THE END OF DIALOGUE IN ANTIQUITY

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dialogue, which is staged in quiet (καθ' ἡσυχίαν, 5.86) and in front of a restricted audience (5.84.3–85).[44] There are similarities with the way in which Thucydides presents his *History* as a product of silent withdrawal (καθ' ἡσυχίαν, 5.26.5).[45] The ideal of dialogue presented in the Melian Dialogue fails, but its failure points to a withdrawal into the written word.[46] In Thucydides' hands the ideal conditions for dialogue are to be found in the quietness of writing, where the dialogue of voices takes place in the mind of the individual. There is an analogy to be drawn here with Harvey Yunis's observations about the shift from oral to written word in Athenian rhetoric, resulting in the phenomenon of orators and prose writers in fourth-century Athens 'using the conventions of literature to avoid the severe encumbrance of actual democratic political discourse'.[47] The paradox is that these written genres presuppose the culture of democratic Athens and enter into dialogue with its ideologies, while simultaneously using writing to sidestep its constraints. This model of closed dialogue presents an ongoing challenge to the modern academy; whatever else, surely we can agree that dialogue *is* interference?

[44] See Connor's description of the Dialogue as 'short, blunt thrusts in a closed conference room' ((1984) 148).

[45] See Greenwood (2004) 190.

[46] Compare Price (2001) 197, 'the failure of the historical characters is a triumph for the writer of history'. Morrison has suggested that Thucydides used the controlled environment of the Dialogue to expose the shortcomings of prevailing Athenian speech culture (Morrison (2000) 124, with n. 18).

[47] Yunis (1988) 240.

CHAPTER 2

The beginnings of dialogue
Socratic discourses and fourth-century prose

Andrew Ford

Dialogue is unusual among literary genres in that we can speak quite specifically about where and when it began, and can even point to an historical individual who inspired the form: the first prose dialogues were representations of Socrates, the Athenian philosopher and teacher who was put to death in 399 BCE. One might have supposed dialogue to be far older, given that verbal duelling and antithetical argument feature so prominently throughout Greek literature; but, while a number of antecedents to the genre have been identified, there is no evidence that anyone wrote prose dialogues before these so-called *Sôkratikoi logoi* – Socratic 'dialogues', 'discourses' or 'texts'. Origins, of course, usually turn out to be elusive on close inspection, and there are some cloudy spots in this picture: it is unclear whether Socratic *logoi* began to be written while Socrates was still alive or if it was his execution that provided the impulse for the new form; there is also some question as to whether we should accept Aristotle's testimony that Socratic dialogues were first written by the otherwise unknown figure Alexamenus; it seems unlikely that a person who made such a contribution should be so obscure.[1] What is not in doubt, however, is the sudden and late appearance of prose dialogue in Greek literature, as well as the role that Socrates played in the first specimens of the genre. From these *Sôkratikoi logoi* subsequent prose dialogue in the West – comic as well as philosophic – derives in an unbroken succession.

Dialogue's entry onto the Greek literary scene was not only sudden but massive. Only Plato's and Xenophon's texts survive intact, but Paul Vander Waerdt points out that:

[1] Aristotle *On Poets* Fr. 72 Rose (= Athenaeus 505c), cf. Hirzel (1895) I.100 n. 2. Wilamowitz (1920) 28 hypothesised that there was an earlier tradition of prose dialogue pioneered by Alexamenus, while it was Plato who invented Socratic dialogue. But the distinction between dialogue and Socratic dialogue is not supported by our sources (also Diogenes Laertius 3.48 and *POxy.* 45 (1977) no. 3219, on which see Haslam (1972)). This seems wishful thinking intending to make Plato not only the greatest of writers in the form but the first. Diogenes Laertius 3.48 was also moved to credit Plato, against his better judgement, with inventing dialogue.

A remarkable number of [Socrates'] associates became authors of *Sôkratikoi logoi*: of the eighteen Socratics whom Plato mentions as being present or absent on Socrates' last day (cf. *Phd.* 59b–c), nine are attested to have written Socratic dialogues; of the seven associates whom Xenophon names (*Mem.* 1.2.48) as consorting with Socrates for proper motives (in order to become gentlemen, καλοικἀγαθοί), three wrote *Sôkratikoi logoi* ... while a fourth, Hermogenes, is named as Xenophon's source for his *Apology for Socrates*.[2]

But perhaps the most striking aspect of the rise of dialogue is how intensive it was: Livio Rossetti, one of the most devoted scholars of early Socratic authors, has amassed evidence for every possible Socratic *logos* written during Plato's career; on his construal of the evidence (which some might consider optimistic), around three hundred texts on Socrates may have been composed between 395 and 370 BCE. As a reviewer pointed out, this means that 'a *Logos Sokratikos* would have been published every month, non-stop, over a quarter of a century!'[3]

This literary development will be the focus of the present essay, which will attempt an analysis of how dialogue arose and won a place in the literary culture of late fifth- and early fourth-century Athens. I will be concerned less with the exact origins or sources of the genre than in noting how it defined itself against (and was defined by) other discourses of the time. I refer to this process of differentiation as the beginnings of dialogue, because I believe it took some time for Socratic *logoi* to achieve a firm identity of their own. But I must stress that I do not think these beginnings somehow determine all later versions of the form. Rather, I hold that, as with any genre, the nature and powers of dialogue must always be assessed in relation to whatever other forms of writing were produced and read at the time. The present study is intended to show that early Greek dialogue had more extensive and subtle affinities with rhetorical literature than its practitioners cared to admit, and to expand our sense of the forms the genre could take and the functions it could serve.

I will first argue that explanations of the rise of dialogue along biographical lines (as due to the influence of Socrates) or philosophical ones (as expressing some conception of philosophy) must be imprecise and incomplete. I will then consider some passages in Plato and Xenophon which are held to define the genre in distinction from sophistic display texts (*epideixeis*). I will argue to the contrary that Socratic *logoi* were deeply

[2] Vander Waerdt (1994) 3. The remains of the Socratics are collected in Giannantoni (1990). Important discussions are Vander Waerdt (1994), Rutherford (1995) 28–68, Kahn (1996) 1–35, Clay (2000).

[3] See Rossetti (2005). The reviewer is Dufour (2005).

involved with the rhetorical literature of the fourth century, when *logoi* of all kinds were eagerly sought out in Athens. Finally, I will bring out some less obvious literary properties of Socratic *logoi* that helped set them apart from other prose writing of the time.

SOCRATIC *LOGOI* AND SOCRATES

The usual explanation for the rise of dialogue is to say that Socrates' students invented the form to preserve the teaching of the master – who did not himself write.[4] One authoritative account goes from the observation that 'dialogue as a genre was a creation of the first generation of Socrates' pupils' to the inference that 'Undoubtedly, the main motivation for their creation was the visualization of Socrates' personality and his teachings as a holistic entity.'[5] The many comedic portraits of Socrates composed during his lifetime confirm that he had a unique mode of philosophising,[6] but even the most striking personality cannot account, by itself, for the development of a new literary genre. Thinking that dialogue was invented to record Socratic speech runs up against the obvious difficulty that the only two substantial portraits we have of the philosopher differ profoundly.[7] We ought also to question the assumption that contemporaries would have thought the obvious or 'natural' way to capture Socrates' philosophising was to write prose dialogue – a form that as far as we know had never been attempted. Significant literary and textual dynamics would have impinged on the most determinedly 'objective' effort to transcribe Socratic practices, as can be seen in a text which, *prima facie*, may seem to support the 'recording' explanation of dialogue: in that miscellany of Socratic *logoi* known as the *Memorabilia* or 'Memoirs of Socrates', Xenophon tells us that his aim was 'to write down as much as I could remember of how Socrates benefited those who associated with him, partly by the way he comported himself and partly by his conversation [*dialegomenos*]'.[8] The assertion that Socrates benefited his associates makes clear that this alleged

[4] E.g. Hermann (1950) 929. More elaborately, Hirzel (1895) I.68–83.

[5] Görgemanns (2002) 351–2.

[6] For Socrates' 'prattling', cf. Aristophanes *Frogs* 1492 (*lalein*) and Eupolis Fr. 353 K.-A. This accusation continues at least down to Plutarch's *Life of Cato*. The excellent article by Clay (1994) 25 points out that his personality was so distinct that a verb 'Socratizing' was coined by the comic poets, to describe what was evidently a fad of acting like him.

[7] Remarked by Sayre (1995) 1–4, Kahn (1996) 1–35.

[8] *Mem.* 1.3.1: ὡς δὲ δὴ καὶ ὠφελεῖν ἐδοκεῖ μοί τοὺς σύνοντας τὰ μὲν ἔργῳ δεικνύων ἑαυτὸν οἷος ἦν, τὰ δὲ καὶ διαλεγόμενος, τούτων δή γράψω ὁπόσα ἂν διαμνημονεύσω. On the quasi-reality of Xenophon's Socratic writings, cf. Chroust (1977) 1–16, Rutherford (1995) 46–56 and Kahn (1996) 29–35.

exercise in memory will in fact be a partisan construction of a figure who was, after all, put to death by the democracy on a charge of corrupting the young.[9] Xenophon soon admits that his recollections are engaged with what others 'have written and said' about Socrates (1.4.1). This particular Socratic is thus partly remembering texts, among which was an influential but equally unreal text of Socratic literature, a fictional *Accusation of Socrates* composed by the rhetorician Polycrates around 393 BCE (cf. *Mem.* 1.2.9). Scholars have long realised that Xenophon is unlikely to have recollected many of the episodes he recounts, so that the declarations of autopsy that recur in the text (e.g. *Mem.* 1.4.2, 2.4.1, 2.5.1, 4.3.2) must be regarded as a pretence not to be taken literally, something like a formula marking a genre.[10]

A degree of literariness and fictionality attends Socratic portraits, however piously they may have been drawn. We will consider more fully below the subtle ahistoricity of Socratic literature that drove Momigliano to call it 'infuriating' three times in a single paragraph.[11] It is enough to remark at present that the evasion of historicity was a feature not just of some writers but of the genre itself. The sheer number of defence speeches of Socrates on offer – from the fourth century alone we can identify *Apologiai Sôkratous* by Plato, Xenophon, Crito, Lysias, Theodectes and Demetrius of Phalerum – ensured that no one would consult an *Apology of Socrates* for a faithful record of what he said in 399.[12] As often, Xenophon is explicit on such points when Plato is implicit, for he begins his *Apology* by acknowledging that he is engaging with what 'others have written' about Socrates' defence (*Apol.* 1). A similar historical elusiveness marks a different Socratic genre or sub-genre, the symposium or 'drinking party' attended by Socrates. Plato's version toys with any hopes of getting an eye-witness account by beginning with a fantastically elaborate chain of witnesses – not all of them reliable – through whom the story has been handed down for his account. Xenophon seems more direct, simply saying at the beginning that he was present at the events described (*Symp.* 1); but he sets the party at a dramatic date (after the Panathenaia of 421) when he happened to be absent from Greece on military campaigns. Devoted readers of Socratic *logoi* could hardly fail to appreciate that they were *imitations* of Socratic speech. Even Polycrates'

[9] A good discussion of the political, pamphleteering function of Socratic *logoi* in the fourth century is Magalhães-Vilhena (1952).
[10] The point was well made by Maier (1913) 26–30, esp. 27 n. 1.
[11] Momigliano (1971/1993) 46–7, Kahn (1996) Ch. 1 (on Xenophon).
[12] Cf. Rossetti (1975), Rutherford (1995) 29–35, Danzig (2003), with references on p. 285.

Accusation had what must have been a deliberately anachronistic moment, referring to Conon's repair of the long walls in 393 BC.[13]

The idea of writing dialogues, then, did not simply spring from Socrates' fascinating way of talking.[14] A different way of understanding the form is to consider its philosophical potential. After all, the pioneers in this genre were – setting the mysterious Alexamenus aside – followers of Socrates, and so may have adopted the form as the best expression of his particular philosophy. It is eminently plausible that one attraction of dialogue form was that it encouraged readers to reflect in some way upon the arguments being offered. Such analyses, however, will tend to vary according to what is considered the heart of Socratic philosophy: dialogue thus may be described as the natural vehicle for teaching dialectic or as a way to model philosophy as a cooperative enterprise.[15] Often such explanations contrast the active processes needed to construe meaning from dialogues with passively being indoctrinated through academic treatises, lectures or sophistic orations.[16] A danger in this approach is that, given our limited evidence, it soon devolves into the different (though provocative and fascinating) question of why *Plato* wrote dialogues.[17] Plato's reasons for choosing the form may have been idiosyncratic, and of course may have changed along with the considerable changes in the kinds of dialogue he wrote over a long career.[18] The fact that Plato was neither the first nor only Socratic to write dialogues must make us wary of analyses that tie dialogue to specifically Platonic conceptions. There is also something ahistorical in the tendency of such analyses to contrast dialogue with allegedly more dogmatic forms of exposition dear to sophists: treatises are doubtlessly less polyvocal than dialogues, but no one was publishing lectures at this time (Aristotle, for example, 'published' his dialogues and kept his lecture notes in his school), and the literature of 'treatises' was likely to be far more limited than philosophers imagine; as for *epideixis*, we will see that dialogue was hardly averse to incorporating epideictic passages.

The question of why dialogue arose, then, is not fully illuminated either by biographical or philosophical considerations. One may be tempted to

[13] DL 2.39, citing Favorinus (Fr. 34 Barigazzi).
[14] See Greenwood in this volume.
[15] See Long in this volume. Also Gundert (1971); for other perspectives, Klagge and Smith (1992), Frede (1992), Gill and McCabe (1996).
[16] E.g. Görgemans (2002) 352: Dialogue 'opposes the didactic lectures of the sophists and demonstrates that knowledge is not merely transferred but acquired by each individual for himself'.
[17] A number of influential essays on this theme (by Ludwig Edelstein, Paul Plass, Charles Griswold Jr and Michael Frede) are conveniently collected in Smith (1998) Chs. 9–12.
[18] So Kraut (n.d.); Laks (2004) stresses that it is not clear that we can assume that such a varied corpus falls under a single literary formula.

dismiss the matter and say that something like dialogue was bound to surface in this speech-filled literature: after Homer's heroic 'speakers of words', the verbal agons of drama, the antilogies of the sophists and the speech-riddled historians, one might well take the view that it would have been more surprising if Plato had written 'straightforward expository prose' rather than dialogue.[19] Yet the relatively late appearance of the genre in Greek remains remarkable, and the suddenness with which it burst on the scene seems to suggest local influences. I turn then to a closer look at some Socratic texts to bring out certain literary dynamics that, along with personality of the master and the philosophic agendas of its authors, defined the form.

SOCRATIC *LOGOI* AND *DIALOGOI*

Socratic literature is dramatic and normally does not refer to its principles of composition. Some passages of Plato have nevertheless been singled out as programmatic of the genre, but to recognise these in the first place we depend on some definition of dialogue.[20] As a baseline for pursuing possible self-reference in Plato, then, we may consider one of the more popular ancient definitions of dialogue, from a second-century *Introduction* to his works: 'What then is a dialogue? It is a discourse [*logos*] composed of questions and answers on a philosophical or political topic, with the characters of the individuals taking part delineated appropriately, and in an artistically finished style.'[21] Albinus, the author of this text, was a well-trained and orthodox Platonist, and so some elements of the definition he purveys may go far back and illuminate practices of the fourth century BCE. That dialogues ought to exhibit stylistic polish, for example, might not occur to moderns, but was characteristic of the form already for

[19] Vlastos (1991) 51–52. On literary predecessors of dialogue, see Hirzel (1895) I.2–67, Laborderie (1978) 13–42, and Rutherford (1995) 10–15.

[20] An undeniably suggestive, but inconclusive text is the opening of *Theaetetus* (143b–c) in which the narrator explains that the book at hand has been written not as Socrates 'narrated' (*diêgeito*) it but as a 'conversation' (*dialegomenon*), dropping the tiresome 'narrative parts [*diêgêseis*] between the speeches', things like 'I said' or 'he replied'. This passage has been taken to imply that 'dramatic' dialogues without frames were a Platonic innovation, but we know far too little about the relative dates of Socratic writings to be sure of this, and the passage in any case does not easily lead to a general theory of dialogic writing; see Long in this volume.

[21] Albinus, *Eisagôgê* (p. 147.15–19 Hermann): τί ποτ' ἔστιν ὁ διάλογος; ἔστι τοίνυν οὐδὲν ἄλλο τι ἢ λόγος ἐξ ἐρωτήσεως καὶ ἀποκρίσεως συκκείμενος περί τινος τῶν πολιτικῶν καὶ φιλοσόφων πραγμάτων, μετὰ τῆς πρεπούσης ἠθοποιίας τῶν παραλαμβανομένων προσώπων καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὴν λέξιν παρασκευῆς. The same definition, abbreviated and lightly glossed, is in Diogenes Laertius' life of Plato (3.48 Marcovich) and underlies that in the anonymous *Prolegomena to Plato* (14 Westerinck). On Albinus, see Witt (1937).

Aristotle.[22] The emphasis on *êthopoiia* was also essential, for the fact that arguments in Socratic dialogues came with speakers attached was, as we will see, one key feature that distinguished them from other dialogic texts. But the limitation of dialogue to the 'question and answer' format seems less useful. This, of course, can only apply to some Socratic writings with strain. (Does a work so fundamental as Plato's *Apology* really belong 'inside the fold' because of the brief dialectical exchange at 24c–27d? Does the insertion of some perfunctory assenting remarks into long stretches of exposition, as sometimes happens in later Plato, really suffice to make a text a dialogue?) Albinus' identification of dialogue with the exchange of question and answer is logical and etymologically sound, but seems to reflect the philosophy teacher's need to bear down on the arguments in such texts at the expense of their formal variety. The problem here may reduce to whether we conceive the genre under discussion as Socratic *logoi* – apparently a popular designation, and inclusive of more varied kinds of texts – or as Socratic *dialogoi*, emphasising back-and-forth arguing. I suspect that Plato's corpus as it was received in the Academy played a major role (perhaps the role) in subsuming the various Socratic *logoi* under one archetypal notion of philosophical dialogue. Too many works are lost to say more, but one widely cited programmatic passage from Plato at least allows us to see that the question-and-answer format had only a limited role in defining the genre for fourth-century readers.

Aristotle, one of our first sources to refer to the dialogues composed by Plato and others, usually calls them *Sôkratikoi logoi*.[23] In one fragmentary passage, he seems to speak of 'Socratic dialogues' (*dialogoi*), though this isolated usage is possibly an error for *logoi*.[24] The noun *dialogos* and the verb *dialegesthai* are common in Plato's and Xenophon's Socratica to describe what goes on in those texts, but do not appear to be a name for the genre. A few times a stretch of argument is called a *dialogos* (e.g. *Laches* 200e, *Rep.* 354b), but without noticeable generic force; and there is no passage in

[22] Aristotle speaks of the grace (*kompson*) and freshness (*kainotomon*) of Socratic *logoi* (*Pol.* 1265a10–12; cf. Fr. 73 Rose praising Plato's style), and Cicero praised their wit: *elegans, ingeniosum, urbanum, facetum* (*Off.* 1.29.104). For the 'golden' fluidity of Aristotle's own dialogues (Cicero, *flumen orationis aureum*), see Düring (1957) 363–4.

[23] *Poetics* Ch. 1 argues that *Sôkratikoi logoi* (1447b11) and mime deserve to be ranked with poetry insofar as they are mimetic arts, producing representations of people in action. The expression is also used in his *Rhetoric* (1417a21), and a variant, 'The *logoi* of Socrates', in *Politics* (1265a11).

[24] *On Poets* Fr. 72 Rose (cited in n. 1 above). The next use of *dialogos* as a genre term of which I am aware is in Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Aristotle's only other use of *dialogos* refers to a form of dialectical disputation (*Posterior Analytics* 78a12); Isocrates uses the word similarly at *Pan.* 26, on which see text below. I examine Aristotle's evidence in a study forthcoming in *Classical Philology*.

which either word need mean anything more formal or technical than 'talking together'. On occasion, each author shows Socrates punning on the active meaning of *dialegein*, 'sort into classes', suggesting that *dialogos* can be in some sense 'dialectical';[25] but usually in these texts the word refers to a social rather than intellectual activity. The language of Socratic 'conversation' in fact seems to owe its currency to the sophists, who deployed it as one of many euphemisms by which they downplayed any suggestion of compulsion or inequality in the teacher–pupil relationship. 'Talking together' (*dialegesthai, homilein*) is part of how sophists in Plato and Xenophon describe their activities, 'associating' or 'spending time together' (*suneinai, diatribein*) with their 'companions' or 'associates' (*hetairoi, sunontes*), not 'pupils' (*mathêtai*). Socratic writers, of course, insisted that his *dialogoi* differed vastly from Sophistic conversations, but on such grounds as the fact that Socrates would talk to people without charging fees.[26] These quarrels to one side, it is clear that the language of 'conversation' belonged to a social vocabulary that represented philosophy or sophistry as a liberal pursuit, an unpressured discussion among men at leisure who were, if not precise social equals, equally free to pass their time this way.[27]

'Conversation' is thus usually the best way to render *dialogos* in Socratic literature, but Albinus' emphasis on question and answer hardly came out of nowhere; he is likely to have found textual support for his definition, as scholars have since, in a suggestive passage from Plato's *Protagoras* 338a: in this passage Socrates insists on a 'form of conversing' (εἶδος τῶν διαλόγων) that proceeds by short question and answer, which has seemed to define his own methods in distinction from those of the great sophist after whom the work is named. This text must be set in context, for the first half of the *Protagoras* is an extended wrangle about how to conduct a profitable discussion. It begins when Protagoras, having been challenged to prove that virtue is teachable, offers (320c) to give an *epideixis* in the form of a *muthos* (i.e. the allegory he gives of Prometheus' distribution of talents among mankind) or of a formal demonstration (*logos*).[28] He ends up doing both, and Socrates congratulates him on his ability to make his 'fine long speeches'. Socrates then asks him to give 'short' answers (*kata brakhu*, 329b)

[25] On Plato's evolving conception of dialectic (in the *Republic* and some later dialogues) see Müri (1944). For *dialogos* connected with *dialegein*, cf. Xenophon *Mem.* 4.5.11–2; 4.6.1; Plato *Phaedrus* 265d–266c.

[26] Blank (1988).

[27] Paradigmatic of this attitude is the Platonic Protagoras' opposition between his own tuition and the 'compulsory' education of grammar school (*Prot.* 326a; cf. 318d–e = 80 A 5 DK).

[28] 320c: μῦθον λέγων ἐπιδείξω ἢ λόγῳ διεξελθών. On sophistical *epideixis* (e.g. *Gorg* 448d, 449c, *Rep.* 337a, *Dissoi Logoi* 8.1), Thomas (2000) 252–7.

in his conversation (*dialegesthai*, 334e). Protagoras assents, though cannot suppress the occasional applause-winning outburst until Socrates despairs at 'what shall be our mode of conversing?' (τίς ὁ τρόπος ἔσται τῶν διαλόγων, 336b). Things only get back on track when the host of the event advises Protagoras to trim his rhetorical sails, but he also urges Socrates not to insist on 'this kind of conversation consisting in extremely short answers' (μήτε σε τὸ ἀκριβὲς τοῦτο εἶδος τῶν διαλόγων ζητεῖν τὸ κατὰ βραχὺ λίαν, 338a).

The opposition that is read into this text between Platonic dialogue through short questions and answers and sophistic harangues crumbles away upon a little reflection. There is no doubt Socrates is consistently portrayed – possibly with an historical basis – as favoring brachylogy over *epideixis*.[29] But this passage is far from constituting a programme for Platonic writing, which, as *Protagoras* itself shows, readily incorporated long uninterrupted speeches. Nor are such orations limited to sophistic types: Socrates soon gives an *epideixis* himself in which he fancifully derives the practice of brachylogy from the Laconic utterances of the Seven Sages (342b–343b). Socrates' willingness to fly off into long disquisitions (as in Plato's great myths) is not solely a Platonic device: in the *Memorabilia* Xenophon depicts Socrates 'recalling' at length (2.1.21–34) a composition about Heracles which Prodicus 'displayed' before a great number of people. Socrates poor-mouths his offering as less splendidly adorned than the original, but as a textual practice Xenophon has managed, like Plato, to incorporate his version of a sophist's 'composition' (*sungramma*, 2.1.21) into his own. Conversely, brachylogy was not an exclusively Socratic practice, but one of many modes of speech that versatile performers like sophists controlled. Socrates includes it as among Protagoras' professed skills as a debater: 'you are able, on your own account and as your reputation goes, to practice either makrology or brachylogy in your interactions with people – after all you are a wise man – whereas for my part I am incapable of speaking at length' (335b–c).[30] The sophist Gorgias has the same double competence in the *Gorgias* (447c, 449b–c) and being able both to 'converse in brief replies' (*kata brakhu ... dialegesthai*) and to 'give a public harangue' (*damagorein*) are

[29] Clay (1994) 37 points to *Clouds* 482–3, where Socrates proposes to put a few 'short' questions to his pupil (οὐκ, ἀλλὰ βραχέα σου πυθέσθαι βούλομαι, εἰ μνημονικὸς εἶ).

[30] This passage may be part of the basis for the claim in Diogenes Laertius (9.53) that Protagoras 'was the first to develop the Socratic form of discussion [*eidos logôn*]'. On Diogenes' report (3.48) that Zeno first wrote dialogues, see Barigazzi (1966) 204. Aristotle speaks of Zeno's 'question and answer' format at *Soph. El.* 170b19.

among the broad range of competences desiderated of a technically accomplished teacher in the sophistic *Dissoi logoi* (8.1.27).

As in *Protagoras*, Plato's *Gorgias* stages a contrast between declaiming and 'conversing'. It opens with Socrates turning down an offer to hear a reprise of an *epideixis* Gorgias has just performed, preferring instead 'to have a conversation with him, if he would be so kind' (*dialekhthênai*, 447c; cf. 449b). Together, both texts suggest that the significant difference between conversations through questions and answers and long speeches is not Socratism vs. sophistry but between speaking before a mass (and undiscriminating) audience and conducting a private conversation. In *Gorgias* Socrates is very clear that it is impossible to have dialogue with a mass assembly (474a–b, picked up at 475e–476a), and in *Protagoras* when the sophist breaks out into a long speech, Socrates observes acidly, 'I thought there was a difference between conversing together [*dialegomenous*] and making grand public speeches [*dêmêgorein*].'[31] The distinction in *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* between 'conversation' (*dialogos*) and 'demagoguery' defines those texts' audience as much as their methods. Unlike the sophists, Socratics stick to producing texts for private reading; they have no interest in addressing the mass public on its terms.

I infer from these passages that Socratic dialogues did not present themselves in the first instance as manuals for learning dialectic, though they certainly were so used by later students. Viewed without the retrospective agenda of an Albinus, that varied body of works rather resembles a sampler of the different kinds of talk that a Socrates could elicit. Recalling that stylistic polish was one of the hallmarks of the genre, I suggest that part of the appeal of these Attic mimes was in providing scenes of civilised conversation in leisure, forms of discourse distinct from 'the compulsory speeches of the law-courts' (Gorgias *Helen* 13). This is not to deny the moral seriousness and logical rigour of such Socratic authors as Antisthenes and Aeschines of Athens, Euclides of Megara and Phaedo of Elis, all of whom were philosophers in their own right. And it would be going too far to say that Socratic *logoi* functioned merely as conversation manuals, for their agenda always involved working through, with more or less pertinacity and success, 'some philosophical or civic topic'. But the self-presentation of Plato and Xenophon suggests that, over and above preparing readers to undertake philosophy, dialogue was valued for its models for negotiating

[31] *Prot.* 336b. Xenophon *Mem.* 3.7.4 also opposes private discussion (*idiai … dialegesthai*) to 'competing before a multitude' (*en plêthei … agônizesthai*). Cf. *damagoria* in *Dissoi Logoi* 8.1.27, cited above.

debate and sustaining conversation.[32] After all, in the bustling competition among higher educators in the fourth century, it was not necessary to pack a complete philosophical education into these brief publications. As such the genre would have appealed to those interested in what Aristotle called 'noble leisure' (*Politics* 8.3; cf. 7.13–15), and there is much to be said for Gaiser's suggestion that early Platonic dialogues were indebted to the sophistic genre of protreptic.[33] But it is time to step back to discern other ways by which Socratic *logoi* claimed a place of their own.

SOCRATIC *LOGOI* AND *LOGOI*

Dialogue emerged at a time of unprecedented expansion in the number and kinds of prose texts produced in Athens. It is an obvious fact, but too easily lost sight of, that when cultures acquire convenient means of writing, they do not write everything down all at once, but pick out certain forms of discourse as especially useful to fix in writing and leave the rest to carry on as it had.[34] The early fourth century, when Socratic literature was gaining its feet, was marked by a flood of new prose texts, especially speeches, either orations 'actually' delivered or samples of the kinds of speech suitable for given occasions. In Athens, the publication of rhetorical *logoi* is said to have begun with forensic speeches and exercises circulated by Antiphon (*obit.* 411), followed soon by judicial orations of Lysias and the early texts Isocrates produced as a speechwriter for hire. What we have of Greek literature that was published over the next century, from Antiphon through Demosthenes, is dominated by such speech texts.

Prima facie, Socratic literature was another kind of *logos* – as its name indicated – and so a prime task for Socratics was to distinguish their *logoi* as special and valuable. Having been taught by Plato and Aristotle, we can specify many respects in which Socratics elevated their own truly 'philosophic' texts over rhetorical and sophistic chicanery. But such discrimination was less easy in the early fourth century when the burgeoning *logos* literature made boundaries between genres porous and highly provisional. A look at the genre of funeral orations shows how the constant expansion of the kinds of prose written down and the exponential increase in their numbers made prose forms promiscuous and mobile. This traditional ceremony of lament became a prose affair sometime in the fifth century

[32] The rhetorical tradition developed the form called the *Lalia* or 'Talk': see Menander Rhetor 388.17–394.31, with commentary by Russell and Wilson (1981) 294–303.

[33] Gaiser (1959) 21–8. Cf. Rynearson (2006). [34] More at Ford (2005).

when orators and politicians took over the poets' task of composing dirges (*thrênoi*) for citizens who had died in war.[35] At first, these performances were closely tied to their performative contexts 'at the tomb' (*epitaphios*) and seem not to have been written down, even when they were delivered by such oratorical giants as Pericles. The *epitaphios logos* effectively became a prose genre when sample texts of such speeches began to be circulated. Gorgias produced an *epitaphios* suitable for performance at Athens (82 B 6 DK), presumably as a specimen of his talents since it is doubtful that a Sicilian would have been invited to speak on behalf of the Athenian people. Other rhetoricians competed with their own *epitaphioi*, such as the one ascribed to Lysias purporting to memorialise the fallen in the Corinthian war of the late 390s. A further stage is reached when we find faux-*epitaphioi* introduced into texts of other kinds, such as the splendid impersonation of Pericles' performance in 430 BCE that Thucydides inserted into his history (2.35–46). Socratic writers felt no need to resist a topic so popular (and thus so effective at displaying one's skills): Plato's *Menexenus* is little more than a playful *epitaphios* (236d–249c) nestled in a dialogue (236b may be read as giving, in effect, the 'ground rules' of the game). He hints at the intertextual escapades afoot when his Socrates claims to have learned his speech from Aspasia – who was not only Pericles' mistress but the eponymous figure of a dialogue by the Socratic Antisthenes. The Socratic texts in turn could inspire other writers, and Isocrates took over many epitaphic motifs for his faux-festival speeches, the *Panegyricus* and *Panathenaicus*.

The *epitaphios logos* is far from being the only rhetorical genre involved with the *Sôkratikoi logoi*. Andrea Wilson Nightingale has argued extensively that Plato's dialogues only won their way to the status of 'philosophical' writing by incorporating and parodying a great many genres, poetic and rhetorical.[36] A vivid picture of the process is dramatised in *Phaedrus* when Socrates forces a *logos*-loving companion to disgorge a speech text he has been hiding under his cloak in hopes of studying it: the roll turns out to contain a sample *erôtikos logos* or seduction speech by Lysias, which Socrates duly listens to, travesties and rewrites. A reader of this Socratic *logos* thus is given not only a piece of pseudo-Lysias in a well-tried genre but instructions on how to outdo it as well.[37] In this way the multivocal *Phaedrus* delivers the type of help our poor student had sought from the meagre *logos* text itself.

[35] Loraux (1986a).
[36] Nightingale (1995); Goldhill (2002) 80 notes how often Plato's text constitutes itself by 'humiliating' significant civic discourses.
[37] See Lasserre (1944) and Rynearson (2006).

As said above, the exchange between Socratic literature and sophistic rhetoric was not one-sided: a sample erotic speech included in the Demosthenic corpus (*Or.* 61) is set at the house of Epicrates, the very place where Phaedrus claims to have heard Lysias perform (*Phaedrus* 227b). Other discourse genres important to Plato and all teachers of the time include the *protreptikos logos*, exhortations to virtue like Prodicus' text on Heracles at a crossroad, and the encomium or speech in praise of a mortal.[38]

The fecundity of this period in generating new kinds of prose and the evident appetite of the public for such writings are a main reason that Socratic *logoi* are so hospitable to other prose genres and why they range so readily beyond the question-and-answer format. It remained important, however, for Socratic *logoi* to project an identity of their own, especially since they were confusable with the widely practised but discreditable genre of disputation or eristic.[39] The danger emerges clearly in an interesting passage from Isocrates which lists a number of recognisable prose genres (*Antidosis* 45–47). Arguing that prose has as many forms (*tropoi*, *ideai*) as poetry, Isocrates lists: antiquarian genealogies, scholarly inquiry into poets, history and 'those who have occupied themselves with questioning and answering, which they call "antilogistics"'.[40] The list is incomplete, but clearly the label 'antilogistics' is meant to lump Socratic *logoi* together with the texts teaching disputation. Isocrates has little respect for this kind of writing, which he elsewhere calls 'eristic dialogues' (his sole use of the term *dialogos)* and characterises as a novel element in education in which the young delight overmuch and which older people find intolerable (*Panath.* 26). For such reasons, of course, Plato repeatedly distinguishes *dialegesthai* from *erizein*, 'conversation' from 'disputation'.[41] His anxiety about being assimilated to this class of writer is doubtless projected onto his portrait of Zeno, whom he represents as embarrassed for having published a book of eristic paradoxes; Zeno is made to write off this work (which must have been a pioneer in eristic literature, and probably contained a version of Achilles and the tortoise) as the fruit of his youthful love of contentiousness; he claims quite disingenuously that it was published without his consent.[42]

[38] Cf. Nightingale (1993). [39] On eristic literature and the dialogue, Laborderie (1978) 27–40.
[40] ἄλλοι δέ τινες περὶ τὰς ἐρωτήσεις καὶ τὰς ἀποκρίσεις γεγόνασιν, οὓς ἀντιλογικοὺς καλοῦσιν. On 'antilogies', cf. Thomas (2000) 252–3, 264–7.
[41] E.g. *Euthydemus*, *passim*; *Phaedo* 90b–91a; *Rep.* 454a, cf. 511c; *Theaet.* 167e; *Sophist* 216b. Isocrates rejects the distinction at *Sophists* 1–3; *Helen* 2, 6; *Antid.* 265.
[42] *Parmenides* 128. Cf. Wilamowitz (1920) 28.

It is clear that the literature of disputation had a following among the young, but was disreputable if pursued too seriously or past the age of youthful contentiousness. 'It would be unseemly', Plato's Socrates says at the beginning of his *Apology*, 'for me to come before you making up speeches like a schoolboy.'[43] And yet Plato says this precisely in a model speech of a kind (defence) that sophists had long cultivated. The need for a shibboleth separating Socratic from dubious sophistic *logoi* was all the more urgent for the difference between them being at times so slight. It is here that the *êthopoiia* of dialogue played a significant role: the fact that Socratic arguments issued from defined personae strongly distinguished them from the usual texts of disputation. Reading an exchange between Socratic characters was fundamentally different from studying the opposed anonymous speeches of the *Dissoi Logoi* or the paired defence and prosecution speeches constituting Antiphon's *Tetralogies*. When, as sometimes happened, the eristic mode entered Socratic *logoi*, personae made a powerful difference. Xenophon reports a 'conversation' (*dialekhthênai*) he heard of between Alcibiades and Pericles about the laws (*Mem.* 1.2.40–47). The substance of the argument is eristic, a captious undermining of a series of definitions of law. The amoral argument is given a certain colour, however, by casting Alcibiades, the future star and bane of Athenian politics, as the indefatigable confuter of every sane statement, while the unworthily abused victim is played by Pericles, Alcibiades' guardian and a revered hero of the Athenian state. Albinus would call it 'fitting' *êthopoiia* that Alcibiades is described as not yet twenty at the time, and that the mature Pericles becomes impatient at this quibbling, saying that he used to enjoy such exercises (*meletê*, 1.2.46) as a lad.

The most important element of Socratic *êthopoiia*, of course, was the persona of Socrates himself. We have already noted that this was not to be the 'real' Socrates of history, but a quasi-historical figure promising a certain kind of text. Wilamowitz noted that the expression *Sôkratikos logos* would have implied a certain ethos, as an Aesopic *logos* promised to be tricky and table-turning and a Simonidean *logos* wise and controversial. We can guess that, amid the forest of rhetorical *logoi*, a 'Socratic' *logos* stood out as a high-minded and elegant discourse; so much is suggested by a phrase from a Lysianic speech that describes Aeschines the Socratic as 'one who had been a pupil of Socrates and who had made so many impressive [*semnous*] speeches about justice and excellence'.[44]

[43] *Apology* 17c; cf. *Menex.* 236c. [44] Lysias *Against Aeschines*, Fr. 1.2 (= Athenaeus 611d–612f).

A final distinctive feature of the Socratic *logoi* emerges if we compare the persona of Socrates with other fictional figures of discourse, for teachers of rhetoric also used a kind of fictionality to give their specimen speeches a less serious appearance. In the fifth century, some sophists produced sample speech texts, but these were presented to 'associates' with a studious casualness, as toys for practice and demonstration, not as valuable prose works in their own right.[45] Especially when recruiting students in democratic societies, it was important not to appear too serious about dominating audiences, and some sophists reinforced their pose of urbane levity by making their speeches about mythical or legendary figures.[46] Such, for example, are Gorgias' defence of Palamedes or of Helen, which he calls 'an encomium of Helen and a plaything of my own' (*Helen* 21; cf. Alcidamas *Against the Soph.* 35).[47] The trend was still ongoing at the time of Plato, to his dismay. Polycrates, for example, wrote an encomium of Clytemnestra in which the matricide was contrasted favourably with Penelope. He also wrote a text praising and defending Busiris, a legendarily bloodthirsty tyrant of Egypt.[48] The implicit logic of the game dictated that the most admirable performance was the one that defended the most impossible case – vindicating Helen's virtue, praising Death or exalting the qualities of mice. Many complained about the cynicism of such exercises.[49] Among these high-minded objectors was Isocrates (*Helen* 8–13; *Panath.* 1), but the popularity of the form put this aspiring rhetorician in a bind: in the end he could not resist the challenge of showing his own talents by discoursing on Busiris, but he preserved his dignity by framing his *Busiris* not as another speech text but as a letter of protest to Polycrates. Rhetoric was the mother of inventive prose.

Socratics also disdained the literature of paradox and myth.[50] But writing speeches for hopeless causes had something in common with Socrates' *Apologiai*, which were, after all, on behalf of the most surprising loser in the history of capital trials. Plato's and Xenophon's versions show that part of the game was in coming up with an explanation of how Socrates, that supreme talker, failed to secure his own acquittal (cf. *Mem.* 4.8.5; 8). There was, however, a saving limit to these similarities in the fact that Socrates was a figure of recent history. Socrates was not Helen, Heracles or Busiris; he

[45] See Cole (1991), esp. Chs. 5–7. [46] Cf. Ford (2001).
[47] See Wardy (1996) for the levels of levity here.
[48] For a good recent overview of Polycrates, see Livingstone (2001) 28–40. Polycrates' *Busiris* seems to have been, like Gorgias' *Helen*, a cross between encomium and apology: Livingstone (2001) 39 n. 101.
[49] On the literature of praising small things: O'Sullivan (1992) 84 and Pease (1926).
[50] E.g. Plato *Symposium* 177b; Aristotle *NE* 7 1146a; *Rhetoric* 1366a18–20.

was more like Alcibiades, Pericles or Cyrus, a real figure, bearing, for readers born around the turn of the century, some interest and a certain amount of historical identity, but he was not so well-known as to hem in a writer's themes and style. A fiction but half-real, Socrates' persona helped Socratics produce speech texts without being taken as rhetoricians. They could write ironically without projecting triviality and insincerity; the martyred philosopher allowed them to affect a pose of moral seriousness and careful speech, but without sacrificing the opportunities for novelty and innovation and the appeal that *logos* literature commanded.[51]

CONCLUSION

The ways that Socratics exploited personae could be analysed far more extensively, but it may be fair to sum up by saying that the rhetorical culture of the fourth century shaped early dialogue at least as deeply as previous literature or the activities of Socrates. The connections I have been arguing for between dialogues and speech texts are surprising only if one accepts Plato's position that only his opponents resort to the low tactics of rhetoric. But one great benefit of literary historical studies is that they can unravel such ideological constructs. We can point in conclusion to Antisthenes of Athens as a figure who crossed over between rhetorical and Socratic *logoi*: a follower of Socrates some twenty years Plato's senior, Antisthenes wrote not only Socratic *logoi* but a defence speech for the matricide Orestes and a pair of speeches by which Odysseus and Ajax ought to have contended for the arms of Achilles.[52] The line between Socratic and rhetorical *logoi* is also straddled by a figure like Alcibiades, whose notorious career furnished material for dialogues and faux-prosecution speeches in equal measure.[53] Plato would not approve of this proximity, but he would be hard pressed to deny that, when he first took up his pen, Socratic dialogue was inseparable from its rhetorical 'other'. In other words, dialogue began life as a genre of Greek prose.

[51] Cf. Joël (1894–1895) 476: 'Man schämt sich in eigenem Namen zu schreiben und scheut sich vor der toten Schrift, darum versteckt man sich hinter einen andern und fingiert ihn als lebendig redend – das ist die μίμησις im λόγος Σωκρατικὸς.'

[52] Wilamowitz (1920) II.26–7 questions whether Antisthenes can be credited with *Socratic* dialogues.

[53] Dialogues on Alcibiades include Plato's *Alcibiades* I (and Alcibiades' speech in Plato's *Symposium*), pseudo-Plato *Alcibiades* II, and works of that name by Aeschines of Sphettus and Antisthenes (the latter of whom claimed to have been an eye-witness, *autoptês genomenos*, of Alcibiades' beauty: Fr. 30 Caizzi). These are matched by forensic speeches about him (sometimes focalised through his son, Alcibiades the younger) including [Lysias] 6, Andocides 4, and polemical passages in Isocrates 16 and Lysias 14. On these, see Goldstein (1968) 122–5.

CHAPTER 3

Plato's dialogues and a common rationale for dialogue form

Alex Long

INTRODUCTION: EXPLAINING DIALOGUE FORM

The project of this volume is to explain why the dialogue genre was put to minimal or no use by early Christian authors, despite the previous prominence of the genre in antiquity. One might approach our task in the following manner: first determine what attracts authors to dialogue form, and then use that determination to explain the genre's absence or rarity in early Christianity. For when we have unearthed the rationale for writing in dialogue form – a rationale common to all writers of dialogues – explaining the preference for *other* media will become a straightforward business; once we have found the desiderata secured by dialogue form, we can infer that early Christians thought that other genres would achieve the same ends more effectively, or alternatively that such desiderata simply ceased to be desiderata in the Christian era.

At the risk of caricature, let me give an intuitive example of the sort of account which this approach would yield. An author writes dialogues because of what she values in dialogue. Now dialogue allows for disagreement and candid exchange, and is thus an inherently non-authoritarian medium. All writers who choose dialogue form do so because they value this feature of dialogue, and so the natural home of dialogue form is democracy, where open debate is valued; little wonder, then, that the dialogue form first flowered in classical Athens. But early Christians stopped using dialogue form (at least to the same extent), showing thereby that open debate was no longer valued (at least to the same extent). We could of course make further refinements to this account. Perhaps there was something newly doctrinaire in early Christianity, or maybe an authoritarian malaise was already endemic.

This example and the kind of approach it illustrates assume that dialogue form is the hallmark of a certain outlook. On this assumption there is a universal rationale for writing in dialogue form, and, more generally, an