖν ἔοικε γνώμας ὁ θεός, δι' ὧν  
ὠφελούνητες ὠφελήθησονται· ὅπερ κἀκείνῳ συνέβη.

More recent scholars have speculated that Petronius may have been bribed to halt the operation, or perhaps he was understandably fearful of a revolt in Judaea given the huge demonstrations that even mere rumors of Gaius' plan provoked.<sup>251</sup> Bilde has looked closely at how the character of Petronius differs in Josephus from the way he is depicted by Philo. In Philo he is reluctant from the start to carry out the idea, while in Josephus he is dutiful and quick in the beginning and develops reservations later, and he concludes that Josephus' characterization is likely to be closer to the truth than Philo's—it would be strange for a Roman governor to take risks for provincials out of sympathy with their devotion to their faith.<sup>252</sup> However, it is important rhetorically for Philo to impute Petronius' actions to a noble impulse in his character: in this way the basic benevolence of Roman rule is stressed at the very moment when Gaius is most threatening the Temple and the Jewish people.

Herod Agrippa's letter to Gaius, begging him to spare the Temple, which Philo places in this treatise around the desecration of the temple narrative, is full of adulation for the Imperial family, as a letter of supplication would be, but, as was the case with Macro's speech, the flattery is put into the voice of another, in this case the Herod Agrippa himself. (The idea that this letter is an actual transcription of a letter of Herod Agrippa to Gaius has been mostly dismissed in current scholarship. The themes of the letter are too characteristic of Philo's own work.<sup>253</sup>) The letter describes the instinctive

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<sup>251</sup> Balsdon 1934, 138; Bilde, 76-9

<sup>252</sup> Bilde 76-9

<sup>253</sup> For the view that the letter is substantially a reproduction of Herod Agrippa's actual letter, see Johnson

affinity that the Roman Imperial family has always felt towards the Temple and its ritual. He passes over earlier Roman attacks on the Temple (of course) and creates a story of the Imperial family's admiration and protection of the Temple.

When Marcus Agrippa," Herod writes to Gaius, "your maternal grandfather, was in Judaea during the reign of my grandfather Herod, he immediately decided to travel up from the coast to the capital, which lies inland. When he had gazed on the Temple and the dignity of the priests and the piety of the native population, he was filled with admiration and considered that he had seen something very solemn and quite indescribable. His only topic of conversation with the friends who were with him at the time was praise for the Temple and everything connected with it...He adorned the Temple with all such dedications as were permissible, and conferred all such benefits as he could grant without doing harm (294-6).

Μάρκος Ἀγρίππας εὐθέως, ὁ πρὸς μητρός σου πάππος, ἐν Ἰουδαίᾳ γενόμενος, ἠνίκα Ἡρώδης ὁ ἐμὸς πάππος ἐβασίλευε τῆς χώρας, ἀναβῆναι μὲν ἀπὸ θαλάττης εἰς τὴν μητρόπολιν ἐν μεσογείῳ κειμένην ἠξίωσε· θεασάμενος δὲ τὸ ἱερόν καὶ τὸν τῶν ἱερέων κόσμον καὶ τὴν τῶν ἐγχωρίων ἀγιστείαν, ἠγάσθη χρῆμα νομίσας ὑπέρσεμνόν τι καὶ παντὸς λόγου μείζον ἑωρακέναι, καὶ διήγημα οὐδὲν ἦν ἕτερον αὐτῷ πρὸς τοὺς συνόντας τότε τῶν ἐταίρων ἢ ὁ τοῦ νεῶ καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτὸν ἀπάντων ἔπαινος...ἀναθήμασι δὲ κοσμήσας ὅσοις ἐξῆν τὸ ἱερόν καὶ τοὺς οἰκήτορας εὐεργετήσας ὅσα μὴ βλάψει χαριζόμενος...

Of Augustus Agrippa says:

When he was told about our Temple and heard that no man-made image, no visible representation of the invisible Being, was to be found in it, did he not marvel and worship? He had more than a merely superficial taste of philosophy...He gave orders for regular sacrifices of holocausts to be offered every day at this expense...[for he felt that] it was essential for a special place consecrated to the invisible God to be set apart in the earthly regions... (310, 317-8).

οὐκ ἀκοῆ πυνθανόμενος τὰ περὶ τὸ ἱερόν καὶ ὅτι οὐδὲν ἐστὶν ἀφίδρυμα ἐν αὐτῷ χειρόκμητον, ὀρατὸν ἀοράτου μίμημα φύσεως, ἐθαύμαζε καὶ προσεκύνει, φιλοσοφίας οὐκ ἄκροις χεῖλεσι γευσάμενος... διετάξατο γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἰδίων προσόδων ἀνάγεσθαι θυσίας ἐντελεχεῖς ὀλοκαύτους τῷ ὑψίστῳ θεῷ καθ' ἐκάστην ἡμέραν... ἐλογίσαστο παρ' ἑαυτῷ, ὅτι ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ἐν τοῖς περιγείοις ἐξαίρετον ἀπονεμεῖσθαι τόπον ἱερόν τῷ ἀοράτῳ θεῷ...

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(Chap. 3) and A.H.M. Jones (202-3). For the view that it is mostly a fabrication, see Zeitlin (1965, 22-31) and D.R. Schwartz (1990, 13-18).

Again, your great-grandmother, Julia Augusta, who had in Augustus a fine instructor in piety, enriched the Temple with gold bowls and cups and a number of other costly offerings. What made her do this, when there was no image there?...her intellect...had become so keen that she grasped mental concepts better than objects of sense, and regarded the latter as shadows of the former (319-20).

ύφηγητῆ τοιοῦτω [Augustus] τῆς εὐσεβείας χρησαμένη καὶ ἡ προμάμμη σου Ἰουλίᾳ Σεβαστῇ κατεκόσμησε τὸν νεῶν χρυσαῖς φιάλαις καὶ σπονδαῖς καὶ ἄλλων ἀναθημάτων πολυτελεστάτων πλήθει· τί παθοῦσα καὶ αὕτη, μηδενὸς ἔνδον ὄντος ἀφιδρύματος; ... ἀρρενωθεῖσα τὸν λογισμὸν, ὃς οὕτως ὀξυτερκῆς ἐγεγένητο, ὡς μᾶλλον τὰ νοητὰ καταλαμβάνειν τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ ταῦτα νομίζειν ἐκείνων εἶναι σκιάς.

This focus on Gaius' predecessors' considerate treatment of the Temple is entirely to be expected given the context of the letter, but it is noticeable how Philo describes the deference to the Temple as the result of instinctive impulses of admiration and awe, and even recognition of the Temple's unique "philosophical" character (the aniconic conception of the deity and its expression in the Temple's would have been considered most compatible with Platonism and with Greek philosophy generally). Again, the benevolence of Roman rule is the emphatic frame of the narrative of a crisis in Roman-Judaeian relations.

He goes out of his way to depict the pogrom at Alexandria as an aberration resulting from a breakdown of the organs of provincial government, and a seizure of power by the Greek Alexandrians.

...[T]he promiscuous and unruly Alexandrian mob (ὄχλος)...supposed that a most opportune moment had come its way and attacked us...and threw everything into chaos and confusion...they attacked us with insane and bestial fury...[they were] like burglars...(120-122).<sup>254</sup>

ὁ Ἀλεξανδρέων μιγὰς καὶ πεφορημένος ὄχλος ἐπέθετο ἡμῖν, καιρὸν ἐπιτηδειότατον παραπεπτωκέναι ὑπολαβῶν, καὶ ...ἀνέφηνε πάντα κυκῶν

<sup>254</sup> This kind of rhetoric describes the anti-Semitic mob in the *In Flaccum* as well, but in the *In Flaccum* he is careful then to distinguish this mob from the other, better Alexandrians. Colin says: "Il s'agit d'une foule (ὄχλος), notamment composée de désœuvrés (*In Flacc.* 38), soigneusement distingués des honnêtes citoyens d'Alexandrie" (Colin, 284).

καὶ συνταράττων ...ἐκμανέσι καὶ θηριωδεστάταις ὄργαῖς  
κατειργάζοντο...ὡς λησταὶ

In fact, much of the imagery he uses suggests specifically invective against the Egyptian-Alexandrians, as Gruen has pointed out:<sup>255</sup>

When they deify dogs, wolves, lions, crocodiles, and many other animals of the land, the sea, and the air, and establish altars, temples, shrines, and sacred precincts to them throughout the whole of Egypt, what reason was there against so treating those who were at least human beings? [On their attempts to deify Gaius] (139)

τί δὲ οὐκ ἔμελλον ἀνθρώπους γε ὄντας οἱ κύνας καὶ λύκους  
καὶ λέοντας καὶ κροκοδείλους καὶ ἄλλα πλείονα θηρία καὶ ἔνυδρα καὶ  
χερσαῖα καὶ πτηνὰ θεοπλαστοῦντες, ὑπὲρ ὧν βωμοὶ καὶ ἱερά καὶ ναοὶ  
καὶ τεμένη κατὰ πᾶσαν Αἴγυπτον ἴδρυνται;

The name of 'god' is so sacred among them that they let the ibises and poisonous asps of their country and many other wild animals share it (163).

θεοῦ κληῖσις οὕτως ἐστὶ σεμνὸν παρ' αὐτοῖς, ὥστε καὶ ἴβησι καὶ ἰοβόλοις  
ἀσπίσι ταῖς ἐγχωρίοις καὶ πολλοῖς ἑτέροις τῶν ἐξηγριωμένων αὐτῆς θηρίων  
μεταδεδώκασιν

...Egyptians, a worthless breed, whose souls were infected with the poison and bad temper alike of the crocodiles and asps of their country... (166)

Τούτων ἦσαν οἱ πλείους Αἰγύπτιοι, πονηρὰ σπέρματα, κροκοδείλων καὶ  
ἀσπίδων τῶν ἐγχωρίων ἀναμεμαγμένοι τὸν ἰὸν ὁμοῦ καὶ θυμὸν ἐν ταῖς  
ψυχαῖς.

However, in spite of these descriptions suggesting mobs of unruly peasantry, the declarations that began the killings seem to have happened in the theatre (as we know from *In Flacc.* 41), and so were likely the result of a formal political assembly, while the organized drive to sequester all the Jews in one quarter of the city was also likely a complex operation requiring the cooperation of city officials. He also lays especial blame for Gaius' supposedly implacable hatred of the Jews on the presence of Helicon, a slave

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<sup>255</sup> Gruen 2002, 63ff; Gruen actually suggests that the indigenous Egyptians were really the ones primarily responsible for the violence.

and companion of Gaius from Alexandria (166-177), who filled his conversations with “ridicule and accusations” (διασυρμοὶ δὲ ἦσαν ἀνακεκραμένοι κατηγορίας) of Jews (176). And of course, he mentions by name the nationalist Alexandrian Isidorus, who, it seems, had already been executed by Claudius, perhaps for his role in the violence.<sup>256</sup> In this way, the blame for the pogrom is clearly placed on non-Romans, disfunctioning provincial government, and people already punished and gone, all of which would appeal to a Roman audience.

The characterization of Gaius<sup>257</sup> inverts all of the above, however. Philo makes the utmost effort to connect the hated former emperor with the persecutions of the Jews at Alexandria, even though this doesn't fit the timeline or any of the other information about the Alexandrian riots, as I discussed above, as well as make Gaius the antithesis of everything that the idealized Roman emperors have routinely upheld. They disdained to be worshiped, Philo says, while Gaius seeks after it (154, 93ff.). (In some cases this becomes ideologically confused, as when his castigation of Gaius' immoral desire to be deified flows into praise of a Temple of Augustus at Alexandria [151].) Philo's Gaius instinctively hates Jews as much as the previous Roman leaders instinctively admired them (115, 156-7, 160-1). Previous Roman emperors have protected the Jews from hostile provincials, while Gaius encourages the Greek Alexandrians to attack Alexandrian Jews (119-121). This is asserted in spite of the fact that Gaius seems to have intervened on their behalf in the conflict, possibly even arresting and punishing Flaccus for his part in the violence, thereby fulfilling the natural role, in Philo's view, of the Roman princeps as the protector of Jews and the policer of violence against them. The

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<sup>256</sup> Harker, 45; Lampo is mentioned only in *In Flaccum* (20,125-35), not the *Legatio*, but he is mentioned in the papyri evidence too and it's possible he was on the embassy as well (Smallwood 1970, 249).

<sup>257</sup> For more on how his character here is a literary creation, see D.R. Schwartz (1990, 87) and Bond (30).

Jamnia affair, which initiated Gaius' attack on the Temple, is, in Philo's narrative, merely a convenient pretext to carry out an attack against a people he has always hated (200).

More recent scholars have seen Gaius' attempted takeover of the Temple somewhat differently, as a response to a political revolt. Bilde has pointed out that even if Gaius didn't take the Jamnian incident personally, there would have been reason to retaliate:

Neither in Jamnia nor anywhere else were the Jews forced to participate in the imperial cult. The act in Jamnia, therefore, seems to have been a sort of 'Zealotic' attack on the status quo. It touched upon the foundation of the Roman policy of tolerance: reciprocity. The precondition of the Roman protection of Jewish religion was that they themselves should limit their zeal...[and show respect for the imperial cult].<sup>258</sup>

After Agrippa's plea averts the Temple's desecration, Philo says that Gaius almost changed his mind about the Temple project but then secretly planned to continue with it because he was of such a character that "if he ever happened to do anything good, he immediately regretted it and looked for a way of undoing it which would cause greater distress and harm" (339). (According to Josephus, Agrippa successfully dissuaded him from further interfering with the Temple. However, Tacitus omits the intervention of Agrippa and says that only Gaius' assassination ended his plans for the Temple.<sup>259</sup>) All through the *Legatio*, Philo makes Gaius out to be a uniquely determined enemy and, as Bilde puts it, one with a "superhuman hatred of the Jews, 'his worst enemies' (*Leg.* 256)".<sup>260</sup> Many researchers used to take Philo's characterization of Gaius and his motivations as fact and even attribute the Alexandrian pogrom to his influence, which is surely wrong. It was also usual to consider the *Legatio* especially valuable as an early source for Gaius' character, court, and diplomatic activity, one not influenced by Tacitus

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<sup>258</sup> Bilde, 74

<sup>259</sup> Tacitus *Hist.* 5.9.5; Josephus, *AJ* 18.289-300

<sup>260</sup> Bilde, 87-8

or Suetonius.<sup>261</sup> Newer studies have examined how Philo's portrait of Gaius may be influenced by Jewish depictions of tyrants and enemies of the Jews in biblical literature (although, as I pointed out above, speculation about how much Philo was influenced as a literary artist by traditional Hebrew literature and culture is controversial, given that he probably could not read Hebrew).<sup>262</sup> Bilde has pointed out that Herod Agrippa, whom Philo admires and respects, is depicted as being rather distant from Gaius in the *Legatio*, while Josephus depicts them as great friends, which is probably closer to the truth.<sup>263</sup> The true objective of the depiction of Gaius here is to associate the persecution of the Jews at Alexandria with an unpopular, deceased emperor, and to underline Gaius' divergence from the "real" Roman character and attitude towards the Jews, which frames Gaius and is juxtaposed with his behavior at every turn. In the end, the invective tone of Philo's characterization of Gaius in this work makes it somewhat less trustworthy as a historical source than has been previously thought.

It is probable that the 'palinode' included Gaius' assassination and perhaps his repentance. As I have discussed already, this was probably a companion to the *In Flaccum*, or part of some series that included both works. It is structurally similar to the *In Flaccum*, and the character of Flaccus and his supposedly inveterate hatred of Jews is described in similar terms. The theme of divine vengeance is very prominent in the concluding section of the *In Flaccum*, which narrates Flaccus' torment in exile and his repentance for his treatment of the Jews. He only meets his just punishment (a divine punishment, in Philo's view, even though it is administered at the whim of Gaius), after acknowledging that it is vengeance from God for mistreating the Jews. Philo imagines

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<sup>261</sup> Johnson, 13

<sup>262</sup> Bond, 30; see also note 227 above.

<sup>263</sup> Bilde, 83

him finally realizing the error of his ways too late:

[While in exile] [t]here is a story that once about midnight he became inspired, like in the Corybantic rites, and came out of his farm house. He then turned his eyes towards heaven and the stars and, seeing that which is really a cosmos within the cosmos, he cried out: ‘King of gods and men, it is now clear that you are not indifferent to the nation of the Jews, nor is what they assert about your providence false, for all who deny that the Jews have you for the champion and defender go astray from sound opinion. I am a clear proof of this, for all the mad acts that I have committed against the Jews I have now suffered myself...’ (trans. van der Horst 2003, 84)

λέγεται δέ ποτε καὶ περὶ μέσας νύκτας ὡσπερ οἱ κορυβαντιῶντες ἔνθους γενόμενος, ἐκ τῆς ἐπαύλεως ἔξω προελθὼν καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἀνατείνας εἰς οὐρανὸν καὶ τοὺς ἀστέρας, τὸν ἐν κόσμῳ κόσμον ὄντως ἰδὼν, ἀναβοῆσαι· βασιλεῦ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων, οὐκ ἄρα τοῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους ἀμελῶς ἔχεις, οὐδ’ ἐπιψεύδονται τὴν ἐκ σοῦ πρόνοιαν, ἀλλ’ ὅσοι φασὶν αὐτοὺς μὴ προαγωνιστῆ σοι καὶ ὑπερμάχῳ χρηθῆσαι, δόξης ὑγιοῦς διαμαρτάνουσι. σαφῆς δ’ ἐγὼ πίστις· ὅσα γὰρ κατεμάνην τῶν Ἰουδαίων, αὐτὸς πέπονθα...

The palinode of the *Legatio* is missing, but I agree with Frick that it probably concerned some sort of recognition and recantation on Gaius’ part.<sup>264</sup> His assassination would have provided Philo with an excellent opportunity to frame his miserable death as divine retribution for his hatred of the Jews, and depict his agonizing, belated regret in the same way that he did in the case of the *In Flaccum*’s very similar narrative.

In summary, we see how his negative depiction of Gaius is enhanced and framed by eulogizing of prevailing Roman values, governmental structures, and the historical benevolence of the Julio-Claudian dynasty. In the end, Gaius’ fall was probably conceived of as divine retribution dispensed by heaven and the natural force of justice, in a way that would appeal to both a pagan and a Jewish audience that was sympathetic to the new regime following Gaius’ death. The fact that he attributed Gaius’ (and Flaccus’) punishment to superhuman forces could also be used to justify an “apolitical” stance on

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<sup>264</sup> Frick, 188; Bond, 29; Sandmel 1984, 8



the part of the philosopher, and brings us to a central paradox of Philo's works: that while he privileged contemplation over action in his philosophical writing, he was probably politically involved in the affairs of Alexandria for most of his life (and to a certain extent in those of Judaea—his family's close relationship with Herodian royalty was longstanding).

Philo gives us very little information in his writings about his participation in public life. The passage most often referenced to describe Philo's views on political engagement and his own political involvement is taken from *De Specialibus Legibus III* 1.1-5:

There was once a time when, devoting my leisure to philosophy and to the contemplation of the world and the things in it, I reaped the fruit of excellent, and desirable, and blessed intellectual feelings, being always living among the divine oracles and doctrines, on which I fed incessantly and insatiably, to my great delight, never entertaining any low or groveling thoughts, nor ever wallowing in the pursuit of glory or wealth, or the delights of the body, but I appeared to be raised on high and borne aloft by a certain inspiration of the soul, and to dwell in the regions of the sun and moon, and to associate with the whole heaven, and the whole universal world. At that time, therefore, looking down from above, from the air, and straining the eye of my mind as from a watchtower, I surveyed the unspeakable contemplation of all the things on the earth, and looked upon myself as happy as having forcibly escaped from all the evil fates that can attack human life. Nevertheless, the most grievous of all evils was lying in wait for me, namely, envy, that hates every thing that is good, and which, suddenly attacking me, did not cease from dragging me after it by force till it had taken me and thrown me into the vast sea of the cares of public politics, in which I was and still am tossed about without being able to keep myself swimming at the top. But though I groan at my fate, I still hold out and resist, retaining in my soul that desire of instruction which has been implanted in it from my earliest youth, and this desire taking pity and compassion on me continually raises me up and alleviates my sorrow. And it is through this fondness for learning that I at times lift up my head, and with the eyes of my soul, which are indeed dim (for the mist of affairs, wholly inconsistent with their proper objects, has overshadowed their acute clear-sightedness), still, as well as I may, I survey all the things around me, being eager to imbibe something of a life which shall be pure and unalloyed by evils. And if at any time unexpectedly there shall arise a brief period of tranquility, and a short calm and respite from the troubles which arise from state affairs, I then rise aloft and float above the troubled waves, soaring as it were in the air, and being, I may almost

say, blown forward by the breezes of knowledge, which often persuades me to flee away, and to pass all my days with her, escaping as it were from my pitiless masters, not men only, but also affairs which pour upon me from all quarters and at all times like a torrent. (trans. Yonge, 303-4)<sup>265</sup>

We can see in the passage the very typical ancient view of politics as a dangerous and debasing field of activity for the philosopher. The idea that engagement with the world leads to “groveling thoughts,” (ταπεινὸν φρονῶν ἢ χαμαίζηλον) expresses the familiar anxiety that philosophers felt about how political dealings necessitated unseemly flattery and loss of dignity.<sup>266</sup> These are prominent issues in the final confrontation with Gaius in the *Legatio*, as we have seen. Unfortunately his comments here are not very specific about what his political duties involved or what his exact position was among Jews of Alexandria. His narrative specifies that he was one of five members of his delegation (370), but does not give names of his fellow delegates or the process by which he himself was chosen. As we noted earlier, he did come from a very wealthy family and his brother

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<sup>265</sup> Ἦν ποτε χρόνος, ὅτε φιλοσοφία σχολάζων καὶ θεωρία τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ τὸν καλὸν καὶ περιπόθητον καὶ μακάριον ὄντως νοῦν ἐκαρπούμην, θείοις αἰεὶ λόγοις συγγινόμενος καὶ δόγμασιν, ὧν ἀπλήστως καὶ ἀκορέστως ἔχων ἐνευφραϊνόμεν, οὐδὲν ταπεινὸν φρονῶν ἢ χαμαίζηλον οὐδὲ περὶ δόξαν ἢ πλοῦτον ἢ τὰς σώματος εὐπαθείας ἰλυσπώμενος, ἀλλ' ἄνω μετάρσιος ἐδόκουν αἰεὶ φέρεσθαι κατὰ τινα τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπιθειασμὸν καὶ συμπεριπολεῖν ἡλίω καὶ σελήνῃ καὶ σύμπαντι οὐρανῷ τε καὶ κόσμῳ. τότε δὴ τότε διακύπτων ἄνωθεν ἀπ' αἰθέρος καὶ τεινῶν ὡσπερ ἀπὸ σκοπιᾶς τὸ τῆς διανοίας ὄμμα κατεθεώμην τὰς ἀμυθήτους θεωρίας τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἀπάντων καὶ εὐδαιμονίζον ἑμαυτὸν ὡς ἀνὰ κράτος ἐκπεφευγότα τὰς ἐν τῷ θνητῷ βίω κῆρας. ἐφήδρευε δ' ἄρα μοι τὸ κακῶν ἀργαλεώτατον, ὁ μισόκαλος φθόνος, ὃς ἐξαπιναίως ἐπιπεσὼν οὐ πρότερον ἐπαύσατο καθέλκων πρὸς βίαν ἢ με καταβαλεῖν εἰς μέγα πέλαγος τῶν ἐν πολιτείᾳ φροντίδων, ἐν ᾧ φορούμενος οὐδ' ὅσον ἀνανήξασθαι δύναμαι. στένων δ' ὅμως ἀντέχω τὸν ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας ἀνανήξασθαι δύναμαι. στένων δ' ὅμως ἀντέχω τὸν ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας ἐνιδρυμένον τῇ ψυχῇ παιδείας ἴμερον ἔχων, ὃς ἔλεόν μου καὶ οἶκτον αἰεὶ λαμβάνων ἀνεγείρει καὶ ἀνακουφίζει. διὰ τοῦτον ἔστιν ὅτε τὴν κεφαλὴν ἐπαίρω καὶ τοῖς τῆς ψυχῆς ὄμμασιν ἀμυδρῶς μὲν—τὸ γὰρ ὀξυδερκέες αὐτῶν ἢ τῶν ἀλλοκότων πραγμάτων ἀχλὺς ἐπεσκίασεν—ἀλλ' ἀναγκαίως γοῦν περιβλέπομαι τὰν κύκλῳ καθαρᾶς καὶ ἀμιγυῶς κακῶν ζωῆς σπάσαι γλιχόμενος. εἰ δέ μοι καὶ ἐξ ἀπροσδοκῆτου βραχεῖα γένοιτο εὐδία καὶ γαλήνη θορύβων τῶν ἐν πολιτείᾳ, ὑπόπτερος ἐπικυματίζω μόνον οὐκ ἀεροπορῶν, αὔραις τῆς ἐπιστήμης καταπνεόμενος, ἢ με πολλάκις ἀναπέθει δραπετεύειν συνημερεύουσιν αὐτῇ καθάπερ ἀπὸ δεσποτῶν ἀμειλίκτων, οὐκ ἀνθρώπων μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ πραγμάτων ἀλλαχόθεν ἄλλων χειμάρρου τρόπον ἐπεισχεομένων.

<sup>266</sup> See Royse (48) for a discussion of Philo's ambivalent view of the biblical Joseph as the 'political' man. Guillaumont compares how Philo depicts Joseph as compared with the more contemplative Isaac: "Isaac, le contemplatif par excellence, qui s'oppose à Joseph, l'homme social, quand il veut méditer, sort seul dans le desert... afin de parler seul à seul... avec Dieu. Nous sommes sur la voie qui conduit à la célèbre formule sur laquelle s'achèvent les ἡσυχία de Plotin: 'fuir seul vers le seul'" (366). See also Levy (171) on the "ambivalence" of Philo's view of Joseph and how it reflects his disapproval of "immersion in the world of politics."

and nephew surely had Roman citizenship. His brother Alexander the Alabarch and his nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, who assisted Titus in the sacking of Jerusalem in 70, may also have been present on the embassy to Gaius,<sup>267</sup> as they also seem to have been important members of the Jewish community at Alexandria who had imperial favor and connections. The family also was related by marriage to Herodian royalty, and on friendly terms with Herod Agrippa himself.<sup>268</sup>

A general review of Philo's opinions on political engagement reveals him to be somewhat inconsistent. He sometimes criticizes the mentality of those who act as though they live apart from society, at other times he clearly exalts the contemplative life as ideal.<sup>269</sup> However, his usual view of the world of public life as undesirable and corrosive may be more a rhetorical stance (one typical of Platonic philosophers in general) than an actual reflection of his life and priorities. Scholars have disagreed on just how much Philo was involved in political life at Alexandria and Rome. The common view early in scholarship on Philo was that he truly did live a secluded life, and was only reluctantly drawn into the embassy to Gaius,<sup>270</sup> while more recent scholars have portrayed a very

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<sup>267</sup> Royse, 62; Philo, *De animalibus* 54

<sup>268</sup> Alexander the Alabarch (an alabarch was some sort of tax official) managed estates in Egypt for members of the imperial family and was close to Claudius. Alexander was jailed by Gaius around the time of the embassy, and then released by Claudius. Philo does not mention him in connection with the embassy in the *Legatio*, however, so the reason Gaius was displeased with him is not known (Turner, 54, 58; Josephus *AJ* 19, 329).

<sup>269</sup> *De Mig.* 90; *De Fuga* 23-38; *De praem.* 51; *Quaes. exod.* 2.31; *De sacrif.* 78; *Genesium* 4.47 (a fragment that discusses the three types of life: the contemplative, the active/practical, and the dissolute); *De somnis* 1.221, 2; *De ebriitate* 86; *Vita contemp.* 86; *Spec. leg.* 2.42-9, Probus 55, 63; Guillaumont has an excellent overview of Philo's opinions on this issue (363ff): "L'opinion que Philon se fait des rapports de la 'vie pratique' (*bios praktikos*) et de la 'vie contemplative' (*bios theoretikos*) est sujette à controverse et ses déclarations à ce sujet paraissent parfois contradictoires" He says that some have seen an "evolution" in Philo's thought, starting out exalting only the contemplative life, and later incorporating the practical life into his ideal, while others have seen him as advocating a combination of the two styles of living, and others have seen him as chiefly valorizing contemplation and separation from the world. He concludes that "il paraît certain que Philon, conformément à une tendance profonde de la philosophie grecque, qui remonte au moins à Platon, a posé, en principe, la précellence de la vie contemplative, ver laquelle aussi la nature de son esprit et de ses goûts le portait..."

<sup>270</sup> Leisegang; Sandmel 1984, 5

political advocate fully engaged in the affairs of his time.<sup>271</sup> I tend to agree that he was probably very politically involved. The one political assignment we know of was a very important one, and it is unlikely a reclusive figure would have been chosen for the job. In addition, his family's important political connections would have virtually guaranteed their participation in local politics to some degree, as they would have provided a valuable conduit for the Jews of Alexandria to powerful people both in Rome and Judaea—giving them the opportunity to exchange information, argue for their interests, and carry on a dialogue with those at the center of Roman imperial government.

Recognizing that, in Philo's view, political life generally demeans the philosopher, we should explore how he depicts his political mission in the *Legatio* and how the *Legatio* functions as a political mission in its own right. How does he portray the encounter, an encounter in which he must honestly express his failure and humiliation, in such a way as to excuse himself? How does the *Legatio*'s own message accomplish its flattering purpose (if it was in fact written for Claudius as Eusebius tells us), without sacrificing the writer's integrity? I have touched on how the panegyric sections which praise the imperial family are presented as reported speech, such as the *Letter of Agrippa*, the supplicating speech of the old men to Petronius, the eulogies of Augustus and Tiberius that are addressed to an imaginary Alexandrian Greek interlocutor—and that are framed by a reiteration of the modest refusal of Tiberius and Augustus to be worshipped—and the speech of Macro in praise of kingship. I would like to spend the remainder of this chapter analyzing the *Legatio* in this vein, looking at it not

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<sup>271</sup> Levy (168) says that “we find in Philo, alongside the exaltation of the ascetic idea, an in depth consideration of all the aspects of the political side of life.” See also J. Schwartz: “De toute façon, il faut renoncer à voir en lui...un vieux garçon menant une vie savante et retirée, à l'écart d'une famille très prise par ses hautes relations et ses ambitions politiques” (14). See also D.R. Schwartz (2009a, 14).

only as an apologia for the failure of his mission, but as an attempt to repeat the mission and reassert his parrhesia. I have already discussed how his account negotiates the tension between flattery of Rome and a picture of the empire's debasement under Gaius. It remains to explore how he balances presenting a plea on behalf of his people with asserting their power and importance, presents himself to his own people as a representative of Judaism and reasserts to them that Judaism is fundamentally compatible with the Roman empire, and how he turns his report of the embassy into a new argument for the protection of Jewish rights and the Temple to Claudius.

Whether this work was presented to Claudius and the senate or not, many features of the *Legatio* suggest that it not only depicts an embassy, but actually is an embassy in itself. (Briefs of some kind were presented on embassies, usually, and in the *Legatio* Philo mentions the 'memorandum' (178-9: γραμματεῖον... κεφαλαιώδη τύπον περιέχον ὧν τε ἐπάθομεν καὶ ὧν τυχεῖν ἠξιούμεν; "a memorandum, containing a summary of our sufferings and our claims") that he handed over to Gaius prior to his audience with him.) The *Legatio* itself could be such a brief written after Gaius' death for embassy to Claudius in 41. The description of the pogrom allows him to reargue his case against the Greek Alexandrians in a way he was not able to, apparently, before Gaius, or at least present it anew to Claudius. The praise of Roman rule would obviously be very helpful in this context, and the speech of the old men to Petronius and the *Letter of Agrippa* are rhetorically effective as pleas on behalf of the Temple and Jewish rights in the context of a new embassy. In fact Bond has suggested that the whole *Legatio* could be interpreted as a plea on behalf of the Temple.<sup>272</sup> (It is notable that although the essay is called the *Legatio ad Gaium*, it spends so much of its length on the Temple issue,

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<sup>272</sup> Bond, 33

which didn't have anything to do with Alexandrian issue that concerned the ambassadors.) In any case, all of this makes it possible that the *Legatio* is not only an apologia for the embassy's failure and his own humiliation, and an assertion of his own parrhesia,<sup>273</sup> as I speculated above, but also an embassy brief in itself.

However, there are some ways in which the *Legatio* presents a case to Philo's fellow Jews as well as to Romans. The theme of divine vengeance on the enemies of the Jews, which this work shares with the *In Flaccum*, would have obvious appeal for a Jewish audience, but there is more to look at in this regard. Jewish opinion on the desirability of Roman rule was very divided at this time,<sup>274</sup> and Philo presents a case for Romanization even in the context of reporting on such difficult events as the pogrom at Alexandria and the attempted violation of the Temple, a locus of national resistance and feeling.

The embassy to Claudius, at which the *Legatio* may have been presented, probably included two Jewish delegations, and some scholars have speculated that one represented the more 'zealotic' Jews, and one the more 'pro-Roman Jews' of Alexandria,<sup>275</sup> or perhaps just two groups who couldn't agree on how to present their case to Claudius at the embassy. In this context, it would be reasonable to expect that the argumentation of the *Legatio* would be designed to appeal to Philo's fellow Jews, some of whom perhaps did not share his views. There were differences of opinion about the level of integration with gentiles that was desirable in the diaspora, as well as an essential difficulty over how a diaspora saw itself in relation to the Judaeans. As

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<sup>273</sup> Leisegang characterizes the *Legatio* as a belated assertion of "echt philosophischem Freimut" after a difficult confrontation with the emperor.

<sup>274</sup> Johnson, 86, 174

<sup>275</sup> Balsdon 1934, 144

Schwartz puts it,

[T]o the extent that Alexandrian Jews were Judaeans, embracing Roman rule-- although an obvious move insofar as the Romans defended the Jews' status in Alexandria--was far from an obvious move. This is because half a century before Philo's birth, the Romans had destroyed the sovereign Jewish state in Judea, and in 6 CE, when Philo was a young man, they had established...direct Roman rule in Judea. If the Romans were protective of the Jews but predators vis-à-vis the Judeans, where did that leave the Ioudaioi of Alexandria?<sup>276</sup>

In the continuum of opinion on these matters, most scholars believe that Philo came down on the 'pro-Roman' side,<sup>277</sup> and in that case he would have felt the need to make a case for Roman power to his fellow Jews. This is likely the case in the *Legatio* given its pro-Roman tone, but how does he do this in the context of this narration?

His glorification of previous emperors and their connection with the Jews could possibly be designed to argue to his fellow Jews on behalf of Roman rule. But I think it is suggestive in this context to look at his depiction of the riot in Jamnia that triggered Gaius' attack on the Temple, since it is one part of the narrative in which he would need to walk a fine line between appealing to more traditional Jews, who would have approved of the Jamnians tearing down Gaius' statue, and the Roman audience, who would have deplored that as an act of rebellion. I described the incident earlier, but just to review here is Philo's report of the matter:

Jamnia, one of the largest cities in Judaea, has a mixed population, the majority being Jews and the rest gentiles who have wormed their way in from neighbouring countries. These settlers cause trouble and annoyance to those who may be described as the natives of the place by continually violating some one or other of the Jews' traditions. These gentiles learnt from travelers how enthusiastic Gaius was about his own deification and how hostile he was towards the whole Jewish race. So, assuming that a suitable opportunity for an attack had come their way, they built a rough and ready altar of the most shoddy material, namely clay bricks, for the sole purpose of plotting against their fellow-townsmen. For they knew that they would refuse to tolerate the violation of their

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<sup>276</sup> Schwartz 2009a, 23

<sup>277</sup> Balsdon 1934, 124; Smallwood 1970, 182; Schwartz 2009a, 27

customs, which was precisely what happened. For when the Jews saw the altar and were greatly incensed at the effectual destruction of the sanctity of the Holy Land [because of the erection of a pagan altar], they gathered together and pulled it down. The Greeks promptly went to Capito [a Roman official]...who sent a grossly exaggerated account of the affair to Gaius (200-203).

τὴν Ἰάμνειαν—πόλις δὲ ἐστὶ τῆς Ἰουδαίας ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα πολυάνθρωπος—  
[ταύτην] μιγάδες οἰκοῦσιν, οἱ πλείους μὲν Ἰουδαῖοι, ἕτεροι δὲ τινες ἀλλόφυλοι  
παρειασθαρέντες ἀπὸ τῶν πλησιοχώρων, οἱ τοῖς τρόπον τινὰ αὐθιγενέσιν  
ὄντες μέτοικοι κακὰ καὶ πράγματα παρέχουσιν, αἰεὶ τι παραλύοντες τῶν  
πατρίων Ἰουδαίους. οὗτοι παρὰ τῶν ἐπιφοιτῶντων ἀκούοντες, ὅση σπουδῇ  
κέχρηται Γάιος περὶ τὴν ἰδίαν ἐκθέωσιν καὶ ὡς ἀλλοτριώτατα διάκειται πρὸς  
ἅπαν τὸ Ἰουδαϊκὸν γένος, καιρὸν ἐπιτήδειον εἰς ἐπίθεσιν παραπεπτωκέναι  
νομίζοντες αὐτοσχέδιον ἀνιστάσι βωμὸν εἰκαιστάτης ὕλης, πηλὸν  
σχημάτισαντες εἰς πλίνθους, ὑπὲρ τοῦ μόνον ἐπιβουλεύειν τοῖς συνοικοῦσιν·  
ἤδεσαν γὰρ οὐκ ἀνεξομένους καταλυομένων τῶν ἐθῶν, ὅπερ καὶ ἐγένετο.  
θεασάμενοι γὰρ καὶ δυσανασχετήσαντες ἐπὶ τῷ τῆς ἱερᾶς χώρας τὸ  
ἱεροπρεπὲς ὄντως ἀφανίζεσθαι καθαιροῦσι συνελθόντες· οἱ δὲ εὐθύς ἐπὶ τὸν  
Καπίτωνα ἤκον, ὃς...γράφει Γαίῳ διαίρων τὰ πράγματα καὶ μετεωρίζων...

In an appeal to the senate, it would be wise to thoroughly condemn the rioters at Jamnia, but instead, as Schwartz says,

Philo says only that the Jews of Jamnia did what they did because they were greatly incensed by the ‘effectual destruction of the sanctity of the Holy Land.’ Although the drift of his narrative clearly justifies them, Philo abstains from signing on to the logic that explained the Jews’ action... while he condemns those who erected the altar, portraying them as villainous provocateurs, he makes no effort to justify the Jews’ reaction, so his condemnation of the others simply means that those whose neighbors have special sensitivities should be considerate.<sup>278</sup>

This is a very diplomatic approach to the incident, and indicates, perhaps, that he wanted more conservative Jews, who would be offended by the idea of iconic or pagan statuary anywhere in Judaea, to respect his argumentation. In any case, the possibility of an embassy of more ‘traditional’ Jews from Alexandria meeting with Claudius alongside the delegation carrying his *Legatio* could be a factor in some of the *Legatio*’s rhetoric, including his depiction of the ideal of Roman-Jewish relations and his own dialogue, as a Hellenized Jew, with more traditional elements in his community.

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<sup>278</sup> Schwartz 2009a, 29



The dialogue with his fellow Jews on these issues also perhaps influences the balance in the work's rhetoric between passivity and resistance in the face of Roman rule that he achieves throughout the work. On the one hand, Philo glorifies non-violent resistance as the ideal for Jews in Alexandria and in Judaea. The speech of the old men (229-242) to Petronius in defense of the Temple is one exalting passive resistance above all:

We are unarmed, as you see,” say the old men, “and yet some people accuse us of coming as enemies. The limbs with which nature has endowed each of us for our defense, our hands, we have put behind us, where they can do nothing, and thus we offer our own bodies as targets for the unerring missiles of those who want to kill us... (229)

εἶτα ἡ γερουσία καταστᾶσα τοιάδε ἔλεξεν· „ἄοπλοι μὲν <έσμεν>, ὡς ὄρας, παραγενομένους δὲ αἰτιῶνταιί τινες ὡς πολεμίους. ἃ δὲ ἡ φύσις ἐκάστῳ προσένειμεν ἀμυντήρια μέρη, χεῖρας, ἀπεστρόφαμεν, ἔνθα μηδὲν ἐργάσασθαι δύνανται, παρέχοντες αὐτῶν τὰ σώματα πρὸς εὐσκόπους τοῖς θέλουσιν ἀποκτεῖναι βολάς

However, there is an undercurrent of threat in the *Legatio* as well. Philo emphasizes the large number of Jews in the Roman empire (214, 281-2), as well as the fact that large numbers of them live in the neighboring Parthian empire and could return to Judaea at any time. Petronius broods over following Gaius' orders with respect to the Temple,

Would it not be highly dangerous to turn these vast hordes of enemies against himself? Heaven forbid that the Jews everywhere should unanimously come to the defense! That would produce an impossible military situation—quite apart from the fact that the Jews living in Judaea are infinitely numerous, physically strong, mentally courageous, and prefer to die for their traditions... The forces beyond the Euphrates were also causing Petronius alarm. He knew... that Babylon and many other satrapies contained Jewish settlements... So he was naturally very much afraid that, when these Jews heard of the proposed new dedication, they would suddenly invade and encircle him...(215-7)<sup>279</sup>

τοσαύτας μυριάδας ἐφέλκεσθαι πολεμίῳν ἄρ' οὐ σφαλερώτατον; ἀλλὰ μήποτε γένοιτο συμφρονήσαντας τοὺς ἐκασταχοῦ πρὸς ἄμυναν ἐλθεῖν· ἄμαχόν τι συμβήσεται χρῆμα· δίχα τοῦ καὶ τοὺς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν κατοικοῦντας

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<sup>279</sup> See also 281-2 for this idea.

ἀπείρους τε εἶναι τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τὰ σώματα γενναιοτάτους καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς εὐτολμοτάτους καὶ προαποθνήσκειν αἵρουμένους τῶν πατρίων ... ἐφόβουν δὲ αὐτὸν καὶ αἰ πέραν Εὐφράτου δυνάμεις· ἦδει γὰρ Βαβυλῶνα καὶ πολλὰς ἄλλας τῶν σατραπειῶν ὑπὸ Ἰουδαίων κατεχομένης, ... περιδεῆς οὖν ὡς εἰκὸς ἦν, μὴ πυθόμενοι τὴν καινουργουμένην ἀνάθεσιν ἐπιφοιτήσωσιν ἐξαίφνης καὶ περίσχωσιν, οἱ μὲν ἔνθεν οἱ δὲ ἔνθεν, κύκλος γενόμενοι...

The reference in the previous quote to Jewish martyrdom is just one of several throughout the piece that also serve to underline their potential to wreak havoc if excessively aggravated. (D.R. Johnson has discussed how raising the spectre of martyrdom was a strategy for dealing with Roman power, and how impressed Romans were by Jewish martyrdom.<sup>280</sup>)

If we fail [to protect the Temple]... we hand ourselves over to be killed, in order that we may not live to see and evil worse than death... We will bring our wives to the Temple to slay them with our own hands; as fratricides we will bring our brothers and sisters, as infanticides our sons and daughters—innocent children!... Then as we stand in the midst bathed in the blood of our kinsfolk... we will mingle our blood with theirs by killing ourselves (233-5)

εἰ δὲ μὴ πείθομεν, παραδίδομεν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς ἀπώλειαν, ἵνα μὴ ζῶντες ἐπίδωμεν θανάτου χεῖρον κακόν... αὐτοὶ κατάρξομεν τῶν θυμάτων οἱ καλοὶ ἱερεῖς, παραστησόμενοι τῷ ἱερῷ γυναικῆς οἱ γυναικοκτόνοι, ἀδελφούς καὶ ἀδελφὰς οἱ ἀδελφοκτόνοι, κούρους καὶ κόρας, τὴν ἄκακον ἡλικίαν, οἱ

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<sup>280</sup> Johnson, 164-71. The Romans were especially impressed by the Jews' willingness to sacrifice their lives on behalf of the Temple—see Josephus (*AJ* 14.66-8) on the priests' continued determination to carry out Temple rituals even as Pompey was besieging the Temple and killing those inside with missiles: "And any one may hence learn how very great piety we exercise towards God, and the observance of his laws, since the priests were not at all hindered from their sacred ministrations by their fear during this siege, but did still twice a-day, in the morning and about the ninth hour, offer their sacrifices on the altar; nor did they omit those sacrifices, if any melancholy accident happened by the stones that were thrown among them; for although the city was taken on the third month, on the day of the fast, upon the hundred and seventy-ninth olympiad, when Caius Antonius and Marcus Tullius Cicero were consuls, and the enemy then fell upon them, and cut the throats of those that were in the temple; yet could not those that offered the sacrifices be compelled to run away, neither by the fear they were in of their own lives, nor by the number that were already slain, as thinking it better to suffer whatever came upon them, at their very altars, than to omit any thing that their laws required of them" (Trans. Whiston, 292). μάθοι δ' ἂν τις ἐντεῦθεν τὴν ὑπερβολὴν ἧς ἔχομεν περὶ τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας καὶ τὴν φυλακὴν τῶν νόμων, μηδὲν ὑπὸ τῆς πολιορκίας διὰ φόβον ἐμποδιζομένων πρὸς τὰς ἱεουργίας, ἀλλὰ δις τῆς ἡμέρας πρωΐ τε καὶ περὶ ἐνάτην ὥραν ἱεουργούντων ἐπὶ τοῦ βωμοῦ, καὶ μηδὲ εἴ τι περὶ τὰς προσβολὰς δύσκολον εἴη τὰς θυσίας παυόντων. καὶ γὰρ ἀλούσης τῆς πόλεως περὶ τρίτον μῆνα τῆς νηστείας ἡμέρα κατὰ ἐνάτην καὶ ἑβδομηκοστὴν καὶ ἑκατοστὴν ὀλυμπιάδα ὑπατευόντων Γαίου Ἀντωνίου καὶ Μάρκου Τυλλίου Κικέρωνος οἱ πολέμιοι μὲν εἰσπεσόντες ἔσφαττον τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, οἱ δὲ πρὸς ταῖς θυσίαις οὐδὲν ἤττον ἱεουργοῦντες διετέλουν, οὔτε ὑπὸ τοῦ φόβου τοῦ περὶ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐθ' ὑπὸ τοῦ πλῆθους τῶν ἤδη φονευομένων ἀναγκασθέντες ἀποδρᾶναι πᾶν θ' ὅ τι δέοι παθεῖν τοῦτο παρ' αὐτοῖς ὑπομείναι τοῖς βωμοῖς κρεῖττον εἶναι νομίζοντες ἢ παρελθεῖν τι τῶν νομίμων.

παιδοφόνται...εἴτ' ἐν μέσοις στάντες καὶ λουσάμενοι τῷ συγγενικῷ αἵματι...ἀνακερασόμεθα τὸ ἴδιον ἐπικατασφάξαντες αὐτούς.

How many deaths, then, do you think people who have respected the sanctity of the shrine [in the Temple] would gladly undergo, if they saw the statue being taken into it? I believe that they would kill their whole families, wives and children and all, and finally sacrifice themselves on top of the bodies of their kindfolk (308).

πόσους ἂν οὖν οἶει θανάτους ἐκουσίως ὑπομένειν τοὺς περὶ ταῦτα ὤσιωμένους, εἰ θεάσαιντο τὸν ἀνδριάντα εἰσκομιζόμενον; ἐμοὶ μὲν δοκοῦσι γενεὰς ὅλας αὐταῖς γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις ἀποσφάξαντες ἐπὶ τοῖς τῶν οἰκείων πτώμασιν ἑαυτοὺς τελευταῖον καθιερεύσειν.

Bond, who believes the *Legatio* was written for presentation to Claudius, finds in such passages a “veiled threat.”<sup>281</sup> Balsdon points out that the Jewish stance towards Rome in the time of Gaius was not entirely powerless; “they had a strong weapon...--the threat that, if they were not humoured, they would revolt, and the rest of the Jewish world with them.”<sup>282</sup> This rhetorical compromise between passive supplication and threat makes the strongest use possible of any leverage that Jews may have had on that score. It would also echo the work’s overall determination to walk a fine line between flattery and forceful argumentation.

If this work was written for Claudius, the issues it dealt with relating to Gaius and his treatment of the Judaeans and Jews were still quite urgent. Claudius, although a great friend of Agrippa and generally favorable towards Jewish rights,<sup>283</sup> seems to have presided over another expulsion of Jews from Rome, which we know almost nothing about.<sup>284</sup> He also probably punished Isidorus and Lampo for their part in the Alexandrian unrest around the same time that he received the second round of delegations from

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<sup>281</sup> Bond, 35

<sup>282</sup> Balsdon 1934, 124

<sup>283</sup> Ibid., 143

<sup>284</sup> D.R. Schwartz 1990, 94-5; There are many questions about this expulsion, which may have involved only Christians in Rome, but for further discussion see Schwartz and his sources, as well as Stern (114). It probably happened in 41, as Dio Cassius says, but the date is uncertain.

Alexandria regarding the whole affair. The question of diaspora Jews' and Judaeans' rights was therefore an important part of his concerns/schedule in the year 41, and the fact that Philo focuses in the *Legatio* less on the specific Alexandrian question, and more on the question of Jewish rights overall and the protection of the Temple, would be fitting in such a context. In fact, the piece could be seen as a plea on behalf of the Temple most of all,<sup>285</sup> given that it focuses more on the attempted violation of the Temple than anything else, and that the longest, and last, speech of supplication reported is Agrippa's letter to Gaius on behalf of the Temple. In addition, blaming the riots on Isidorus and Lampo would be well-timed, considering that Claudius either had just punished them or was about to do so. Praising the ideal emperor's work as a judge could also have pleased Claudius, as would the appeal to the *mos maiorum* in respect to his ancestors' benevolent treatment of the Jews. Finally, placing the climactic supplication, at least in the document as we have it, in the voice of Claudius' favored friend Herod Agrippa (in the '*Letter of Agrippa*') could have been Philo's way of taking advantage of that relationship to reinforce his plea, while at the same time avoiding excessive flattery in his own voice.

The one real question that Gaius asks Philo's embassy, βουλόμεθα μαθεῖν, ἔφη, τίσι χρῆσθε περὶ τῆς πολιτείας δικαίους; is the crucial question that is answered in the whole of the *Legatio* as we have it. As I mentioned above, the sentence has been variously construed by different translators, sometimes as a question about the Jewish delegation's ideals of civic justice, sometimes about their actual civic rights at Alexandria, and sometimes about what rights they would claim for themselves. A.H.M. Jones translates the question as "I want to know what rights you enjoy in respect of the

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<sup>285</sup> Bond, 33

citizenship,”<sup>286</sup> while Goodenough says that Gaius asked them to “...speak on the Jewish ideas of justice.”<sup>287</sup> Colson translates it as “We want to hear what claims you make about your citizenship,”<sup>288</sup> and Ritter translates it “What lawful rights/claims do you have regarding ἡ πολιτεία”?<sup>289</sup> Philo’s treatise addresses all of these nuances, and gives a full explication of the Jewish Alexandrians’ historical rights, rightful claims, and ideals of justice as a community and as a part of the empire. Gaius refuses to listen to Philo’s answer, turning the meeting into a “farce,” taking away Philo’s voice, as the philosopher puts it, bridleing his tongue and sewing up his mouth (360). In the *Legatio ad Gaium*, he finds his voice to give a long and detailed response to Gaius’ question, and to do it in a dignified way befitting his position as a philosopher, combining censure and praise of Roman power in a way that avoided the appearance of flattery and submission, and portraying his conflict with a tyrant in the context of an endorsement of imperial rule.

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<sup>286</sup> A.H.M. Jones, 200

<sup>287</sup> Goodenough, 18

<sup>288</sup> Colson, 181

<sup>289</sup> Ritter, 153

## Chapter IV

### Plutarch: Civic and imperial duty

In the year 67 C.E., the young Plutarch of Chaeronea accompanied his instructor in Platonic philosophy Ammonius on an excursion to the Pythian games at Delphi.<sup>290</sup> The occasion for the trip was the emperor Nero's attendance and performance at those games, just one stop on his famous "tour" of Greece that included visits to all of the Panhellenic festivals.<sup>291</sup> Ammonius, a somewhat mysterious figure in the history of Platonism and an important influence on Plutarch's decision to become a member of the Academy, seems to have been a very politically active citizen of Athens (although originally from Egypt),<sup>292</sup> who held several magistracies and was probably the Hoplite

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<sup>290</sup> He is the only of his teachers that Plutarch ever mentions by name (C.P. Jones 1971, 16). In the few dialogues where he appears he usually takes an authoritative role in the discussion. (C.P. Jones 1967, 205-6). For Ammonius' influence see also Swain (1997, 81-5). Swain speculates that he may have been the son of Tiberius' astrologer Ti. Claudius Thrasyllus (183)—a guess based on surnames of various officials and probable members of his family, as well as the fact that they were both Egyptian Platonists. He received Roman citizenship from M. Annius Afrinus, who was one of the Romans who accompanied Nero on this trip to Greece (Swain 1997, 183; Stadter, 9). He seems to be one of the foundational figures of Middle Platonism as it was developing at the time: "Für uns ist er der älteste bekannte Vertreter jener religiös-mystischen Färbung des Platonismus, welche im 2. Jhd. die Herrschende wird." (von Arnim 1894, col. 1862) Glucker (1978, 124-6) argues that Ammonius was not actually a Platonist, but what we know of his philosophy (i.e. interest in mathematics and the unchanging consistency of reality [Mor. 392e --Τί οὖν ὄντως ὄν ἐστι; τὸ αἰδίων καὶ ἀγένητον καὶ ἄφθαρτον, ᾧ χρόνος μεταβολὴν οὐδὲ εἶς ἐπάγει]) seems to reflect what Dillon has called the "Pythagoreanizing Alexandrian Platonism" of the time (Dillon 1996, 184-5; Swain 1997, 182).

<sup>291</sup> On Nero's Greek tour see Cassius Dio, 63.14-19; Suetonius *Nero* 22-25; Suet. *Vespasian* 4.4; Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.* 5.7; see also interesting discussions of this event in Bartsch (Chapter 1 passim) and Alcock (98-111). The most accurate dates for the trip are August 66 to December 67 (Rudich, 186). G. Lienhart (62-5) gives the primary sources and proposes the order of Nero's itinerary, giving all the ancient testimonia related to it. Apparently, at the Pythian festival he performed as a citharoedus. He won prizes at all the festivals.

<sup>292</sup> Peuch, 4835-6

General of Athens when this visit to Delphi occurred.<sup>293</sup> This was likely Plutarch's first real contact with Roman imperial power and politics.<sup>294</sup> This excursion to Delphi is the setting for Plutarch's essay *De E Delphico*, although he does not refer to the performance in the dialogue.<sup>295</sup>

It is likely that Ammonius' visit to the festival was made in an official capacity as a political representative of Athens. "Nero was a demanding guest," C.P. Jones writes in his biography of Plutarch, and "...the notables of the province could hardly have failed to come as spectators of the imperial performances...Ammonius, prominent as a philosopher and magistrate of Athens, may have judged it discreet to make the journey."<sup>296</sup> Stadter is even more emphatic: "Ammonius...would have been required at Nero's performances, and Plutarch may have accompanied him less as a student of philosophy than of politics."<sup>297</sup> Ammonius at some point received Roman citizenship from M. Annius Afrinus, who was one of the Romans who accompanied Nero on this very trip to Greece.<sup>298</sup> Ammonius' activities in politics and government seem to have made a great impression on Plutarch and remained his ideal for a philosopher throughout the rest of his life,<sup>299</sup> and it is worth looking in more detail at what he and his teacher would have experienced on this trip, and examine it as a formative event in Plutarch's philosophical—and political—education.

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<sup>293</sup> Stadter, 9

<sup>294</sup> He makes reference to an embassy to the proconsul of Achaëa as a young man (*νέον ἔτι*) at *Mor.* 816c, but it is unclear what year exactly it occurred (C.P. Jones 1971, 15-16). But in any case, this would have been his first encounter with the Roman Imperial retinue, even if he had attended on the proconsul previously.

<sup>295</sup> *Mor.* 385b; C.P. Jones 1967, 205; Stadter, 8-9

<sup>296</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 17

<sup>297</sup> Stadter, 9

<sup>298</sup> Swain 1997, 183; Stadter, 9

<sup>299</sup> Puech, 4836: "Ammonios semble avoir impressionné Plutarque par son style de vie plus que par l'originalité de sa pensée: l'écrivain ne l'a guère cité dans ses ouvrages proprement philosophiques mais, fidèle à son exemple, s'est attaché à devenir à son tour 'un philosophe engagé dans la vie politique et se mêlant aux joutes publiques.' (*Mor.* 798B)."

Our ancient sources, admittedly tendentious, portray Nero's performances at Delphi and the other festivals as both ridiculous and potentially dangerous for those notable people in the audience.<sup>300</sup> Some of the Panhellenic festivals had to be rescheduled or given twice so that he could attend them all.<sup>301</sup> In his theatrical performances, he seems to have appeared both maniacally earnest and conceited at the same time.<sup>302</sup> It is sometimes reported that the audience enjoyed (or at least applauded) his musical performances,<sup>303</sup> but the situation was naturally tense when audiences and judges were required to give a verdict on the emperor's efforts. Suetonius says that, at the contests,

before beginning...[Nero] would address the judges in the most deferential terms, saying that he had done all that could be done, but the issue was in the hands of Fortune... When they bade him take heart, he withdrew with greater confidence, but not even then without anxiety, interpreting the silence and modesty of some as sullenness and ill-nature, and declaring that he had his suspicions of them. (Suet. *Nero* 23; trans. Rolfe, 119)

*Iudices autem prius quam inciperet reverentissime adloquebatur, omnia se facienda fecisse, sed eventum in manu esse Fortunae... atque, ut auderet hortantibus, aequiore animo recedebat, ac ne sic quidem sine sollicitudine, taciturnitatem pudoremque quorundam pro tristitia et malignitate arguens suspectosque sibi dicens.*

(From Suetonius comes also the claim that at his Greek performances some people

<sup>300</sup> Suet. *Nero* 23; Cassius Dio 63 17.5-6; Suet. *Vespasian* 4.4; Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.7. Tacitus history for the period of Nero's trip to Achaëa is missing.

<sup>301</sup> See e.g. Phil. *Vit Apoll.* 5.7.2; Alcock 99

<sup>302</sup> *Quam autem trepide anxieque certaverit, quanta adversariorum aemulatione, quo metu iudicium, vix credi potest... In certando vero ita legi oboediebat, ut numquam exscreare ausus sudorem quoque frontis brachio detegeret; atque etiam in tragico quodam actu, cum elapsum baculum cito resumpsisset, pavidus et metuens ne ob delictum certamine summoveretur, non aliter confirmatus est quam adiurante hypocrita non animadversum id inter exultationes succlamacionesque populi.* (Suet. *Nero* 23-4)

<sup>303</sup> See note above: *inter exultationes succlamacionesque populi.* However, Nero often had "professional clappers" in the crowd to encourage and police audience response (Bartsch, 8-9). Bartsch makes a game attempt to argue that the wider public's, if not the Senators', enjoyment of Nero's performances may have been genuine (28-9). The performances would have been funny and entertaining, perhaps, even, or especially, if he was unskilled (see Philostratus, *Vit. Apoll.* 5.7.1: "Menippus burst out laughing at the recollection of Nero [performing in Greece]..." (ἀναγέλασας ὁ Μένιππος, ἀναμέμνητο δὲ ἄρα τοῦ Νέρωνος. τί ἔφη... τοὺς δὲ βελτίστους Ἕλληνας οὐ ξὺν ὄλω γέλωτι φοιτᾶν ἐς τὰς πανηγύρεις;).



feigned death in order to be carried out of the theatre.)<sup>304</sup> These judges, and the other Greek officials there, such as Ammonius, would have been seated in the front part of the theatre, probably, and would have had to at least pretend to be interested and pleased in order to escape notice. Plutarch and his friends were apparently not among those who admired the performances Nero gave; Plutarch sadly reflects in *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* that it was the evil of flattery that put Nero on the stage: Πτολεμαίω δὲ τί περιῆψεν ἄλλο φορβειὰν καὶ αὐλούς, τί δὲ Νέρωνι τραγικὴν ἐπήξατο σκηνὴν καὶ προσωπεῖα καὶ κοθόρνους περιέθηκεν; οὐχ ὁ τῶν κολακευόντων ἔπαινος; (*Mor.* 56f: “What else was it that fastened the mouthpiece and flute upon Ptolemy? What else set a tragic stage for Nero, and invested him with mask and buskins? Was it not the praise of his flatterers?” trans. Babbitt, 305). While it is not clear if Plutarch himself would have seen Nero’s performance, it is fairly certain that Ammonius would have, and Plutarch’s opinion would have then reflected the reports he heard.

It is debated to what extent Nero’s tour of Greece was a political event, and it is therefore uncertain also whether the Greek officials at his performances, such as Ammonius, were on a sort of political mission. While the prevailing opinion among scholars seems to be that the trip was not for any practical political purpose,<sup>305</sup> Alcock has argued otherwise. She suggests that the trip was focused on “coherent policies” rather than “madcap antics,” and that scholarship on the phenomenon of Roman emperors “‘on the road,’ and of the ‘royal progress’ as an instrument of imperial manipulation, provides a framework within which Nero’s time abroad loses something of its frightening

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<sup>304</sup> Suet. *Nero* 23. But see also Cassius Dio 63.15, where Senators feign death to be carried from the theatre. This seems to be recurring anecdote when discussing Nero’s performances.

<sup>305</sup> Rudich finds that “[o]ur sources unanimously claim a purely cultural background to the whole enterprise and no political reasons behind it whatever.” However, Rudich also says that, “It was...a painstakingly orchestrated affair with consequences and repercussions which undoubtedly contributed both to the growth of Nero’s popularity in the Orient and to the erosion of his power at home” (187).

peculiarity.”<sup>306</sup> The arguments on both sides are too extensive to go into here, but it is worthwhile to remember in this connection that Nero’s grant of tax-free status to the province of Achaia on this trip, and his ostentatious displays of philhellenism, won him wide popularity in Greece for a time.<sup>307</sup> In fact the presence of various “imposters” there claiming his identity in the years afterwards show a lingering affection for him that continued in the region. Rudich says of these “false Neros” that “three of them apparently emerged in the span of twenty years, and the amount of support they enjoyed there was striking testimony to the strength and vitality of pro-Neronian sentiments in the Eastern parts of the empire.”<sup>308</sup> Plutarch’s attitude to Nero in his writings was mixed, but he is mostly depicted as a flawed character who is somewhat redeemed by his love of Greece. C.P. Jones summarizes Plutarch’s view of Nero:

Plutarch’s view of Nero could not be a simple one. Like other Greek writers he was influenced favorably by Nero’s philhellenism. In the vision of Thespesius of Soli which is Plutarch’s Myth of Er, the soul of Nero is represented as that of ‘one to whom the gods owed some benefit because he had freed the best and the most dear to him of all his subjects [i.e. Greece]’ (*De sera num. vind.* 567f: ὀφείλεισθαι δέ τι καὶ χρηστὸν αὐτῷ παρὰ θεῶν, ὅτι τῶν ὑπηκόων τὸ βέλτιστον καὶ θεοφιλέστατον γένος ἠλευθέρωσε [τὴν Ἑλλάδα].) As a moralist, Plutarch saw Nero’s nature as an essentially good one corrupted by flattery. But he was too much of a realist to let such considerations outweigh the external effects of Nero’s character...In the final judgement Nero was a tyrant and his overthrow a noble act.<sup>309</sup>

Judges at the Isthmian games, and perhaps at the other festivals throughout the

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<sup>306</sup> Alcock, 98

<sup>307</sup> Ibid., 103: “...Nero’s liberation of the Greeks, a deed often regarded as a parody of Flaminius’ respected proclamation of Greek freedom after the Second Macedonian War, some 250 years before...can be assessed in a different way...Potency of the ‘freedom of the Greeks’ as a concept, manipulated by monarchs right back through Hellenistic times, is often underestimated by modern scholars too aware of the ‘Realpolitik’ of the situation. Genuine political advantage could be wrangled through such a gift, as can be glimpsed in the sources, especially in Nero’s enduring popularity in the east.” Solidifying his position among the peoples of the east would not have been an entirely foolish waste of time at this period.

<sup>308</sup> Rudich, 188

<sup>309</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 18-19

province, received gifts of money and Roman citizenship.<sup>310</sup> As I pointed out above, Ammonius is known to have received his Roman citizenship, possibly at around this same time, from M. Annius Afrinus, a senator who accompanied Nero on his tour of Greece (67-8 CE).<sup>311</sup> We cannot know if Ammonius received his citizenship from the imperial entourage during this tour, but we can reasonably speculate that he would have had some contact with his important patron (Afrinus) while he was visiting Greece. Given these circumstances, the trip to Delphi with his students, including Plutarch, starts to appear as more business than pleasure.

I will discuss below the evidence for the political activities of Plutarch's career, including the embassies he seems to have taken on throughout his life, and the evidence for his political views as well. But it is important to observe here at the outset that Plutarch is the first of the Platonists we have covered in this dissertation to consider his political duties and engagement absolutely *integral* to his position as a philosopher. The traditional Platonic view that political activity is a mostly unproductive burden to be avoided if possible is rejected emphatically in Plutarch,<sup>312</sup> and this can perhaps be traced to the influence of Ammonius, given what we know about Ammonius' career. The journey to Delphi with Ammonius, and the spectacle of the grave and upright<sup>313</sup> Ammonius dealing with imperial Roman officials in the dignified fashion befitting a famous philosopher, would have made a lasting impression on the young Plutarch. At the

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<sup>310</sup> Suet. *Nero* 24: *Decedens* [to go back to Rome] *deinde provinciam universam libertate donavit simulque iudices civitate Romana et pecunia grandi. Quae beneficia e medio stadio Isthmiorum die sua ipse voce pronuntiavit.*

<sup>311</sup> Stadter, 8-9; Swain 1997, 183; C.P. Jones 1967, 208-11

<sup>312</sup> See Aalders (6) for discussion and copious references in the *Moralia*.

<sup>313</sup> At *Mor.* 70e Plutarch depicts him as an imposing person who could scold his wealthy and eminent students (for eating too much at lunch); Jones 1967, 205

same time, the worst excesses of Roman imperial vanity and capriciousness would have been on fearful display.

Despite his extensive corpus and its wealth of personal reminiscences, Plutarch's biography is still unclear in many respects.<sup>314</sup> However, in spite of the uncertain chronology of his career and the difficulties of identifying his exact appointments and positions, it is certain that he was involved in politics on some level for almost his entire life. His involvement in local government began when he was a young man with no reputation of his own, still advised by his father,<sup>315</sup> and continued until his extreme old age, when he was a priest of Delphi and an epimelete of the Amphictyons<sup>316</sup> and perhaps a procurator<sup>317</sup> of Achaia. "Politics" in Plutarch's milieu would have mostly involved mediating between the local administrative structure of his city and Roman officials, both within the province of Achaia and in the city of Rome, as well as managing local government. The opportunities to influence important policy decisions would be fairly limited, and so it is paradoxical that for Plutarch, in comparison with Philo and Carneades and previous Platonic thinkers, political activity was absolutely essential to the fully lived philosophical life.<sup>318</sup> Plutarch was a forceful advocate of statesmanship, and rejected the notion that only the contemplative life had real value.<sup>319</sup> He lived in a time, on the other

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<sup>314</sup> The best and most exhaustively documented source is C.P. Jones (1971, 13-38). Plutarch's dates are 40s C.E. to after 120 C.E.

<sup>315</sup> *Mor.* 816c.

<sup>316</sup> See C.P. Jones (1971, 28) on *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 829 A (an inscription recording that he oversaw the dedication of a statue to Hadrian).

<sup>317</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 34; Bowersock 1969, 57

<sup>318</sup> Lamberton (2001) puts it best: "He admired leaders and statesmen and spent much of his life thinking and writing about the great generals of the past, in whose lives a great deal was at stake. But he lived in a place and an age without politics, where there was no foreign policy, no scope for military excellence--except at the limits of the empire, a part of the world that on the whole does not seem to have interested him much." (2)

<sup>319</sup> See for example *Mor.* 776f-777a. "καὶ μὴν ὁ τοῦ φιλοσόφου λόγος, ἐὰν μὲν ἰδιώτην ἕνα λάβῃ, χαίροντα ἀπραγμοσύνη καὶ περιγράφοντα ἑαυτὸν ὡς κέντρῳ καὶ διαστήματι γεωμετρικῶν ταῖς περὶ τὸ σῶμα χρεῖαις, οὐ διαδίδωσιν εἰς ἑτέρους, ἀλλ' ἐν ἐνὶ ποιήσας ἐκείνων γαλήνην καὶ

hand, when political activity mainly involved things like petitioning and cultivating Roman officials' friendship, traveling to Delphi to applaud Nero's performances as citharode, or overseeing the maintenance and cleaning of Chaeronea's streets.<sup>320</sup> Perhaps we should not underestimate the perils and difficulties of carrying out such duties as these, however, since, as I discussed in my introduction, dealing with Roman officials was a delicate business, and Plutarch himself devoted a great deal of his thought to considering the best way to approach superiors while still maintaining one's dignity and gaining their respect.<sup>321</sup> During Plutarch's political career the power of government was fairly concentrated in a relatively small number of governors, and imperial officials at Rome, and the ability to persuade those particular people, and take advantage of their respect for the intellectual elite<sup>322</sup> of Greece, was both important and valued. Under these circumstances, leading an embassy was probably one of the most prestigious and significant positions a citizen could hold, and being a prominent philosopher would have given him a special cachet in dealing with Romans on official matters.

We know that Plutarch led an embassy while still a young man to the proconsul of Achaëa,<sup>323</sup> and that he accompanied the very politically active Ammonius to Delphi when he was a sort of delegate to Delphi during Nero's performance there. Later trips to Rome

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ἡσυχίαν ἀπεμαράνθη καὶ συνεξέλιπεν.” “Certainly the teachings of the philosopher, if they take hold of one person in private station who enjoys abstention from affairs and circumscribes himself by his bodily comforts, as by a circle drawn with geometrical compasses, do not spread out to others, but merely create calmness and quiet in that one man, then dry up and disappear” (trans. Fowler, 33)

<sup>320</sup> *Mor.* 811b

<sup>321</sup> See in particular *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 65f-74e, which is primarily concerned with how to delicately and properly use parrhesia among your social superiors.

<sup>322</sup> Breebaart, 55-75; Breebaart says, discussing the position of philosophers as well as rhetoricians under the empire, “The great cultural ambassadors of the Second Sophistic showed a self-consciousness, even in the face of Emperors, that is not only indicative of the prestige of rhetorical culture. The government did not like to lose its face by intimidating men, who never questioned the order of the state itself and did a lot of good by their public generosity and their pleas for concord and peace in the cities of the Greek world” (70-71).

<sup>323</sup> *Mor.* 816c

that he mentions in his writings in passing were also probably undertaken for political reasons: at *Dem.* 2.2 he mentions that he never learned Latin well while in Italy because he was too busy with political business as well as lecturing.<sup>324</sup> Such “political duties” (χρείαι πολιτικάί) would likely have been embassies of some sort since his political career always revolved around Chaeronea, Delphi, and the Amphictyonic League, and in fact he strongly disapproved of Greeks who left their province to start political careers elsewhere serving Romans.<sup>325</sup> His scattered references to his embassies are not very detailed, but show that he had knowledge of diplomatic procedure at Rome (i.e. that foreign ambassadors registered at the temple of Saturn) and that embassies could be burdensome and expensive as well as prestigious.<sup>326</sup> We have no thorough account of a particular embassy, as we have for Philo, but it is possible to reconstruct some aspects of his trips to Rome and his dealings with Roman officials.

In many ways, despite the passage of over 200 years and the changes in Roman culture and government over that time, Plutarch’s visits to Rome seem to have been strikingly similar to that of Carneades, in particular his combining of his political trips with some sort of lecture tours that were attended by politically important figures as well as younger Roman students.<sup>327</sup> The extent to which these lectures would have intersected with his political business is difficult to assess, but we can be sure that many of the same participants would have been involved in both his philosophical and political discussions and gatherings, making all the appearances performances of equal importance to his

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<sup>324</sup> ἐν δὲ Ῥώμῃ καὶ ταῖς περὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν διατριβαῖς οὐ σχολῆς οὔσης γυμνάζεσθαι περὶ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν διάλεκτον ὑπὸ χρειῶν πολιτικῶν καὶ τῶν διὰ φιλοσοφίαν πλησιαζόντων...

<sup>325</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 116; *Moralia* 802d, 822c, 823e, 470c

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*, 21; *Quaes. Rom.* 275b-c; *De exil.* 602c; *Praec. ger. rep.* 805a; *adv. Col.* 1126e

<sup>327</sup> See the anecdote about Arulenus Rusticus below (522d-e), who was probably consul suffect at the time he was attending Plutarch’s lecture (Jones 1971, 23; Puech, 4855-6).

reputation as a “philosopher,” with all the independence and gravitas involved in that image. Pliny the Younger’s account of the demeanor and activities of the philosopher Euphrates, which I will discuss below, give some idea of the Roman nobleman’s ideal at this time of the perfect equanimity and harmonious, therapeutic wisdom of a philosopher advisor.<sup>328</sup> In many ways, this would have been just as demanding a ‘performance’ as the theatrics of the Second Sophistic rhetors just beginning to make their names around this same time.

Plutarch recounts an incident that very much impressed him and his audience at one of his Roman lectures which may give an idea both of the atmosphere of these events and the importance of those in attendance. Arulenus Rusticus, the hero of this anecdote, was a senator, and probably a consul,<sup>329</sup> when this occurred.

When I was once lecturing in Rome, that famous Rusticus, whom Domitian later killed through envy at this repute, was among my hearers, and a soldier came through the audience and delivered to him a letter from the emperor. There was a silence and I, too, made a pause, that he might read his letter; but he refused and did not break the seal until I had finished my lecture and the audience had dispersed. Because of this incident everyone admired the dignity of the man. (*De curios.* 522d-e; trans. Hembold, 513)

ἐμοῦ ποτ’ ἐν Ῥώμῃ διαλεγομένου Ῥουστικός ἐκεῖνος, ὄν ὕστερον ἀπέκτεινε Δομετιανὸς τῇ δόξῃ φθονήσας, ἠκροῶτο, καὶ διὰ μέσου στρατιώτης παρελθὼν ἐπιστολὴν αὐτῷ Καίσαρος ἀπέδωκε· γενομένης δὲ σιωπῆς κάμου διαλιπόντος, ὅπως ἀναγνῶ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν, οὐκ ἠθέλησεν οὐδ’ ἔλυσε πρότερον ἢ διεξελεῖν ἐπιστολὴν, οὐκ ἠθέλησεν οὐδ’ ἔλυσε πρότερον ἢ διεξελεῖν ἐμὲ τὸν λόγον καὶ διαλυθῆναι τὸ ἀκροατήριον· ἐφ’ ᾧ πάντες ἐθαύμασαν τὸ βᾶρος τοῦ ἀνδρός.

Domitian executed Arulenus Rusticus soon after this incident, in 93.<sup>330</sup> The theatricality of his conduct here says much about the expectations and self-presentation at these gatherings, and it is interesting also to compare it to the overall atmosphere during

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<sup>328</sup> Pliny *Epist.* 1.10; Euphrates is portrayed very differently in Philostratus *Vit. Apoll.*: see for example 5.37-39. In Philostratus he is an unscrupulous adversary of Apollonius.

<sup>329</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 23; Puech, 4855-6

<sup>330</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 23

Carneades' visit. The senators' rapt attention to Carneades' presentations, both as a way to be ostentatiously philhellenic, and to establish their intellectual independence from Roman authority, is recalled by Rusticus' gesture. We must remember that, just as much of the Roman leadership presiding at Carneades' embassy were threatened by his rhetoric, and by the influence of other Greek philosophers newly at Rome, Domitian also was hostile to philosophers, and felt threatened by a group of senators who were devoted to the memory of Thraesa Paetus—Arulenus Rusticus was one of these. This was the context for Domitian's expulsion of philosophers from Italy in 93 or 94.<sup>331</sup> The ideal of *sang-froid* in the face of political power that Arulenus Rusticus, a philosopher as well as a politician, displays and that Plutarch praises in this anecdote, gives some notion of how Plutarch wanted to present himself in his audiences with powerful figures. The difficulties of maintaining such a stance are easy to imagine.

Plutarch experienced quite a variety of political climates throughout his career, beginning with the regime of Nero in his youth, and ending with that of Hadrian, who acceded shortly before Plutarch's death. Stadter speculates that "the year of the four emperors would have been a terrifying time for Plutarch, who might reasonably fear that Greece...might become a battlefield,"<sup>332</sup> but it is significant that he portrays the havoc after Nero's death the result of insufficient autocratic Roman control, not as a fault of Roman power or empire.<sup>333</sup> He was perhaps especially uneasy under the Flavians, although he does not explicitly discuss his personal dangers.<sup>334</sup> On the other hand, we

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<sup>331</sup> Ibid., 24

<sup>332</sup> Stadter, 9

<sup>333</sup> *Life of Galba* 1

<sup>334</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 25; Jones says that "[Plutarch's] attitude to the Flavians is notably hostile." He argues that Plutarch did not write anything public under the Flavians, probably, and that what he did have to say about them was usually hostile. However, there is little evidence either way.



know he was granted Roman citizenship by Mestrius Florus, who was close to Vespasian.<sup>335</sup> His general silence when it comes to contemporary Roman administrations makes it difficult to conclude whether he was ever in political difficulties during this time.

The aforementioned Arulenus Rusticus was one of Plutarch's more dangerous friends from a political perspective, as he and several others were either executed or exiled in 93 as a result of the aforementioned purge of followers of the memory of Thraesa Paetus.<sup>336</sup> Domitian exiled the brother of Arulenus Rusticus, also praised by Plutarch, around this time as well, probably for being a part of this Thraesa Paetus admiration society.<sup>337</sup> Jones speculates that Plutarch's brother Timon may have also been affiliated with Arulenus Rusticus and the banned group,<sup>338</sup> but this is uncertain. Under Vespasian, Helvidius Priscus, the son-in-law of Thraesa Paetus, had already been banished and executed,<sup>339</sup> so a group dedicated to his memory would have already been recognized as dangerous to be part of, probably.<sup>340</sup> Plutarch does mention Thraesa Paetus favorably, but only in works written probably much later under Trajan.<sup>341</sup>

If his association with Arulenus Rusticus turned out to be risky, he had many other contacts that were beneficial. "The statesman," says Plutarch,

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<sup>335</sup> Stadter, 9

<sup>336</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 24

<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 24; This was Junius Mauricus Rusticus, mentioned by Plutarch in his *Life of Galba* (8.8), which was probably written before 93. Plutarch was also a friend of Avidius Quietus, who had also been associated with this group, but remained in favor with Domitian for some reason (24-5).

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 23-4; he bases this possibility on Pliny *Ep.* 1.5, which has Pliny the Younger defending someone named Arionilla, said to be the wife of someone named Timon, whom Arulenus Rusticus had asked Pliny to represent. Plutarch's brother Timon was, like Plutarch, friends with the Avidius Quietus circle at Rome, which included Arulenus Rusticus (see *Mor.* 487d-e, where Timon is mentioned affectionately by Plutarch in an essay which is addressed to Avidius Quietus and his brother Nigrinus).

<sup>339</sup> Griffin, 194-195; Suet. *Vespasian* 15; Dio Cassius 66.12

<sup>340</sup> Domitian executed Herennius Senecio, also a part of Arulenus Rusticus' group, around this time as well for writing a favorable biography of Helvidius Priscus (Cassius Dio, 67.13). One of Plutarch's most important confidants and patrons was Q. Sosius Senecio.

<sup>341</sup> *Mor.* 810a; *Cat. Minor* 25.2, 37.1; C.P. Jones 1971, 24

should...have always a friend among the men of high station who have the greatest power as a firm bulwark, so to speak, of his administration; for the Romans themselves are most eager to promote the political interests of their friends... (*Mor.* 814c; trans. Fowler, 241).

δεῖ...φίλον ἔχειν αἰεὶ τινα τῶν ἄνω δυνατωτάτων, ὥσπερ ἔρμα τῆς πολιτείας βέβαιον· αὐτοὶ γὰρ εἰσι Ῥωμαῖοι πρὸς τὰς πολιτικὰς σπουδὰς προθυμότεροι τοῖς φίλοις·

As I mentioned above, he received his citizenship from L. Mestrius Florus, a senator who probably started his long career under Nero.<sup>342</sup> None of Plutarch's works are dedicated to Florus, although Plutarch mentions taking a trip around Northern Italy with him (*Otho* 14.2) and depicts him as a friendly old man in the *Table Talks* (*Mor.* 734d). He was an officer of Otho, and Jones points out that several of Plutarch's Roman friends had been partisans of Otho.<sup>343</sup> Florus' career thrived under Nero, Vespasian, and Domitian all, so he will have been a useful correspondent for a long time. Other important allies were the Avidii brothers, Quietus and Negrinus.<sup>344</sup> They prospered under Domitian in spite of associations with the Thraesa Paetus group. Q. Sosius Senecio, to whom Plutarch dedicated a large number of his works, including the *Lives*, *Table Talks*, and *On Progress in Virtue*, was a prominent figure in the governments of Domitian and Trajan and quite a bit younger than Plutarch.<sup>345</sup> Jones speculates that Plutarch may have sent the *Lives* to him for leisure reading on his military campaigns.<sup>346</sup>

Finally, did Plutarch know Trajan and Hadrian personally? Scholars are divided on this question. There is a dedication to Trajan tied to the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (*Mor.* 172b-e), which has usually been judged spurious, but which more

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<sup>342</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 48-49; Puech, 4860

<sup>343</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid.*, 53-54; Puech, 4841

<sup>345</sup> Puech, 4883; C.P. Jones 1971, 54-57

<sup>346</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 56

recent scholars have argued is genuine.<sup>347</sup> We know that Plutarch did not travel to Rome much in his old age,<sup>348</sup> and, if the dedication mentioned above is spurious, then it is also clear that Plutarch never mentions meeting Trajan in his extant works. However, he also doesn't mention the *ornamenta consularia* that we know he received under Trajan, or the procuratorship that he possibly received under Hadrian.<sup>349</sup> The evidence that he knew Trajan must be considered circumstantial: they had friends in common (including the powerful Sosius Senecio), the *Suda* strongly implies that they met (and that Trajan made him procurator of Illyria!), and the aforementioned possibly spurious dedication.<sup>350</sup> For his contact with Hadrian the picture is also uncertain. We only know that he presided over the sanctuary at Delphi at a time when Hadrian was bestowing many gifts on it,<sup>351</sup> and that Eusebius (by way of Syncellus) suggests knew each other.<sup>352</sup>

Turning to his expressed political views, and his views on the position of his province vis-à-vis Rome and the Roman empire in general, we find that he keeps fairly silent on contemporary politics,<sup>353</sup> which will be important in my assessment of his special take on the important philosophical value of *parrhesia* that I discuss below. As has been mentioned above, Jones argues that Plutarch was “unhappy” under the Flavians and hostile to them, but he argues this mainly from Plutarch's supposed silence during

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<sup>347</sup> See Beck (163-73) for overview of the issue. C.P. Jones is sure it is spurious (1971, 31).

<sup>348</sup> Russell, 10

<sup>349</sup> Lamberton, 12; C.P. Jones 1971, 29, 34

<sup>350</sup> See Barrow (1967, 46-50) for a good summary of the evidence; *Suda* Π 1793: Π λ ο ύ τ α ρ χ ο ς , Χαιρωνεύς τῆς Βοιωτίας, γεγονώς ἐπὶ τῶν Τραιανοῦ τοῦ Καίσαρος χρόνων καὶ ἐπίπροσθεν. μεταδούς δὲ αὐτῷ Τραιανὸς τῆς τῶν ὑπάτων ἀξίας προσέταξε μηδένα τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἰλλυρίδα ἀρχόντων παρέξ τῆς αὐτοῦ γνώμης τι διαπράττεσθαι. ἔγραψε δὲ πολλά.

<sup>351</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 34

<sup>352</sup> Syncellus, *Ecloga chronographica*, 426: Πλούταρχος Χαιρωνεύς φιλόσοφος ἐπιτροπεύειν Ἑλλάδος ὑπὸ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος κατεστάθη γηραιός.

<sup>353</sup> At least aside from his biographies of Galba and Otho, which, as Jones points out, were part of a lost series covering the emperors from Augustus to Vitellius. They “reveal little about the author's personal impressions and experiences” of contemporary affairs (C.P. Jones 1971, 19). Their date of composition is unknown.

the Flavian period rather than anything Plutarch actually wrote.<sup>354</sup> Plutarch seems to avoid analyzing Roman matters which he might be expected, on the basis of his work, to criticize: for example, he does not criticize the Roman custom of imperial cults, even though he does express disapproval of the practice under Hellenistic monarchs.<sup>355</sup> The fact that his opinions on contemporary imperial politics and issues are so scarce throughout his voluminous output is noteworthy,<sup>356</sup> and we have to look to some of his more general statements about Rome and the Romans to sketch out his philosophical and political stance towards Rome.

There is no doubt that Plutarch's official view of Roman power was extremely positive. "It is a well-known fact that Plutarch shows a rather striking acceptance of Roman imperialism, even when his fellow-countrymen are hit by the expansive politics and strategies of Rome," Teodorsson observes in an analysis of Plutarch's historical writings, in particular those which narrate the progress of Roman expansion in Greece.<sup>357</sup> In general, Plutarch promotes the view that Roman power over empire is a divine gift to the people and an expression as close as possible to Platonic ideals of divine kingship.<sup>358</sup> "Plutarch believed...that the rise of Rome and her continuing success were due to a guiding providence," Simon Swain argues, and this more or less echoes the conclusions of other scholars who have carefully examined all his pronouncements (a daunting task) on the subject of Roman rule.<sup>359</sup> Assertions of the divinity of Roman rule may seem convenient and opportunistic coming from a politician of this time, but they were likely

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<sup>354</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 25

<sup>355</sup> Ibid., 123-4; Scott, 117-35; Scott gives a full study of passages where Plutarch discusses deification of kings, and shows that he was entirely silent on recent and contemporary instances.

<sup>356</sup> However, estimates are that only about half of his total corpus survives (Aalders, 7).

<sup>357</sup> Teodorsson, 433-439, 434

<sup>358</sup> Aalders, 54-55; Swain 1996, 151-5, 161; C.P. Jones 1971, 98

<sup>359</sup> Swain 1989, 272

sincere given the stability and prosperity of the province of Achaëa during his lifetime and Plutarch's abhorrence of faction and commitment to "concord" (ὁμοφροσύνη) as the highest goal of politics.<sup>360</sup>

Does he take a negative view of Roman culture or power anywhere? One could argue that his early essay *De fortuna Romanorum*, in which he concludes that τύχη rather than ἀρετή is most behind the Roman empire's growth, disproves the divinely ordered vision of Roman hegemony that he articulates elsewhere.<sup>361</sup> However, there is reason to believe that this early essay is more a rhetorical showpiece from an alleged "sophistic" phase in his late teenage years, and therefore should not be taken to negate a view of Rome that he expresses so often in his other writings.<sup>362</sup> In addition, Whitmarsh argues that Plutarch's conception of τύχη in this essay is not necessarily in conflict with the idea that the Romans were divinely ordained to rule.<sup>363</sup> Plutarch was not shy about condemning certain Roman customs, such as gladiatorial games or other 'luxuries' associated with Rome.<sup>364</sup> But this is not necessarily from a superior "Greek" or cross-cultural perspective, as many Romans condemned the same practices. Jones puts it well: "When Plutarch surveys Roman culture, including those aspects of it which he dislikes, he does so less from a Greek than a Graeco-Roman point of view."<sup>365</sup> As we have already mentioned, he expresses disapproval of the deification of kings and their cults, but only mentions Hellenistic rulers when doing so, and says nothing about the Roman

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<sup>360</sup> Swain 1996, 181-2; Russell, 8; *Mor.* 816a

<sup>361</sup> For Greeks arguing that Rome's rise was due only to chance, see Polybius 1.63.9, Dionysius of Halicarnassus *RA* 1.4.2; Bowersock 1965, 108-10

<sup>362</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 67

<sup>363</sup> Whitmarsh 2005, 69; Τύχη can mean either chance/luck or divine providence.

<sup>364</sup> See for example *Acad. post. II (Lucullus)* 39.2; *Mor.* 822c, 959e.

<sup>365</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 122-3

practice,<sup>366</sup> thus making his criticism custom culturally neutral, i.e. not a condemnation of a ‘Roman’ convention.

However, when examining the scholarly debate over whether Plutarch has a negative or positive view of Roman culture, we need to stop and consider the possibility that he did not perceive this cultural divide in a nationalistic or chauvinistic way—or even that he did not perceive a cultural divide at all. It is a commonplace to observe that wealthy Greeks of Plutarch’s time were increasingly assimilated and into Roman society. In this period wealthy Greeks “became partners in an empire to which they had been subjects.”<sup>367</sup> This process had begun much earlier, however. “Ever since their first intervention in Greek affairs,” Jones says, the Romans had forged alliances with Greeks of the “wealthy class, in which they found Greeks most like themselves. While retaining governmental power for herself, Rome supported the rich in the control of the places they knew best, their own cities. It was an arrangement designed to benefit both parties.”<sup>368</sup> Plutarch and other Greeks of his rank may have seen the empire as an alliance, or a cooperative effort, rather than an imposed settlement—despite the fact that they had to make decisions with “the Roman proconsul’s boot above their head” (*Mor.* 813e: ὀρῶντα τοὺς καλτίους ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς), as Plutarch uncharacteristically puts it in his *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*—he usually portrays Roman rule much more favorably.<sup>369</sup> (Jones actually suggests that this famous line is spurious.<sup>370</sup>) After all, elite

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<sup>366</sup> Scott, 117-35

<sup>367</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 130

<sup>368</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>369</sup> Speaking of the essay in which this quote appears, the *Praec. ger. reipub.* (which I will discuss below), Stadter observes that though some statements “seem...anti-Roman, it is more appropriate to say that Plutarch here praises...stability and good order over individual self-assertion: a principle he applies as much to the Romans as to his fellow Greeks.” (Stadter, 14)

Greeks' insistence on the benevolence of Roman rule would naturally play an instrumental role in keeping the peace between the imperial government and the Achaean populace, which in turn made the benefits of Roman administration at this period possible. Woolf has written extensively about whether modern conceptions of "colonialism" or "imperialism" can really map onto the way that provincial Romans and subjects would have understood Roman rule. He thinks that "rather than conflict, competition or interaction between two cultures, we have to...[understand] the creation of a new imperial culture that supplanted earlier Roman cultures just as much as it did the earlier cultures of indigenous peoples."<sup>371</sup> There is much evidence that Plutarch and his Greek aristocratic friends saw themselves as part of a wider imperial culture—one much more focused on antiquarian cultural obsessions<sup>372</sup> rather than on current political conflicts and differences, and one in which they were treated as equals by philhellenic Roman aristocrats that they regarded as personal friends. "It is more productive," says Woolf, "to see Roman Imperial culture as a structured system of differences that was highly differentiated by region, class, [and] social locale...Such an approach enables us to admit both the unity and diversity of imperial culture."<sup>373</sup> While Plutarch is self-consciously proud of his Greek heritage, many modern researchers may overestimate the extent to which he felt that this separated him from his Roman friends, or the extent to which the entire Graeco-Roman world may have shared in that heritage, in his

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<sup>370</sup> C.P. Jones: "the κάλτιοι are...the senatorial shoes of the proconsul. It is inconceivable that Plutarch, who frequently praises the ubiquity of Roman peace, could represent cities of Greece or Asia under the close guard of Roman soldiers." (1971, 133).

<sup>371</sup> Woolf, 339-50

<sup>372</sup> Bowie, 4; however, Bowie also argues that archaism was a way for Greeks to retreat from their "dissatisfaction" with imperial reality.

<sup>373</sup> Woolf, 341

thinking.<sup>374</sup>

Despite his favorable view of Rome and of political engagement with empire, though, he at times takes a strangely insular view of what acceptable political activity involves: one particularity of his thinking that has been taken to reflect some “anti-Roman” or “patriotic” feeling is his insistence that wealthy Greeks should serve in their own communities rather than go to Rome or other provinces to pursue a wider career in politics or the military.<sup>375</sup> He emphasizes his own service to his hometown throughout his works, and frowns on a more cosmopolitan view of what constitutes an illustrious political career. But this insistence on a local career, carefully shepherding his own community, was likely a philosophical stance rather than repudiation of Rome, or of political service in the wider empire: Roman honors in this case would represent for Plutarch’s readers wealth and fame and all those material things that a true philosopher was naturally inclined to devalue. In keeping with this attitude, he mentions so little of the rewards and honors of his political career that we only know of them from elsewhere. For example, he never mentions his Roman citizenship or that Florus Mestrius obtained for him (we know this from an inscription<sup>376</sup>), and he does not mention that he received

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<sup>374</sup> Scholarship is divided on just how integrated with Roman culture Plutarch would have considered himself. While the *Parallel Lives* might seem the ultimate synthesis in thinking about Greek and Roman culture, they have also been interpreted as being built around the “construction of a...[Greek] identity which is pure and resists acculturation” (Mayer, 34). Pelling, also looking at the *Lives*, finds that Plutarch emphasizes the Greek education of his Roman subjects more than the education of his Greek ones—which would reflect some fundamentally ‘foreign’ view of Romans, perhaps (Pelling, 199-231). But the prevailing attitude of “cultural fusion” during this time cannot be underestimated either. (Balsdon 1979, 54).

<sup>375</sup> *Mor.* 814d: ἀρά γ’ ἄξιον τῆ χάριτι ταύτῃ παραβαλεῖν τὰς πολυταλάντους ἐπιτροπὰς καὶ διοικήσεις τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν, ἃς διώκοντες οἱ πολλοὶ γηράσκουσι πρὸς ἀλλοτρίαις θύραις, τὰ οἴκοι προλιπόντες. (“Is there any comparison between such a favor [i.e. obtaining favor and clemency for your home city from imperial officials] and the procuratorships and governorships of provinces from which much money may be gained and in pursuit of which most public men grow old haunting the doors of other men’s house and leaving their own affairs uncared for?” (trans. adapted from Fowler, 241); see also *Dem.* 2.2.

<sup>376</sup> *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> 829 A



the *ornamenta consularia* or other probable honors he received under Trajan and Hadrian.<sup>377</sup>

Plutarch also emphasizes that there is a particularly diplomatic aspect to serving local communities, in that he sees his place (and any other leader's place), as reconciling sometimes-discontented Greeks to Roman rule and explaining its benefits and value to those with less understanding or foresight.<sup>378</sup> (We have touched on this already, and I will return to it in my discussion of the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* below.) This reflects a wider trend seen throughout the Second Sophistic: as Greek intellectual leadership becomes more influential in Roman imperial circles—in the sense that it is actually integrated most fully into the power structure—it becomes less intellectually relevant, a mere mouthpiece for the power structure above. “Had even philosophy turned out to be a servant of the imperial establishment?” Breebaart asks when considering the milieu of the Second Sophistic,

I do not think so: rather philosophers threw the whole weight of stock arguments about right and judicious ruling into the somewhat empty vessels of Roman administrative practice and the government was grateful enough to recognize the value of such and ideological assistance.<sup>379</sup>

Breebaart's statement is somewhat contradictory—if philosophers are aiding the Roman government in this way, does it matter that the imperial establishment only *accepts* such “ideological assistance” rather than demanding it? The outcome of the cooption of philosophy for imperial propaganda is the same. This pattern—the decline of philosophers as an intellectual threat to powerful figures even as philosophers gain more

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<sup>377</sup> Lamberton, 12; C.P. Jones 1971, 29-30, 34

<sup>378</sup> See *Mor.* 814a, in which Plutarch compares Greek subjects in the cities to children (μικρὰ παιδιά) who must be guided to respect Roman authority, or 809e where he compares the statesman to a musician who must work to bring his fellow citizens in tune when they become boisterous (ὥσπερ ἀρμονικὸν ἐπιτείνοντα καὶ χαλῶντα πράως εἰς τὸ ἐμμελὲς ἄγειν), or 815a-b where the statesman is a doctor using political medicine to reconcile the ordinary and the powerful.

<sup>379</sup> Breebaart, 70

influence over the Roman government itself—is, of course, an overarching theme of my dissertation.

Despite his insistence on the exalted nature and divine providence of the Roman power, the reality of dealing with Roman officials was surely not always so pleasant. Plutarch himself reflects in one of his essays on the anxiety that a difficult governor could cause.<sup>380</sup> Roman officials acted with impunity and little oversight. It was a common expectation that a proconsul would increase his wealth during his tenure in the provinces by means of bribes and gifts from the people there.<sup>381</sup> Cities often spent a great deal of money erecting flattering monuments to Roman governors in an effort to influence them or get their good will.<sup>382</sup> Dealing with a Roman official could be a delicate matter that required discretion: You must not let the “greed and contentiousness of the foremost citizens” (μάλιστα πλεονεξία καὶ φιλονεικία τῶν πρώτων) cause every little disagreement to be taken before the Roman proconsuls, because this causes the whole city government and court system to lose its authority in the eyes of the imperial governors (ἐκ τούτου δὲ καὶ βουλή καὶ δῆμος καὶ δικαστήρια καὶ ἀρχὴ πᾶσα τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἀπόλλυσι) (*Mor.* 815a). This recalls Dio Chrysostom’s admonition that the city must “praise and blame with one voice” (ψόγον τε καὶ ἔπαινον ἐπὶ ταῦτο φέροντας) and “sing together as a chorus, well-ordered and to the same melody” (ὥσπερ ἐν χορῷ τεταγμένω, συνᾶδειν ἐν καὶ ταῦτὸ μέλος) in order to deal effectively

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<sup>380</sup> *Mor.* 604b-c: Taking the view of the benefits of an exile, he says οὐδὲ προσηρτήμεθα θύραις ἡγεμόνος· οὐδὲν νῦν μέλει, ὅστις ὁ κεκληρωμένος τὴν ἐπαρχίαν ἐστίν, εἰ ἀκράχολος εἰεπαχθῆς. (“I wait upon no governor; I care not now who has obtained the province, whom he is quick to anger or in other ways oppressive.” Trans. De Lacey)

<sup>381</sup> Lendon, 176, 201

<sup>382</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-196, 201

with proconsuls (τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν).<sup>383</sup> Lendon documents evidence of how extremely jealous such officials were of the deference due to them and their privileges, and how important their self-presentation was within their province—the possibility of offending one of them, even accidentally, would have been an ever-present worry.<sup>384</sup> In the previous chapter I noted the oddity of the Alexandrian governor Flaccus’s apparent humiliation when King Herod Agrippa II visited Alexandria and was paraded through the streets by the Jewish Alexandrians—Flaccus’s extreme anxiety and offence at this, which is what actually set off his persecution of the Jews—according to Philo, anyway—is hard for modern scholars to explain. Lendon relates it to the puzzling attitude that a governor lost ‘face’ if “an individual with greater prestige than he appeared in his province.”<sup>385</sup>

However, as I discussed in my introduction, philosophers had a particular kind of leverage over officials in that only a ‘tyrannical’ authority was expected to be unwilling or unable to tolerate the philosopher’s parrhesia.<sup>386</sup> Breebaart has described the increasing prestige of philosophers throughout Roman officialdom around Plutarch’s time. In his piece on ‘The Freedom of the Intellectual in the Roman World,’ he finds that “intellectual activities gradually acquired official recognition and status ... Even philosophers, still much distrusted by Vespasian and persecuted by Domitian, became respectable.”<sup>387</sup> This new respect for and cultivation of philosophers, starting around the reign of Vespasian, manifested itself in “grants, privileges and endowments, *immunitas* and state salaries for professors [which] gradually freed intellectuals from subsistence

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<sup>383</sup> Ibid., 200; Dio Chysostom 48.6-7

<sup>384</sup> Ibid., 207-8

<sup>385</sup> Ibid., 208

<sup>386</sup> Fields, 93

<sup>387</sup> Breebaart, 69

problems and from the whims of private generosity.”<sup>388</sup> Dillon’s ‘The Social Role of the Philosopher in the Second Century C.E.’ paints a similar picture of philosophers’ increasing influence during this period.<sup>389</sup> However, this imperial generosity complicated intellectuals’ relationship with power, and produced “one of the...paradoxes of Roman cultural history: an intellectual establishment came into existence when the days of ancient *libertas* were irrevocably past.”<sup>390</sup>

This conflict of interest was especially acute for a philosopher, given that their ideals of self-presentation involved independence (αὐτάρκεια), frankness (παρρησία), and self control (ἐγκράτεια). Any interaction with a powerful person would threaten that façade, and as Plutarch illustrated in his admiration of Rusticus’ indifferent reception of Domitian’s letter, the perfect behavior required a great deal of self-control and an almost theatrical nonchalance. A philosopher was expected to be a master of the ‘art of living,’<sup>391</sup> displaying exemplary conduct at all times and teaching others by example as well as by conveying doctrine. Pliny’s admiring portrait of the philosopher Euphrates, a contemporary of Plutarch, is valuable as a picture of the Roman gentleman’s ideal of a Greek philosopher advisor at this time, and it bears distinct similarities to Plutarch’s picture of himself in his writings:

If ever there was a time when this Rome of ours was devoted to learning, it is now. There are many shining lights, of whom it will be enough to mention but one. I refer to Euphrates the philosopher... he is ever easy of access, frank, and full of the humanities that he teaches... His reasoning is acute, weighty, and elegant, often attaining to the breadth and loftiness that we find in Plato... Add to this a tall, commanding presence, a handsome face, long flowing hair, a streaming white beard -- all of which may be thought accidental adjuncts and without significance, but they do wonderfully increase the veneration he inspires. There is

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<sup>388</sup> Ibid., 70

<sup>389</sup> Dillon 2002, 30-40

<sup>390</sup> Breebaart, 70

<sup>391</sup> Hahn, 54

no studied negligence in his dress, it is severely plain but not austere; when you meet him you revere him without shrinking away in awe. His life is purity itself, but he is just as genial; his lash is not for men but for their vices; for the erring he has gentle words of correction rather than sharp rebuke... He has three children, two of them sons, whom he has brought up with the strictest care... Sometimes -- but how seldom I get the opportunity -- I complain to Euphrates about...[my] uncongenial duties. He consoles me and even assures me that there is no more noble part in the whole of philosophy than to be a public official, to hear cases, pass judgment, explain the laws and administer justice, and so practise in short what the philosophers do but teach. But he never can persuade me of this, that it is better to be busy as I am than to spend whole days in listening to and acquiring knowledge from him. (Pliny the Younger, Epist. 1.10; trans. Firth, 45-6)<sup>392</sup>

Si quando urbs nostra liberalibus studiis floruit, nunc maxime floret. Multa claraque exempla sunt; sufficeret unum, Euphrates philosophus... Est enim obvius et expositus, plenusque humanitate quam praecipit... Disputat subtiliter graviter ornate, frequenter etiam Platonicam illam sublimitatem et latitudinem effingit... Ad hoc proceritas corporis, decora facies, demissus capillus, ingens et cana barba; quae licet fortuita et inania putentur, illi tamen plurimum venerationis acquirunt. Nullus horror in cultu, nulla tristitia, multum severitatis; reverearis occursum, non reformides. Vitae sanctitas summa; comitas par: insectatur vitia non homines, nec castigat errantes sed emendat... Iam vero liberi tres, duo mares, quos diligentissime instituit... Soleo non numquam — nam id ipsum quando contingit! — de [meis] occupationibus apud Euphraten queri. Ille me consolatur, affirmat etiam esse hanc philosophiae et quidem pulcherrimam partem, agere negotium publicum, cognoscere iudicare, promere et exercere iustitiam, quaeque ipsi doceant in usu habere. Mihi tamen hoc unum non persuadet, satius esse ista facere quam cum illo dies totos audiendo discendoque consumere.

As we can see in this description, a mellow, detached demeanor was crucial to the philosopher's image.

How does Plutarch maintain an appropriately aloof stance while at the same time pursuing a very active political career? Well, we have seen that he never described his

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<sup>392</sup> Griffin, 199: "The younger Pliny...gives an encomium of the philosopher Euphrates, a pupil of Musonius Rufus. He is seemly in appearance, bearded but elegantly so; he does not scold but improves and instructs; he castigates vices, not men...He is married with children and accepted as a son-in-law by a man of high social position, clearly a man at home in high society. He does not despise public service. But not only is he without the conventional Cynic defects (from the Roman point of view), but he is also without the conventional Stoic blemishes: he is eloquent, even achieving Platonic sublimity, and his instruction is realistic, taking account of the obligations men actually have. Finally, Pliny presents him as an exemplum, a living sapiens." These are the sorts of standards of behavior and attitudes that Plutarch surely observed while on tour among the Romans.

imperial political assignments or honors in detail. In this he perhaps follows a Platonic tradition of being detached from such worldly things, but really, it is still paradoxical because of his expressed enthusiasm for public service. His contempt for sophists<sup>393</sup> can also fit in with this discomfort with the showy side of politics—its flattery and display. Plutarch’s eccentric and mitigated view of parrhesia, the signature virtue of the philosopher, also shows, perhaps, his inability to fully integrate his philosophy and the compromises of politics.

I say “eccentric” because, in fact, Plutarch’s conception of parrhesia is **not** parrhesia. Fields, in her dissertation on *The Rhetoric of Parrhesia in Roman Greece*, has made a thorough examination of Plutarch’s views on parrhesia.<sup>394</sup> She finds that he takes a very qualified and pragmatic view of parrhesia, and that he describes it as a “skill” (τέχνη) and often compares it with medicine.<sup>395</sup> A more distorted view of parrhesia is hard to imagine. She also finds that, in general, when considering the subject of parrhesia, “his interest is...in easing the tensions that crop up in interactions among the elites of imperial era society,” and that he frowns on excessive directness, considering it inflammatory, self-indulgent, and dangerous.<sup>396</sup> He is instead in favor of judicious and discreet parrhesia,<sup>397</sup> and writes that “...it is...hard... to find a man who can use frankness well rather than simply abusing the one to whom he is speaking (*Mor.* 66a: οὐ ῥαδίως ἂν εὐροῖς ἐπίσταμένους τοῦτο ποιεῖν, ἀλλ’ οἰομένους, ἂν λοιδορῶσι καὶ ψέγωσι, παρρησίᾳ χρῆσθαι)”<sup>398</sup> Fields does not go so far as to say that Plutarch changes the meaning of parrhesia, but it is clear that as a philosopher who must practice it, he is

<sup>393</sup> Russell, 21, 32; Swain 1996, 136-7; cf. *Mor.* 131a (ridicule of a sophist with throat infection)

<sup>394</sup> See especially chapter 4: ‘Plutarch and Aristocratic *Parrhesia*’

<sup>395</sup> Fields, 182; *Mor.* 74c-d, 60b, 63d, 66b, 67e-f, 69a, 71a

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 149, 153-4, 162-3

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*, 165

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, 153

interested in promoting a much more moderated view of what frankness really is, and how cautiously one must use it when addressing superiors. Griffin has pointed out that ‘extreme,’ unfettered parrhesia was especially associated with the Stoics and Cynics at this time,<sup>399</sup> and so Plutarch’s emphasis on the folly of unguarded parrhesia may be an oblique attack on those schools. Finally, it is important to note that Plutarch explicitly associated the skilled and cautious use of parrhesia with the “public welfare,” as Fields puts it,<sup>400</sup> because being able to finesse one’s superiors would help in the protection of your community under imperial rule.

In the interest of public welfare, Plutarch also offers an idiosyncratic definition of friendship (φιλία) in his political writings. According to G. Roskam’s article ‘A Great and Sacred Thing? Plutarch’s attempt to reevaluate public office’—an analysis of the *Praeceptae gerendae reipublicae*—Plutarch depicts “friendship towards one’s colleagues...[as] a duty towards one’s country. It does not start round the table or behind a drinking cup, nor near the hearth, but is created by the vote of the people.”<sup>401</sup> Fields also points out how Plutarch, in the section of the treatise *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* on how to use parrhesia with “friends” (φίλοι), depicts parrhesia between said friends as a “fraught and dangerous activity,” again conflating tense and dangerous political connections with “friendship.”<sup>402</sup> In fact, Fields takes this strange definition of friendship as proof that this essay is primarily about political connections and relationships rather than about friendship.

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<sup>399</sup> Griffin, 191-2, 197

<sup>400</sup> Fields 170

<sup>401</sup> Roskam, 401; Plutarch calls political office “a great and sacred thing” at 816a: Ἱερὸν δὲ χρῆμα καὶ μέγα πᾶσαν ἀρχὴν οὖσαν καὶ ἄρχοντα δεῖ μάλιστα τιμᾶν, τιμῆ δ’ ἀρχῆς ὁμοφροσύνη καὶ φιλία πρὸς συνάρχοντας πολὺ μᾶλλον ἢ στέφανοι καὶ χλαμύς περιπόρφυρος.

<sup>402</sup> Fields, 154

This stipulation that parrhesia, and to some extent philia, must be used to advance the public welfare is a key to the way he saw his role as a philosopher in politics: pragmatism and humanism (in the sense of prioritizing human and societal welfare over dogmatic adherence to abstract principles) are at the center of his approach to philosophical statesmanship. As we shall see, this stipulated an ambassadorial and conciliatory role vis-à-vis Roman power and his people, and a rejection of the kind of Stoic or Cynic rigidity in personal conduct that he seems to admire in Arulenus Rusticus’ uncompromising defiance, but that he ultimately does not advocate in his own political treatises. (Although he was still interested in finding ways to project the kind of ideal “philosophical” behavior that is described in the anecdote about Rusticus—he just wanted to display it in a more non-confrontational way.) How this humanization of his Platonism is tied to his eclecticism and his conception of eudaimonia is discussed by D.A. Russell:

It is not the self-centeredness of his moral ideal [of εὐδαιμονία] that is peculiar to Plutarch [rather, that is how all Greek philosophers conceived of εὐδαιμονία, *E.L.*]...What is notable in Plutarch is not his adherence to these attitudes, but his tacit modifications of them. These come from the emphasis laid in all his moral judgments on mildness and humanity, πραότης and φιλανθρωπία; these are qualities which, even if practiced in a self regarding sense, involve at least some degree of understanding for the feelings and aims of others. What we may call Plutarch's social ethics displays this in many ways...<sup>403</sup>

Russell connects Plutarch’s primary philosophical virtue of “humanity” with his political action and approach to politics in his writings:

What is...advocated for the subject Greeks [in the *Praec. ger. reipub.*], and with emphasis on their weakness, is also something that in Plutarch's view is to be commended among all conditions of men in and in all ages. Kindness, and all the gentler and more humane forms of ἀρετή, are of the essence of the good life.

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<sup>403</sup> Russell, 89-90



Without them, courage becomes mere aggressiveness and ends in brutality. This is a recurrent theme of the *Lives*...<sup>404</sup>

For Fields also, a compromise between philosophical principles and pragmatic, humanistic concerns is characteristic of his work. She notes that “the tension between philosophical ideals and...pragmatism that frames Plutarch's advice to public figures throughout his corpus” can be associated with “Plutarch's self-fashioning as a philosopher and the conventional power structures from which he benefits as a member of the provincial elite.”<sup>405</sup> This effort is not only out of concern for his own position, however. His concerns always throughout his work are to better help and protect his community, as we have seen. Plutarch’s emphasis on realism and concord, and his view that virtues like parrhesia and philia must be used not only for private but for civic benefit, would have defined how conducted himself in his role as an ambassador and a philosopher for his community.

Surveying some of Plutarch’s politically oriented works in the *Moralia* confirms the basic humanism and pragmatism of his approach to politics, and it will be helpful to examine some of them here and analyze what they have to say about his attitude towards his own public life and its ambassadorial roles. My choice of which political works to examine is admittedly arbitrary, and my conclusions are various and sometimes tentative—as well as being focused on different aspects of politics and political relationships—but these are all works that I think have something important to contribute to our understanding of Plutarch’s view of the Roman empire and his own communication with it. I will examine these works in the following order: *Quomodo*

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<sup>404</sup> Ibid., 97-8

<sup>405</sup> Fields, 177

*adulator ab amico internoscatur, De exilio, Praecepta gerendae reipublicae, An seni respublica gerenda sit, and Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum.*

Field argues convincingly that *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* is a political treatise, mainly because it seems to analyze relationships where the stakes are made out to be very high, and even a small *faux pas* can have disastrous consequences.<sup>406</sup> I agree with her that while this essay is not explicitly about politics, it is primarily concerned with the kind of delicate interactions required in political and diplomatic interactions. It was dedicated to C. Julius Antiochus Philopappus, a nobleman descended from the last Hellenistic kings of Commagene who had a successful political career in both Athens and Rome.<sup>407</sup> The first part of the essay (48e-65e), dealing with flattery (κολακεία), is focused mainly on responding to those who are your inferiors while the second part (65f-74e), dealing with parrhesia, is focused on conversing with social superiors and with political leaders.

In this essay, as I have mentioned above, Plutarch describes parrhesia as a sort of tool to be used for the public good rather than as an absolute that is virtuous for its own sake. Excessive frankness with your superiors can “deliver them over...to the flatterers” (66b: τοῖς κόλαξι...παραδίδωσιν)<sup>408</sup> for relief, an argument that takes on political significance when so many of the examples of the most and least astute uses of parrhesia have to do with admonishing rulers and generals. He compares parrhesia with medicine, introducing a couple of anecdotes in which Philip of Macedon and Hiero of Syracuse are corrected by their interlocutors in gentle and not-so-gentle ways:

Just as a certain orderliness and neatness should pervade the work of a surgeon

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<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 141

<sup>407</sup> Puech, 4872; he was made a senator and eventually suffect consul.

<sup>408</sup> All translations from *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* are taken from Babbitt.

when he performs an operation, but his hand should forbear all dancing and reckless motions, all flourishes and superfluity of gesticulation, so frankness has plenty of room for tact and urbanity, if such graciousness does not impair the high office of frankness... (*Mor.* 67e-f; trans. Babbitt, 359)

ὥσπερ γὰρ ἰατροῦ σάρκα τέμνοντος εὐρυθμίαν τινὰ δεῖ καὶ καθαριότητα τοῖς ἔργοις ἐπιτρέχειν, ὀρχηστικὴν δὲ καὶ παράβολον καὶ περιτρέχουσαν ὑγρότητα καὶ περιεργίαν ἀπεῖναι τῆς χειρός, οὕτως ἡ παρρησία δέχεται τὸ ἐπιδέξιον καὶ τὸ ἀστεῖον, ἂν ἡ χάρις τὴν σεμνότητα σφῶζῃ... (67e-f)

After all, people who are insulted by your parrhesia, especially in the presence of others, can succumb to “morbid thoughts” (71a: νόσημα...πάθος) and become destructive or ineffective. The examples used throughout to illustrate these principles are almost all political interactions. Frankness used heedlessly and without skill can even lead to your death, while accomplishing nothing because it is “offensive” (λυπηρός) (68a-b). He takes an approach that is both eclectic and humanist, citing philosophers from various schools (but not the Stoics!) as he makes the case for tactful frankness—handling people delicately and with a view towards improving their disposition.<sup>409</sup> Because most of the anecdotes revolve around dealings with powerful people, this definitely can give us an idea of what his own version of parrhesia in a diplomatic context would have looked like. It is also significant that he makes clear throughout that a good understanding of flattery and frankness are essential for the public good, since he dwells on how they can lead to the corruption or improvement of leaders respectively. Flattery is seen as a *public* menace: “flattery does not attend upon the...obscure...but makes itself a stumbling block and pestilence in great houses and great affairs, oftentimes overturning kingdoms and principalities.” (49c: τὴν κολακείαν ὀρῶμεν οὐ ...ἀδόξοις ...ἀκολουθοῦσαν, ἀλλ’

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<sup>409</sup> See 69c-d and 70c for examples of Cynics behaving tactfully and relatively reasonably with difficult superiors (although Plutarch has some reservations about the latter example). See 70f for an anecdote of Pythagoras lamenting the suicide of a young man he had criticized in front of others, and his resolve to never criticize anyone in company again.

οἴκων τε καὶ πραγμάτων μεγάλων ὀλίσθημα καὶ νόσημα γιγνομένην, πολλάκις δὲ καὶ βασιλείας καὶ ἡγεμονίας ἀνατρέπουσαν). He dwells on this aspect of flattery at length. This concern for the public good is of a piece with Plutarch's emphasis throughout his philosophical corpus both on the necessity of political engagement and the value of conciliatory approaches.

Plutarch's consolation piece *De exilio*, dedicated to a Greek nobleman of Sardis,<sup>410</sup> dates from after the reign of Domitian and stands in a long tradition of ancient Greek philosophical 'consolations' on exile.<sup>411</sup> The essay argues, of course, that exile is a welcome escape from public duties and cares, but the whole work has the empty feel of a rhetorical exercise when one considers how dedicated Plutarch was to his hometown and how attached he was to his honors there. However, as routine and clichéd as the consolation genre can be, it does give us some insight into Plutarch's political life (the dedicatee was probably of comparable rank to Plutarch in his city and had similar responsibilities<sup>412</sup>), in particular the downsides of his civic duties, which he naturally emphasizes since the essay is a consolation on loss of citizenship. No more sudden "special levy" at a moment's notice, Plutarch says, or demands that you "entertain the governor" or "take on an embassy to Rome" (602c: εἰσένεγκε, πρέσβευσον εἰς Ῥώμην, ὑπόδεξαι τὸν ἡγεμόνα).<sup>413</sup> No more fellow citizens showing up to "entreat us to go surety for them, or help in canvassing an election" (603f: τις... οὐκ ἐγγυήσασθαι παρακαλῶν οὐ συναρχαιρεσιάσαι).<sup>414</sup> He can find a place where no "magistrate or

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<sup>410</sup> It may be the same man, Menemachus, to whom he dedicated the *Praec. ger. reipub.* (Puech, 4859.)

<sup>411</sup> Opsomer, 286-9

<sup>412</sup> He seems to be writing about a city politician of own level, and Menemachus was a person of similar status at Sardis (Jones 1971, 110-11).

<sup>413</sup> All translations of the *De exilio* are taken from DeLacy.

<sup>414</sup> cf 604b-c

governor disrupts the customary tenor of life” (604d: μήτ’ ἄρχοντος μήθ’ ἡγεμόνος τὴν συνήθη δίαίταν περισπῶντος), and no longer worry about “commands from the governor or ministrations to the needs of countrymen and public services that are difficult to decline” (602f: οὐδὲ προσταγμάτων ἡγεμονικῶν οὐδ’ ὑπουργιῶν ἐν πολιτικαῖς χρείαις καὶ λειτουργιῶν δυσπαραιτήτων). It is significant that he sees his public life as primarily ambassadorial—and therefore focused on the public good, rather than on keeping order or accruing honors. He dwells on this part of public life, whether it involves interfacing with the proconsul (frequently mentioned) or undertaking embassies.

But there is another way in which Plutarch’s *De exilio* reflects a more moderate, conciliatory take on his subject. Whitmarsh has noted how the genre of the consolation relies on “language of exile [that] implies a polemical engagement with Roman power,” and how the “vaunted transcendence of humiliation and suffering imposed by exile advertises the philosopher’s superiority to imperial domination.”<sup>415</sup> Exile became a badge of honor for courageous philosophers to the point that Philostratus actually accuses Dio Chrysostom of claiming the reputation of a courageous exile when he was not ever actually an exile at all.<sup>416</sup> Plutarch’s *De exilio* completely eschews this belligerent and self-important framing of exile. His references to the annoyances of difficult governors are very mild,<sup>417</sup> depicting them as only as an irritation rather than as a threat to one’s freedom and dignity, and he does not reference the imperial administration as oppressive, only as one of the many factors one has to deal with in public life. He presents the exile simply as an equal who has suffered a misfortune, one not so severe as others, but still

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<sup>415</sup> Whitmarsh 2001a, 275

<sup>416</sup> *Vit. Soph.* 488, Whitmarsh 2001b, 239

<sup>417</sup> 602c-f

regrettable.<sup>418</sup> Nowhere does he present the exile or his suffering as a repudiation of the community that exiled him or of the tyranny of the imperial government.

Plutarch's essay on how to conduct a successful political life, the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae*, is a useful source on the realities of a political career and on the relations between Achaean local governments and the Roman state in Plutarch's own time (this in spite of its frequent digressions on figures from both Greek and Roman history). Besides the specific bits of information about his own political situation and duties, he conveys an overarching ambassadorial purpose to his political activities—one directed both at representing his own people to Rome, and presenting Roman authority to his own people. This work is addressed to Menemachus of Sardis (the possible addressee of the *De exilio*), a wealthy Greek provincial politician and nobleman.<sup>419</sup> It is significant that he offers his advice here specifically as a philosopher, not a 'secular' advisor. He wants to teach Menemachus about "a philosopher's life in the open among affairs of State and public conflicts" (798b: ἀνδρὸς φιλοσόφου βίον ὑπαιθρον ἐν πράξεσι πολιτικαῖς καὶ δημοσίοις ἀγῶσι),<sup>420</sup> and its proper conduct, rather than simply give practical, or even cynical, counsel.

The details of political life that we encounter in this treatise resonate with issues we have been considering in Plutarch's thought relating to parrhesia, philosophical integrity, pragmatism, and public service. The view of parrhesia that he takes here is extremely compromised from a more traditional, Socratic perspective:

When the populace are suspicious about some important and salutary measure, the statesmen, when they come to the assembly, ought not all to express the same opinion, as if by previous agreement, but two or three of the friends should dissent

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<sup>418</sup> 607a

<sup>419</sup> Puech, 4859

<sup>420</sup> All translations of *Praec. ger. rep.* that follow are taken from Fowler.

and quietly speak on the other side, then change their position as if they had been convinced; for in this way they draw the people along with them, since they appear to be influenced only by the public advantage. (813b; trans. Fowler, 233-4)

ἀλλ' ὅταν ὑπόπτως ἔχωσιν οἱ πολλοὶ πρὸς τι πρᾶγμα καὶ μέγα καὶ σωτήριον, οὐ δεῖ πάντας ὥσπερ ἀπὸ συντάξεως ἤκοντας τὴν αὐτὴν λέγειν γνώμην, ἀλλὰ καὶ δύο καὶ τρεῖς διαστάντας ἀντιλέγειν ἡρέμα τῶν φίλων, εἴθ' ὥσπερ ἐξελεγχομένους μετατίθεσθαι· συνεφέλκονται γὰρ οὕτω τὸν δῆμον, ὑπὸ τοῦ συμφέροντος ἄγεσθαι δόξαντες

This is typical of his attitude to public speaking throughout the essay; he focuses on manipulating the crowds—for the public good, of course—in elaborate ways, such as pretending to be less well-spoken than one truly is, or using maxims in appropriate ways, or tailoring your speeches to the “natural character” (799c: ὑποκειμένοις ἤθεσιν) of the people of your city (i.e. whether for the emotional Athenians or for the more obedient Boeotians, etc...).<sup>421</sup>

His attitudes about parrhesia in more private consultations with political partners or superiors are equally equivocal: one must “avoid harshness and bitterness of speech” (808f: τοῦ λόγου τὴν τραχύτητα καὶ πικρίαν) when asked for an unreasonable favor, and the statesman “should reject base and absurd requests not harshly but gently, informing the askers by way of consolation that the requests are not in accord with their own excellence and reputation” (808d-e: τὰς δὲ φαύλας καὶ ἀτόπους ἀξιώσεις ἀποτριβεσθαι μὴ πικρῶς ἀλλὰ πράως, διδάσκοντα καὶ παραμυθούμενον ὡς οὐκ ἄξιοι τῆς ἐκείνων ἀρετῆς εἰσι καὶ δόξης). When it comes to political adversaries, the statesman should approach “those who are...out of harmony...like skillful musician, [and he should bring them] into unison by gently tightening or relaxing the strings of his control, not by attacking angrily and insultingly those who err...” (809e: τοὺς δ' ἄλλως

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<sup>421</sup> 802f; 803a; 799c-d; 799e-f; for the lengthy section on giving speeches as a statesman in general, see 801c-804c.

ἀπάδοντας ὡσπερ ἀρμονικὸν ἐπιτείνοντα καὶ χαλῶντα πράως εἰς τὸ ἐμμελὲς ἄγειν, μὴ τοῖς ἀμαρτάνουσι σὺν ὀργῇ καὶ πρὸς ὕβριν ἐπιφυόμενον).

He repeatedly returns to embassies as one of the most prestigious and important duties of a statesman.<sup>422</sup> They “demand a man of ardent temperament and one who possesses both courage and intellect” (805a-b: πρεσβεῖαι πρὸς αὐτοκράτορα ἀνδρὸς διαπύρου καὶ θάρσος ἅμα καὶ νοῦν ἔχοντος δεόμενοι). The greatest pleasure in life is interceding successfully on behalf of your community, Plutarch says (814d). Speaking of various conflicts that provincial communities have had with Augustus, Vespasian and Domitian, he praises the true statesman as the savior in these situations, whom you will never see

throwing blame upon others and putting himself out of danger, but you will see him serving on embassies, sailing the seas and...even though he had no part in the wrongdoing of the people, taking dangers upon himself in their behalf. For this is noble... (815d-e; trans. Fowler, 247)

οὐδ’ αἰτιώμενον ἑτέρους αὐτὸν δὲ τῶν δεινῶν ἔξω τιθέμενον, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρεσβεύοντα καὶ πλέοντα... κὰν τῆς ἀμαρτίας μὴ μετάσχη τοῖς πολλοῖς, τοὺς κινδύνους ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἀναδεχόμενον. καὶ γὰρ καλὸν τοῦτο...

However, it is the way that the essay presents the Greek politician as an ambassador to his people on behalf of Rome, and the way that this ties into his philosophical thinking about concord and hierarchy, that is most striking:

...when we see little children trying playfully to bind their fathers’ shoes on their feet or fit their crowns upon their heads, we only laugh, but the officials in the cities, when they foolishly urge the people to imitate the deeds, ideas and actions of their ancestors, however unsuitable they may be to the present times and conditions, stir up the common folk and, though what they do is laughable, what is done to them [by the Roman imperial officials] is no laughing matter, unless they are merely treated with utter contempt. Indeed, there are many acts of the Greeks of former times by recounting which the statesman can mould and correct the characters of our contemporaries, for example, at Athens by calling to mind, not deeds in war, but such things as the decree of amnesty after the downfall of

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<sup>422</sup> 804e; 812e; 815d; 816d; 819a



the thirty tyrants...By emulating acts like these it is even now possible to resemble our ancestors, but Marathon, the Eurymedon, Plataea and all other examples which make the common fold vainly swell with pride and kick up their heels, should be left to the schools and sophists. (814a-c: trans. Fowler, 239-40)

Τὰ μὲν γὰρ μικρὰ παιδία τῶν πατέρων ὀρώντες ἐπιχειροῦντα τὰς κρηπίδας ὑποδεῖσθαι καὶ τοὺς στεφάνους περιτίθεσθαι μετὰ παιδιᾶς γελῶμεν, οἱ δ' ἄρχοντες ἐν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀνοήτως τὰ τῶν προγόνων ἔργα καὶ φρονήματα καὶ πράξεις ἀσυμμέτρους τοῖς παροῦσι καιροῖς καὶ πράγμασιν οὔσας μιμεῖσθαι κελεύοντες ἐξαίρουσι τὰ πλήθη, γέλωτά τε ποιοῦντες οὐκέτι γέλωτος ἄξια πάσχουσιν, ἂν μὴ πάνυ καταφρονηθῶσι. πολλὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ἄλλα τῶν πρότερον Ἑλλήνων διεξιόντα τοῖς νῦν ἠθοποιεῖν καὶ σωφρονίζειν, ὡς Ἀθήνησιν ὑπομιμνήσκοντα μὴ τῶν πολεμικῶν, ἀλλ' οἷόν ἐστι τὸ ψήφισμα τὸ τῆς ἀμνηστίας ἐπὶ τοῖς τριάκοντα... ταῦτα γὰρ καὶ νῦν ἔξεστι ζηλοῦντας ἐξομοιοῦσθαι τοῖς προγόνοις· τὸν δὲ Μαραθῶνα καὶ τὸν Εὐρυμέδοντα καὶ τὰς Πλαταιάς, καὶ ὅσα τῶν παραδειγμάτων οἰδεῖν ποιεῖ καὶ φρυάττεσθαι διακενηῖς τοὺς πολλούς, ἀπολιπόντας ἐν ταῖς σχολαῖς τῶν σοφιστῶν.

In fact, a main function of the Greek statesman, in Plutarch's thinking, is to constantly be on guard against any anti-Roman feeling and try to smother it when it occurs—he emphasizes this much more than mollifying Roman proconsuls towards his own community. In discussing previous instances when Greek cities have defied Roman power, he says (in the context of an extended nautical simile) that when there is unrest in the city the statesman must “employ his frankness of speech as a sacred anchor” to calm the community and conciliate it to Roman rule (815c-d: ὡσπερ ἄγκυραν ἱερὰν ἀράμενον...τὴν παρρησίαν). The statesman must make sure that the state is “blameless towards our rulers” (814c: πρὸς τοὺς ἡγεμόνας ἀναίτιον) and “readily obedient to our sovereigns” (814e: τοῖς κρατοῦσιν εὐπειθῆ). In several extended examples he compares the people of the city to domestic animals (horses, dogs, bees) that must be finessed into accepting and appreciating the current government's control and its benefits (821a-b, 823f, 800c). In this way, Plutarch's ideal statesman takes on the role of an ambassador *for* the Roman state who promotes the message of concord under Roman rule. This

emphasis on concord (816a: ὁμοφροσύνη, 824d: ὁμόνοια),<sup>423</sup> furthered by the diplomatic and conciliatory role of the philosopher statesman, is never presented as just a matter of self-interest or expedience. It is associated with Plutarch's most fundamental ideas about political philosophy and most exalted notions of Roman imperial rule, and allows him, as a philosopher, to participate in the most idealized conception of the Platonic state—where the various segments of the population participate in a cosmic order.

The essay *An seni respublica gerenda sit*, which encourages old men to remain politically active, was dedicated to an Athenian politician named Euphanes, whom Plutarch probably met as a fellow representative in the Amphictyonic League.<sup>424</sup> This essay also provides a mixture of anecdotal evidence for the political norms and expectations of Plutarch's day along with philosophical underpinnings and ideals of political activity. The philosopher-statesman's ability to promote concord is once again an important theme. The philosopher statesman shall act as a “kind of umpire” and “endeavor to do away with contention” (795a: οἶον Βραβεύων...ἀφαιρῶν φιλονεικίας).<sup>425</sup> The Stoic conception of public service as a duty seems to be referenced and endorsed when Plutarch affirms that “nature leads” the man who is a member of a community to be involved in its political life (791d: ἡ φύσις ἄγει) (Plutarch's larger project of advocating for Platonism against Stoicism impels him to appropriate some Stoic ideas in a way that seems curious and eclectic; he is eager to prove that Platonism is not only as good an affiliation for a politically active nobleman as Stoicism is, but even

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<sup>423</sup> For the sections of the essay focused specifically on concord, see 816a-e and 824d-825f.

<sup>424</sup> Puech, 2829; he was twice Archon and served on the Areopagus council.

<sup>425</sup> All translations from *An seni* are taken from Fowler.

better because it is less rigid and more realistic and conciliatory.<sup>426</sup>)

A central premise of the work is the idea that the true statesman never stops being a statesman (hence the need to continue the work in old age). In an interesting passage, he compares the philosopher's constant quest to impart wisdom to others and better his fellow citizens with the statesman's continuous imperative to do the same:

But above all things we must remind them that statesmanship consists, not only in holding office, being ambassador, vociferating in the assembly and ranting round the speakers' platform proposing laws and making motions. Most people think all of this is part of statesmanship, just as they think of course that those are philosophers who sit in a chair and converse and prepare their lectures over their books; but the continuous practice of statesmanship and philosophy, which is every day alike seen in acts and deeds, they fail to perceive... Now being a statesman is like being a philosopher. Socrates at any rate was a philosopher, although he did not set out benches or seat himself in an armchair or observe a fixed hour for conversing with his pupils, but jested with them, when it so happened, and drank with them... He was the first to show that life at all times and in all parts in all experiences and activities, universally admits philosophy. So this is what we must understand concerning statesmanship also: that foolish men, even when they are generals or secretaries or public orators, do not act as statesmen, but court the mob, deliver harangues, arouse factions, or under compulsion perform public services; but that the man who is really public-spirited and who loves mankind and the State and is careful of public welfare... is always acting as a statesman by urging on those who have power, guiding those who need guidance, assisting those who are deliberating, reforming those who act wrongly, encouraging those who are right minded... (796c-f; trans. Fowler, 145-6)

Παρά πάντα δὲ ταῦτα χρὴ μνημονεύειν, ὥς οὐκ ἔστι πολιτεύεσθαι μόνον τὸ ἄρχειν καὶ πρεσβεύειν καὶ μέγα βοᾶν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ περὶ τὸ βῆμα βακχεύειν λέγοντας ἢ γράφοντας, ἃ οἱ πολλοὶ τοῦ πολιτεύεσθαι νομίζουσιν, ὥσπερ ἀμέλει καὶ φιλοσοφεῖν τοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ δίφρου διαλεγομένους καὶ σχολὰς ἐπὶ βιβλίοις περαίνοντας· ἢ δὲ συνεχῆς ἐν ἔργοις καὶ πράξεσιν ὀρωμένη καθ' ἡμέραν ὁμαλῶς πολιτεία καὶ φιλοσοφία λέληθεν αὐτούς... ὅμοιον δ' ἐστὶ τῷ φιλοσοφεῖν τὸ πολιτεύεσθαι. Σωκράτης γοῦν οὔτε βάθρα θείσιν οὔτ' εἰς θρόνον καθίσας οὔθ' ὥραν διατριβῆς ἢ περιπάτου τοῖς γνωρίμοις τεταγμένην φυλάττων, ἀλλὰ καὶ συμπαίζων, ὅτε τύχοι, καὶ συμπίνων

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<sup>426</sup> *De tranquill anim.* 472a: ἀλλ' ἐνιοὶ τοὺς μὲν Στωικούς οἴονται παίζειν, ὅταν ἀκούσωσι τὸν σοφὸν παρ' αὐτοῖς μὴ μόνον φρόνιμον καὶ δίκαιον καὶ ἀνδρεῖον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ῥήτορα καὶ ποιητὴν καὶ στρατηγὸν καὶ πλούσιον καὶ βασιλέα προσαγορευόμενον, αὐτοὺς δὲ πάντων ἀξιοῦσι τούτων, κἂν μὴ τυγχάνωσιν, ἀνιῶνται. He goes on to say that not all statesmen are good at everything, and they need to work together to take advantage of each others strengths.

...ἐφιλοσόφει. πρῶτος ἀποδείξας τὸν βίον ἅπαντι χρόνῳ καὶ μέρει καὶ πάθει καὶ πράγμασιν ἀπλῶς ἅπασι φιλοσοφίαν δεχόμενον. οὕτω δὴ διανοητέον καὶ περὶ πολιτείας, ὡς τοὺς μὲν ἀνοήτους, οὐδ' ὅταν στρατηγῶσιν ἢ γραμματεύωσιν ἢ δημηγορῶσι, πολιτευομένους ἀλλ' ὀχλοκοποῦντας ἢ πανηγυρίζοντας ἢ στασιάζοντας ἢ λειτουργοῦντας ἀναγκαίως· τὸν δὲ κοινωνικὸν καὶ φιλόανθρωπον καὶ φιλόπολιν καὶ κηδεμονικὸν καὶ πολιτικὸν ἀληθῶς... πολιτευόμενον αἰεὶ τῷ παρορμᾶν τοὺς δυναμένους, ὑψηγεῖσθαι τοῖς δεομένοις, συμπαρεῖναι τοῖς βουλευομένοις, διατρέπειν τοὺς κακοπραγμονοῦντας, ἐπιρρωννύειν τοὺς εὐγνώμονας...

Here we see philosophical discussion and political activity are motivated by exactly the same 'public-spirited' (φιλόπολις) drive to improve the community. The correlation of the modern statesman with Socrates in this way shows a real break with more traditional conceptions of Socrates as the ultimate independent, outsider (and we shall see that Themistius also used Socrates—especially Socrates' military and political activities—as an endorsement of his own political career). However, it fits in well with Plutarch's project: to claim politics as the proper sphere of the philosopher, and affirm the philosophical value of statesmanship. The promotion of peaceful agreement and concord here is once again evidence of the diplomatic and conciliatory role of the philosopher statesmen in Plutarch's thinking.

The addressee of *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* is not known. Plutarch, who mediated between his own people and the Roman empire throughout his whole career would be expected to promote the idea that philosophers could improve the whole of the world by influencing powerful men, and this idea was, of course, a commonplace in antiquity. He again, as so often, connects philosophy with a desire to serve the public, and says that "philosophy strives to make everything that it touches active" and impels men to action, and to want to influence "a soul which he sees is solicitous for many and is under obligation to be wise and self-restrained and just in behalf of many" (776c-d: ὁ τῆς φιλοσοφίας λόγος...ἐνεργὰ βούλεται ποιεῖν ... ψυχῆς

ἐπιμελήσεται προθυμότερον, ἦν ὑπὲρ πολλῶν φροντίζουσιν ὄρα καὶ πολλοῖς φρονεῖν καὶ σωφρονεῖν καὶ δικαιοπραγεῖν ὀφείλουσαν).<sup>427</sup> The philosopher who seeks seclusion is mistaken, wasting the knowledge that he could use to benefit mankind (776f-777a). Plutarch anticipates the charge the ‘flattery’ that may be made against someone who is pleasant to a ruler, but says that suffering such an accusation is worth it if one is able to advance the public good by influencing a leader for the better. The philosopher will “cherish” (ἀγαπᾶν) great men, and he won’t “be afraid of being called a courtier and a toady” (778b: οὐδὲ φοβήσεται τὸ αὐλικὸς ἀκοῦσαι καὶ θεραπευτικός). It is significant here that he also defends a fairly circumspect approach to parrhesia in the presence of rulers, so as to avoid ‘annoying’ them unduly (778b: οὐκ ἐνοχλῶν).

In Plutarch’s massive collection of biographies, the *Parallel Lives*, he is addressing one of the most powerful men in the Roman empire of his time. These works were dedicated to Q. Sossius Senecio, a Roman politician and general about twenty years younger than Plutarch who was at his most powerful under Trajan. Plutarch probably received the *ornamenta consularia* and other honors that he received under Trajan with Sossius Senecio’s help.<sup>428</sup> This collection of essays may seem too large and multifaceted to ascribe any definite “purpose” to, but there is a philosophical as well as didactic tone in much of its content. Swain has argued that the *Parallel Lives* is didactic and continues a message started by Plutarch in *De profectibus in virtute*, partially intended to promote Platonism over Stoicism.<sup>429</sup> Beyond any personal type of message to his dedicatee, however, it reflects the tendency in Plutarch’s writing to promote connections and correlations between Greek and Roman cultures. In fact, it has been argued that the

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<sup>427</sup> Translations of *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* are taken from Fowler.

<sup>428</sup> Puech, 4883

<sup>429</sup> Swain 1996, 145

*Parallel Lives* themselves are a sort of embassy to both Romans and Greeks: “I believe,” says Teodorsson

that one of the predominating objectives of Plutarch...as a writer was to bring Greeks and Romans in still closer contact and to increase the mutual understanding and feeling of affinity... [Plutarch] aimed at bringing about a synthesis and integration that would reshape and convert Greeks and Romans into true Graeco- Roman citizens.<sup>430</sup>

We don't have the introduction to the *Lives*, which is where you would expect a programmatic statement about the *Lives* intent. Jones disagrees that there was a “diplomatic purpose” to the collection, and thinks they are “purely ethical”: “He did not write to bridge a gap between Greeks and Romans, because in his society there was none.”<sup>431</sup> Also, the mixing of Greek and Roman culture in his *exempla* and his thinking is found all throughout the *Moralia* as well as in the structure of the *Parallel Lives*, so we either must conclude that all of his works had a diplomatic purpose, or perhaps none.

At the outset of the Second Sophistic philosophers became ever more involved with Roman government and politics, and in Plutarch we have a Platonic philosopher, perhaps the first Platonic philosopher, who explicitly considered his political role to be not only compatible with philosophical life, but an integral, essential part of it. The emphasis on pragmatism and humanism in his approach to politics and philosophy dictated a mediating, communitarian commitment to using his position, resources, and knowledge to promote concord in his society. In a sense, he was an ambassador continuously throughout his career, interfacing between the Roman imperial administration and his community as a diplomat at Rome on behalf of Greece, as a representative of the Roman government to his own people at home, as a peacemaker

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<sup>430</sup> Teodorsson, 438; see also C.P. Jones (1971, 103-5) for a discussion of this issue.

<sup>431</sup> C.P. Jones 1971, 107

between factions in his own city, and, in his writing, as sort cultural ambassador combining and relating Greek and Roman history. The imperial culture that he was exposed to in his youth when Ammonius took him to Delphi to pay homage to Nero—both as an emperor and a citharode—and its particular blend of benevolent autocracy and the cooperation of provincial elites, was a model of government and an ideology that he was dedicated to promoting for the rest of his life, not least in his role as an influential philosopher-ambassador.

## Chapter V

### Themistius: The emperor's ambassador

Ἀκούεις δὲ καὶ Ἡρακλέα τὸν τοῦ Διὸς ὅτι μὴ τῷ γινώσκειν ἀκριβῶς τοὺς περαντικούς λόγους καὶ τοὺς ἀπεράντους τοσοῦτος ἦν, ἀλλ' ὅτι ἐκώλυσε παρανομίαν, ὅτι μὴ συνεχώρησε τοῖς θηριώδεσι τῶν ἀνθρώπων χρῆσθαι τῇ φύσει. καὶ γὰρ τοίνυν τὸν Ἰόλεων ἐμιμησάμην, καὶ γέγονα χρόνον τινα ὑπουργὸς τῷ Καλλινίκῳ καὶ τῆς κοινῆς ἐστίας ἐπεμελήθην. οὐ περιείργασμαι, οὐδὲ ἔλαττον προσήκει τούτῳ ἔχειν ἢ εἰ τοῖς ἀβακίοις ἐνεκαρτέρησα. ἀλλὰ Πλάτων μὲν οὐ κατέβη τρις διαπλέων ὑπὲρ Δίωνος τὸν Ἴόνιον, οὐδὲ Ἀριστοτέλης ὑπὲρ Σταγείρων πεφροντικῶς, οὐδὲ Καρνεάδης οὐδὲ Κριτόλαος πρεσβεύοντες ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἀττικῆς·

You hear that Hercules the son of Zeus was such a great man, not because he made precise distinctions between conclusive and inconclusive arguments, but because he prevented lawlessness, [and] because he did not permit the bestial elements of human nature to prevail. I then imitated Iolaus [the supporter of Hercules] and have been for a time servant to the gloriously triumphant [Hercules], and had the common hearth [of Constantinople] in my care. I have not wasted my labor, nor is it less fitting for this to be the case than for me to have persevered with geometrical diagrams. Plato did not 'descend'<sup>432</sup> by sailing three times over the Ionian Sea for Dion, nor did Aristotle by taking thought for the people of Stageira, nor did Carneades nor Critolaus on their embassies for Attica. (*Oration* 34.28,<sup>433</sup> Trans. adapted from Heather & Moncur, 351)

Themistius' use of the embassy of Carneades and Critolaus as an *exemplum* at the close of *Oration* 34 is typical of the way in which he argued for his own prominence in the political life of Constantinople and closeness to several imperial administrations.

Themistius consistently uses the persona of the ancient philosopher-ambassador in his

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<sup>432</sup> This is a reference to an epigram of Palladas that ridiculed Themistius for 'descending' to public office (*Anth. Pal.* 11.292), which I will discuss later in this chapter.

<sup>433</sup> I have adopted the number of the *Orations* from Schenkl & Downey. This numbering differs in places from that on the TLG, so I have appended a list of the *Orations*, with their Greek titles, as numbered in Schenkl & Downey.



portrayal of his relationship with the city of Constantinople and its senate. It is an important part of his self-presentation as a philosopher involved in politics—and of his defense of a political involvement with the Roman imperial government that is actually much more extensive than any traditionally thought proper for a Greek philosopher (and certainly much more extensive than any thought proper by Hellenic philosophers in Themistius' own time). He was not, however, an actual ambassador for the Constantinopolitans, since the senate he ostensibly advocated for represented a much wider, imperial constituency, rather than a civic assembly, and since he was actually more an ambassador *to* the senate from the emperor rather than *from* the senate. In this way he represents the culmination a trend I have been tracing throughout this dissertation: the Hellenic philosopher-ambassador's development from an independent advocate for his community, with a special status in the presence of Roman power, to a much more powerful, but ultimately co-opted, symbolic figure with little autonomy. While the more traditional view among scholars is that Themistius was simply a panegyrist who used his status and eloquence to admonish or influence Roman emperors in subtle ways, more recent research argues that he functioned more as an active advocate for the emperor, an advocate whose primary audience was a pagan elite that needed to be reconciled to certain imperial policies of the new Christian government.<sup>434</sup> In this way, we see that he is the ultimate inversion of the traditional philosopher-ambassador, as his philosophical advice is simply a performance, and he represents the emperor's views to his community, rather than the other way around.

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<sup>434</sup> Heather & Moncur, xiv, 22-3, 31-2; Whitby, 181; On Themistius as an aide in formulating policy as well as advocating it, see Heather and Moncur (28, 35).

The structure of the chapter is as follows: I will first discuss how Themistius repeatedly justifies his role as a politician by opposing it to an exaggerated image of the withdrawn Iamblichan holy man, and how he further validated his political duties for the emperor by drawing a connection between his own career and the lives and works of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. We shall see that his depiction of himself as a philosopher-ambassador for his adopted polis, Constantinople, was an important part of how he correlated himself with those philosophers and established himself as their true heir. Next, I will summarize briefly his actual political career and the power and influence that he held under the various emperors of the east from Constantius II to Theodosius. This will lead into a look at the difficulties that he faced in defending his reputation as a philosopher from those who accused him of being a sophist or an imperial crony. Then, relying primarily on the work of Heather and Moncur, I will describe how his reputation as a politically active philosopher in the ancient tradition made him useful to a series of Christian emperors trying to maintain their relationship with the traditional Roman state and the pagan elite. Finally, I will end with a detailed look at *Oration 34* (Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιασαμένους ἐπὶ τῷ δέξασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν, ‘On those who have found fault with me for taking office’). This oration looks back at his entire political career and contains many of his usual defenses of his political role; his emphasis on his ambassadorial duties in the speech is notable and a discussion of this rounds out the chapter.

One cannot discuss Themistius’ political philosophy without reference to the dominant philosophical movement of his day, Iamblichan Neoplatonism. Themistius specifically defines his own political outlook as being one in opposition to the prevailing apolitical orientation of Neoplatonist philosophy. “From the beginning, as a young man,

I did not chose a philosophy that was in corners,” he declares (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐξ ἀρχῆς νέος ὢν τὴν ἐν ταῖς γωνίαις φιλοσοφίαν εἰλόμην) (*Or.* 34.12).<sup>435</sup> He is particularly praised for this view by Constantius in his letter to the Constantinopolitan senate, who says that Themistius “does not practice a solitary philosophy, but he shares out the benefit which he has painstakingly assembled with even greater pains...” by helping to govern the city (οὐ μέτεισι φιλοσοφίαν ἀκοινώνητον, ἀλλ’ ὁ μετὰ πόνου συνήγαγεν ἀγαθόν, τούτου σὺν πλείονι πόνῳ...μεταδίδωσι).<sup>436</sup> In fact, there is some evidence that the adherents to the mainstream philosophical orthodoxy of the time, such as Eunapius<sup>437</sup> and Julian, considered Themistius to be a sort of traitor to philosophical and religious ‘Hellenism’ as it was defined at this period,<sup>438</sup> not just because of his extensive involvement in the Roman imperial government of Christian emperors, as I will discuss below, but also because of his privileging of political involvement over private contemplation and personal divinization. This opposition in Platonism between the value of private contemplation and the value of political action to better one’s community is something that has been an issue for all of the philosopher-ambassadors in this study, except perhaps the mysterious Carneades (who likely would have refrained from judgment on the matter). As we shall see, Themistius traced his more politically active use of his status as a philosopher back to the examples of Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle in various ways, as well as to the example of the philosopher-statesmen of the Antonine

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<sup>435</sup> See also *Or.* 31.352b-c; *Or.* 34.3. On Themistius’ ‘active’ conception of philosophy and rejection of Neoplatonic seclusion, see also Daly 1983, 208-10; Penella 2000b, 198; Heather & Moncur, 4; O’Meara, 207; Smeal, 18.

<sup>436</sup> Trans. Heather & Moncur, 110

<sup>437</sup> Eunapius strangely does not include him in his *Vitae Sophistarum*. However, Penella suggests that Eunapius may have left Themistius out simply because he was not strictly associated with Iamblichan Neoplatonism, as most of the others sophists and philosophers he discusses were (Penella 1990, 136-9).

<sup>438</sup> *Hellenism* (Ἑλληνισμός) at this time was, in the East, not identified with the wider Greco-Roman civilization but with paganism (Bowersock 1990, 9-10), and especially a paganism closely connected with Iamblichan Neoplatonism.

period.

The fourth century Neoplatonists' views were quite different from those of Themistius in this regard. Their view of the practice of philosophy was quite religious and personal, in an almost Christian way (i.e. in its asceticism and emphasis on an “individual relationship with a transcendent deity,” and a “sense of sect”).<sup>439</sup> Robert van den Berg points out that the “Neoplatonists remained largely invisible in the world of politics. Indeed, ‘liv[e] unnoticed,’ [λάθε βιώσας] once an Epicurean vice, was turned into a Pythagorean, and hence Platonic virtue.”<sup>440</sup> The true philosopher was considered naturally unable to converse in the language of the court: Eunapius describes how many in Julian's Neoplatonist circle were unsuited to politics because of their parrhesia, and their study of philosophy at the expense of politics.<sup>441</sup> In addition, hostility to Christianity was a bar to entering the imperial service for many. In his study of Eunapius' *Vitae sophistarum*, R. Penella concludes that “Eunapius will have seen the accepting of an official imperial office or title by men of learning as a clear-cut case of cooptation into the Roman order,” although service in Julian's court was forgivable.<sup>442</sup> The scholarly consensus that Neoplatonists scorned to be involved in politics has recently been challenged by D. O'Meara in his monograph *Platonopolis: Platonic political philosophy in Late Antiquity*,<sup>443</sup> and there is evidence that they were more actively involved in

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<sup>439</sup> Swain 2004, 361

<sup>440</sup> Van den Berg, 112

<sup>441</sup> Bradbury 1986, 20; Eunapius *VS* 502 (on Chrysanthius of Sardis); Eunapius Hist. frg. 19 (Dindorf, 225-6)(on Maximus of Ephesus and Priscus of Epirus); for more on Neoplatonism as apolitical: Matthews, VIII 176-7; Brauch 1993b, 87; Fowden, 33

<sup>442</sup> Penella 1990, 139; cf. Dragon, 53-4

<sup>443</sup> He finds that “[f]or Neoplatonists, doing politics is part of the purificatory process that helps the human soul escape the material world and reach out to the immaterial divine realm. The virtues that are developed by doing politics are those of Plato's Republic: temperance, courage, wisdom, and above all justice... *The means by which this is done, by private discussions as Socrates did, or politics as the Platonic philosopher-king would do, were considered to be of secondary importance*” (106), emphasis mine.

rhetorical education and practical studies than was previously thought, even in more contemplative schools.<sup>444</sup> The caricature of the Neoplatonist, however, was of a philosopher devoted mainly to the mystical union with the divine and engaged in solitary study with a few close companions.

This is the image from which Themistius sought to differentiate himself and his philosophy, and which he used in justifying his political career and his extensive, at times, political power in the Roman state. In doing so, he could both refute the claim that he was a toady to Christian emperors or a traitor to Hellenism, and at the same time tie his own activities to the ancient tradition represented by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle—claiming that his own political activities returned to their example while the Neoplatonist schools had fallen away from true philosophical engagement. He does this in various ways.

Socratic references abound in several of his orations, and often praise the philosopher for his public engagement with people from all walks of life and for his undertaking of the prytany at Athens and other public duties.<sup>445</sup> In *Oration 23*, one of several speeches he had to make in order to defend his government service,<sup>446</sup> he models much of his argument on the *Apology* of Socrates,<sup>447</sup> and even includes an anecdote of a “philosopher from Sicyon” who was so inspired by Themistius’ bestseller, the *Paraphrases* of Aristotle, that he sent all of his students to study with Themistius and

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<sup>444</sup> Heather and Moncur, 15. They cite evidence of a recently excavated Neoplatonic school in Aphrodisias with sculptures of Socrates opposite Alcibiades and Aristotle opposite Alexander, symbolizing both the politically active and contemplative sides of the admirable life. “[E]ven a dedicated Neoplatonist” they conclude, “needed to uphold the more general educational purposes of Hellenic philosophy.” Neoplatonic philosophy is associated with rhetoric in other sources as well (Swain 2004, 361; O’Meara, 209-11).

<sup>445</sup> cf. *Or.* 34.10; 17.215b

<sup>446</sup> See also *Or.* 26, *Or.* 29, *Or.* 34.

<sup>447</sup> Smeal, 28, 84ff: Smeal details the “striking imitation of Plato’s *Apology*” in *Or.* 23, and he discusses also the extensive references to it in *Or.* 26.

“when these young men resisted, he sent them to the...god [the oracle at Delphi]...to ask if...[Themistius’] understanding was better [than his own]. The god delivered the same judgment that he had given long ago regarding Socrates” (ἐπειδὴ ἠμφισβήτουν οἱ νεανίαι, πέμπει εἰς θεοῦ πεισομένους εἰ ἄρα ἄμεινόν τι ἐκεῖνος γινώσκει· καὶ φέρει τὴν αὐτὴν ψῆφον ὁ θεός, οἷαν πάλαι ἐπὶ Σωκράτην) (296a).<sup>448</sup> In *Oration 26*, he echoes the *Apology* as he accuses other philosophers and enemies of trying to legislate against his right of free speech in public assemblies, even though, as J. Smeal rightly points out, it is extremely improbable that his rights were really threatened given that he was a protégé of Constantius at the time.<sup>449</sup> In *Oration 28* he continues to equate his own political and social engagement with that of Socrates: “Gentlemen, I am trying, and I am eager, to restore Socrates’ descendents to their ancient condition” (Ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπιχειρῶ μὲν, ὧ ἄνδρες, καὶ προθυμοῦμαι εἰς τὴν τάξιν ἐπανάγειν αὐτοὺς τὴν ἀρχαίαν), he says, and asserts that

the descendants of Socrates [i.e. philosophers], in our day...have vanished and become nonentities--understandably and deservedly so. For they are fearful (I know not why) and wary of public assemblies...and they cannot bear to look away from their couches and secluded corners. They have completely forgotten that their forebears used to speak to crowds of people in workshops, porticoes, baths, and theatres<sup>450</sup>

Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ τῆς Σωκράτους γενεᾶς εἰκότως ἄρα καὶ ἐν δίκῃ ἀπεφθίκασι τε καὶ ἀπερρυήκασι ἐν τῷ παρόντι. οὐ γὰρ οἶδα ὅθεν φρίττουσι τε καὶ εὐλαβοῦνται τὰς ἀγοράς...καὶ οὐκ ἀνέχονται παρακύπτειν ἔξω τοῦ σκίμποδος καὶ τῆς γωνίας· οὕτως ἐκλελησμένοι εἰσὶ τῶν προγόνων, ὅτι ἐκεῖνοι ἐπὶ τῶν ἐργαστηρίων πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς διελέγοντο καὶ ἐν ταῖς στοαῖς καὶ ἐν τοῖς βαλανείοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις. (341d-342b)

In this way, he counters his critics’ ridicule of his philosophical influence and flattering

<sup>448</sup> *Or.* 23.294d-296c. See Penella 2000a, 123-4 for the translation and explanation of the passage with copious references. For speculation on the identity of this philosopher, see Vanderspoel (1987, 383-4).

<sup>449</sup> Smeal, 31-2; *Or.* 26.312d-313a

<sup>450</sup> Trans. Penella 2000a, 175-6; Cf. Daly 1972, 352; Downey 1958, 50; Vanderspoel 1995, 11

rhetoric by asserting that the alternative is an insular Neoplatonism that should be considered foreign to the philosophical tradition of Socrates.

Themistius' invokes Plato's philosophical ideas in a similar way. He attempts to draw a direct connection between Plato's philosophy and his own panegyrics by relying almost exclusively on Platonic terms of praise of the ideal king in his speeches for various emperors,<sup>451</sup> even while emphasizing the value of his praise as supposedly coming from a plain speaking philosopher (*Or.* 1.1, 3.41b, 5.63b<sup>452</sup>). As we read his orations, we find emperor after emperor praised in similar terms: as a Platonic philosopher-ruler.<sup>453</sup> He compares his situation as an advisor of Theodosius favorably to the position that Plato was in with Dionysius, Solon with Peisistratus, and Musonius with Nero (*Or.* 34.15).<sup>454</sup> He continually presents himself under diverse regimes as "the philosopher-counselor to the ideal philosopher-ruler"<sup>455</sup> and constructs an ideology of empire that relies primarily on Platonic rhetoric (and also on the use of Plato by Dio of Prusa<sup>456</sup>). As Bradbury puts it, "Themistius...deals in detail with the theme of the imperial hierarchy as a reflection of the divine hierarchy," a hierarchy of images (imperial officials are τὰς ἐμψύχους εἰκόνας) as compared to Platonic "ideas" (these officials reflect τὴν ἰδέαν τοῦ βασιλέως) (*Or.* 8.117d-118a).<sup>457</sup> In this approach to

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<sup>451</sup> Smeal, 52; See Heather & Moncur on how Themistius departs from the traditional pattern for a panegyric set out by Menandor Rhetor (9-10, 19-20).

<sup>452</sup> See Heather & Moncur for more on this theme of his panegyrics (159 n51).

<sup>453</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>454</sup> Daly 1983, 194

<sup>455</sup> Brauch 1993b, 113

<sup>456</sup> O'Meara, 207; Heather 1998b, 130; Heather & Moncur, 8; Dragon, 201-2

<sup>457</sup> Bradbury 1986, 48; Cf. *Or.* 1.9a-b: τοῦτο γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ θαυμάζειν αὐτόν, οὗτος ὁ μέγας ὕμνος, τοῦτο γέρας ἀληθινόν, τοῦτο πρέπον βασιλέως ἀνάθημα, οὐ χαλκῆν ἢ ἀργυρᾶν ἢ χρυσοῦν, ἀλλὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ ψυχὴν εἰκόνα θεοῦ κατεσκευάσθαι. ἐθέλει μὲν οὖν τοῦτο καὶ ὁ φιλόσοφος, ἀλλὰ τῆς δυνάμεως ἀπολειπόμενος πάμπαν χωλεύειν ἔοικε τὴν μορφήν. ("For this is what it is to admire Him, this the great hymn, this the true reward, this a fitting dedication for a king: to fashion not bronze, silver or gold, but his own soul into an image of God. The philosopher desires this too but, falling short in his power, seems altogether imperfect in the form [of that image].") Trans. Heather & Moncur, 86.)

kingship, he presents a more emphatic version of the conception of the Roman hierarchy as a divine order than Plutarch presented, and perhaps in this imagery he draws closer to the mainstream Neoplatonic outlook of his day (in this projection of the Platonic hierarchy of ideas onto actual political structures), but it is important that he draws these analogies in order to refute Neoplatonic philosophers, not to establish a common ground with them: he stresses repeatedly that it is a philosopher's duty to contribute to the divine order as it is represented on earth—that is, to serve the emperor and participate in government.<sup>458</sup> In defending against accusations of (presumably) having too much influence and being corrupt, he draws a comparison to tie his own receipt of imperial gifts to Plato's biography: "Don't people now inveigh against Plato, accusing him of having sailed to Sicily three times to get rich and enjoy fine food?" (Πλάτωνος δὲ οὐ μέχρι νῦν καταβοῶσιν ὡς τρίς πλεύσαντος εἰς Σικελίαν ἐπὶ χρήμασι καὶ τραπέζῃ;) (23.285c).<sup>459</sup> Once again, he establishes a connection between his own political activity and Plato's biography, while drawing a line that separates himself from the cloistered Neoplatonic caricature of his day.

Themistius' also emphasizes connections between his political activity and the philosophy of Aristotle, to the point that some scholars have identified him as a Peripatetic, although one with Platonizing tendencies.<sup>460</sup> It is true that his first major work, the one that made him a 'star' in the philosophical world, was his *Paraphrases* of

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<sup>458</sup> See, for example, *Or.* 5.63d-64a; 34.16; Penella 2000b, 200; Heather & Moncur, 4: "This belief in the importance of political participation, manifested in its fourth-century context in a belief in the divine legitimacy of the Roman state, distinguished Themistius from contemporary Neoplatonists." Cf. Heather & Moncur, 99: "Themistius' philosophical programme both implicitly and explicitly set itself up in direct opposition to the Neoplatonic holy man."

<sup>459</sup> Trans. Penella 2000a, 111

<sup>460</sup> Blumenthal, 123



Aristotle, which he described modestly as a sort of summary of Aristotle's arguments to aid the memory (*Or.* 23.294d-295a). He would have learned about Peripatetic philosophy from early on, as his father Eugenius was an Aristotelian scholar who wrote commentaries on his works.<sup>461</sup> Associating his pursuit of a political career and influence with the philosophy of Aristotle would have been fairly easy, since Aristotle advocated a more realistic attitude to political involvement than Plato. One might expect that he would use Aristotle as an *exemplum* differently than he did Plato, given the differences in their approach to politics. However, Themistius seems to see Aristotle as equivalent to Plato, and usually mentions them together, almost always emphasizing the essential unity of their philosophical outlook.<sup>462</sup> (It should be mentioned that Neoplatonists at this period were also very involved explicating the texts of Aristotle, and in efforts to interpret them as a sort of aid to reading Plato.<sup>463</sup>) In any case, Aristotle is, like Plato, presented by Themistius as an inspiration for his combination of contemplative philosophy and action, and his benefactions for Stageira and associations with rulers are used in the same way that Themistius uses the anecdotes of Plato's efforts with Dionysus (*Or.* 34.28), i.e. as efforts to put Platonic philosophical principles into practice (cf. *Or.* 34.5-6).

In drawing these correlations between his own career pursuits and the lives and work of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, he does not neglect to portray himself as fulfilling the 'civic' function, i.e. a representative or advocate on behalf of his community, that was so associated with many of the ancient philosophers of the Classical and Hellenistic period. He claims that his political activity signals a return to the 'ancient

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<sup>461</sup> Daly 1970, 11-12; *Or.* 20.243d, 287

<sup>462</sup> cf. *Or.* 21.258; 23.286; 26.325; 34.5-6

<sup>463</sup> Sorabji, 2-3

way' (τὴν τάξι...τὴν ἀρχαίαν) (*Or.* 28.342b), the true way of doing philosophy, which modern philosophers have abandoned.<sup>464</sup> In the rhetoric of Themistius, Constantinople is not an imperial capital, but a Greek polis that he humbly serves and hopes to improve.<sup>465</sup> He emphasizes his role as a mediator *on behalf* of the city, whether he is delivering a golden crown (the *aurum coronarium*, a sort of tax) to the emperor, or giving a speech in praise of a peace treaty (we shall see more of this rhetoric in detail when we look closely at *Oration* 34), this in spite of the fact that he was more a representative of the emperor to the senate than of the senate to the emperor (*Or.* 3.44b; 16.200c-d; 34.13). Furthermore, he depicts the senate of Constantinople, a group representing a variety of aristocrats from all over the empire and region-wide imperial interests, as the assembly of a classical polis.<sup>466</sup> In doing so, he drew on the tradition of the philosopher-ambassador, a tradition that was still very much respected in his time. “[C]ities had long employed philosophers for difficult embassies to Roman emperor,” Heather and Moncur note, “when some unwelcome truth had to be spelled out, exploiting their traditional right to freedom of speech (*parrhesia*)...their own personal bravery (*karteria*), and the greater tolerance that an emperor was expected to show them...These traditions had not yet lost their force in Themistius' day.”<sup>467</sup> In two separate speeches delivered thirty years apart, he reminds his audience that he successfully interceded with Constantius II in 357 to restore the *annona* (grain dole) of Constantinople to the level it had been set at before it was reduced as

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<sup>464</sup> Daly 1970, 28

<sup>465</sup> See Dragon (53) on how Themistius rejects the distinctions in terminology observed by his contemporaries that separate imperial service from service of the polis: “Au I<sup>er</sup> siècle, la sensibilité politique de l'hellénisme se situe encore, pour l'essentiel, dans cette distinction entre les πολιτευόμενοι et les ἄρχοντες. P. Petit a remarqué que le vocabulaire de Libanios ne laisse place à aucune confusion: les fonctions curiales s'expriment toujours par des mots formés à partir de πόλις et sont nettement opposées aux fonctions d'administration impériale, fonctions d'autorité désignées par des dérivées du verbe ἄρχειν.” He goes on to say that Themistius ignores this distinction and even reverses it at times.

<sup>466</sup> Heather & Moncur, 5

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, 21

punishment for a riot there in 342 (23.298b-d; 34.13)<sup>468</sup> Penella summarizes Themistius' attitude towards Constantinople in his speeches: "[H]e celebrated imperial benefactions to and love of the city, asked emperors to confirm its benefits and privileges, argued that the city enjoyed a special relationship with the emperor, and asked emperors to come to Constantinople."<sup>469</sup>

Themistius was politically active at a crucial time in the expansion of Constantinople's power and importance.<sup>470</sup> All the steps towards the elevation of Constantinople's status as an imperial capital, such as an expanded senate with greater significance, the designation of Constantinopolitan senators as *clarissimi* rather than *clari*, and the replacement of the city's proconsul with an urban prefecture similar to that of Rome, happened during Themistius' career, and he was substantially involved in these developments. He personally oversaw the selection of perhaps over a 1000 senators for the newly expanded senate,<sup>471</sup> and he certainly served as urban prefect once (maybe twice) and earlier was possibly a proconsul for Constantinople, as well as holding a leading role of the senate (perhaps with the title of *princeps sentatus*) for several years.<sup>472</sup>

In fact, Themistius attained more actual political power than any previous philosopher had under the Roman empire, and Vanderspoel has concluded that he was "[i]n some important ways...the most significant politician [in the East] outside of the

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<sup>468</sup> Smeal, 12, 180; It is alluded to in *Or.* 23 and specifically brought up thirty years later in *Or.* 34. The embassy in which he argued for the restoration of the *annona* at Constantinople (which had been cut in half) was the same one on which he delivered the *aurum coronarium* to Constantius at Rome.

<sup>469</sup> Penella 2000a, 2; cf. *Or.* 17.215a-c

<sup>470</sup> Heather 1994, 12; Vanderspoel 1995, 51-70

<sup>471</sup> Under Constantius, circa 358-61 C.E.; The senate seems to have expanded from 300 to 2000 members, but it is unclear how many were selected by Themistius (Heather 1994, 12).

<sup>472</sup> Vanderspoel 1996, 65-6, 105-6; on the controversy about his proconsulship, see Heather & Moncur (45-6).

emperors and their court officials during the period of his active service.”<sup>473</sup> Beginning with his adlection to the senate by Constantius II, he seems to have been a key figure in several successive administrations, and only under Julian, as I will discuss below, did he perhaps fall slightly out of imperial favor (although this is arguable). In spite of his efforts to model his image on that of philosophers in politics of the past, there was no denying that “[i]n the course of his career, Themistius went well beyond both the rhetorical and political parameters established by his predecessor for the socially active philosopher.”<sup>474</sup> The defensiveness of *Oration* 34, as we shall see, reflects rhetoric well exercised by a lifetime of attacks on his integrity as a philosopher because of his many political appointments.<sup>475</sup> The privileged position that he enjoyed under so many emperors in the east, even through thorny changes of regime and power struggles, is remarkable in itself. Themistius was able to “stay atop the greasy pole for over thirty years”<sup>476</sup> in Roman politics, and his influence went beyond the simple prerogative to praise and advise the emperors in panegyrics.

A brief chronology of his career is in order here. Themistius was ‘discovered’ at Ancyra by Constantius II in around 350 (when he delivered *Or.* 1: Περὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἢ Κωνσταντίου) and was subsequently adlected to the senate by him in 355. Themistius’ first important assignment was the selection of senators from all over the east to participate in the newly expanded Constantinopolitan senate under Constantius.<sup>477</sup> This project occupied him for perhaps one to three years, and by the time Constantius stopped the recruitment of new senators in 361, it is likely that the vast majority of the senators

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<sup>473</sup> Vandespoel 1995, 220; cf. Ando, 177

<sup>474</sup> Heather 1998b, 130

<sup>475</sup> Cf. *Or.* 17, 21 (on which see Penella [2000a, 14-16]), 23, 26, 28, 29, 31

<sup>476</sup> Heather & Moncur, 18

<sup>477</sup> See Heather (1994, 12) for the best discussion of the circumstances surrounding this.

owed their position to Themistius and had a personal connection with him on that basis. Several of Libanius' letters refer to the influence that Themistius had over his new contacts and the terms of their adlection. Libanius' requests on behalf of friends indicate that Themistius could adjust the fees and allow men to take on senatorial status without paying the full cost.<sup>478</sup> Libanius saw the recruitment of wealthy local men from cities around the east to the new senate of Constantinople as a negative development, it seems, and there may have been some friction between the two of them over the issue.<sup>479</sup> Cribiore describes how Libanius portrays Themistius' authority in his letters after this period: "[Themistius'] friends were friends to the gods, and his enemies were enemies to the gods themselves."<sup>480</sup> As a result of his role in the expansion of the senate, he was well placed throughout his career "to deliver the backing of a substantial block of senatorial opinion when imperial policy needed support."<sup>481</sup> He proudly points to his long running leadership role in the senate in *Oration 34* (13), and while it is unclear for how long or how many times he held the title of *princeps senatus* there, it is indisputable that he held a leading position in the Constantinopolitan senate for most of his thirty-year career.<sup>482</sup> He also may have held a proconsulship of Constantinople under Constantius, the last one appointed before the office was changed to the "urban prefecture" to mirror the administration of the city of Rome.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>478</sup> Heather & Moncur, 17, 47; Libanius, *Ep.* 70, 87, 40

<sup>479</sup> Penella 1990, 139

<sup>480</sup> Cribiore, 63; cf. Libanius *Ep.* 40: Οὐ σοὶ συγχαίρω μᾶλλον τοῦ τὴν πόλιν ἄγειν ἢ τῆ πόλει τοῦ παραδοῦναί σοι τὰς ἡνίας. σοὶ μὲν γὰρ οὐδὲν δεῖ δυνάμεως, τῆ δὲ ἡγεμόνος ἀγαθοῦ.

<sup>481</sup> Heather & Moncur, 35; See Heather (1998a, 188) on how this senatorial expansion may have helped to consolidate Constantius' base of support in the east, making Themistius an important ally in the very beginning of his sole reign after the defeat of Magnentius.

<sup>482</sup> Vanderspoel 1995, 107-6

<sup>483</sup> For various opinions on this see Vanderspoel (1995, 106), Penella (2000a, 19), Daly (1983, 178-9), Brauch (1993a, 41), and Kennedy (21).

With the accession of Julian, Themistius' career becomes obscure for a while.<sup>484</sup> This is likely because he was less important in Julian's administration, but it could also result from the simple fact that panegyrics to Julian would not have survived the preservation process, given the later historians' almost unanimous hatred of him. We have an essay by Julian called "The Letter to Themistius" which seems to be a slightly irritated reply<sup>485</sup> to a flattering letter written to him by Themistius earlier, and Julian certainly wrote it either before he became emperor or very shortly after he took office.<sup>486</sup> In the letter to Julian that occasioned it, Themistius seems to have spoken the typical language of panegyric, but Julian replies with a tone of frankness and modesty that seems to reproach Themistius for that tone, and pressure him to instead have a conversation "entre philosophes," as S. Bradbury puts it.<sup>487</sup> We also have a reference to a panegyric to Julian by Themistius in two of Libanius' letters.<sup>488</sup> A brief note in the *Suda* says he held an urban prefecture at Constantinople under Julian, but most scholars consider this impossible.<sup>489</sup> Finally, a mysterious treatise on good governance in Arabic called the *Risâlat* attributed to Themistius may be either a letter or panegyric to Julian (perhaps the panegyric that Libanius mentioned)<sup>490</sup>, but there is no way to tell for certain. I will return to his relationship with Julian in a moment; it is a mysterious issue and there are no easy answers. The scholarship is divided on whether they were on friendly terms or seriously

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<sup>484</sup> For the best overview of possible reasons for this, see Vanderspöel (1995, 115-134). See also Dragon, 230-5

<sup>485</sup> For varying interpretations of the tone and purpose of the letter, see Daly (1983 205-6), Brauch (1993b, 84-87), Dragon (64), and Bradbury (1986 29-32). Vanderspöel (1995, 119) endorses the consensus opinion that the letter reflects "respectful animosity."

<sup>486</sup> On the date of the letter, see Barnes & Vanderspöel (187-90) and Bradbury (1987).

<sup>487</sup> Bradbury 1986, 29

<sup>488</sup> Libanius, *Ep.* 818.3, 1430

<sup>489</sup> *Suda*, θεμίσιτιος; for an overview of the issue and a contrary view (i.e. that Themistius *did* hold this post under Julian), see Brauch (1993a).

<sup>490</sup> Criatore, 63; Vanderspöel 1995, 128

estranged.<sup>491</sup> In any case, Themistius seems to have retained his senatorial influence, if not his influence over the emperor, during this time.

From Jovian's brief reign we have one panegyric in which Themistius praises Jovian's unpopular peace treaty with the Persians and then advocates a policy of religious tolerance within the empire (*Or.* 5). Scholars have disagreed about whether this speech was designed to encourage Jovian to end religious persecutions or is simply endorsing and 'selling' a policy of tolerance already formulated, but there is little disagreement about the praise of the Persian peace being propaganda intended to reconcile the public to a difficult situation.<sup>492</sup>

Under Valens Themistius was in great favor once more.<sup>493</sup> It was probably under Valens that he received his second dedication of a bronze statue from an emperor.<sup>494</sup> As he did under Theodosius later, he made speeches effusively praising the policy of making peace treaties with the Goths (*Or.* 8, 10), which was actually a fairly unpopular position in Constantinople at this time.<sup>495</sup> There is a strong impression that he is trying to reconcile the public to the policy, rather than advise the emperor. After the revolt of Procopius, he offered a speech to Valens (*Or.* 7, Περὶ τῶν ἡτυχηκότων ἐπὶ Οὐάλεντος) that attempted to excuse Constantinople, which had not been loyal to Valens,<sup>496</sup> wearing once again his persona as a defender of his polis. Socrates (*HE* 4.32) and Sozomen (*HE* 6.36.6-7; 6.37.1) both say that, under Valens, his advice was vital in protecting Nicene Christians from persecutions by Valens, an Arian—but these claims

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<sup>491</sup> Vanderspoel 1995, 155; Brauch 1993b

<sup>492</sup> On the policy of religious toleration, see Heather & Moncur (154-5), and Vanderspoel (1995, 148-53). On peace with the Persians, see Vanderspoel (1995, 144-6), and Heather & Moncur (152-4).

<sup>493</sup> Vanderspoel 1995, 185

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, 177

<sup>495</sup> Heather & Moncur, 200-1; Vanderspoel 1995, 175; On Themistius' involvement in the making of Valens agreements with the Goths, see Lenski (132, 134).

<sup>496</sup> Vanderspoel 1995, 162

are suspected by some scholars since they propose a speech on religious tolerance closely resembling Themistius' speech to Jovian that touched on the same matter mentioned above (*Or.* 5).<sup>497</sup>

Theodosius valued Themistius as much as his predecessor did, at least until his probable retirement in 384 when Themistius disappears from public life.<sup>498</sup> He is presumed to have died around 388 in his early seventies. Under Theodosius, Themistius held the urban prefecture and made three speeches defending his political appointments and refuting the accusation that it was unworthy of a philosopher to hold such high office (*Or.* 17; 31; 34). He also vigorously defended Theodosius' unpopular settlements with the Goths in several speeches during this period (*Or.* 16, 18.216d-219d, 30?,<sup>499</sup> 34.22-5). In addition, he held the position of tutor to the emperor's son Arcadius (18.224c).<sup>500</sup> Shortly after Themistius' disappearance from our sources, Theodosius took a much harder line on paganism and the infamous Maternus Cynegius, Theodosius' praetorian prefect of the east, began his campaign of destroying pagan sanctuaries. Heather speculates that Themistius' presence and relationship with the emperor may have held back this movement towards "militant Christianization," and that when his "power-bloc" disintegrated, a powerful advocate for pagans in the empire was lost.<sup>501</sup> I will discuss later in this chapter how Themistius may have functioned as a sort of ambassador for

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<sup>497</sup> Brauch 1993b, 105; It is true, however, that *Or.* 6 (Φιλιάδελφοι ἢ περὶ φιλαυθροπίας), addressed to Valens in 364, deals briefly with religious tolerance at 77a-79b, but it does not mention the Arian issue, as Themistius had in *Or.* 5.70a (Heather & Moncur, 178), referring to it as a disagreement among the 'Syrians' (καὶ οὐδ' αὐτοὺς Σύρους [ὁ τοῦ παντὸς ἀρχηγέτης ἐθέλει πολιτεύεσθαι] ὁμοίως, ἀλλ' ἤδη κατακερμάτισται εἰς μικρά) ("The creator of the universe... does not even wish there to be uniformity among the Syrians themselves in the conduct of their affairs, but has already fragmented them into small sects" (Trans. adapted from Heather & Moncur, 170).

<sup>498</sup> Heather 1998b, 148

<sup>499</sup> *Or.* 30, a fragmentary speech on how agriculture tames wild people, may have led into a praise of Theodosius' settlement with the Goths on farmland in 382 (Penella 2000a, 34).

<sup>500</sup> Vandespoel 1995, 210-11

<sup>501</sup> Heather 1998b, 148



paganism to Christian imperial court.

Throughout his career in politics, fellow philosophers and intellectuals accused him of being a traitor to philosophy for accepting so many imperial favors and appointments. While he does repeatedly claim to have refused most of the gifts offered to him by emperors,<sup>502</sup> he undoubtedly profited from his appointments. “To get at the reality behind Themistius’ self-portrait, it is important first of all to recognize that he played the game of politics for substantial rewards,” say Heather and Moncur. “His public persona denied this, but the denials are worth careful scrutiny.”<sup>503</sup> He claimed to model his career on Socrates by refusing all payment except for what he needed to survive (*Or.* 23.288-289).<sup>504</sup> On the other hand, he boasts of bronze statues dedicated to him by emperors (*Or.* 31.353, 34.13), and does not ever claim to have refused imperial gifts entirely.

Apart from his own speeches on this matter, we have an epigram by the “ultra-pagan” Alexandrian poet (and later resident of Constantinople) Palladas<sup>505</sup> which accuses Themistius of mercenary motives in his pursuit of political power. *Oration 34* seems to be a reply to this epigram, which accuses him of ‘descending’ to a lower level by ‘ascending’ to political office. It ends “the way back up is down, for now you’ve upwardly descended” (δεῦρ’ ἀνάβηθι κάτω, νῦν γὰρ ἄνω κατέβης) (*Anth. Pal.* 11.292).<sup>506</sup> Libanius disapproves of Themistius’ decision to stay “in the limelight,” as

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<sup>502</sup> cf. *Or.* 23.292; 34.13; for his admission that he sometimes accepted imperial gifts so as not to make a fuss about refusing such things, see *Or.* 31.353; Brown, 68

<sup>503</sup> Heather & Moncur, 12

<sup>504</sup> See Cribiore (186, 189) for this aspect of his persona.

<sup>505</sup> Stertz, 354; the epigram does not mention Themistius’ name but was included with some manuscripts of his orations.

<sup>506</sup> Trans. Heather & Moncur, 288

Cribiore puts it, of Constantinople rather than live in Antioch.<sup>507</sup> Both Libanius and Eunapius, says Penella, “will have regarded Themistius' recruitment of men from various cities into the Constantinopolitan senate as another case of imperial parasitism.”<sup>508</sup> Perhaps his greatest crime in the eyes of some pagans in the east will have been his seeming lack of enthusiasm for Julian’s reign.<sup>509</sup> In addition, his general dismissal of the ethos of the Neoplatonist sage, described above, was probably seen by most philosophers of his day as an excuse to pursue the rewards and recognition of public life. This last point, Themistius’ disregard for the “orthodox” Neoplatonism of his day, cannot have helped him in establishing his relationship with Julian, who brought his own Iamblichan philosopher courtiers to accompany him in his administration.<sup>510</sup> An explanation of his tense relationship with Julian could lie precisely in other philosophers’ suspicion of Themistius, which arose repeatedly throughout his career on account of his political activities.

The accusation that he was a sophist masquerading as a philosopher also arose repeatedly throughout his career, an accusation that he has to fend off from modern scholars as well.<sup>511</sup> According to Libanius, he spoke with a very beautiful voice (γλώττη καλή) (*Ep.* 793.4)<sup>512</sup> and the style of his speeches was very much admired by sophists such as Libanius. Whether these accusations came from political enemies in the senate or from philosophers in general is not clear.<sup>513</sup> Themistius absolutely rejected the charge that he was a sophist (*Or.* 23 and 29 both deal exclusively with this issue), but he

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<sup>507</sup> Cribiore, 64

<sup>508</sup> Penella 1990, 139-40

<sup>509</sup> Stertz, 351-2

<sup>510</sup> Bowersock 1978, 19, 64; His most important and loyal associates were Oribasius (a physician), Maximus of Ephesus, and Priscus (the latter two being Neoplatonist mystics).

<sup>511</sup> Heather & Moncur, xii, 6; Geffcken, 181

<sup>512</sup> Daly 1970, 18

<sup>513</sup> Smeal, 31, 35-6

did believe that elegant speech had its purpose for philosophy—to educate the masses and clarify philosophical concepts.<sup>514</sup> He differentiated himself from sophists rhetorically as much as he could, though; for example, by giving a speech on how he was unable to speak extempore (*Or.* 25), and presumably by means of his dress and deportment, which was entirely different for a philosopher and a sophist. He boasts that he has always wore his “philosopher’s cloak” (τριβώνιον) (34.14), while meeting with emperors.

Why did so many Christian emperors assiduously cultivate Themistius and promote his decidedly unfashionable view of the philosopher’s ideal relation to power? Heather and Moncur have theorized that he functioned as a sort of “talisman” for Christian emperors,<sup>515</sup> representing their connection to the old pagan empire and advertising their continued respect for traditional Hellenic culture and institutions. He could put a philosophical ‘face’ on their decisions, and was an expert at lauding their policies before the senate. In their analysis, his true audience (rather than his constituency, as he always claimed) was the senate of Constantinople,<sup>516</sup> and he was able to argue difficult positions on the emperor’s behalf, as well as reassure eastern pagans that the new Christian administration was respectful of and compatible with the old Greek philosophy and *paideia* as exemplified by Themistius’ life and philosophical position.<sup>517</sup> Themistius demonstrated, at a time when pagans were probably still in the

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<sup>514</sup> Heather & Moncur, 3; Vanderspoel 1995, 39

<sup>515</sup> Heather & Moncur, 23

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid.*, 31

<sup>517</sup> Themistius possible proconsulship and urban prefecture(s) would have had an especially important element of ‘mediation’ between the emperor and the eastern nobility. Heather says of Themistius’ contemporary Symmachus that “In the fourth century...the urban prefect acted as intermediary between the emperor and the senate of Rome, and the *relationes*, official letters, Symmachus wrote in this capacity to the court of Valentinian II provide key insights into the relationship between emperor and senate” (1998a, 198).

majority throughout the empire,<sup>518</sup> that while the radical mystics and other forceful advocates of ‘Hellenism’ (a word which had come to mean simply ‘paganism’ at this time<sup>519</sup>) were resistant and hostile to a Christian ruler—especially after seeing the legislation occasionally directed at pagan sanctuaries and traditions from Constantine onwards<sup>520</sup>—Themistius’ career demonstrated that there was another way, a pro-Roman, pro-Imperial paganism that could co-exist peacefully and even enthusiastically with Christian emperors. If this is in fact what he represented, then Julian’s decision to distance himself from Themistius becomes even more understandable.

His accommodation to Christianity went beyond the norm for pagan intellectuals, who were used to unequivocally asserting the superiority of traditional Greek culture (although the mystical syncretism of some Neoplatonists was an exception to this tendency). He avoided the subject of religion most of the time, but there are some brief favorable references to Christianity in his orations, explicitly referring to the Bible as the “Assyrian books” (Ἀσσυρίων γράμματα) (*Or.* 7.89; 11.147; 19.229). In contrast, Libanius never once in his voluminous output ever mentions that Christianity even exists.<sup>521</sup> Downey has shown that Themistius’ references to the Bible relate especially to kingship and the similarity of the Christian ideals of kingship to Platonic ideal of the philosopher-ruler.<sup>522</sup>

His actual gifts as a propagandist also cannot be underestimated, and this must

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<sup>518</sup> Harl says that “[t]he best current estimate reckons that well over half of the population of the entire Roman world was pagan at the death of Theodosius” (15). Themistius served “a succession of Christian emperors, who ruled their empire via substantially non-Christian local landowning elites (Heather & Moncur, 22).

<sup>519</sup> Bowersock 1990, 9-10

<sup>520</sup> For an overview of the progress of legislation against paganism under the emperors from Constantine forward, see Geffcken (115-240).

<sup>521</sup> Downey 1957, 260

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, 262-3

also have played a role in his continuing position of favor and influence. Themistius' orations, whether or not we can fully appreciate their effect today, were considered extremely persuasive and beautiful by those of his time. Libanius pays him perhaps the highest compliment of which he is capable when he says that Themistius' speeches and his own were so alike that they "had the same form, came from the same parents, were bothers, and actually twins" (ἔμοι γὰρ καὶ σοὶ λόγοι οἱ πολιτικοὶ μορφῆς μιᾶς καὶ τῶν αὐτῶν τοκέων καὶ ἀδελφοὶ καὶ προσέτι δίδυμοι) (*Ep.* 1477; cf. *Ep.* 376.5).<sup>523</sup> Gregory of Nazianus called Themistius the "king of eloquence" (βασιλεὺς σὺ τῶν λόγων) (*Ep.* 24.1)<sup>524</sup>—although this was in a letter to Themistius himself. Themistius was a master of a genre that was highly admired, the panegyric. It is impossible for us to appreciate today just how very much his audiences were pleased by these speeches and considered them really valuable artistic productions. As Bradbury puts it:

From schoolboy to sophist, everyone with a rhetorical education could compose a panegyric. Both Libanius and Julian speak as if rhetors and poets were consistently involved in the production of imperial panegyrics. And officials of all sorts appear to have enjoyed hearing them. Strategius, the Praetorian Prefect of the Orient in 358, was so pleased with a panegyric that Libanius had delivered in the bouleterion at Antioch, that he hired ten scribes to make copies that would be sent around to important Eastern cities...[*note*: This panegyric was so long that it had to be delivered in three separate installments.] Clearly, the modern dismissal of panegyric reveals a serious gap in our comprehension of the literary sensibilities of fourth century people.<sup>525</sup>

The artistic value of his prose and his communicative abilities were therefore undoubtedly another factor in his consistent association with the imperial court.

Another aspect of his speeches that undoubtedly pleased his patrons, and that was

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<sup>523</sup> Trans. Cribiore, 64

<sup>524</sup> Penella 2000a, 5

<sup>525</sup> Bradbury 1986, 41; Libanius *Or.* 1.113; For more on the difficulty of reading and interpreting fourth century panegyric, see Errington (861).

closely related to his persona as a philosopher-politician, was the particular connection of his rhetoric and vision to the Antonine age.<sup>526</sup> Junius Rusticus, Arrian, and Marcus Aurelius are important *exempla* in his orations, elevated even above Augustus and the fifth century political and philosophical heroes of Greece,<sup>527</sup> and several of his earlier panegyrics are noticeably modeled on Dio of Prusa's.<sup>528</sup> Aelius Aristides and Dio were especially popular during the fourth century, to the extent that it has been called the "Third Sophistic" by some scholars because of the way that it looks back not only to pre-Roman Greece but also to the height of the second sophistic under the Antonines.<sup>529</sup> Themistius shared this admiration for the second century authors, and preferred to compare his activity as a political philosopher to that of Junius Rusticus and Arrian especially, as we shall see in *Oration* 34. Downey analyzes how Themistius "harks back to the golden age of the state in the reigns of the 'good emperors,' such as Augustus, Trajan, Marcus, and exhorts the rulers of the present day to follow their examples."<sup>530</sup> Already in the fourth century, it was recognized that the Antonine period was a 'golden age' that was very much removed from current difficulties, and speeches that portrayed the current ruler as signaling a return to the virtues and wealth of that age had a special ideological significance. The court was extremely in need of this particular kind of optimism. Wars with the Persians and Goths were causing great difficulties throughout Themistius' career, and his ability to portray Roman defeats as acts of traditional Roman clemency was welcome when unpopular peace treaties had to be promoted before the

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<sup>526</sup> Stertz, 355; Chambers, 84; Vanderspoeel 1995, Heather & Moncur, 13; 301n36; *Or.* 17.215a; 13.166b; 19.229b-c; 34.7

<sup>527</sup> For a detailed analysis of *exempla* in Themistius orations and his hierarchy of great rulers, see Chambers.

<sup>528</sup> Heather & Moncur, 7-8; Jones, 150

<sup>529</sup> Quiroga (34ff) outlines several distinctive features that separate it from the second sophistic.

<sup>530</sup> Downey 1955, 293

senate.<sup>531</sup>

Themistius' role as a sort of ambassador for cooperative pagans cannot be dismissed either, especially when we consider how much matters deteriorated for pagans in the empire after his retirement (c. 384).<sup>532</sup> Brauch finds that, especially after Julian, Themistius seems to have decided that "the only hope for Hellenism was...an accommodation with the Christian Empire." Brauch further speculates that Themistius' "decision to serve Julian's successors was as much inspired by his resolution to preserve Hellenism within the new Christian culture as to maintain his own political career and its influence."<sup>533</sup> While I think this goes too far (Themistius had happily served a Christian emperor prior to Julian as well), it is indisputable that he took a far more conciliatory and friendly attitude towards Christianity than many others of his cohort who served Julian and who were dedicated to maintaining the Hellenic traditions of the empire.<sup>534</sup> Stertz gives a convincing explanation of Themistius' attitude under Julian's successors:

Themistius was a traditionalist, but not a reactionary traditionalist like the extreme pagans. He conceived of his mission as a reconciling one: he would try to tame those rough Illyrian generals on the throne, with their crude Palestinian religion. The wish would be father to the thought. If he told them that they were philosophic and clement, they would become so. In this respect Themistius resembled many previous court sophists, going back to Hellenistic times. Themistius apparently believed that his own career, and the prosperity of the university at Constantinople with its primarily pagan faculty teaching traditional disciplines, confirmed his hopes. The old religion, if it would no longer have an adherent on the throne, would be tolerated (Themistius was of course to prove mistaken in this presumption). Those nasty barbarians on the frontiers would be pacified and assimilated (soldiers like Ammianus Marcellinus knew better). At least Themistius could try; the fate of civilization and Hellenism themselves were

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<sup>531</sup> See Daly (1972, 362-3, 368) on Themistius' use of the concept of the *philanthropos basileus* in connection with the peace treaties with Goths and Persians under Jovian, Valens, and Theodosius. On the unpopularity of these treaties, see Potter (549) and Seager (579, 600) on Ammianus Marcellinus' more typical aristocratic Roman view of the Goths and what they deserved.

<sup>532</sup> Heather 1998b, 148

<sup>533</sup> Brauch 1993b, 114

<sup>534</sup> Stertz, 354

at stake. Moderation was the keyword; through it as much as possible would be saved.<sup>535</sup>

Like Plutarch, he understood that accommodation with the ruling power was important to survival, but while the ruling power was ‘Rome’ for Plutarch, for Themistius it was Christianity, the religion of the imperial family and of a growing and increasingly powerful bloc of the population. Some scholars have concluded that his plan to preserve Hellenism’s place in the imperial order succeeded in a sense, and that his rhetoric and persona was key in preserving and cementing a respect for Hellenic culture and traditions in the new Christian and ultimately Byzantine order. “Themistius performed a real service in the defense of Hellenism,” says Downey, “and helped assure its place in the new Christian intellectual tradition.”<sup>536</sup> Stertz agrees: “Themistius’ adaptations of the Hellenistic political tradition to the conditions of the later Roman Empire were to be reflected in Byzantine political thought for over a millennium.”<sup>537</sup> Although we may exaggerate his importance in this transmission simply because of the large amount of his work that is preserved for us, there is still much to be learned from close analysis of his speeches about how Hellenic philosophy was able to preserve its civic function even as it lost its spiritual authority. I will now proceed to a brief analysis of Themistius’ last oration, and how he presents himself as a civic philosopher and a representative of his community therein.

*Oration 34*, Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιασαμένους ἐπὶ τῷ δέξασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν (‘In response to those who have found fault with him for accepting the office [of the urban prefecture’]), is not one of Themistius’ official ‘public’ orations delivered to an emperor

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<sup>535</sup> Stertz, 356; cf. Downey 1955, 292

<sup>536</sup> Downey 1957, 274

<sup>537</sup> Stertz, 349



on behalf of the senate. Nevertheless, it is a most useful document for discussing his ideological presentation of his political career as a whole. It was probably delivered in the senate of Constantinople before the Emperor Theodosius in about 384, shortly before Themistius' retirement.<sup>538</sup> In this speech, Themistius "reviewed his whole public career," and "attempted to demonstrate that it had consistently adhered to the principles of Hellenic *paideia*."<sup>539</sup> The oration was occasioned by criticism of his acceptance of an appointment to the urban prefecture of Constantinople by Theodosius, and it takes the form of a wide-ranging defense and justification of his entire thirty-year career in imperial politics, as well as an affirmation of the importance of the philosopher's role as a protector of his civic community, and a mediator between its people and the Roman imperial state.

The speech begins with a veiled reference to the reclusive and apolitical Neoplatonic adversary, who scorns politics, and especially involvement with the Roman state, as being beneath the true philosopher. He laments that "some people consider philosophy worthy of such great things that they think the greatest office inferior to her" (τινὲς φιλοσοφίαν ἀξίαν ἡγοῦνται, ὥστε καὶ τὴν ἀρχὴν τὴν μεγίστην καταδεεστέραν αὐτῆς ὑπολαμβάνειν), but he then expresses a generous sympathy for their good intentions, saying, "I have much praise for these men and love them. For to purpose the greatest things for the most divine of human pursuits, I deem the mark of a not ignoble nature" (λίαν ἐπαινῶ τοὺς ἄνδρας καὶ φιλῶ. τὸ γὰρ περὶ τοῦ θειοτάτου τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐπιτηδεύματος τὰ μέγιστα διανοεῖσθαι σημεῖον οὐκ ἀγεννοῦς

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<sup>538</sup> Penella, 2000a, 209n2; Heather & Moncur 311n68

<sup>539</sup> Heather & Moncur, 304; cf. Vanderspoel, 214-16

τίθεμαι φύσεως) (1).<sup>540</sup> However, he goes on to say, he will argue that he and Theodosius together “rais[e] up philosophy, by leading her from words to deeds” in cooperating with each other in governing (ἐπήραμεν ἄμφω φιλοσοφίαν εἰς τὰ ἔργα ἐκ τῶν λόγων καταγαγόντες) (1). This image of the secluded Neoplatonic sage is one that will recur throughout the speech. He celebrates the “divine Plato” (Πλάτων δὲ ὁ θεσπέσιος) for introducing the contemplative arts of arithmetic, music, and astronomy, saying that

[H]e ascended even beyond heaven itself, and was bold enough to concentrate his attention upon discovering whether there is not something which is above nature itself, not to show that this superabundance contributes nothing to our commonwealth, but—and this was the special characteristic of Plato’s thinking – to link together the mortal with the divine Good, and to fashion as far as possible the organization of human affairs after that of the Universe. This is what the *Republic* and the famous *Laws*, the *Phaedrus* and the *Gorgias* intend... (5)

προϊῶν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ὑπερέβη τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ ἐθάρρησε περιεργάσασθαι, μὴ καὶ αὐτῆς τῆς φύσεως ἔστι <τι> ἀνώτερον, οὐ μὴν ὥστε ἀσύμβολον πρὸς πολιτείαν ταύτην ἀποφῆναι τὴν περιουσίαν, ἀλλὰ τοῦτο καὶ μάλιστα ἴδιον τῆς Πλάτωνός ἐστι περινοίας ἀνάψασθαι τῶν θείων ἀγαθῶν τὰ ἀνθρώπινα, καὶ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παντὸς πολιτείαν ὡς οἶόν τε μορφῶσαι τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην. τοῦτο γὰρ βούλονται αἱ Πολιτεῖαι καὶ οἱ κλεινοὶ Νόμοι καὶ οἱ Φαῖδροι καὶ οἱ Γοργίαί...

In this way, he integrates the contemplative and political strains in Platonic philosophy and denies those who assert an opposition between them. He further chides the contemplative philosopher as being simply misguided and mistaken:

Yet most people either do not know or choose not to learn that this art [philosophy] supports so many and such important deeds and undertakings for the sake of humanity and human happiness, but stand amazed at its approaches, friezes, precincts, groves and meadows. They do not welcome the fact that it [i.e. this attractive realm of contemplation] has afforded sheltering quarters insusceptible to the blasts of fortune [for those who retreat to them only when not doing great deeds]. (6)

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<sup>540</sup> All translations of *Oration* 34 are adapted from Heather & Moncur, 310-33

τοσαῦτα οὖν καὶ τηλικαῦτα ἔργα τε καὶ ἐγχειρήματα ὑποστάσης ταύτης τῆς τέχνης ἀνθρώπου χάριν καὶ ἀνθρωπίνης εὐδαιμονίας οὔτε εἰδότες οὔτε μαθεῖν οἱ πολλοὶ προαιρούμενοι, τοὺς προδόμους αὐτῆς τεθαυμάκασι καὶ τὰ θριγκία καὶ τοὺς περιβόλους καὶ τὰ ἄλση καὶ τοὺς λειμῶνας· ὅτι δὲ κέκτηται καταλύσεις ἀλεξανέμους καὶ δυσπαθεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν τύχης πνευμάτων οὐκ ἀγαπῶσιν.

We see, then, that the caricature of the inactive Neoplatonist sage, lost in the finer details and cosmic questions of Platonic philosophy, was a very important rhetorical tool for Themistius in justifying his own political influence and ambitions.

In reinforcing this theme, he stresses throughout the speech the tradition of public service even among fairly contemplative figures in the early history of philosophy. Socrates' prytany is mentioned twice (10, 20), as it is in the first of his orations defending this election to the urban prefecture (17.215b). Parmenides is even hailed as a lawgiver who "filled what is called Magna Graecia with good order" (Παρμενίδης ...νομοθετῶν ...ἐνέπλησε...εὐνομίας τὴν μεγάλην καλουμένην Ἑλλάδα) (10). Later, he admits that he would find it hard to defend contemporary philosophers from the charge of "uselessness" (τῆς ἀχρηστίας) if he, or any other philosopher, would refuse a public office providing the opportunity to help his city (16). Near the end of the speech, he juxtaposes the usefulness of his, and the ancient philosophers, benefactions with those "persever[ing] with geometrical diagrams" (ἢ εἰ τοῖς ἀβακίοις ἐνεκαρτέρησα) (28).

The portrayal of the emperor as a godlike fulfillment of the Platonic theories of kingship, a conceit that Plutarch did not dare to indulge in so explicitly, is also returned to several times throughout the speech, and shows a very different attitude towards philosophical parrhesia than we see in our earlier philosopher-politicians. (In some ways, this aspect of Themistius' rhetoric just doesn't 'travel well,' and can seem repulsive to the modern reader. However, we must understand that this kind of hyperbolic and

flowery panegyric was very much appreciated artistically in Late Antiquity, and the skillful use of such language in praising the emperor was very much admired, as a rhetorical exercise, even by those who were not entirely sympathetic to the figures being praised.<sup>541</sup>) Theodosius is truly the Platonic philosopher-king, and therefore Themistius had no choice, he says, but to accept the urban prefecture and any other offices to which he was summoned (16). Theodosius is “god-like indeed” (ὁ γε θεοειδέστατος αὐτοκράτωρ) (7), and embodies “philosophy herself, sitting in state” (φιλοσοφίαν αὐτὴν προκαθημένην) (14). “I shall give you Plato as witness,” he says, “that it is in accordance with his precepts that I gave in to the king [and accepted the appointment to the urban prefecture]” (ἐγὼ σοι Πλάτωνα παρέξομαι μαρτυροῦντα ὅτι τοῖς ἐκείνου νόμοις ἀκολουθῶν εἶξα τῷ βασιλεῖ.) (16). This argument, that the Roman emperor and his officials approximated the Platonic divine hierarchy on earth, was a mainstay of Themistian panegyric,<sup>542</sup> and it always justified currying favor with whichever regime was in power. It is fitting then that he returns to it so forcefully in this final *apologia* for his political life.

Another favorite theme, the harkening back to the rule of the Antonines as the ideal regime that is now resurrected by the current emperor, also returns in *Oration 34* (7-8, 20-21). For Themistius, the Antonines, and especially Marcus Aurelius, were the only rulers (before his contemporary emperors, of course) to truly establish philosophy and philosophers as the guardians of the state.<sup>543</sup> This is partly because they were wise enough to appoint Arrian and Junius Rusticus to important offices and military commands (8). He “boldly” compares himself to Arrian and Rusticus in his political

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<sup>541</sup> Bradbury 1986, 41

<sup>542</sup> Ibid., 48; O’Meara, 206; Stertz, 354; Heather & Moncur, 20

<sup>543</sup> Chambers, 84-5; Heather & Moncur, 301n36; cf. *Or.* 17.215a

service under philosophical emperors: “I would boldly set myself up against Arrian and Rusticus as regards the virtue in their elections [i.e. their selection for public office]” (πρὸς δὲ τὸν Ἀρειανὸν καὶ τὸν Ρούστικον θαρσῶν ἂν διαγωνισαίμην τῆς χειροτονίας ἕνεκεν ἀρετῆς) (20). As I mentioned above, his nostalgic view of the Antonine period was a trend in fourth century rhetoric, and the fourth century has sometimes been called the ‘Third Sophistic’ for this reason. It is an attitude that has obvious propaganda value for the emperors Themistius served under, since they were lauded as returning the Roman empire to a ‘new’ Antonine age. More importantly for our analysis of Themistius’ rhetoric, it shows him claiming special significance for his role as an ‘active,’ civic philosopher by associating his own political activity with the ‘good’ emperors of that period.

Finally, there is a prominent emphasis on the philosopher’s ambassadorial role throughout the speech, and several references to his own efforts on behalf of Constantinople. In drawing correlations between his own embassies on behalf of the Constantinopolitan senate and ancient exempla of philosopher-statesman, he portrays the city as his polis, in the ancient sense, rather than as an imperial seat of power in which he has been entrusted official duties by the emperor. Embassies are first specifically mentioned in association with the Seven Sages of Archaic times, although only Solon, Lycurgus, Pittacus, Bias and Kleoboulus are mentioned because the others either weren’t politically active or were associated with tyrants (3). Traditionally the Seven Sages marked the beginnings of Greek philosophy, and Themistius strengthens his overall argument by highlighting their political role. They were wise “not because they uncovered the veiled and horned dilemmas, intractable and dangerous contrivances, had

to fathom and useless to understand, nor yet because they took the sun's measurement or calculated the moon's course," but because they took on "embassies, generalships, liberations of homelands, acquisitions of territory." (οὐδ' ὅτι τοὺς ἐγκεκαλυμμένους [συλλογισμούς] ἀνεκάλυπτον καὶ τοὺς κερατίνας, σοφίσματα δυσμήχανα καὶ κακοῦργα, καὶ ὧν χαλεπὴ μὲν ἢ εὐρέσις, ἀχρεῖος δὲ ἢ ἐπιστήμη, ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον ἀνεμετροῦντο, οὐδὲ ὅτι τῆς σελήνης ἐγνωμάτευον τὴν πορείαν, ἀλλ' ὅτι...ἔργα δὲ ἀμήχανα ὅσα, πρεσβείας καὶ στρατηγίας, ἐλευθερώσεις πατρίδος, γῆς ἐπικτήσεις.) (3). In this way, he separates himself from the Neoplatonist sage and depicts his own politicking as the ἀρχαῖα τάξις, as he put it in *Oration 28* (342b). At chapter 13 he designates an embassy as the first important event of his own political career, making proud reference to his first embassy for the Constantinopolitan senate and the resulting restoration of the *annona* (bread dole) of the city: "[Y]ou elected me to be ambassador to glorious Rome and dispatched me to the son of Constantine [Constantius II]," he says, "I have had the people in my care from that time [i.e. that embassy] when I restored the bread dole..." (με πρεσβεύειν εἰς τὴν αἰοίδιμον Ῥώμην ἐχειροτονεῖτε καὶ πρὸς τὸν παῖδα ἐστέλλετε τὸν Κωνσταντίνου. ἐξ ἐκείνου προεκηδόμην τοῦ δήμου, ἐξ ὅτου τὸ σιτηρέσιον ἐπανήγαγον) (13). He portrays himself as a sort of father to his community in his undertaking of an expansion of the senate: "I have been making provision for the senate in my thoughts from that time when I filled up the register of my fellow citizens from a scant three hundred to two thousand" (ἐξ ἐκείνου τῆς γερουσίας προϋνόουν, ἐξ ὅτου τὸν κατάλογον τῶν ὁμογενῶν ἀντὶ μόλις τριακοσίων ἐπλήρουν εἰς δισχιλίους) (13), turning in imperial appointment into care for the polis. Elsewhere in the speech, he particularly references his management of the city's bread dole and his care for orphans while holding the office of the urban prefect, perhaps subtly reminding

his audience again about his role in restoring the *annona* (10). Finally, the speech closes with a reference to the embassies of several ancient philosophers, including Carneades, which I quoted at the opening of this chapter. He compares their service with his own, and particularly his embassies:

But I have long since, or so it appears, been rolling around on the ground, as a result of the circuits I made back and forth from east to west, bearing with me the city's high opinion. Nor would I exclude from the number of embassies bestowed upon me, my recent sojourn abroad in illustrious Rome. I was ambassador to your Fathers [the Roman senate] then too, in presiding over concord between the cities and rendering you all honored and esteemed by them. For the vote those men passed on your behalf to the emperors is itself a shared glory for the city. Do not, therefore, hold fast to the literal word, and do not, just because Plato in the Republic teases those who descend from the divine sphere of contemplation to the human...think that it is of no importance to take part in public affairs. (29-30)

ἐγὼ δέ, ὡς ἔοικε, χαμαὶ πάλαι ἐκυλινδούμεην ἀπὸ τοῦ διαύλου τῆς ἑσπερίας καὶ τῆς ἑώρας ὃν διέδραμον ἤδη τὴν ἀγαθὴν δόξαν τῆς πόλεως συμπεριφέρων. οὐδὲ τὴν ἔναγχος ἀποδημίαν ἐγὼ τὴν εἰς τὴν ἀοίδιμον Ῥώμην ἐξελοίμην ἂν τῶν πρεσβειῶν ἀριθμῶν. ἐπρέσβευον καὶ τηνικαῦτα πρὸς τοὺς ὑμετέρους πατέρας, ὁμόνοιαν ταῖς πόλεσι πρυτανεύων, καὶ ἐντίμους αὐτοῖς ὑμᾶς καὶ αἰδοίους ποιῶν. ἅ γὰρ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν ἐκεῖνοι πρὸς τοὺς αὐτοκράτορας ἐψηφίζοντο, κοινὴ τῆς πόλεως αὕτη σεμνότης. Μὴ οὖν ἀπρίξ ἔχου τοῦ ῥήματος, μηδέ, ὅτι Πλάτων ἐν Πολιτείᾳ τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς θείας θεωρίας καταβαίνοντας εἰς τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ὑποκορίζεται...οἴου καὶ μικρὸν πολιτεύεσθαι...

In this summation of his argument, he juxtaposes his embassies for Constantinople with those who use Plato's philosophy to discourage political activity, recalling the 'descent' he was accused of in the epigram of Palladas, and denying the central conflict in Platonism between action and contemplation.

We can see that, like Plutarch, Themistius redefined the role of the philosopher-ambassador in order to adjust to the realities of his time. Whether consciously or not, he manipulated the persona of the philosopher in politics to allow for and justify a career which, ultimately, was as far as is possible from the traditional image of the independent

philosopher who speaks the truth to power. We have come a long way from the intimidating and enigmatic Carneades who took Rome by storm in 155 BCE. When Themistius recalls the embassy of Carneades in the conclusion of *Or.* 34, he links his own political power to an entirely different time and place, inadvertently revealing just how much has changed. The philosopher has become more powerful, more enmeshed in the imperial administration than any Greek philosopher had before, only to use that position to be a sort of spokesperson for the emperor. In effect, the old image of the philosopher as a political advocate and mediator for cities has become a cover. “Shop-soiled though it might be through constant use,” says Peter Brown, “the image of the philosopher continued to condense an ideal of integrity and plain-speaking...[and] cast a cloak of old-world integrity over risky [political] business.”<sup>544</sup>

The ancient and respected tradition of the philosopher-ambassador was especially important in Themistius’ portrayal of his political activities as consistent with philosophical tradition, even though his power and position extended far beyond the level that even philosophers in Dio of Prusa’s time had achieved. It is true that in Junius Rusticus and Arrian Themistius found comperands (*Or.* 34.20) for his own political position, but it is important to note that neither had been elevated to their offices qua philosophers, in order to use that designation to sell the policies of the state, but had been promoted in the course of normal senatorial careers. Furthermore, Themistius was forced to refer so often to these examples from more recent imperial history because the traditional Greek role of the philosopher as advocate did not encompass the kind of political authority he achieved in his own career. Themistius filled a useful function for the earliest Christian emperors as well. Early in Themistius’ career, Constantius called

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<sup>544</sup> Brown, 67



him the “adornment (κόσμος) of our reign” (*Or.* 31.354d). The ideal ruler in the ancient world was expected to live harmoniously with the representatives of philosophy; he who enjoyed a blessings and approval of the philosophers would surely never be considered tyrannical or illegitimate. This attitude on the part of Roman emperors eventually led to the kind of symbiotic relationship between philosophy and power that we see in the rhetoric and career of Themistius.

## Chapter VI

### Conclusion

In Themistius' final days, the more powerful members of the Christian clergy were beginning to take on many of the traditional duties of the pagan philosopher, including representing their communities to imperial officials and asserting a special independence and authority, and parrhesia, in the presence of Roman power. In describing Theodosius' dealings with Ambrose of Milan, Brown writes, "the encounter was to prove more drastic than any he had experienced in his dealing with the urbane Themistius. A new type of 'philosopher' had emerged."<sup>545</sup> Pagan philosophers were beginning their final withdrawal from public life, and although they still took on embassies and occasional political assignments,<sup>546</sup> they lost their political clout and significance soon after this time. Of course, the churchmen would also be absorbed into the imperial political structure as well, becoming advocates of the powerful whom they had once confronted, and in some sense repeating the pattern that philosophers had followed under Roman rule—although finding wealth and influence more quickly, in a matter of decades rather than centuries. In both cases, however, a unique and celebrated intellectual tradition was first admired and courted, and then finally co-opted by the

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<sup>545</sup> Brown, 70; see also Vanderspoel (1995, 17), and see Galvão-Sobrinho (271) on the importance of the bishops' parrhesia in dealing with emperors at this period.

<sup>546</sup> O'Meara, 17, 24-5; Brown, 65-7

political structure around it—a familiar process seen across many different eras and cultures.

The special difficulties that the Greek philosopher faced in dealing with this transition, however, were never quite resolved. The pressures of the philosopher's required persona, and the uneasy fit between such a bearing and the need to deal diplomatically with political authorities, resulted in a variety of strategies intended to bridge that gap. In this dissertation, we have explored how four philosophers managed the business of politics, compromise, and supplication while maintaining their personal authority and image, from Carneades' dizzying rhetoric, to Philo's full-throated parrhesia after the fact in his *Legatio ad Gaium*, to Plutarch's somewhat defensive pragmatism, and finally to Themistius' advocacy of imperial power under the guise of the philosopher-ambassador's advocacy for his adopted city of Constantinople. In the end, philosophers' determination to adapt to changing expectations in order to remain politically relevant allowed the influence of philosophy on Roman elite culture to expand and deepen over time. Imperial enthusiasm for Greek philosophy, and friendship with philosophers, thus ensured the survival of Greek philosophy under the new Christian regime and its preservation for posterity.

Appendix: Shenkl & Downey's numbering of Themistius' *Orations*

The *Orations* of Themistius as Numbered in Schenkl & Downey, *Orationes quae supersunt* (Leipzig, Teubner, 1965-1974) are as follows:

1. Περὶ φιλανθρωπίας ἢ Κωνσταντίου
2. Εἰς Κωνσταντίον τὸν αὐτοκράτορα, ὅτι μάλιστα φιλόσοφος ὁ βασιλεὺς, ἢ χαριστήριος
3. Πρεσβευτικὸς ὑπὲρ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως ῥηθεις ἐν Ρώμῃ
4. Εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Κωνσταντίον
5. Ὑπατικὸς εἰς τὸν αὐτοκράτορα Ἰοβιανόν
6. Φιλᾶδελφοὶ ἢ περὶ φιλανθρωπίας
7. Περὶ τῶν ἡτυχηκότων ἐπὶ Οὐάλεντος
8. Πενταετηρικός
9. Προτρεπτικὸς Οὐαλεντινιανῶ νέω
10. Ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρήνης Οὐάλεντι
11. Δεκετηρικός ἢ περὶ τῶν πρεπόντων λόγων τῶ βασιλεῖ
12. Ad Valentem de religionibus (spurious)
13. Ἐρωτικός ἢ περὶ κάλλους βασιλικῆς
14. Πρεσβευτικὸς εἰς Θεοδοσίον αὐτοκράτορα
15. Εἰς Θεοδοσίον· τίς ἡ βασιλικωτάτη τῶν ἀρετῶν
16. Χαριστήριος τῶ αὐτοκράτορι ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰρήνης καὶ τῆς ὑπατείας τοῦ στρατηγοῦ Σατορνίνου
17. Ἐπὶ τῇ χειροτονίᾳ τῆς πολιαρχίας
18. Περὶ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως φιληκοῖας
19. Ἐπὶ τῇ φιλανθρωπίᾳ τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος Θεοδοσίου
20. Ἐπιτάφιος ἐπὶ τῶ πατρί
21. Βασανιστής ἢ φιλόσοφος
22. Περὶ φιλίας
23. Σοφιστής
24. Προτρεπτικὸς Νικομηδεῦσιν εἰς φιλοσοφίαν
25. Πρὸς τὸν ἀξιόσαντα λέγειν ἐκ τοῦ παραχρῆμα
26. <Ὑπὲρ τοῦ λέγειν ἢ πῶς τῶ φιλοσόφῳ λεκτέον>
27. Περὶ τοῦ μὴ δεῖν τοῖς τόποις ἀλλὰ τοῖς ἀνδράσι προσέχειν
28. Ἡ ἐπὶ τῶ λόγῳ διάλεξις
29. Πρὸς τοὺς οὐκ ὀρθῶς ἐξηγουμένους τὸν σοφιστήν
30. Θέσις εἰ γεωργητέον
31. Περὶ προεδρίας εἰς τὴν σύγκλητον
32. Μετριοπαθῆς ἢ φιλότεκνος
33. <Περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τοῦ ὑπάτου>
34. Πρὸς τοὺς αἰτιασαμένους ἐπὶ τῶ δέξασθαι τὴν ἀρχήν

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