

Protreptic in the Socratics: in Search of a Genre

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The scope of this paper is to enquire into the nature of the so called Socratic protreptic, first of all as to which texts comprise the protreptic corpus in the 4th century BC and then as to whether some of these texts can be considered as literary forerunners of Plato's protreptics. My main task is to outline some problems, both chronological and methodological, concerning the protreptic. I do not pretend to give an exhaustive reply to any of the questions posed here. Still, given a variety of attitudes towards the protreptic among ancient philosophy scholars, not to mention those engaged in the New Testament and Patristic studies,¹ such a survey, however sketchy it might be, is justified. A uniform understanding of protreptic is neither possible nor desirable, but a certain disambiguation of terms, as it seems, has long been needed.

The starting point for this enquiry has been P. Hartlich's dissertation in the *Leipziger Studien* in 1889 where he suggests that Antisthenes and Aristippus, who had studied first under sophists and then became disciples of Socrates, "transferred" protreptic from sophists to philosophers.² This point was later taken over by K. Gaiser in his seminal work *Protreptik und Paränese bei Platon*.³ According to Gaiser, the Socratic protreptic can be regarded as a sort of "connection" (*Zusammenhang*)⁴ between sophistic protreptics and Plato's dialogues. The reconstruction of the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines he undertook was designed to illustrate this *Zusammenhang*. "Dieses protreptische Gespräch vertritt – wenn auch vielleicht nicht der Entstehungszeit nach, so doch in formgeschichtlicher Hinsicht – die vorplatonische, der sophistischen Werberrede am nächsten stehende Form des sokratischen Dialogs", he argued.⁵ Later, S.R. Slings listed the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines among other 4th century protreptics in his introduction to the spurious *Clitophon*;⁶ the protreptic character of this text has been generally accepted by other scholars.⁷

However, the discussion of the protreptic in the Socratics is somewhat problematical. The evidence on the *Protreptics* of Antisthenes and Aristippus is too scant to speak of a generic pattern. The Socrates' *logos* in Dio's oration XIII *On Exile*, although not devoid of

¹ Aune (1991), Kotzé (2004), and many others.

² Hartlich (1889), 229.

³ Gaiser (1959), 25.

⁴ Gaiser (1959), 95-96.

⁵ Gaiser (1959), 71.

⁶ Slings (1999), 71-72.

⁷ Michelini (2000), 512 regards the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines as a specimen of "naïve and conventional protreptic." Cf. Kahn (1994), 93: "no one before Aeschines proposed to understand the protreptic and educational influence of Socrates in terms of eros"; Gribble (1999), 216-222.

certain Antisthenic elements, cannot be safely enough assumed to reproduce Antisthenes' *Protrepticus*. To this issue the first part of our paper is dedicated. The second part deals with Gaiser's interpretation of the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines as well as with some methodological pitfalls implied by his approach to this text. Finally, we'll touch upon the question of genre unity. If we, following Slings, include the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines and the *First Alcibiades* into the protreptic corpus, we must give some plausible account of the major discrepancies – both in form and in content – between these texts and the two explicit⁸ 4th century protreptics: I'm referring to the *Clitophon* and to Socrates' protreptic in the *Euthydemus*. The focus on these discrepancies might provide an insight into the meaning of the single texts, as well as into the connections within the corpus, notably between what is believed to be Socratic protreptics and texts of the *Corpus Platonicum*.

1. Protreptics of Antisthenes and Aristippus

First of all, let us briefly revise the evidence on the protreptic writings of the Socratics. We know from Diogenes Laertius (6.2) that Antisthenes wrote one or, perhaps, several *Protreptikoi*.⁹ Unfortunately, even the title of this writing is a matter of speculation. The manuscripts of Laertius give, among other Antisthenes' titles, *Περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας προτρεπτικὸς πρῶτος, δεύτερος, τρίτος, Περὶ Θεόγνιδος δ', ε' (6.16)*. While some authors suppose that the writings on Theognis were included in the *Protreptikoi*,¹⁰ others believe them to form part of another work;¹¹ while some regard *Περὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἀνδρείας* as referring to the protreptic,¹² others see the title of another writing here.¹³ There's no point in enumerating all the conjectures in this regard; let us just say that the title and the number of books are rather obscure, and so is the subject matter.

According to Athenaeus (*Deipnosophistae*, 14.74 = *SSR V A 63*), Antisthenes said in his *Art of Exhortation*: "to be raised in place of sucking-pigs (*delphakia*)". We also know (*SSR V A 64*) that Socrates in this dialogue mentioned a narrow-necked vessel (*bombylios*) and, perhaps, praised it (*SSR V A 66*). Still, we can only guess what sucking-pigs and narrow-necked vessels have to do with manly virtue and justice.

As a matter of fact, the main source for the *Protreptic* of Antisthenes has been Dio Chrysostom's oration *On Exile* (13.16-28), which contains a Socratic *logos* supposedly paraphrasing Antisthenes' exhortation. This hypothesis was formulated by von Arnim in 1898,¹⁴ and has been traditionally accepted ever since.¹⁵ However, the Antisthenic provenance of the Socratic *logos* has been questioned by such scholars as S.R. Slings and M. Trapp. Though not ruling out the influence of Antisthenes completely, both authors

⁸ For reasons of convenience, I shall call "implicit" all the texts the protreptic character of which is not corroborated by textual evidence, and vice versa; Slings (1999), 61 uses the same terms differently.

⁹ Editions: Decleva Caizzi (1966), 29; *SSR V A 63-67*.

¹⁰ Decleva Caizzi (1966), 80.

¹¹ Marcovich (1999, 2008), 384.

¹² Decleva Caizzi (1966), 80.

¹³ Hirzel (1876), 72.

¹⁴ Arnim (1898), 256ff.

¹⁵ Höistad (1948), 171-173; Thesleff (1982), 206; Brancacci (2000), 251. Giannantoni (1990) includes *Or.* 13.12, 15-28 among the fragments of Antisthenes (*SSR V 208*).

point to the fact that the “nucleus”,¹⁶ or the “framework”,¹⁷ of the Socratic *logos* is borrowed from the *Clitophon*. A summary of verbal resemblances between the *Clitophon* and Dio’s text can be found in J. Moles’ article. He concludes that in chapters 14-17 Dio follows *Clitophon* 407a-d2 directly,¹⁸ but the rest of Dio’s speech “contains Antisthenic elements”, such as Archelaus’ invitation to Socrates (13.30) only recorded in Antisthenes’ *Archelaus*¹⁹ and the notion of double *paideia* probably coming from Antisthenes’ *Heraclides* (also paralleled in Dio’s *Fourth Kingship* 29-33).²⁰

The question whether Dio’s oration owes more to Antisthenes or to the *Clitophon* would be of less importance if we were sure that Antisthenes’ *Protreptic* was the primary source for the author of the spurious dialogue.²¹ The main reason for this assumption could be that the image of Socrates we find in the *Clitophon* is unparalleled in Plato’s dialogues and therefore must echo Antisthenes’ *Protreptic*.²² However, multiple reminiscences from Plato’s dialogues in the *Clitophon* raise doubts concerning the validity of this argument.²³ The only parallel between this text and Antisthenes’ fragments²⁴ is not enough to assert that the influence of Antisthenes was decisive here.

As for the image of Socrates exponent of positive moral doctrine we find in Dio, it can be accounted by adaptation of the *Clitophon* itself: discarding the irony and using the *Clitophon* image of Socrates as a representative of moral virtue, Dio follows the same procedure as Epictetus in his *Dissertationes* (3,22,26).²⁵ Thereto it should be added that positive use of Socrates’ protreptic in *Clitophon* was made also by Ps.-Plutarch (*De liberis educandis*, 4e) and by Themistius (*Or.* 26, 320d-321c).²⁶

Let us turn now to the *Protreptic* of Aristippus. This author is, as Kahn puts it, “the mystery figure among the prominent Socratics”²⁷ and these words can also apply to his

¹⁶ Slings (1999), 178 argues that “Dio used the *Clitophon* for the nucleus of his Socratic speech, and embellished it with various motifs culled from everywhere.” However, he admits (211) that “Antisthenes’ *Alcibiades* and *Protr.* could have been among the set of texts which the author of *Clit.* condemns.”

¹⁷ According to Trapp (2000), 233 Antisthenes was used “as an overlay over the Platonic framework.”

¹⁸ Moles (2005), 116.

¹⁹ Cf. Brancacci (1992), 3312.

²⁰ Moles (2005), 117.

²¹ Hirzel (1895), 118 suggested that the author of the *Clitophon* had relied on the image of Socrates given by Antisthenes in his *Protrepticus*.

²² Idid., 118.

²³ Thesleff (1982), 205-208 and Slings (1999), *passim*.

²⁴ Antisthenes’ dictum δεῖν κτᾶσθαι νοῦν ἢ βρόχον (*SSR* V A 105) cited in Cryssippus’ Περὶ τοῦ προτρέπεσθαι (Plutarchus *De Stoic. repugn.* 1039ef = fr. 167 SVF) is paralleled in the *Clitophon* 408a5-7. Slings (1999), 90, n. 168 and 248.

²⁵ Moles (2005), 199.

²⁶ There’ve been attempts to prove that in the *Or.* 26 Themistius paraphrased a non-Platonic fourth-century source, perhaps Antisthenes himself (Kesters [1935]). However, as Slings (1999), 97-98 convincingly argues, the violation of Meyer’s Law in this part of the speech, as well as the abrupt change from direct to indirect speech both in the *Clitophon* and in the *Or.* 26 (321b1) make it more likely that Themistius borrowed from the *Clitophon* directly. English translation of the *Or.* 26: Penella (2000), 151-152. Penella notices that the passage in question must be “a textually close adaptation” of the *Clitophon* 407b-d and 407e-408b.

²⁷ Kahn (1996), 15.

Protreptic, on which we have no testimony except for the title mentioned by Laertius (2.85 = *SSR* IV A 144). Still, we have an interesting, albeit an elusive, account of what Aristippus' *Protreptic* might have looked like in Ps.-Demetrius' *De elocutione*, 296-297 (= *SSR* IV A 148): "...Just as the same bit of wax is moulded by one man into a dog, by another into an ox, by a third into a horse, so with regard to the same subject-matter one man will state as an accusation (*katêgorôn*) 'people leave their wealth to their children, yet they don't leave with it the knowledge how to use (*epistêmên... tēn chrêsomenêên*) their legacy'; this type of discourse is called Aristippean".²⁸ Commenting on Ps.-Demetrius' classification of different literary forms in the Socratics (accusation in Aristippus, advice in Xenophon, interrogation in Plato and Aeschines), Slings observes that this passage is "the outcome of a process of reflection on ethical protreptic".²⁹ It should, however, be noted that the passage in question can be as well regarded as dealing with the Socratic literature in general.

Thus, our knowledge of the two texts entitled *Protreptic* – and it were precisely these titles that made Hartlich assume the existence of such a genre in the Socratics – is extremely scant. Arguments contra Antisthenic provenance of the Socratic *logos* in Dio's oration deserve to be considered, and we have no serious grounds to believe that Ps.-Demetrius refers to the Aristippean *Protreptic* in his *De elocutione*. Of course, the review given here does not claim to be exhaustive or even sufficient to solve the question of Dio's sources. Our aim is to call attention to some problematical assumptions concerning the origin of the genre.

2. *Alcibiades* of Aeschines

In tackling the issue of the Socratic protreptic and its supposed influence upon Plato's dialogues Gaiser offered an elegant and viable solution, the lasting impact of which can hardly be overestimated. He distinguished two primordial types of protreptic corresponding to the two principal forms of education: *logos erôtikos* for traditional *pais-erastês* relationship and *epideixis* for technical sophistic *paideia* – and traced the convergence of these literary forms in the Socratic protreptic and then their philosophical sublation (*Aufhebung*)³⁰ in Plato. This bewitching perspective of literary progress culminating in philosophical masterpieces, in which the process of conversion and the act of philosophizing itself become indistinguishable, paved the way for a more broad understanding of protreptic.³¹

The importance of the Socratic protreptic in this comprehensive scheme is instantiated with the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines: "Die erotisch-protreptische Werbung für die Philosophie im Alcibiades-Gespräch, die der Aischines-Dialog darstellt, hat für uns deshalb eine besondere Bedeutung, weil sich hier die – wenn auch nicht zeitlich, so doch mor-

²⁸ Translated and discussed in Slings (1999), 83-89. According to Kennedy (1994), 88, *De elocutione* was written in the early first century B.C.

²⁹ NB the verb *proetepsato* in 297.8 referring to the "Socratic type" (i.e. Plato and Aeschines). Slings (1999), 88.

³⁰ Gaiser (1959), 130f.

³¹ It can be found, e.g., in Gonzalez (2002). We can't consider here what Thesleff (1989), 2 called "Tübingen-inspired approaches to Plato's 'protreptics'" in general. We must also omit the treatment of protreptic by Festugière (1973). Such a survey would require more space than we can afford here.

phologisch – vor dem frühplatonischen Dialog anzusetzende Form des Logos Sokratikos erschließen läßt und weil wir auf diese Weise Einblick in den Zusammenhang zwischen der Form der sophistischen Protreptik und dem platonischen Dialog gewinnen”, he argues.³² The “sophistic” element³³ in the dialogue manifests itself in the particular stress laid on *epimeleia* (SSR VI A 50,42); this *epimeleia*, indispensable for achieving political success, consists in acquisition of certain type of knowledge (*epistêmê*, 50,45; 51,8) identified with political *aretê* (50,21).³⁴

In sharp contrast to the sophists, – and this is, according to Gaiser, “das eigentümlich sokratische” in the dialogue – Aeschines’ Socrates claims that he has no science by which he could benefit Alcibiades, but expresses the hope that by keeping company with him (*xynôn*: SSR VI A 53,28) he could by divine dispensation (*theia moira*, 53,6; 11) with the power of love (*dia to eran*, 53,28³⁵; *erôta*, 53,23; cf. *epithymia*, 53,13) make him better (*beltiô poiêsai*, 53,27). The motifs of *erôs* and *theia moira* are bound together by the philosophical *Nichtwissen*: on the one hand, in compliance with the tradition of *logoi erôtikoi*, Socrates professes to have nothing to teach; on the other hand, his *Nichtwissen* is inspired by the god and filled with religious meaning of the Delphic precept *gnôthi sauton*.³⁶ Thus understood, Socrates’ protreptics, unlike typical erotic exhortations, not just “converts” (*hinwenden*), but also imparts that specific kind of knowledge which Gaiser identifies with *Wissen des eigenen Nichtwissens*.³⁷ Still, he believes that Aeschines’ understanding of self-knowledge is rather naïve³⁸ and corresponds to the interpretation we find in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 4.2.26: “[T]hose who know themselves, know what things are expedient for themselves and discern their own powers and limitations... by refraining from attempting what they do not understand, they make no mistakes and avoid

³² Gaiser (1959), 95. Following Gaiser, Michelini (2000), 511 argues that “The real source for protreptic is likely to have been the Socratics themselves, writers who used the unconventional Socratic persona both to rebuke immorality and to show the inadequacy of traditional moral concepts. This Socratic protreptic demanded nothing less than a change of life.”

³³ It should be noted that the existence of a separate genre of sophistic protreptic is not accepted by some prominent scholars, who argue that we just don’t have enough evidence to demonstrate it, whereas there’s no point in labeling all the sophistic *epidexeis* as protreptic. Cf. Canto (1989), 60: “On ne trouve guère d’exemples de protreptique antérieurs à l’*Euthydème*. Ce dialogue paraît donner le premier exposé extensif d’un protreptique, et, sans doute, la consécration philosophique du genre.” Also Slings (1999), 64: “[I]t will remain a question of conjecture whether the sophists inaugurated, as a separated genre, explicit protreptic in the stricter sense. Many scholars acknowledge that we have hardly any data to go by, yet they tend to regard the assumption that the sophists did indeed create such a genre at least as plausible.” Still, ever since Gaiser’s study there have been attempts to ground his theses concerning the genre of the sophistic protreptic and even to single out some structural peculiarities of such texts, e.g. Van der Meeren (2002).

³⁴ Gaiser (1959), 96. Ehlers holds a different point of view (1966), 17, n. 19: “Ein Überwiegen des sophistischen Elementes im aischineischen Alkibiades, das (von Gaiser zwar nicht ausdrücklich so ausgesprochen, aber doch in seiner Interpretation de facto) solche Ausmaße annimmt, daß nur die allerletzten Worte des Dialogs diesen als einen sokratischen ausweisen, wäre bei einem Sokratiker, der den Ruf der besonderen Treue zu Sokrates hatte, außerdem kaum denkbar.”

³⁵ Kahn (1994), 93 observes that “no one before Aeschines proposed to understand the protreptic and educational influence of Socrates in terms of eros.”

³⁶ Gaiser (1959), 99.

³⁷ Gaiser (1959), 97.

³⁸ Cf. above n. 7.

failure”.³⁹ This sort of self-knowledge, Gaiser maintains, the Themistocles of Aeschines’ *Alcibiades* was said to lack.⁴⁰

This interpretation is far from being indisputable.⁴¹ In discussing the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines and in reconstructing the argument of the dialogue Gaiser proceeds from the assumption that this text served as a model both for *Memorabilia* 4.2⁴² and for the *First Alcibiades*.⁴³ In this regard he follows rather closely Dittmar’s views set forth in his study on Aeschines. Both authors accept the precedence of Aeschines’ text almost on default, and certain parallels highlighted by them do not seem to be convincing enough to accept this precedence – either chronological or “morphological”⁴⁴ – without qualifications. What Gaiser does demonstrate is the recurrence of certain motifs in the three texts, but the extant fragments of Aeschines don’t permit to maintain that he is the source for the other two authors or just for one of them.⁴⁵ As Ehlers justly observes, “Wir [...] meinen [...] daß Gaiser, von seinem formgeschichtlichen Ausgangspunkt bestimmt, in allzu großem Maß Züge der späteren Alcibiades-Literatur auf Aischines zurückführt, ohne daß dafür sichere Anhaltspunkte in den Fragmenten selbst gegeben wären.”⁴⁶

We cannot go into much detail here; one example would suffice to illustrate the methodological stance adopted by Gaiser. The motif of self-knowledge, shared both by Xenophon’s text and by the *First Alcibiades*, is absent from the extant fragments of Aeschines’ dialogue. To overcome this difficulty, Gaiser claims that there was such a motif in Aeschines’ dialogue: “Die Frage ist nur welches *arete*-Wissen dem Themistokles gefehlt hat und von Sokrates vermittelt werden konnte. Und hier ist aus verschiedenen Gründen an die ‘Selbsterkenntnis’ zu denken”.⁴⁷ This conjecture is not convincing

³⁹ Transl. Marchant (1923).

⁴⁰ Gaiser (1959), 100.

⁴¹ Dittmar (1912), 158 assumed that Themistocles was presented in the dialogue as superior in intellectual virtue only (*tô bouleuesthai*: 50,18; *tô phronein*: 50,31) and that his misfortunes were explained by lack of the moral one. This hypothesis was rejected by Friedländer (1923), 43, who argued that “diese Scheidung ist durchaus unsokratisch und hat nicht die mindesten Stützen”, and by Gaiser (1959, 77 n. 82). According to Friedländer, “in der Themistoklesrede [...] halten sich alle Begriffe die ein Ethisches oder Intellektuelles bezeichnen durchaus in der gewöhnlichsten empirischen Sphäre.” Ehlers (1966), 14-16 argues that the *epistêmê* Themistocles lacked was different from *Fachepisteme*: “[E]s ist hier kaum an etwas anderes zu denken, als daß Themistocles es an jener sittlichen Erziehung der Bürger fehlen ließ, die ihn von ihrer Undankbarkeit bewahrt hätte...” (cf. *Gorgias* 515b). Kahn (1996), 22 leaves this question open.

⁴² Gaiser (1959), 80.

⁴³ Gaiser (1959), 88.

⁴⁴ Cf. above n. 32.

⁴⁵ Cf. Courcelle (1974), I 18: “Assurément les *Mémorables* ont des traits parallèles avec le *Premier Alcibiade*, mais il serait téméraire d’expliquer ces parallèles, selon la ‘Reconstruction’ de Dittmar, par l’Alcibiade d’Esquine qui constituerait leur source commune.”

⁴⁶ Ehlers (1966), 11 n. 1. Friedländer (1923), 44 goes, perhaps, too far maintaining that “nirgends wird dem Staatsmann das Fehlen wahrer ‘Erkenntnis’ nachgewiesen, sondern es wird im Gegenteil erhoben wegen seiner ‘Sorge für sich’ und es wird gezeigt, daß man ohne solche auch nicht das mindeste ausrichten könne.” The mentions of *epistêmê* in fragments 50,45 and 51,8 prove the opposite. He is right, however, in disambiguating the *epimeleia* motif and that of self-knowledge.

⁴⁷ Gaiser (1959), 78, n. 82. Dittmar (1912), 141 suggests that the *First Alcibiades* is a contamination of Aeschines and Xenophon and that it is from the latter that the author of the dialogue borrows the motif of self-knowledge.

enough. As Ehlers wittily remarks, the kind of self-knowledge we find in Xenophon⁴⁸ would be of no use for Alcibiades since he understands nothing. Besides, this pragmatic notion of self-knowledge is hardly consistent with speculations on *erôs* and *theia moira*: we find no *erôs* motif in *Memorabilia* 4.2.⁴⁹

These observations, albeit far from being comprehensive, have a direct bearing on the question posed here, namely: did the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines or similar texts influence or at least anticipate Plato's earlier dialogues? And to which extent can these latter be regarded as protreptics? We see that the *Zusammenhang*-hypothesis turns out to be quite problematical. Thus, Gaiser mentions parallels between Plato's dialogues and Aeschines' text while dwelling on the *Symposium*⁵⁰, the *Laches*⁵¹, the *Charmides*⁵² and some other texts. Of course, if we take a text from the *Corpus Platonicum*, namely the *First Alcibiades*, as the point of departure for reconstructing Aeschines' text, as Gaiser does, we can hardly be surprised by the fact that certain motifs allegedly featuring Aeschines' text 'anticipate' Plato's dialogues. No fewer questions arise if we consider the supposedly 'independent' use of Aeschines by Xenophon in *Memorabilia* 4.2. Xenophon's Socratic works are believed to have been written in the 360s BC "after the first generation of Socratic literature had made its appearance."⁵³ By that time Plato had touched upon the self-knowledge theme on various occasions, and we can cautiously⁵⁴ assume that Xenophon's interest in this theme in *Memorabilia* 4.2 was provoked by Plato. Thus, the self-knowledge motif recurs in Platonic dialogues such as *Protagoras* (343b), *Charmides* (164d-165a), *Phaedrus* (229e), *Philebus* (48c), *Timaeus* (72a), and *Leges* (923a), not to mention the spurious *First Alcibiades* (124b), where it is elaborated at length.⁵⁵ This testifies that the theme was much debated within the Academy.

Of course, speaking of the Socratic protreptic in its relation to the *Corpus Platonicum*, we shouldn't dismiss the question of chronology, the importance of which can't be underrated despite of Gaiser's remark concerning the "formgeschichtliche" character of Aeschines' precedence.⁵⁶ It is not at all unlikely that some of Plato's dialogues, such as the

⁴⁸ Cf. above n. 39.

⁴⁹ Ehlers (1966), 18. This remark applies to all – not numerous – occurrences of the self-knowledge theme in *Memorabilia*. A useful summary of these occurrences can be found in Courcelle (1974), I 18-20.

⁵⁰ Gaiser (1959), 108.

⁵¹ Gaiser (1959), 110; 113; 115; 116; 118; 119 n. 129.

⁵² Gaiser (1959), 122, 124. This view is shared, e.g., by B. Effe (1971), 203, who claims that the *Charmides* takes account of the self-knowledge theme as presented in the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines. In so doing, he accepts almost unreservedly Gaiser's reconstruction of the dialogue, dismissing criticism towards it (199).

⁵³ Kahn (1996), 30.

⁵⁴ Because the motif is elaborated differently.

⁵⁵ Shichalin (1989), 76-77; Courcelle (1974), I 14f.

⁵⁶ Gaiser (1959), 96 and Dittmar (1912), 159 date the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines to the 390s. According to Flashar (1958), 61, Ehlers (1966), 22, and Kahn (1996), 29, the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines might have been influenced by the *Ion*. Kahn (1981), 308 argues that "the *Ion* is one of the very few dialogues which we have some external evidence for dating in the 390s" and that it should "be dated before the *Gorgias*, in the first 10 years after Socrates' death". The hypothesis of Wilamowitz, according to which the *Ion* was written during Socrates' lifetime, has been endorsed by Heitsch (2002), 182f. There are also advocates of a later date of the *Ion*. Thus, Thesleff (1982), 222, 237 dates

Apology and the *Gorgias*, had already been written when Aeschines got down to writing Socratic dialogues.⁵⁷ The motif of *Nichtwissen* in the *Apology*, as well as the notion of *theia moira* we meet there (33c6), are of particular interest in this regard. These parallels have often been explained by the alleged influence of the ‘historical Socrates’, whereas the influence of Plato upon Aeschines has been relatively neglected. Before a thorough enquiry into the intertextual relations between Aeschines’ text, on the one hand, and the *Corpus Platonicum*, on the other hand, has been carried out, and before the chronology of these texts is revised open-mindedly, any discussion of the origin of the genre will remain problematic. First of all, we must not assume that whatever we find in Aeschines can be accounted for by the influence of the ‘historical Socrates’, before all other possibilities have been studied. Once taken into consideration, these possibilities might present a challenge to Gaiser’s *Zusammenhang*-hypothesis.

3. Heterogeneity of the genre

Gaiser’s treatment of the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines and the *First Alcibiades* is corroborated by Aelius Aristides who points to the protreptic situation in the dialogues⁵⁸ (*SSR* VI A 51,10). However, labeling these texts as protreptics is in a way problematical, since they differ both in form and in subject from the two explicit protreptics⁵⁹ of the fourth century: Socrates’ exhortations in the *Euthydemus* and in the *Clitophon*. The *Euthydemus* is the only dialogue in which Socrates claims himself to be providing *logos protreptikos*. He asks the two brothers, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who profess to teach virtue (*aretên paradounai*), to display their skill and to persuade Clinias to pursue virtue and wisdom (*protrepsaite eis philosophian kai aretês epimeleian*, 275a1-2). Dissatisfied with their fallacious reasoning, he gives an example of protreptic wisdom (*tên protreptikên sophian*, 278c5; cf. *tôn protreptikôn logon*, 282d6). In the *Clitophon* textual markers also abound. The namesake of the dialogue regards Socrates’ speeches as “very suitable for exhorting people and very useful” (*protreptikôtatous kai ôphelimôtatous*, 408c2-3).⁶⁰

According to H. Benson, the Socratic elenchos is a means to examine “the reputed wisdom” of Socrates’ interlocutors,⁶¹ so it is not surprising that in the *Euthydemus* Socrates does not recur to elenchos in the conversation with Cleinias: the boy doesn’t claim to

it to the late 70s of the IV century BC. Before him, Moore (1974), 422, 424 argued against the early date of the dialogue pointing to several themes it shares with mature Plato’s works and to its “mature methodological techniques”. In this case it is more problematical to date the *Ion* earlier than Aeschines’ *Alcibiades*, since the latter text presumably preceded the *Symposium*, the date of which is more or less firmly established (see: Thesleff (1982), 135), and the *Menexenus* (386-385 BC, see: Kahn (1990), 296).

⁵⁷ Ehlers (1966), 13-15 mentions some parallels between the *Alcibiades* and these texts. According to Ehlers, these parallels are accounted for by the “historical Socrates”.

⁵⁸ This is not the same, however, as to claim that the dialogues themselves had protreptic function.

⁵⁹ Cf. n. 7.

⁶⁰ Cf. 408d6, 409a1, 410b5, d1.

⁶¹ Benson (2011), 181.

possess any wisdom, nor does he mention the political career as his aim.⁶² Moreover, as Vlastos puts it, “here the only theses investigated by Socrates are introduced, argued for, examined, and amended by himself in the didactic style of the middle dialogues, where the interlocutor is a yes-man”, while “Clinias, a teenager, is docility itself.”⁶³ The fact that in the only Platonic dialogue where *logos protreptikos* is mentioned Socrates abandons the adversary argument⁶⁴ is of particular interest for us, the more so because the protreptic function of the elenchos is generally acknowledged.⁶⁵

An insightful interpretation of Socrates’ protreptic in this dialogue was offered by M. Narcy. He demonstrates the fallaciousness of the argument in Socrates’ protreptic which springs from the ambiguity of the expression *eu prattein* and the erroneous identification of *sophia* and *eutychia* resulting from it.⁶⁶ In fact, the protreptic of Socrates, establishing the “monopoly” of wisdom,⁶⁷ would not have been possible if it had not been for an important omission, i.e. the omission of *orthê doxa*.⁶⁸ This fallaciousness manifests itself also in circularity: having first listed *sophia* among other goods, Socrates goes on to claim that the correct use of the goods depends on wisdom, reducing, therefore, his own argument *ad absurdum*. Besides, the argument according to which those who do not possess wisdom are benefited if they have no other goods also entails the conclusion that under certain circumstances it is better to be coward and unjust. “Rares sont les interprètes qui ont aperçu au prix de quelles étranges conséquences Socrate développe ici cet exclusivisme de la sagesse, ou du savoir. ...[T]out du long son interprétation prête le flanc à la réfutation, à moins qu’elle ne soit elle-même sophistique : ce qui jette une lumière inusitée sur ce ‘protreptique’.”⁶⁹ Though for different reasons, A. Michelini also suggests that we should not take seriously the protreptic in the *Euthydemus*: “Clinias’ sudden philosophical development might seem to show that Socrates can beat the brothers at their own game of imparting instant wisdom. But the ‘handing over’ of sudden knowledge has nothing to do with the practice of Plato’s Socrates.”⁷⁰

⁶² This fact is in itself interesting, since in the *First Alcibiades*, in the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines and in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* 4.2 *epimeleia heautou* has a clear political dimension. See: Foucault (2005), 25ff.

⁶³ Vlastos (1983b), 30.

⁶⁴ That is why I doubt that Gonzalez (2002), 177 is right in his interpretation of the “protreptic dimension of elenchus” in this dialogue: “What we are shown is not only that Clinias has benefited from Socrates’ dialectic but that the benefit he has received is nothing but this dialectic itself. He has become a better person not by receiving some product of Socrates’ dialectic (such as a definition) but by becoming himself dialectical. And Socrates makes the boy dialectical by doing nothing more than turning him toward the pursuit of wisdom and virtue. The benefit here is accomplished entirely through protreptic or exhortation.” His interpretation of protreptic owes a lot to Gaiser, whom he mentions on several occasions (179, 180, 181, 195).

⁶⁵ Gonzalez (2002), 167, 169; Kahn (1996), 179-180: “the aporetic dialogues are also protreptic”; Slings, (1999), 130 (cf. 133): “elenchos is intended to make the subject ready for philosophy, in other words that it is a form of protreptic” etc.

⁶⁶ Narcy (1984), 106-107.

⁶⁷ Michelini (2000), 525 asserts that this is an allusion to conventional and naïve protreptic (cf. n. 6).

⁶⁸ Narcy (1984), 109.

⁶⁹ Narcy (1984), 109.

⁷⁰ Michelini (2000), 526.

As for the *Clitophon*, we find no traits of elenchos in Socrates' protreptics as expounded by the namesake of the dialogue; no mention is made of the impact that Socrates' reported *logoi* had on his audience.

On the contrary, the three implicit protreptics under consideration: the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines, *Memorabilia* 4.2 and the *First Alcibiades* lay a particular stress on the cathartic power of Socrates' elenchos. Though Gaiser's assumption that Aeschines' text contained an elenctic conversation reminiscent of those we find in Xenophon or in the *First Alcibiades* doesn't seem well-grounded⁷¹, I am inclined to agree with B. Ehlers who emphasizes the elenctic function of the Themistocles-*Rede* in Aeschines' *Alcibiades*.⁷² The influence of Socrates' elenchos makes Alcibiades burst into tears and beg Socrates to rid him of his ignorance (*SSR* VI A 51). A similar plot we find in the *Memorabilia*: Euthydemus first professes his *athymia* (4.2.23) and then admits his stupidity (*phaulotês*) and goes away "dejected (*athymôs echôn*), disgusted with himself and convinced that he was indeed a slave (*andrapodon*)" (4.2.39). In the *First Alcibiades* we see Socrates' interlocutor driven to admit his slavishness (135c); the elenctic pattern as described by Vlastos⁷³ is also found in this dialogue.⁷⁴

The second point of diversion is the *technê*-aporia, which we find both in the *Euthydemus* and in the *Clitophon*. In the latter dialogue it is formulated by Clitophon who, in refuting Socrates' companions, tries to imitate (*kata se tropon tina*, 408d1) his elenctic manner.⁷⁵ Socrates' protreptic speeches convinced Clitophon that *epimeleia psychês* is necessary, but he wonders what comes next (*ti tounteuthen*, 408e1-2) and what is the way to start learning justice. The analogy of medicine or gymnastics illustrates that what he is looking for is a *technê* of soul's perfection. Clitophon poses his question to Socrates' companions and one of them identifies this *technê* with justice (409a4-6). In response, Clitophon remarks that effects of this art, just as that of medicine, should be twofold; one is the skill itself, producing new technicians, the other the product of this skill (409b5). One of the companions asserts that the product of justice is friendship (*philia* = *homonoia*) in cities, but as friendship is equated to "concord in knowledge", the investigation ends up in aporia (justice is a knowledge that produces knowledge *ad infinitum*).⁷⁶ A similar *technê*-aporia comes to the fore in the second Socratic protreptic in the *Euthydemus*.⁷⁷

⁷¹ Gaiser (1959), 92-93.

⁷² Ehlers (1966), 16.

⁷³ According to Vlastos, elenchos is a conversation in which the thesis of Socrates' opponent is refuted by reasoning from premises accepted by the opponent. See: Vlastos (1994 [1983]), 1-37. For criticism see: Kraut (1983); Brickhouse and Smith (1984); Polansky (1985); Benson (1995; 2004), Montuori (2001), Penner (2007).

⁷⁴ Alcibiades asserts the thesis: (p) 'the just (τά τε δίκαια) and the expedient (τὰ συμφέροντα)... are not the same' (113d). Socrates secures agreement for the premises: (q) 'all just things noble' (πάντα τὰ δίκαια καὶ καλά: 115a); (r) noble (καλόν) and good (ἀγαθόν) are the same thing (116c1); (s) good things (τὰ ἀγαθὰ) are expedient (συμφέροντα: 116c7-8). Hence, just things (δίκαια) are expedient (συμφέροντα: 116d), which contradicts the first thesis.

⁷⁵ But the elenctic pattern is never reproduced.

⁷⁶ The analysis of this aporia can be found in Slings (1999), 165-166, and Gonzalez (2002), 163-164.

⁷⁷ Slings (1999), 176. Cf. 150-151: "The concept of virtue as a *technê* is a well-known feature of the early Platonic dialogue: the concept invariably causes the main aporia... The distinction of levels

However, this aporia featuring the two explicit protreptics is not paralleled in Aeschines' text. Though in his *Alcibiades* we do find two types of knowledge (cf. above), we have no reasons to assume that he flatly discarded the possibility of attaining virtue through some sort of technical knowledge. Even if we accept the protreptic character of the *Alcibiades*, we must admit that this protreptic represents a radically different track of reasoning.

These are just a few points of divergence between Aeschines' dialogue and the two explicit protreptics; much more can be found if we scrutinize the texts of the corpus. For instance, Themistocles as an example of political virtue is mentioned in the *First Alcibiades*, the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines and in *Memorabilia* 4.2, but his name does not occur in the *Clitophon* and in the *Euthydemus*. Next, there is no conversion scene in the explicit protreptics which seems natural, as here the exhortation is carried out in public.⁷⁸ On the contrary, in the *First Alcibiades*, in *Memorabilia* 4.2 and in the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines there are no indications to the public character of conversations, though the narrative frame⁷⁹ in Aeschines' dialogue theoretically enabled to depict the audience.⁸⁰ There are no mentions of political ambitions of Socrates' interlocutors in the *Euthydemus* and in the *Clitophon*, whereas in Aeschines, Xenophon and (Ps.-)Plato the political motif plays a pivotal role.

Conclusion

Any generic research presupposes certain simplifications that are justified to the extent to which a genre as a theoretical scheme proves to be heuristically valuable and provides us with an adequate context for understanding each of its representatives. In case of the Socratic protreptic the issue is quite the opposite: Gaiser's attempt to single out a specific *Gattung*, reproduced and later 'sublated' by Plato, led to certain distortions in interpretation of the *Alcibiades* of Aeschines. Two major questions arise as regards this text. The first one is whether this dialogue is actually protreptic: the comparison with the two explicit protreptics of the fourth century (those in the *Euthydemus* and in the *Clitophon*) reveals significant divergences, both in form and in content. The second question is whether this text can be considered as a "vorplatonisch" form of exhortation.

The divergences we have just mentioned can be interpreted. The first question can be answered in two ways: either we deal with at least two different protreptic traditions or Aeschines' text is not, actually, a protreptic. Though I am more inclined to the first assumption, the second one, albeit pretty bold, also is not devoid of any sense if we consider the fact that *depiction* of conversion does not necessarily aim at conversion. As for the second question, we cannot properly address it without having previously revised the

of knowledge is part of the philosophical message not only of the *Euthydemus* but of all aporetic dialogues."

⁷⁸ Clitophon's account that Socrates "disparaged mankind like a god in a tragedy in (his) lengthy sermons" (*tois anthrôpois humnois legôn*: 407b1-2) points to the public character of his exhortations. In the *Euthydemus* Socrates mentions that the conversation with the young Clinias took place in the dressing-room of the Lyceum (272e2) and that the pupils (*mathêtai*) of the sophists were present there, expressing their attitude in the course of the conversation.

⁷⁹ Kahn (1996), 19.

⁸⁰ We know that the Lyceum was the scene of Aeschines' dialogue (*SSR* VI A 43). But it is unlikely that a noble young man could have been depicted publicly weeping.

question of chronology and established, as unbiasedly as possible, whether and to which extent Aeschines' text could have been influenced by the *Corpus Platonicum*. Before these tasks are accomplished, we have no solid ground to speak of the Socratic protreptic as a separate genre or to accept Gaiser's *Zusammenhang*-hypothesis.⁸¹

⁸¹ Cf. above, n. 32.