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Drunk with Wisdom: Metaphors of Ecstasy in Plato's *Symposium* and Lucian of Samosata

Eva Anagnostou-Laoutides 

Department of History and Archaeology, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia;
Eva.Anagnostou-Laoutides@mq.edu.au

Abstract: Among the metaphors that Plato employed in the context of his apophatic approach to philosophical truth and its experience, inebriation stands out in the *Symposium*, where famously Socrates is compared to Dionysian figures such as the Silenoi and Marsyas (215a-c), and to frenzied Corybantic dancers (215e; 216d; 218b). The contentious nature of inebriation as a proxy of ecstasy is aptly exemplified in Euripides' *Bacchae*, where Pentheus, the distrusting new tyrant of Thebes, is keen to associate the Bacchic trance with common intoxication and lewd behavior; although Plato tries to anticipate such criticisms by repeatedly stating in the *Symposium* that Socrates is sober and of sound mind (e.g., 214a; 216d; 219d; 220a), later authors are unforgiving of his metaphorical style, which is deemed inconsistent with Plato's stern disapproval of poetry. Among such later authors, Lucian of Samosata deserves closer attention apropos his treatment of inebriation as a most confusing and inappropriate metaphor for philosophical inspiration. Despite the jocular style of his dialogues, Lucian's depiction of Platonic inebriation powerfully sketches a deep intellectual crisis that especially afflicts the young people of his time. Thus, Lucian sheds unexpected light on a less prominent chapter of Plato's reception during the Roman imperial period.



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1. Introduction: Philosophical Conversion and “Platonic Inebriation”

Conversion, the result of undergoing an altered state of consciousness,¹ was invariably described in Greek antiquity as ecstasy or divine possession,² and was linked with philosophy rather than religion.³ For example, in the Platonic dialogues Socrates is typically portrayed as preoccupied with abstract notions, meditating for hours in full public view, lost in his thoughts,⁴ often talking to himself,⁵ yet candidly musing on his frequent divine visitations (his *daimonion*).⁶ Hence, Socrates becomes an easy target of fifth-century BCE Athenian anti-intellectualism,⁷ spearheaded by Aristophanes.⁸ This, however, does not alter that fact that our encounter with the secrets of the cosmos or the divine is typically marked by an inexpressible sublimity, often accompanied by feelings of amazement, fear, and awe. Thus, Plato's descriptions of the inner experience of philosophy are full of lacunae, such as, for example, in the *Symposium*, where Diotima resorts to a series of negatives to convey the ineffable uniqueness of Beauty (*Symp.* 211b2). Still, Plato needs to relate in some way the experience of philosophical conversion and thus he coins a number of metaphors for which he draws on culturally familiar states of altered consciousness (see n.1). One of the most controversial metaphors that Plato employed to describe philosophical conversion is inebriation,⁹ notably expounded in the *Symposium* (e.g., *Symp.* 218b3-4), which relates the events that took place during a splendid banquet organized by Agathon in 416 BCE to celebrate his dramatic victory at the Lenaia festival of that year. The guests are some of the most prominent politicians and members of the Athenian intellectual elite of the time, including Socrates and aristocratic bad-boy Alcibiades.

The latter is, in fact, portrayed as gate-crashing the party (212d4-7) and proclaiming himself symposiarch (213e9-10) before urging everyone to drink beyond measure (213e10-

214a4). In addition, when prompted by Eryximachus to participate in the competition of praises about Eros which the guests have chosen as their pastime, Alcibiades resolves to deliver a praise of Socrates, comparing him to the Silenoi and Marsyas,¹⁰ figures typically associated with Dionysus,¹¹ who, according to Euripides' iconic representation of the god's cult, drove his followers "out of their mind,"¹² stinging them with bouts of *mania*.¹³ Framed by repeated references to drinking in the dialogue—that of the other guests (176a7–c4),¹⁴ of Poros in Diotima's tale (203b6–8), and notably, Alcibiades' undeniable state of intoxication, as he is supported by a flute girl into the banqueting hall (212d–e)—Socrates' philosophical inspiration is described as an ecstatic experience that leads his audiences to shock and amazement (215d6):¹⁵

ἐπειδὴν δὲ σοῦ τις ἀκούῃ ἢ τῶν σῶν λόγων ἄλλου λέγοντος, . . . , ἐκπεπληγμένοι
ἐσμὲν καὶ κατεχόμεθα.

For whenever one listens to you or to someone else relating your speeches . . .
we are all astounded and possessed.

Alcibiades has first-hand experience of this frenzy, which he compares to the orgiastic rites of the Corybantes (215e1–4):¹⁶

ὅταν γὰρ ἀκούω, πολὺ μοι μᾶλλον ἢ τῶν κορυβαντιῶντων ἢ τε καρδίᾳ πηδᾷ
καὶ δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων τῶν τούτου, ὁρῶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλους παμπόλλους
τὰ αὐτὰ πάσχοντας.

For when I hear him, I am much worse than those partaking in the Corybantic
dances; and my heart leaps and tears run down my eyes at the sound of his
speeches, and I have witnessed many others undergoing the same experience.

Alcibiades' statement focuses on the difference between appearance and essence and aims to dramatize the effect that Socrates has on his audiences: despite being rather unassuming in appearance (remember the joke at the start of the *Symposium* about Socrates looking unusually polished; 174a10–11), always joking with his interlocutors (175e8 and 215b9: ὑβριστῆς εἶ; cf. 219c6; 221e4; 222b1 and especially 216e5–6: εἰρωνευόμενος δὲ καὶ παίζων πάντα τὸν βίον πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διατελεῖ), and claiming to know little (216d4–5: καὶ αὖ ἄγνοεῖ πάντα καὶ οὐδὲν οἶδεν), in reality, he is a deft speaker that leads his interlocutors to *aporia* before guiding them to change their views and way of life (cf. 215b4–5; 216e3–8). Thus, indeed he resembles the Silenoi statues that look ridiculous at first (221e2–3: φανεῖεν ἂν πάνυ γελοῖοι τὸ πρῶτον) with their deceptively ludicrous exterior though inside them they hide statues of the gods. Similarly, an inexperienced and thoughtless person might at first laugh at Socrates' speeches (221e7–222a1: ὥστε ἄπειρος καὶ ἀνόητος ἄνθρωπος πᾶς ἂν τῶν λόγων καταγελάσειεν) before realizing that his are the only speeches that make sense.

Nevertheless, Socrates' philosophical inspiration, defined by Alcibiades as *mania* and *baccheia* (218b3–4), and supplemented by testimonies of the philosopher's reputation for being able to quaff considerable amounts of wine,¹⁷ could easily render him misunderstood, even ridiculed, as being "under the influence" of wine, as being drunk.¹⁸ Despite repeated references in the *Symposium* to Socrates' *sophrosyne* (214a; 216d; 219d), reinforced by Alcibiades' assurance that "no-one has ever seen Socrates drunk" (220a6–7: Σωκράτη μεθύοντα οὐδεὶς πώποτε ἑώρακεν ἀνθρώπων), Plato's bold attempt to defend Socrates backfired. "Platonic" or "Socratic inebriation" attracted considerable criticism by later readers for confusing philosophy, expected to unpack abstract notions in plain language, with the literary endeavor, typically associated with florid, figurative language. Thus, Plato was accused of misguiding students of philosophy who were unable to appreciate his penchant for metaphors. My paper, then, discusses the negative reception of Plato's metaphorical style in the Hellenistic and early Roman imperial periods before focusing on the rejection of Socrates' *baccheia* by Lucian of Samosata, the second century CE satirist who offers a refreshing insight into the renewed debate of his time on philosophical conversion.¹⁹

2. Critiquing Plato's Metaphorical Language

As Millet has pointed out,²⁰ Socrates was already a controversial figure in his own time, and shortly after his death, a plethora of Socratic literature came into circulation, including “the so-called Sokratikoi Logoi or ‘Conversations with Socrates’, which was possibly as much hostile to Socrates as in his favour.” Among this wide variety of approaches to Socrates, Plato's metaphorical attempts to articulate Socratic wisdom came in for criticism. Hence, in the fourth century BCE, Dicaearchus shows little sympathy for Socrates' discursive tropes and accuses Plato of encouraging people to engage with philosophy at a superficial level (Phld. Hist. Acad., PHerc. 1021, col. 1.1-21).²¹

ἐνδεχόμενον [οὔ]ν ἐπα-
νεκαίνισ[ε] πάλιν ἄπασαν
τὴν τέ[χνην κ][αί κ][α]τὰ τοῦτ'
ἐν το[ῖς] [λ][ό]γοις εὐρυθμίαν
προέλαβεν, αὐτὸς δὲ πολ-
λὰ ἐπειγνέγκατο ἰδια· [δι'] ὧν
– εἴ γε διὰ παρρη[σίας] δε[ῖ] c. 3]..
νόμηναι λέγειν–πλ[εῖστον]
δὴ τῶν πάντων [ἀνθρ]ώ-
πων οὗτος εὐξήσε[ν φ]ιλο-
σοφίαν καὶ κατέλυ[ε]ν· προ-
[ε]τρέψατο μὲν γὰρ ἄπ[α]ντας
ὥς εἰπεῖν ἐπ' αὐτὴν διὰ
τῆς ἀναγραφῆς τῶν λ[ό]-
γων, ἐπιπολαίως δὲ καί
τ[ι]νας ἐποίησε φιλοσοφεῖν
φανεράν ἐκτρέ[πων] εἰ[c]
τριβή[ν]. φησὶ δ' ὅτι [c. 7]
[c. 5]εκαπ... [c. 2]. νακ[()]
[c. 2] τοῦ φιλο[σο]φεῖν ἐνδ[ό]-
σιμον ἔδω[κεν],

... possible ... he (sc. Plato) renewed again the entire art and, in doing so, added good rhythm in his dialogues.²² He himself introduced many things of his own. [Through] these—if (I may) say ... frankly—indeed [most] of all humans this man strengthened and broke up philosophy. For he urged everyone so to speak to practice it by writing down his dialogues. However, he also made some people practice philosophy in a superficial manner, leading them astray to a visible practice. Additionally, he (sc. Dicaearchus) says that ... [he] gave an impulse for practicing philosophy ...

This mode of criticism was still operative in the first century CE; thus, while focusing on the use of metaphors in speeches, Demetrius, the author of *On Style*,²³ offers aspiring writers the following advice (*Eloc.* 80):²⁴

Ἐπὶ μὲν τοῖς κινδυνώδεις ἢ μεταφορὰ δοκῇ, μεταλαμβάνεσθαι εἰς εἰκασίαν: οὕτω γὰρ ἀσφαλέστερα γίνονται ἄν. εἰκασία δ' ἐστὶ μεταφορὰ πλεονάζουσα, ... οὕτω μὲν γὰρ εἰκασία γέγονεν καὶ ἀσφαλέστερος ὁ λόγος, ἐκείνως δὲ μεταφορὰ καὶ κινδυνώδης. διὸ καὶ Πλάτων ἐπισφαλές τι δοκεῖ ποιεῖν μεταφοραῖς μᾶλλον χρώμενος ἢ εἰκασίαις, ὁ μὲντοι Ξενοφῶν εἰκασίαις μᾶλλον. When a metaphor seems bold, convert it into a simile for greater safety. A simile is an expanded metaphor ... The result is a simile and a less risky form of

expression, while the former was a metaphor and more dangerous. This is why Plato's use of metaphor in preference to simile is thought risky. Xenophon by contrast prefers the simile.

Socrates' superior state of mental agility and the process of acquiring it cannot be communicated and/or experienced precisely; this, however, as Halliwell pointed out, leads prospective students of philosophy to confusion and uncertainty about the nature of truth to which ecstasy is expected to lead.²⁵ Thus, as Platonism came in for increasing criticism in the Hellenistic and early Imperial periods, the boundaries between metaphor, experience, diction, and reality in the metaphor of Socratic intoxication became a locus for satire.²⁶

This wariness around philosophical discourse and its inspirational effect²⁷ reflects a heated debate in the centuries after Plato,²⁸ a debate that does not always differentiate between Plato, Socrates, and their followers. According to pseudo-Longinus, Caecilius Calactinus, who wrote at the time of Augustus,²⁹ was among several later readers who were especially critical of Plato's inebriation metaphor (*Subl.* 32.7; = Caec. Cal. fr. 150):³⁰

ὅτι μέντοι καὶ ἡ χρῆσις τῶν τρόπων, ὥσπερ τᾶλλα πάντα καλὰ ἐν λόγοις, προαγωγὸν αἰεὶ πρὸς τὸ ἄμετρον, δῆλον ἦδη, καὶ ἐγὼ μὴ λέγω. ἐπὶ γὰρ τούτοις καὶ τὸν Πλάτωνα οὐχ ἥκιστα διασύρουσι, πολλάκις ὥσπερ ὑπὸ βακχείας τινὸς τῶν λόγων εἰς ἀκράτους καὶ ἀπηνεῖς μεταφορὰς καὶ εἰς ἀλληγορικὸν στόμφον ἐκφερόμενον. οὐ γὰρ ῥᾶδιον ἐπινοεῖν ὅτι πόλιν εἶναι δεῖ δίκην κρατῆρος κεκερασμένην, οὗ μαινόμενος μὲν οἶνος ἐγκεχυμένος ζεῖ, κολαζόμενος δ' ὑπὸ νήφοντος ἐτέρου θεοῦ, καλὴν κοινωνίαν λαβὼν ἀγαθὸν πόμα καὶ μέτριον ἀπεργάζεται νήφοντα γάρ, φασί, θεὸν τὸ ὕδωρ λέγειν, κόλασιν δὲ τὴν κρᾶσιν, ποιητοῦ τινος τῷ ὄντι οὐχὶ νήφοντός ἐστι.

However, it is obvious without my stating it, that the use of metaphor, like all the other attractions of style, always tempts writers to excess. Indeed, it is for these passages in particular that critics pull Plato to pieces, on the ground that he is often carried away by a sort of Bacchic possession in his writing into harsh and intemperate metaphor and allegorical bombast. "It is by no means easy to see," he says, "that a city needs mixing like a wine bowl,³¹ where the mad wine seethes as it is poured in, but is chastened by another and a sober god and finding good company makes an excellent and temperate drink." To call water "a sober god" and mixing "chastisement," say the critics, is the language of a poet who is far from sober.

Although ps.-Longinus defends Plato, using vocabulary that evokes the Platonic *Symposium*,³² evidently Plato did not avoid being misunderstood. His critics were particularly challenged by the contradiction of a philosophical mind overcome by frenzy and yet able to grasp transcendental truth(s) with remarkable alertness.³³ Indeed, even if we allow for the typical exaggeration associated with comedy and its antagonistic relationship with philosophy, as already noted in the context of Aristophanes' (alleged) attack on Socrates,³⁴ and even if we try to counter the criticisms levelled at Plato with the Stoic emphasis on the usefulness of poetry,³⁵ Plato's style was nonetheless the target of ridicule. Lucian, one of his most vocal yet rather understudied critics, was especially preoccupied with Plato's controversial description of philosophical trance as wine-fueled frenzy.

3. Lucian and "Platonic Inebriation"

Lucian epitomizes the satirical critique of Socratic inebriation as an image unsuitable to express and articulate philosophical progress because it is dangerously open to misinterpretation.³⁶ In Lucian's *Lexiphanes*, the eponymous character whose name etymologically points to a bombastic speaker, claims to have composed a *Symposium* to compete with Plato's famous dialogue (*Lex.* 1):³⁷

ἀντισυμποσιάζω³⁸ τῷ ἀρίστῳ ἐν αὐτῷ.

Πολλοὶ μὲν οἱ Ἀρίστωνες· σὺ δὲ ὅσον ἀπὸ τοῦ συμποσίου τὸν Πλάτωνα μοι
ἔδοξας λέγειν.

Ὅρθῳς ἀνέγνως.

I am counter-banqueting the son of Aristo in it.

There are many “Aristos,” but to judge from your “banquet” I suppose you mean
Plato.

You read me right.

When asked by Lycinus, Lucian’s alter ego,³⁹ to recite part of his new work, an invitation expressed in notably sympotic terms (νέκταρος γάρ τινος ἔοικας οἰνοχοήσῃν ἡμῖν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ: I dare say you will properly “wine us with nectar” out of it), Lexiphanes embarks on an incoherent exhibition of utter verbalism, replete with Atticisms⁴⁰ (*Lex.* 16), to which Lycinus replies:

Ἄλῃς, ὦ Λεξιφάνες, καὶ ποτοῦ καὶ ἀναγνώσεως. ἐγὼ γοῦν ἤδη μεθύω σοι
καὶ ναυτιῶ καὶ ἦν μὴ τάχιστα ἐξεμέσω πάντα ταῦτα ὅποσα διεξελέλυθας,
εὖ ἴσθι, κορυβαντιάσειν μοι δοκῶ περιβομβούμενος ὑφ’ ὧν κατεσκεδάσας
μου ὀνομάτων. καίτοι τὸ μὲν πρῶτον γελᾶν ἐπῆει μοι ἐπ’ αὐτοῖς, ἐπειδὴ δὲ
πολλὰ καὶ πάντα ὅμοια ἦν, ἤλθουν σε τῆς κακοδαιμονίας ὁρῶν εἰς λαβύρινθον
ἄφυκτον ἐμπεπτωκότα καὶ νοσοῦντα νόσον τὴν μεγίστην, μᾶλλον δὲ
μελαγχολῶντα.

Enough, Lexiphanes, both of the drinking-party and of the reading. I am already
drunk and nauseous, and if I do not very soon vomit all this gallimaufry of
yours, know it well, I expect to go raving mad with the roaring in my ears from
the words with which you have showered me. At first I was inclined to laugh
at it all, but when it turned out to be such a quantity and all of a sort, I pitied
you for your hard luck, seeing that you had fallen into an inescapable labyrinth
and were afflicted with the most serious of all illnesses—likely suffering from
melancholy.⁴¹

For Lucian, Plato’s refutation of rhetoric is but another form of it which can obscure the purpose of philosophical enlightenment when entrusted to the wrong people.⁴² In adopting this approach, Lucian responds to the widespread (certainly at the time) view that few people can grasp complex philosophical arguments and have the stamina to make the necessary lifestyle changes that accord with philosophical insight. This image, however, is in loud contrast with the hordes of young men that by Lucian’s time flocked to philosophers and oratory schools to improve themselves. The impetus for self-improvement, fuelled by aspirations of social advancement, led to a systematic misreading or misapplication of Plato’s dialogues that, according to Lucian, Plato had invited.

Lycinus’ informal diagnosis of Lexiphanes’ insanity is confirmed a couple of paragraphs later by Sopolis,⁴³ a doctor who happens to approach (*Lex.* 18):

Ἄλλ’ εἰς καλὸν γὰρ τουτονὶ Σώπολιν ὁρῶ τὸν ἱατρὸν προσιώντα, φέρε τούτῳ
ἐγχειρίσαντές σε καὶ διαλεχθέντες ὑπὲρ τῆς νόσου ἰασίν τινά σοι εὐρώμεθα
συνετὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ καὶ πολλοὺς ἤδη παραλαβὼν ὥσπερ σὲ ἡμιμανεῖς
καὶ κορυζῶντας ἀπῆλλαξεν ἐγχείας φάρμακον. Χαῖρε, Σώπολι, καὶ τουτονὶ
Λεξιφάνην παραλαβὼν ἐταῖρον, ὡς οἴσθα, ἡμῖν ὄντα, λήρῳ δὲ νῦν καὶ ξένη
περὶ τὴν φωνὴν νόσῳ ξυνόντα καὶ κινδυνεύοντα ἤδη τελέως ἀπολωλέναι
σῶσον ἐνὶ γέ τῳ τρόπῳ.

But what luck! Here I see Sopolis the physician drawing near. Come now, suppose we put you in his hands, have a consultation with him about your complaint, and find some cure for you. The man is clever, and often before now, taking charge of people like yourself, half crazed and full of drivel, he has relieved them with his doses of medicine.—Good-day to you, Sopolis. Do take charge of Lexiphanes here, who is my friend, as you know, and at present has on

him a nonsensical, outlandish distemper affecting his speech which is likely to be the death of him outright. Do save him in one way or another.

Thus, pretentious, exaggerated speech is firmly identified as a symptom of a disorder bordering madness (par. 18: ὥσπερ σὲ ἡμιμανεῖς καὶ κορυζῶντας), similar to Corybantic frenzy (par. 16: κορυβαντιάσειν μοι δοκῶ) and drunkenness (μεθύω).⁴⁴ By extension, Lucian criticizes Plato, Lexiphanes' confessed model, both for his promotion of Socratic intoxication and for his metaphorical, florid language. Importantly, this condition is not to be confused with the insights of a true philosopher—with all his eloquence Lexiphanes is but a deluded impostor.

Lucian returns to the theme of the exaggerated and haphazard metaphors employed by philosophers in *Hermotimus* 59. In this dialogue, Lycinus attempts to dissuade his friend Hermotimus from his enthusiastic desire to be tutored in philosophy. Lycinus, after comparing philosophers to wine merchants keen to impress their prospective customers,⁴⁵ asks of his new interlocuter, Hermotimus (*Herm.* 60):

Πῶς οὖν οἶόν τέ σοι ἦν ἀπὸ τοῦ πρώτου γεύματος εἰδέναι τὰ πάντα; οὐ γὰρ τὰ αὐτά γε, ἀλλὰ ἀεὶ ἕτερα καὶνὰ ἐπὶ καινοῖς ἐλέγετο, οὐχ ὥσπερ ὁ οἶνος ὁ αὐτὸς ἦν. ὥστε, ὦ ἑταῖρε, ἦν μὴ ὅλον ἐκπίης τὸν πίθον, ἄλλως μεθύων περιεῖ· ἀτεχνῶς γὰρ ἐν τῷ πυθμένι δοκεῖ μοι ὁ θεὸς κατακρύψαι τὸ φιλοσοφίας ἀγαθὸν ὑπὸ τὴν τρύγα αὐτήν. δεήσει οὖν ὅλον ἐξαντλήσαις ἐς τέλος, ἢ οὐποτ' ἂν εὖροις τὸ νεκτάρειον ἐκείνο πόμα, οὗ πάλαι διψῆς μοι δοκεῖς. σὺ δὲ οἶε τὸ τοιοῦτον αὐτὸ εἶναι, ὥς εἰ μόνον γεύσαιο αὐτοῦ καὶ σπάσαις μικρὸν ὅσον, αὐτίκα σε πάνσοφον γεννησόμενον ὥσπερ φασὶν ἐν Δελφοῖς τὴν πρόμαντιν, ἐπειδὴν πῆν τοῦ ἱεροῦ νόματος, ἐνθεὸν εὐθύς γίγνεσθαι καὶ χρᾶν τοῖς προσηύουσιν. ἀλλ' οὐχ οὕτως ἔχειν ἔοικε· σὺ γ' οὖν ὑπὲρ ἡμισυ τοῦ πίθου ἐκπεπωκὼς ἐνάρχεσθαι ἔτι ἔλεγες.

Then how could you have known everything from just the first taste? There were not the same, but always new things being said on new subjects, unlike wine, which is always the same. So, my friend, unless you drink the whole butt, your tipsiness has been to no purpose; god seems to me to have hidden the good of philosophy right down at the bottom beneath the very lees. You will have to drain it all to the end or you will never find that nectarous drink for which I think you have long thirsted. But you imagine it to be such that, if you were but to taste and draw just a drop, you would at once become all-wise, as, they say, the prophetess at Delphi becomes inspired as soon as she drinks of the sacred spring and gives her answers to those who consult the oracle. But it seems it is not so: you had drunk over half the butt, and you said that you were still at the beginning.

The condemnation of the intoxicating effect of philosophical rhetoric in this dialogue is, however, marked by ambiguity. Hermotimus starts the dialogue anxious to become a distinguished philosopher,⁴⁶ but when he comes to his senses, as if recovering from a previous drunkenness (*Herm.* 83: νυνὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐκ μέθης ἀνανήφων ὁρῶ οἷα μὲν ἐστίν), he pledges to drop his study of philosophy in tandem with its accompanying apparel (*Herm.* 86): he will cut his long beard, refrain from his punitive lifestyle, maybe even wear purple.⁴⁷ Lycinus introduces his attempt to sober Hermotimus up, however, with a reference to *Symposium* (215e1-2): ἐμοὶ μὲν ὥσπερ κορυβαντιῶντι μὴ πρόσεχε τὸν νοῦν, ἀλλ' ἔα ληρεῖν, “Take no notice of my corybantic frenzy, but let me speak nonsense” (par. 63).⁴⁸ For Hermotimus to be swayed by Lycinus' counter-arguments, he must thus have experienced another kind of intellectual illumination, similar in its description at least to the mesmerizing effect his teacher's words used to have on him.⁴⁹ Lycinus is a deft speaker, as Hermotimus protests repeatedly.⁵⁰

In his *Wisdom of Nigrinus*,⁵¹ which also contains striking allusions to Plato's *Symposium*,⁵² Lucian moves from attacking pretentious eloquence to targeting Socratic intoxication directly. As often reiterated so far, in the *Symposium* Plato is constantly aware of

the shallowness and ineptness of the metaphors at his disposal to describe the Socratic effect; therefore, Alcibiades' comic descriptions of experiencing philosophy do not undermine Socrates' moderation, self-evident in his sobriety while in the company of his tipsy fellow-symposiasts. His is (presented as) a genuine phenomenon, not a desperate attempt to recreate it.⁵³ In *Nigrinus* 38, we read a description of Socratic intoxication, based on both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* (bold fonts in the quotation below indicate similarities with Plato's descriptions), which nonetheless represents only heady enthusiasm:⁵⁴

Ὦς σεμνὰ καὶ **θαυμάσια**⁵⁵ καὶ θεῖά γε, ὦ ἑταῖρε, **διελήλυθας**,⁵⁶ ἐλελήθεις δέ με πολλῆς ὡς ἀληθῶς τῆς ἀμβροσίας καὶ τοῦ λωτοῦ κεκορεσμένος· ὥστε καὶ μεταξὺ σοῦ λέγοντος **ἐπασχόν** τι ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ παυσάμενου **ἄχθομαι**⁵⁷ καὶ ἵνα δὴ καὶ κατὰ σέ εἴπω, **τέτρωμαι**.⁵⁸ καὶ μὴ **θαυμάσης**· οἶσθα γὰρ ὅτι καὶ οἱ πρὸς τῶν κυνῶν τῶν λυσσώντων δηχθέντες οὐκ αὐτοὶ μόνοι λυσσῶσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τινες ἑτέρους ἐν τῇ **μανίᾳ** τὸ αὐτὸ τοῦτο διαθῶσιν, καὶ αὐτοὶ **ἐκφρονες**⁵⁹ γίνονται· συµμεταβαίνει γάρ τι τοῦ πάθους ἅμα τῷ δῆγματι καὶ πολυγονεῖται ἡ νόσος καὶ πολλὴ γίνεταί τῆς **μανίας** διαδοχή.

What a grand, wonderful, and indeed divine tale you have told, my friend; I did not realize but you have been truly chock-full of ambrosia and lotus! So that while you spoke, I felt something in my soul, and now you have stopped I am vexed: to speak in your style, I am wounded. Additionally, no wonder! for you know that people bitten by rabid dogs not only go mad themselves, but if in their fury they give the same thing to others, they too go out of their minds. Something of the affection is transmitted with the bite; the disease multiplies, and there is a great run of madness.

The character Nigrinus, described as a Platonic philosopher (par. 2), praises philosophy and the freedom it bestows, while criticizing in a distinctly Socratic manner people's preoccupation with wealth, money, and reputation (par. 4: αὐτήν τε φιλοσοφίαν ἐπαινέσαι καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ ταύτης ἐλευθερίαν . . . πλούτου τε καὶ ἀργυρίου καὶ δόξης).⁶⁰ His words allegedly restore the "soul sight" of his zealous student who relates the story (par. 5: τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ὁξυδερκέστερος κατὰ μικρὸν ἐγιγνόμεν),⁶¹ and inspire him to offer an accurate (if ironic) interpretation of Plato's Socrates in the *Symposium* couched in the language of medicine:⁶²

γαῦρός⁶³ τε γὰρ ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου καὶ μετέωρός⁶⁴ εἰμι καὶ ὅλως μικρὸν οὐκέτι οὐδὲν ἐπινοῶ: δοκῶ γάρ μοι ὁμοίον τι πεπονθέναι πρὸς φιλοσοφίαν, οἷόν περ καὶ οἱ Ἴνδοι πρὸς τὸν οἶνον λέγονται παθεῖν, ὅτε πρῶτον ἔπιον αὐτοῦ: θερμότεροι γὰρ ὄντες φύσει πίνοντες ἰσχυρὸν οὕτω ποτὸν αὐτίκα μάλα ἐξεβακχεύθησαν καὶ διπλασίως ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀκράτου ἐξεμάνησαν. Οὕτω σοι καὶ αὐτὸς ἐνθεὸς καὶ διπλασίως ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων περιέρχομαι.

What he said has made me proud and exalted, and in short, I am no longer concerned with trifles. I suppose I have had a similar experience with philosophy that the Hindus are said to have had with wine when they first tasted it. As they are by nature warmer than we, on taking such strong drink they went into frenzy at once and became manic by the unmixed drink twice as much. There you have it! I am going about enraptured twice as much by his words.

Although the interlocutor of Lucian's character protests that "this is not drunkenness but sobriety and temperance" (*Nigr.* 6: Καὶ μὴν τοῦτό γε οὐ μεθύειν, ἀλλὰ νήφειν τε καὶ σωφρονεῖν ἐστίν), Nigrinus' student, like Hermotimus above, clings to the bombastic descriptions of his transformation and revels in the license to use this kind of language that he has secured on account of his engagement with philosophy; Nigrinus himself, trapped in his image, watches on in guilty awareness and unable to react.⁶⁵

Finally, in Lucian's *Bis Accusatus*, Drunkenness is portrayed as dragging Academy at court, because she was able to convert one of her dearest slaves, the bad-boy-turned-philosopher Polemon,⁶⁶ whose description readily evokes Plato's Alcibiades in the *Sympo-*

sium.⁶⁷ Polemon's physical drunkenness corresponds to his "inspirational" way of teaching.⁶⁸ However, when Drunkenness is too intoxicated to defend her case,⁶⁹ Academy offers to speak for her, an offer probably designed to allude to Socrates' disconcerting practice of delivering arguments on behalf of his rhetorical opponents, which Cicero appreciated as a key feature of Socratic irony⁷⁰ (which he describes as *severe ludas* in *De Or.* 2.269–270). As Lane has pointed out,⁷¹ Socrates employed his ironic, playful style both in the Aristophanic way, where it means "concealing by feigning" and in the Aristotelian way where emphasis is given to self-deprecation. His style caused confusion among ancient as much as modern readers;⁷² hence, in Lucian, Academy seizes the opportunity to discredit the arguments of Drunkenness even further rather than deliver a fair defence on her behalf, a hint to the criticism that Socratic rhetorical practices incurred.⁷³ It seems then that, as an author of satiric dialogues, Lucian engages with Old Comedy⁷⁴ and its potential for moralizing rhetoric, recognizing its affinity with philosophy and its equal claim to parrhesia.⁷⁵ In this guise, he calls for a re-evaluation of the flow of wine and jokes⁷⁶ in the post-Platonic era.

4. Conclusions

I have explored here a rather overlooked chapter of Plato's reception that focuses on the problem of articulating philosophical conversion. Despite his well-documented objection to poetry and its ambiguous use of rhetoric, Plato resorted to culturally ingrained metaphors to defend Socrates' philosophical insights. Among such metaphors, further developed in the writings of Neoplatonic thinkers and often adapted by theologians such as pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite to refer to the core dogmatic truths of Christianity, inebriation proved to be especially controversial. Although Plutarch promoted the educational value of sympotic conviviality (Teodorsson (1999); Roskam (2009)), Lucian used his sharp satire to point out the simmering intellectual crisis of his time which Plato had unwittingly fuelled with his passionate imagery: while "Platonic inebriation" was meant to express powerfully the interiorization of philosophy and its life-altering effect, an image already misrepresented by Socrates' critics in his own time, the trope was now transformed in the hands of inept teachers and desperate students into a dangerous way of manipulating the students' zeal for progress. Truth, it seems, was as highly prized and yet as elusive in Lucian's time as during any time of humanity's intellectual struggle to grapple with our purpose in this world.

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Notes

- ¹ See Druckman and Bjork (1994), pp. 207–8, noting that altered states of consciousness are marked by heightened or intensified awareness; cf. Kihlstrom (1984), p. 207. The ancient Greeks used to induce such states with the aid of dance, music, hallucinogens, strong emotions, or wine, all of which typically featured as part of ancient mysteries or divination rites. See Ustinova (2017), pp. 83, 117–29, 130, 134–36, 174–79, 182, 186, 193–95, 332; also, Hamilton (2008), pp. 41–46. **N.B.** Ancient texts and their translations (often with my modifications) are cited from the relevant Loeb Classical Library editions (=LCL), unless otherwise specified.
- ² (Siikala 2002), pp. 26–34; on trance and ecstasy, see Rouget (1990) with Ustinova (2017), pp. 20–21.
- ³ See Herrero de Herrero de Jáuregui (2010), p. 135 with n.2 citing Nock (1933) among others.
- ⁴ Pl. *Symp.* 175a1–b4 and 220c3–d5.
- ⁵ *Tht.* 173e–174a and 189e–190a; cf. *Phdr.* 249d1–4. Frede (1989), pp. 28–31; Pelosi (2010), p. 91.
- ⁶ See Pl. *Apol.* 31c–d; 40a–c; 41c–d; *Phdr.* 242b–d; *Resp.* 496c; *Tht.* 150e–151a; *Euthphr.* 3b; *Alc.* I 105e–106a; *Euthyd.* 272e–273a; *Theag.* 128d–129e; Xen. *Mem.* 1.1.1–5 and *Apol.* 12–13. Ustinova (2017), pp. 318–21.
- ⁷ On Athenian anti-intellectualism, see Pl. *Tht.* 155e5–8; cf. Green (1979), pp. 15–16 and Bromberg (2017), pp. 32–35.
- ⁸ See Ar. *Nub.* 188–199; Pl. *Apol.* 19c4–7. Whitehorn (2002), pp. 33–34.
- ⁹ On the influence of "Platonic inebriation" on Christian conversion, see Anagnostou-Laoutides (2020).
- ¹⁰ Pl. *Symp.* 215a1–216a2; 216d6–7; 221d6–8.

- 11 On the association of the Silenoi (or their leader, Silenos; cf. [Carpenter \(1986\)](#), p. 76) with drunkenness, see Eur. *Cycl.* 139–161; for Drunkenness (Μέθη) represented with Silenos at his temple at Elis, see Paus. 6.24.8. Silenos was believed to have nursed Dionysus: Diod. Sic. 4.4.3 and OF 54. On the entourage of Dionysus known as both satyrs and *silenoi*, see [Hedreen \(1992\)](#), pp. 161–5. Although Marsyas interacts in myth with Apollo (see Hdt 7.26.3; Pl. *Euthyd.* 285c; Xen. *Anab.* 1.2.8), yet, he is typically described as a satyr (cf. Paus. 1.24.1 referring to Marsyas the Silenos) from Phrygia. On Marsyas' experience of ec-stasy, as represented in his punishment by flailing, see [Hamilton \(2008\)](#), pp. 40–41.
- 12 Eur. *Bacch.* 850; also, 1122–1124; cf. [Roth \(2005\)](#), p. 39.
- 13 Eur. *Bacch.* 32–33.
- 14 Also, note that the *Symposium* concludes with a second gate-crashing event (223b2–8) during which a great crowd of revellers enter the hall forcing everyone to drink even more (ἐξαιφνης δὲ κωμαστὰς ἤκειν παμπόλλους ἐπὶ τὰς θύρας, ... , καὶ οὐκέτι ἐν κόσμῳ οὐδενὶ ἀναγκάζεσθαι πίνειν πάμπολυν οἶνον).
- 15 All *Symposium* translations are mine having consulted Lamb 1925 (=LCL 166).
- 16 However, the role of wine in these rites is not easy to determine; see Jiménez San [Jiménez and Isabel \(2009\)](#), pp. 46–47 and esp. 55. On the use of wine in *baccheia*, see *schol.* Ar. *Nub.* 606 and Hsch. s.v. ληνεύουσι. Cf. [Bernabé and Cristóbal 2001](#), 118–122. On the connection of enthusiasm with maenadism and drunkenness, see Suda s.v. ἐνθουσιώσας. On references to Corybantic *choreia* in the *Phaedrus*, see [Belfiore \(2006\)](#). Also, see [Ustinova \(2017\)](#), pp. 119, 124, 134, 137 (on the use of wine in mystic rites) and 172, 174, 177, 182, 191 (on wine and Dionysus); cf. Jiménez San [Jiménez and Isabel \(2002\)](#), pp. 307–17; [Dodds \(1960\)](#), p. xiii; [Graf and Johnston \(2007\)](#), pp. 148–9.
- 17 Pl. *Symp.* 214a5–6; cf. *Symp.* 176c4–6. [Anagnostou-Laoutides and Payne \(2021\)](#) on Socrates' sobriety despite his comparison with the Dionysian Silenoi and Marsyas.
- 18 For Plato's comparison of joking with drinking, see [Anagnostou-Laoutides \(2021\)](#).
- 19 See Anagnostou-Laoutides and Van [Anagnostou-Laoutides and Wassenhove \(2020\)](#) on Seneca's reception of "Platonic inebriation" in his *De Tranquillitate Animi*.
- 20 See [Millet \(2005\)](#), 26–27 with Xen. *Mem.* 1.1–2 and DL 2.19–20.
- 21 Text and trans. [Verhasselt \(2017\)](#), p. 59; [Dorandi \(1991\)](#), pp. 144–5.
- 22 See Dem. *Eloc.* 183–185 on the rhythm of the Platonic dialogues; cf. ps.-Long. *Subl.* 39.1; [Halliwell \(2001\)](#), pp. 337–8.
- 23 Regarding the identity of the author (often believed to be Aristotle's student, Demetrius of Phaleron) and the dating of the work (possibly as late as 1st century BCE), see the introductory notes by Innes and Roberts in [Halliwell et al. \(1995\)](#) (=LCL 199), 310–319. Trans. also by Innes and Roberts (= LCL 199), 401.
- 24 Cf. Dem. *Eloc.* 87 and 89.
- 25 [Halliwell \(2001\)](#), pp. 359–67. Cf. [Trabattoni \(2012\)](#) on Plato's definition of metaphysical reality.
- 26 [Tieleman \(2003\)](#), 166 (on Zeno); Plut. *de profect. in virt.* 84d.
- 27 See Lucian, *Fish.* 42 (with [Peterson 2010](#), pp. 130–1) where Philosophy admits that distinguishing between true philosophers and opportunist rhetoricians is almost impossible given the similarity of their appearance. Cf. Plato, *Phdr.* 261a for evidence that Socrates did not oppose rhetoric *per se* but its uncritical and immoral employment by poets and *logographoi*.
- 28 See Plut. *de rect. rat. aud.* 44a–d echoed in Plut. *de profect. in virt.* 80e–81f; also, see Cic. *Acad.* 1.17–19 and 33–34 in [Karamanolis \(2020\)](#) on the changes that Plato's heirs made to his unified philosophical system.
- 29 Suda, s.v. Καϊκίλιος (=Adler (1967), K1165 in 3.83); *BNJ* 1–3.
- 30 For the text, see [Ofenloch \(1967\)](#), 129; trans. Fyfe, rev. Russell (1995) (=LCL 199), 263, 265; also see Ps.-Long. *Subl.* 3.5: πολλὰ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἐκ μέθης τινὲς εἰς τὰ μηκέτι τοῦ πράγματός, ἴδια ἑαυτῶν καὶ σχολικὰ παραφέρονται πάθη: εἴτα πρὸς οὐδὲν πεπονθότας ἀκροατὰς ἀσχημονοῦσιν, εἰκότως, ἐξεσθηκότες πρὸς οὐκ ἐξεσθηκότας (For writers often behave as if they were drunk and give way to outbursts of emotion which the subject no longer warrants, but which are private to themselves and consequently tedious, so that to an audience which feels none of it their behavior looks unseemly. And naturally so, for while they are in ecstasy, the audience is not; trans. Fyfe, rev. Russell (1995), 171). Using Plato's metaphor of mixing wine with water, Plutarch (*aud. poet.* 15d–e) advises against overdramatic effects in poetry. On *Subl.* 32.7, see [Walsh \(1988\)](#), p. 262. For Plato's tendency to coin metaphors, see Caec. Cal. fr. 95 ([Ofenloch \(1967\)](#), pp. 85.10–86.11). On the different approaches of Ps.-Longinus and Caecilius to the role of sublimity in Plato, see [Innes \(2002\)](#). Finally, cf. Dem. *Eloc.* 5 and 15 on rhetorical exaggeration that makes speakers appear drunk.
- 31 The metaphor appears in Plato's *Leg.* 773c8–d4; cf. [Belfiore \(1986\)](#).
- 32 Ps.-Longinus qualifies his statement with references to the ability of the sublime to inspire wonder and amazement (ἐκπλήξει τοῦ πιθανοῦ καὶ τοῦ πρὸς χάριν αἰεὶ κρατεῖ τὸ θαυμάσιον); cf. *Subl.* 8.4 as well as Plato, *Symp.* 215d6 and 216d4. For Longinus' awareness of the difference between persuasion and ecstasy, see [Halliwell \(2001\)](#), pp. 329–30.
- 33 Note that in his response to the critique levelled at Plato and the ensuing confusion regarding the nature of philosophical inspiration, Longinus stresses the voluntary submission of the mind to experiencing ecstasy; [Halliwell \(2001\)](#), pp. 340, 343–5. Also, remember Plato's striking description of philosophical elation in the *Phaedrus*, where the lover is described as being in agony, unaware of the nature of his affliction (250a9–b1: ὁ δ' ἔστι τὸ πάθος ἃ γνοοῦσι διὰ τὸ μὴ ἱκανῶς διαισθάνεσθαι; cf. 251e1–2:

ἀδημονεῖ τε τῇ ἀτοπίᾳ τοῦ πάθους καὶ ἀποροῦσα λυττᾷ; also, see 265b8-9 where Socrates admits that his use of metaphors, here the comparison of philosophy with erotic passion, allowed him to portray *some* aspects of truth although he was partly carried away to another direction (ἴσως μὲν ἀληθοῦς τινος ἐφαπτόμενοι, τάχα δ' ἂν καὶ ἄλλοσε παραφερόμενοι, ...).

See Peterson (2019), 38–44 on the competition between Old Comedy and philosophy on shaping social morality, and its reception by Plutarch; cf. Dem. Eloc. 171.

Asmis (2017), pp. 136–7.

Fowler (2018), pp. 236–9, esp. 237; on Lucian and Petronius inspired by Menippean satire, see Teodorsson (2009), p. 10. Anderson (1978), pp. 372–3; Hunter (2012), pp. 15–16; Männlein-Robert (2021).

Trans. Harmon (1936) (=LCL 302), 293, 295. For the similarity of Lucian's *Lexiphanes* with Plato's *Symposium*, see Whitmarsh (2005), p. 46, with Weissenberger (1996), pp. 68–84 and 151–283; cf. Kazantzidis (2019) on Lucian's use of the association between melancholy and irregular speech patterns.

See Weissenberger (1996), pp. 159–60.

Tarrant (2009), p. 20.

Weissenberger (1996), pp. 72–74. Cf. Kazantzidis (2019), p. 291. Trans. Harmon (1936) (=LCL 302), 315.

For melancholy as a disease especially afflicting philosophers, see the ps.-Aristotelian *Problems* 953a10-15; cf. DL 7.118 and Plut. *Lys.* 2.3. The condition is associated with black-bile irregularities (ps.-*Prob.* 954a32-34) and was known to Galen (Stewart 2018, pp. 88–100) but was derived from (or, at least, perceived as originating in) Hippocratic medicine.

In his own *Symposium* (par. 45) Lucian refers to the philosophers who get drunk and attack each other as Lapiths and Centaurs; on Lucian's reception of Plato's *Symposium* in his *Double Indictment* and the *Dialogues of the Courtesans*, see Blondell and Boehringer (2014), esp. 233–234; cf. Peterson (2018).

See Weissenberger (1996), 82–84 arguing that Lucian's intention was to identify Sopolis with Galen. Trans. Harmon (1936) (=LCL 302), 317.

See ps.-*Prob.* 875b19 (τῶν μεθύνωντων ἡ γλῶττα πτάλει) and 875b29-31; cf. Hipp. *Dis.* 2.22. For the connection of drunkenness and irrationality in the Hippocratic corpus, see Thumiger (2017), p. 226.

The text (still par. 59) reads: ὅτι αὐθομολογούμενον πρᾶγμα λαβὼν καὶ γνώριμον ἅπασι τὸν οἶνον εἰκάξεις αὐτῷ τὰ ἀνομοιότατα καὶ περὶ ὧν ἀμφισβητοῦσιν ἅπαντες ἀφανῶν ὄντων. ὥστε ἔγωγε οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν καδ' ὅτι σοι ὁμοιος φιλοσοφία καὶ οἶνος, εἰ μὴ ἄρα κατὰ τοῦτο μόνον, ὅτι καὶ οἱ φιλόσοφοι ἀποδίδονται τὰ μαθήματα ὥσπερ οἱ κάπηλοι—κερασάμενοι γε οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ δολώσαντες καὶ κακομετροῦντες. (You take a self-evident thing, known to all, wine, and you compare to it most dissimilar things that everyone debates about because they are obscure. So, I surely cannot tell how in your view philosophy and wine are similar, except perhaps with regard to this, that philosophers sell their lessons as wine-merchants their wines—many indeed corrupting and cheating and giving bad measure). Trans. for both paragraphs 59 and 60 cited above from Kilburn (1959) (=LCL 430), 369 and 371 respectively. For Plato's influence on *Hermotimus*, see Hunter (2012), pp. 1–3.

Herm. 63; cf. Plut. *de profect. in virt.* 78e-f.

The text reads as follows: ἅπειμι γοῦν ἐπ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο, ὡς μεταβαλοίμην καὶ αὐτὸ σχῆμα. ὅψει γοῦν οὐκ εἰς μακρὰν οὔτε πώγωνα ὥσπερ νῦν λάσιον καὶ βαθὺν οὔτε δίαιταν κεκολασμένην, ἀλλ' ἄνετα πάντα καὶ ἐλεύθερα. τάχα δὲ καὶ πορφυρίδα μεταμφιάσομαι, ὡς εἰδεῖεν ἅπαντες ὅτι μηκέτι μοι τῶν λήρων ἐκείνων μέτεστιν (I am going away to do just that—to make a change—of dress as well. You will soon see me without this big, shaggy beard. I shall not punish my daily life, but all will be liberty and freedom. Perhaps I shall even put on purple, to show everybody that I've no part in that nonsense now).

Cf. *Hermotimus*' tears of joy when he comes to his senses (*Herm.* 83), evoking Alcibiades' tears while in Corybantic ecstasy in *Symp.* 215e2 (δάκρυα ἐκχεῖται). On the external transformation of students of philosophy, cf. Luc. *Nigr.* 1.

See Schlapbach (2010).

Herm. 63 and 65. On the Socratic style, which Alcibiades notes already in *Symp.* 216d2-6, also see Dem. *Eloc.* 297: Τὸ δὲ ἰδίως καλούμενον εἶδος Σωκρατικόν, ὃ μάλιστα δοκοῦσιν ζηλῶσαι Αἰσχίνης καὶ Πλάτων ... ἅμα γὰρ καὶ εἰς ἀπορίαν ἔβαλεν τὸν παῖδα λεληθότως ... (what is particularly called the Socratic manner, which Aeschines and Plato are especially considered to emulate ... Socrates unobtrusively drives the boy into a corner).

For a summary of scholarship on Lucian's *Nigrinus*, see Anderson (1978) and more recently Peterson (2010), pp. 251–301.

On Lucian's use of Platonic themes, see Neef (1940), pp. 18–38; cf. Hirzel (1895), 2.289-333 and Bompaire (1958), pp. 304–20, 372–4, 607–13; on his use of the *Symposium*, see Whitmarsh (2001), pp. 267–9, 271, 274–6 (also noting Lucian's familiarity with the *Phaedrus*); cf. Peterson (2010), pp. 263–4.

On the popularity of “recreating” Platonic dialogues, see Cic. *De Or.* 1.28: *Cur non imitamur, Crasse, Socratem illum, qui est in Phaedro Platonis?* (why don't we imitate Socrates, Crassus, as he appears in Plato's *Phaedrus*?)

Trans. Harmon (1913) (=LCL 14), 139.

For the typical description of Socrates with the adjective θαυμάσιος in the *Symposium*, see 219c1-2: δαίμονίω ὡς ἀληθῶς καὶ θαυμαστῶ; cf. 215c1; 220c7; 221c3-4 and 6-8; cf. 217a1-2 where Alcibiades describes the rare occasion when he has caught Socrates in a serious moment and glimpsed the images in him: “καὶ μοι ἔδοξεν οὕτω θεῖα καὶ χρυσᾶ εἶναι καὶ ἀγκυκαλᾶ

καὶ θαυμαστά;” Alcibiades’ heaping of adjectives evokes Lucian’s description of Nigrinus’ words above (with two of them coinciding: θεῖα, θαυμαστά/θαυμάσια). The adverb σεμνῶς is found in both dialogues (*Symp.* 199a3: καὶ καλῶς γ’ ἔχει καὶ σεμνῶς ὁ ἔπαινος, referring ironically to Agathon’s speech; *Phdr.* 258a: λέγων μάλα σεμνῶς καὶ ἐγκωμιάζων ὁ συγγραφεύς, where again Socrates speaks ironically about politicians, keen on writing speeches despite Phaedrus’ view that they mostly avoid it “for fear of being called sophists by posterity” (257d9–10: δόξαν φοβούμενοι τοῦ ἔπειτα χρόνου, μὴ σοφιστὰι καλῶνται).

- 56 Note the use of διέρχομαι, common otherwise, in *Phdr.* 273a3–7 where Socrates is said to have gone over the issues deemed important by professional rhetoricians who nevertheless care little about the truth (Αὐτά γε, ὦ Σώκρατες, διελήλυθας ἃ λέγουσιν οἱ περὶ τοὺς λόγους τεχνικοὶ προσποιούμενοι εἶναι.); cf. *Phdr.* 269b–c and 271a–c.
- 57 Lucian continues to use here vocabulary that evokes Plato’s descriptions of philosophical *mania*; see *Phdr.* 238c2 (ἡ... ἐπιθυμία πρὸς ἡδονὴν ἀχθεῖσα κάλλους) and 252c8 (τὸ τοῦ πτερονύμου ἄχθος); cf. *Phdr.* 251a9–10 (ἐκ τῆς φρίκης μεταβολή) referring to the mental change the philosophical eros affects; on the use of the word *pathos* in the *Phaedrus*, see 238c7 (θεῖον πάθος πεπονθέναι), 250a9; 251c1; 251e1; 252b2; 252c4; 254e2; 262b4.
- 58 For the use of the verb τέτρωμαι, see *Symp.* 219b4 (καὶ ἀφείς ὥσπερ βέλη, τετρώσθαι αὐτὸν ὥμην) where Alcibiades hopes to have wounded Socrates erotically and 219e2 (χρήμασί γε πολὺ μᾶλλον ἄτρωτος ἢ πανταχῇ ἢ σιδήρῳ ὁ Αἴας) stating that Socrates is not tempted by money; cf. *Symp.* 220e1–2 where τετρωσμένος is used literally to refer to Alcibiades’ actual battle wounds. For the use of verb δάκνω (to bite) and related words, see *Symp.* 217e7–218a: ἔτι δὲ τὸ τοῦ δηχθέντος ὑπὸ τοῦ ἔχειος πάθος κάμ’ ἔχει. φασὶ γάρ πού τινα τοῦτο παθόντα οὐκ ἐθέλειν λέγειν οἷον ἢν πλὴν τοῖς δεδηγμένοις, ὡς μόνοις γνωστομένοις τε καὶ συγγνωστομένοις εἰ πᾶν ἐτόλμα δρᾶν τε καὶ λέγειν ὑπὸ τῆς οδύνης. ἐγὼ οὖν δεδηγμένος τε ὑπὸ ἀλγεινότερου καὶ τὸ ἀλγεινότατον ὣν ἂν τις δηχθεῖν-τὴν καρδίαν γὰρ ἢ ψυχὴν ἢ ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸ ὀνομάσαι πληγείς τε καὶ δηχθείς ὑπὸ τῶν ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ λόγων, οἳ ἔχονται ἐχίδνης ἀγριώτερον, νέου ψυχῆς μὴ ἀφυοῦς ὅταν λάβωνται, καὶ ποιοῦσι δρᾶν τε καὶ λέγειν ὅτιοῦν (Now I have been bitten by a more painful creature, in the most painful way that one can be bitten: in my heart, or my soul, or whatever one is to call it, I am stricken and stung by his philosophical discourses, which adhere more fiercely than any adder when once they lay hold of a young and not ungifted soul, and force it to do or say whatever they will; trans. Lamb (1925) = LCL 166, 227).
- 59 Both the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* contain many references to *sophrosyne* and its opposite (ἄφροσύνη); here I focus on the adjective ἄφρων, used in *Symp.* 194b9–10 and repeated on 218d7 (about the foolish being many) and the noun τὸ ἄφρον (unreason) used in *Phdr.* 236a2; 265e5; cf. *Ion* 533b7: οὐκ ἔμφορονες (referring to those dancing in Corybantic rites and enthused poets) and 534b5: ἔκφρων.
- 60 See, for example, Alcibiades’ reference to Socrates’ scorn about material possessions, beauty, and honors in *Symp.* 216d9–e4.
- 61 Lucian’s reference here alludes to Socrates’ description of the lover’s initiation into philosophy, when his soul is blessed with clear intellectual vision that allows him to see the bright image of beauty; *Phdr.* 250b–c (κάλλος δὲ τότ’ ἦν ἰδεῖν λαμπρόν, ὅτε σὺν εὐδαίμονι χορῶ μακαρίαν ὄψιν τε καὶ θέαν, [...], ὁλόκληρα δὲ καὶ ἀπλᾶ καὶ ἀτρεμῇ καὶ εὐδαίμονα φάσματα μνούμενοί τε καὶ ἐποπτεύοντες ἐν αὐγῇ καθαρῇ).
- 62 Trans. Harmon (1913) (=LCL 14), 105. For Socrates as a doctor in the Platonic dialogues, see *Charm.* 155d; *Grg.* 475d; *Phd.* 89a; cf. *Leg.* 720aff (where the lawgiver is compared to a doctor); cf. the role of Eryximachus, the doctor, in the *Symposium*, esp. 176a–c; 185d–e; 214b. Eryximachus understands health in Hippocratic terms, as the result of balancing opposite elements in the body. For Plato’s familiarity with the medical symptoms of insanity, especially as discussed in the Hippocratic *Regimen*, see (Jouanna 2012, 2013). On the continuing interest on the treatise and Galen’s thorough knowledge of it, see Bartoš (2015), pp. 3, 92, 95, 102–10.
- 63 Cf. the adjective γαῦρος in Caec. Cal. fr. 86 (Ofenloch 1967, 68 = ps.-Long. Subl. 7.2; L199: 178–179): φύσει γάρ πως ὑπὸ τάληθους ὕψους ἐπαίρεται τε ἡμῶν ἢ ψυχὴ καὶ γαῦρόν τι ἀνάστημα λαμβάνουσα πληροῦται χαρᾶς καὶ μετ’ ἀγαλαυχίας, ὡς αὐτὴ γεννήσασα ὅπερ ἤκουσεν (by nature our soul is somehow uplifted by true sublimity, and acquiring a kind of lofty stature, it is filled with joy and pride as if having created itself what it has heard).
- 64 For the use of the adjective μετέωρος to allude to both Aristophanes’ *Clouds* and Plato’s *Phaedrus* (269e6–270a7 on Anaxagoras), see Peterson (2010), pp. 292–5.
- 65 On whether Lucian is critical only of the student or of Nigrinus too, see Clay (1992), pp. 3420–25; Peterson (2010), pp. 254–65, 274–6; cf. Anderson (1978), 372–373n18.
- 66 See Tarrant (2005), pp. 226–8 with DL 4.16–20.
- 67 See Peterson (2010), pp. 145–7 and Tarrant (2005), 229 for Lucian’s allusions to the Platonic *Phaedrus*. Also, see Bis. Acc. 5 for a reference to the *Apology*, where Justice describes those who condemned Socrates thus: παρὰ τοσοῦτον ὑπερέσχον οἱ κατήγοροι τάναντία περὶ τῆς ἀδικίας φιλοσοφούντες (his accusers superior to him by so much were since they practiced contrary to him philosophy about Injustice; trans. based on Harmon (1921) = LCL 130, 95). Cf. Peterson (2019), 102–103 who claims that Lucian takes up the episode where Aristophanes left off in the *Clouds*. For Lucian’s *Fisherman* and its debt to the *Apology*, see Whitmarsh (2001), pp. 263–4 (also cited by Peterson 2019, 83n5). Cf. Laird (2003) and Ní Ní Mheallaigh (2014), pp. 73–83, esp. 88–89 discussing Lucian’s adaptation of Socratic ecstasy in the *Symposium* in his *Philopseudes*, where Eucrates, the character corresponding to Socrates, who relying on his “august outer appearance conceals his truly ludicrous nature.”
- 68 Tarrant (2005), pp. 230–2.

- ⁶⁹ Bis. Acc. 15: “Οὐ δύναμαι,” φησί, “τὸν ἀγῶνα εἰπεῖν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀκράτου τὴν γλῶτταν πεπεδημένη, μὴ γέλωτα ὄφλω ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ.” Note that here Hermes reports on behalf of Drunkenness that she is unable to speak, in line with our observations above about the speech impairment observed in both the insane and drunken.
- ⁷⁰ Cic. Brut. 292 for definitions of Socrates’ irony.
- ⁷¹ Lane (2010), pp. 239–42 and 247–9 with n.25; cf. Arist. EN 1127b23–26. Based on the similarities in the speeches of Lysias and Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, Bryan (2021), pp. 5–9 and 18–21 claims that Socrates responds to Lysias’ attempt to engage with Socratic ethics (which he misrepresents dangerously).
- ⁷² Cf. Strauss (1964), p. 51 (cited by Lane 2010, p. 242) who understands Socratic irony as part of an allegorical strategy against those “capable of understanding neither the irony nor the philosophy which it protects.”
- ⁷³ Peterson (2010), pp. 145–7; Tarrant (2005), p. 228: “the story presents a comic caricature of the effect of both Xenocrates’ Academy on Polemo and Polemo on the Academy.”
- ⁷⁴ Cf. Weissenberger (1996), pp. 9, 47, 73. Also, see Bis. Acc. 34.
- ⁷⁵ On Lucian’s *Fisherman*, especially, and its protagonist, Parrhesiades, see Peterson (2010), 129 who notes: “Through the *Fisherman*’s focus on parrhesia, a virtue that bridges the divide between Old Comedy and Philosophy, Lucian merges the parrhesia of comedy with that of the Cynics and in doing so, argues for its place in society.” Also, see Holland (2004), p. 263 and Branham (1989), esp. 33 (both cited by Peterson (2010), pp. 111–2 and 129 respectively).
- ⁷⁶ Cf. Fish. 25 (Peterson 2010, p. 127), where Parrhesiades attacks the Cynics for making Philosophy ridiculous and encouraging people to laugh at it; the text reads: φύσει γὰρ τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν ὁ πολὺς Λεώς, χαίρουσι τοῖς ἀποσκώπτουσιν καὶ λοιδορουμένοις, καὶ μάλιστα ὅταν τὰ σεμνότατα εἶναι δοκοῦντα διασύρῃται, ὥσπερ ἀμέλει καὶ πάλαι ἔχαιρον ἀριστοφάνει καὶ Εὐπόλιδι Σωκράτη τουτοῖ ἐπὶ χλευασίᾳ παράγουσιν ἐπὶ τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ κωμωδοῦσιν ἄλλοκότους τινὰς περὶ αὐτοῦ κωμωδίας (L130: 40–41: The common people are such by nature; they delight in jesters and buffoons, and most of all when they criticize what is held in high reverence. Just so in the past they took delight in Aristophanes and Eupolis, who brought Socrates on the stage to make fun of him and got up monstrous farces about him); cf. Dem. Eloc. 170 and Eunap. Vit. Soph. 462 (L134: 380, 382) repeating the view vis-à-vis a plot against the philosopher Sopater.

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