Beyond Schools and Monasteries:
Literate Education in Late Roman Syria (350-450 AD)

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Abbreviations

Ench	Epictetus' *Encheiridion*
ID	Ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* (Or. 1)
LC	Lucian, *De calumnia* (13)
Nil	Epictetus' *Encheiridion* - Christian paraphrase attributed to Nilus of Ancyra
Par	Epictetus' *Encheiridion - Paraphrasis Christiana*
PE	Ps.-Plutarch, *De exercitatione*
PHarrauer	Funghi 2001
PI	Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira* (Mor. 29)
PU	Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (Mor. 6)
TA	Themistius, *De amicitia* (Or. 22)
TV	Themistius, *De virtute*
Vat	Epictetus' *Encheiridion* - Christan paraphrase of *Vaticanus graecus 2231*

ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
AntClass	L'Antiquité classique
CAH	The Cambridge Ancient History
CrSt	Cristianesimo nella Storia
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum
FC	The Fathers of the Church, Washington DC
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller
JECS	Journal of Early Christian Studies
JThS	Journal of Theological Studies
Lampe	Lampe, G.W.H., *A patristic Greek lexicon*, Oxford 1961
MH	Museum Helveticum
MPER	Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der österreichischen Nationalbibliothek
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica
OLP	Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
RAC	Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum
RAL	Rendiconti della Reale Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, classe di scienze morali, storiche e filologiche
RSO	Rivista degli Studi Orientali
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
ZAC	Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum

Abstract

The subject of the present work is the provision of higher literate education in late Roman Syria (c. 350 - c. 450). The difference that Christianity made to literate education has always been in danger of being explained with the introduction and the development of a new kind of instruction provided in monasteries. A rigid dichotomy between secular schools and Christian monasteries, however, finds limited validation in our sources for literate education. While early Christian literature often presented monasteries as providers of education, documentary evidence offers a more blurred picture. On the one hand, students' papyri show the penetration of Christianity into schools, and, on the other, secular instructional texts have been found in the excavations of early monasteries in Egypt.

This thesis presents a neglected *corpus* of Christian instructional texts that call into question an oppositional understanding of scholastic and monastic education in the Syrian region during late Antiquity. The *corpus* consists of the Syriac translations of six literary pieces by (or attributed to) Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius that bring together features of rhetorical education with an interest in Christian asceticism (ch. 2). While the contents and the transmission of the Syriac translations reveal the link to Christianity and Christian ascetic practice (ch. 3), the textual form and the choice of the texts unearths the underlying connection to traditional literate education (ch. 4).

These documents, which will be put in relation to instructional literature composed in Greek, Latin, and Syriac in the same period, challenge the existence of a neat line dividing scholastic and monastic education in the Syrian region during late Antiquity. A fresh analysis that is not constrained by a preconceived model of monastic instruction better accounts for the

involvement of early Christian leaders in higher education and prompts a new investigation of their conduct on the social scene. Their agency now appears much closer to that of their non-Christian counterparts, sophists *in primis*, and raises the broader question of the extent to which they owed their considerable success to the implementation of strategies ultimately derived from the world of professional *paideia*.

1. Introduction

1.1 Object and aim

1.2 Methodology

1.1 Object and aim

The thesis looks at a *corpus* of lesser-known instructional texts produced by Christian authors for a Christian audience, the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. These texts have been for too long at the margins of the scholarly debate on late Antiquity. The present work argues that such a state of affairs is regrettable, and that the translations can be effectively related to instructional literature composed by well-known Christian authors between c. 350 and c. 450, primarily the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus. It will be maintaned that it was practices connected with the provision of literate education among Christians that prompted the composition of both sets of texts, Syriac translations on the one hand and Greek instructional literature on the other hand.

I argue that the importance of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius lies in the fact that they offer a new insight into literate education during late Antiquity. Rather than easily fitting into a model of monastic instruction that for decades has fuelled the study of literate education in early Christianity, the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius undermine the inherited dichotomy between secular schools and Christian monasteries. As will be shown in Part I, the translations bring together features of secular literate education with a new interest in Christian asceticism. The unconventional nature of the texts may thus provide a tentative explanation for the marginal role that they have so far played within the current academic debate.

Although the relation between *paideia* and Christianity has been one of the most studied subjects in the research on late Antiquity,[1] the difference Christianity made in the

[1] Jaeger 1962 moved in search of traces of Greek *paideia* in the statements by Christian authors such as Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa; Kaster 1988 applied to the study of literate education models developed in the social sciences; Brown 1992, 35-70, described the crucial role that *paideia* played within late-antique society at large; Cameron 1997 addressed the endurance of literate education among early Christian authors; Stroumsa 2012 described the transformations of *paideia* under the influence of Christianity. Thanks to the work by these and other scholars, *paideia* is now recognised as an important element in late antique society that

provision of literate education has always been in danger of being reduced to the introduction and the development of monastic instruction. Pachomius, Jerome, John Cassian, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus are among the fourth- and fifth-century authors who described Christian ascetic communities as settings in which literate instruction was provided. While it is agreed that rhetorical and legal schools continued to play an important role in late-antique society, ancient and modern authors have related the appearance and the diffusion of Christian monasticism to the provision of literate education of a new Christian kind.

A modern and influential proponent of the dualistic model of schools and monasteries was Henri-Irénée Marrou, whose work amply relied on literary evidence.[2] While later scholars have questioned specific points of Marrou's position, the dualistic framework that underpinned his research has had a deep impact on modern analyses. Scholars who have closely followed Marrou have argued that monastic education in the first centuries AD was mostly addressed to monks, and that it aimed to develop basic literacy skills so as to enable them to read and pronounce the Scriptures correctly.[3] Likewise, scholars who challenged Marrou's arguments on monastic education have nonetheless accepted its underlying dichotomy: they have argued that the imagery of the unlettered monk was mostly a construction, and that monasteries could provide more sophisticated instruction to monks and perhaps to lay individuals as well.[4] Not even the hypothesis that the Christian monastic phenomenon itself developed out of the Greco-Roman tradition of philosophical schools has caused serious scrutiny to be given to the validity of an oppositional understanding of schools and monasteries.[5]

Recently-published documentary evidence, however, increasingly questions the

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continued to play a crucial role as a path to social advancement in the Christian Roman empire (Van Hoof 2013; Swain 1996 and Whitmarsh 2001 for the earlier period).

[2] Marrou 1956, 330-34.

[3] Modern proponents are Browning 2000 and Liebeschuetz 2001.

[4] Most recently Debie 2010 for Syria and Giorda 2011 for Egypt.

[5] Rubenson 2012; Brakke 2006a; Rubenson 2006a.

isolation of the two worlds, and it ultimately undermines the effectiveness of the dualistic paradigm for the study of literate education during early Christianity. Raffaella Cribiore's research on school documents written on papyri, wooden tablets, and *ostraka* has revealed the penetration of Christianity among instructional texts produced at school. Lines from *Psalms* and *Proverbs* appear among elementary writing exercises, and Biblical stories could provide new topics for rhetorical exercises such as *prosopopoiai*.[6] At the same time, archaeological excavations in the monasteries of Phoebammon and of Epiphanius in Egypt have uncovered instructional documents containing lines from the *Iliad* and from the *Sentences of Menander*.[7] Given the varied distribution of such findings, it may be problematic to decide once and for all if the instructional papyri and teachers' booklets of unknown origin that combine secular literature and passages from the Scriptures were used in traditional schools or in monastic settings.[8]

The issue at stake is not the distinction between schools and monasteries, but rather how useful such a distinction is within the study of literate education in late Antiquity. Given that documentary evidence provides a blurred picture, one wonders to what extent the modern understanding of monastic education will be deemed to rely on a preconceived idea of monasticism. Once scholars exclude from the picture the literary witnesses by Christian authors who explained how a specific monastic community was or how monasticism should be, they are left with instructional documents that often do not point at a neatly monastic or neatly scholastic environment. Most fourth- and fifth-century instructional texts do not provide enough information about the institution in which they were produced, and the inherited question "school or monastery?" is not one that this material can easily answer.

[6] Cribiore 2001 and 1996; Morgan 1998; Fournet 1992.

[7] A convenient overview is provided in Bucking 2007. The author, however, questioned that the documents were used for educational purposes. The peak of skepticism is represented by the argument that the copy of the opening line of the *Iliad* "merely represents a test of the pen by the writer" on page 41.

[8] Significant examples can be found in Cribiore 1996; Pernigotti 2003; and it has been hypothesised that at least some of the recently published fifth-century documents from the Petrie Collection were also intended for instructional purposes (Funghi 2003a; Römer 2003).

So much for the *pars destruens*. What is most striking, in fact, is that the problem of classification does not affect documentary evidence alone, but it extends to another vast and understudied *corpus* of Christian instructional literature. This literature likewise does not easily fit into the familiar pattern of "scholastic or monastic." To the contrary, such texts bring together traditions of the Greek literate education with a new interest in Christianity, and in Christian ascetic practice in particular.

Early Syriac literature provides abundant and remarkable examples of instructional texts of such a kind, which are not limited to the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius (ch. 2). At the same time, similarly interstitial texts of an instructional nature were composed by well-known Christian authors, primarily the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus. Their analysis beyond the inherited dichotomy of schools and monasteries constitutes the object of Part II of the present work. It will be argued that the texts provide a new insight into literate education that is not confined by a preconceived model of monastic education, and they prompt a broader question about the relation between the careers of Christian authors and the world of professional *paideia*.

This thesis focuses on the Syrian region, which is broadly understood to include Cappadocia. Not only does the chronological framework (350-450 AD) cover a period of profound change in the nature of Christian asceticism in the region, but it also constitutes an influential formative period that set the basis for future developments in Christian education and literature. Written sources from the middle of the fourth century attest to the earliest attempts to reconcile secular education with a new interest in Christian asceticism. Conversely, the middle of the fifth century confronts us with Theodoret of Cyrrhus' and Socrates of Constantinople's reports of organised monastic communities that allegedly acted as providers of education.[9]

[9] For Theodoret see ch. 7; Socrates, *HE* 4.26, 6.3 .

1.2 Methodology

The research approach follows a strand of scholarship that moved away from the debate about the dualistic developments -pagan and Christian- of literate education in the Mediterranean world. In recent years, scholars have increasingly addressed specific educational enterprises within local historical settings, and there has been a shift of interest from the authors' statements to the pedagogical strategies that late-antique individuals implemented on the ground during a time characterised by cultural and religious change.[10] As far as Syria is concerned, Christianity made an entry in Cribiore's work on the rhetorical school of Libanius in Antioch, whose classrooms, not unlike his network, included pagan as well as Christian individuals. In the Christian field, Philip Rousseau showcased the paramount role that secular rhetorical teaching played in Theodoret's construction of Christian ascetic identities.[11]

The instructional texts addressed in the present work offer ample scope for research on didactic practices that Christian teachers implemented within fourth- and fifth-century Roman society. In order to unlock the pedagogical strategies that linked teachers and pupils in late-antique settings, however, this material requires a process of decipherment that shifts the analysis from the *opus operatum*, the very instructional texts, to the historical *modus operandi*, the cultural practices that the texts reveal.[12] In particular, didactic practices will be inferred from the instructional texts at two different levels. Textual transformation at a microscopic level, which is mostly addressed in Part I, and book production at a macroscopic level, which is

[10] Van Nuffelen 2014; Van Hoof 2013; McLynn 2010 and 2006.
[11] Cribiore 2007; Rousseau 1998.
[12] The terminology is borrowed from Bourdieu 1977, 72-95, whose work on education (Bourdieu 1990 and 1991), however, is not followed here.

mostly addressed in Part II, will both be used to gather information about didactic practices on the ground.

An example of how a simple instance of textual transformation can betray didactic practice is provided by the documents produced in the classroom of a teacher working in late-antique Egypt. A set of papyri written in students' hands contain the following text:

> A son who had killed his father, fearing the laws, fled to the wilderness. When he reached the mountains he was pursued by a lion. Then, being pursued by the lion, he climbed a tree. He saw a serpent on the tree and since he could not climb further he was killed by the serpent.
> The evil man never escapes from God. The Divinity leads evil men to justice.[13]

Since the text is of an elementary nature and the students' papyri attest a considerable number of orthographic mistakes, the documents have been rightly interpreted as an exercise of dictation.[14]

The text used for the dictation, however, was the final product of a process of textual transformation. Textual analysis reveals that the teacher made use of an Aesopic fable that had been transformed with a view to its use as an elementary instructional text (the sections that the teacher changed are in *italics*):

> A *man* who had committed *a murder was pursued by the relatives of the victim*. When he arrived at *the river Nile*, since he saw a lion and got frightened, he climbed a tree. But above the tree he found a serpent and, *again fearing about this, he dove into the river. But in the river a crocodile devoured him*.
> *The fable shows that no element –earth, air, or water– nor (any) other place defends murderers*.[15]

The teacher transformed a known text with a view to instructional purposes on the ground, and, accordingly, the textual changes shed light on his pedagogical strategies. One can speculate

[13] Cribiore 1996, nos. 230, 231, 232, 314, 323, 409 and 412: Ὁ υἱὸς τὸν ἴδιον πατέρα φονεύσας καὶ τοὺς νόμους φοβηθεὶς ἔφυγεν εἰς ἐρημίαν καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀρέων παρερχόμενος ἐδιώκετο ὑπὸ λέοντος. Διωκόμενος οὖν ὑπὸ λέοντος ἀνῆλθεν εἰς δένδρον. Εἶδεν δράκοντα καθήμενον ἐπὶ τὸ δένδρον καὶ μὴ δυνάμενος ἀνελθεῖν διὰ τὸν δράκοντα ἀνῃρέθη. Κακὸς γὰρ οὔποτε λανθάνει θεόν. Ἄγει τὸ θεῖον τοὺς κακοὺς πρὸς τὴν δίκην. Diethart 1988; Harrauer 1985.

[14] Harrauer 1985, 109. An example by a student is: Ο ΥΙΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΥΙΤΗΟ ΠΑΔΕΡΑ ΦΩΝΟΣΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟΥΣ ΝΩΜΟΥ ΦΩΒΗΘΗΣ ΕΦΙΓΕΝ ΙΣ ΕΡΙΜΙΑΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΙΑ ΤΩΝ […]: Harrauer 1985, no. 132.

[15] *Corpus fab. Aes.*, 32 ii (ed. Hausrath): Ἄνθρωπός τις φόνον ποιήσας ἐδιώκετο ὑπὸ τῶν συγγενῶν τοῦ φονευθέντος. Γενομένου δὲ αὐτοῦ κατὰ τὸν Νεῖλον ποταμὸν λέοντα ἰδὼν καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἀνέβη εἰς δένδρον. Εὗρε δὲ δράκοντα ἐπάνω τοῦ δένδρου καὶ πάλιν τοῦτον φοβηθεὶς ἔρριψεν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸν ποταμόν. Ἐν δὲ τῷ ποταμῷ κροκόδειλος αὐτὸν κατεθοινήσατο. Ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ, ὅτι τοὺς φονεῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὔτε γῆς οὔτε ἀέρος οὔτε ὕδατος στοιχεῖον οὔτε τόπος ἄλλος φυλάττει.

that the change of "a man who had committed a murder" into "a son who had killed his father" must have rendered the text simpler and more relevant to the pupils' point of view; the specific reference to the Nile was rendered simpler or more generic by the replacement with "wilderness" and "mountains;" the reference to the crocodile was omitted with the intention to make the story shorter (or perhaps because the crocodile was a sacred animal for some communities in Egypt?); and the closing moral added a religious slant to the text, perhaps due to Christianity.

Textual transformation, then, can reveal some of the didactic concerns and the pedagogical strategies that guided this particular teacher. Didactic practice, however, can be inferred at the macroscopic level of book production too. In the late Roman world, the very production of secondary literature, especially in the form of *scholia* and commentaries, amply overlapped with the provision of literate education. Donald Russell has argued that "so much of ancient (literary) criticism is grounded on the practices of education," and that, especially in the late Roman world, works of rhetorical criticism derived from the lecture-room and the students' 'needs', and not from the taste of the adult conoisseur.[16]

Similarly, the composition of secondary literature on the Scriptures, such as exegetical *scholia* and commentaries, may be understood as part of the cultural practices that pertained to the very teaching of the Scriptures. Richard Layton used the exegetical commentaries composed by Didymus the Blind as a tool to study the teaching practice of the fourth-century Alexandrian exegete, and he put forward a model for the functioning of Didymus' classroom and for the pedagogical strategies that guided his activity.[17] The pseudo-Macarian homilies, which not rarely adopt the question and answer form and are likely to have originated in fourth-century Syria, might likewise reveal a sophisticated Christian educational enterprise

[16] Russell 1995, 167, and 52-68 for literary criticism in the imperial period.
[17] Layton 2004.

with a more successful afterlife.[18]

The very composition of the Christian instructional texts addressed in the present work, Syriac translations in Part I and instructional literature by better known Christian authors in Part II, have likewise the potential to reveal didactic practices within late Antique society, as recent research on other early Christian authors has shown. Anthony Grafton and Megan Williams have brought together the two cultural enterprises underpinning the creation of Origen's library in Caesarea, which was functional to the composition of the *Hexapla*, and, about one century later, the research institution headed by Eusebius of Caesarea, whose imperial support materialised in Constantine's bid for the production of fifty Bibles destined for the churches in Constantinople. The two cultural projects by Origen and by Eusebius had much in common. Both workshops were characterised by an exegetical and philological interest applied to the Biblical text, by the exploitation of the multi-columned format and the codex form, and, last but not least, by a drive for innovative book production.[19]

Given the absence of corroborative documentary evidence, Origen's and Eusebius' didactic practices on the ground have been inferred from their own (and their pupils') books. It has been argued that the cultural technologies that such books reveal, such as the philological efforts applied to the Biblical texts and the use of the multi-columned codex format, are ultimately indicative of Origen and Eusebius' pedagogical strategies while teaching and commenting the Biblical text.[20] Whether or not Origen's and Eusebius' efforts for book production were related to the didactic practices of late Roman sophists and philosophers is a broader question that awaits to be addressed. Such a question, however, is even more pressing for the instructional texts addressed here, for they explicitly introduce the secular tradition of rhetorical education.

To sum up, both levels, textual transformation on the one hand and book production on

[18] Plested 2004; Stewart 1991.
[19] Grafton 2006.
[20] Young 1997, 76-96.

the other hand, have guided our research on literate education in late Roman Syria. The present work opens with the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius - a puzzling and understudied Christian *corpus* of instructional texts whose origin can be sought within the literate school tradition, but whose Christian and ascetic slant marks the distance from rhetorical education. The translations will then be put in relation to texts of a similar nature that were instead composed in Greek and in Latin, such as the Christian paraphrases of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* and Rufinus' translation of the *Sentences of Sextus* (Part I).

Syriac literature was characterised as a Christian phenomenon from its early stages, and one would not immediately expect to find, within Syriac manuscripts, an active production of instructional literature that built on the tradition of Greek secular education. The fact that the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius survive in Syriac uncovers an ambitious enterprise of cultural transmission underpinned by the endurance of traditional didactic practice in the Syriac-speaking world, and, beyond it, in fourth- and fifth-century Christianity at large. A fresh analysis of known and less-known texts will question a too simplistic understanding of the developments in the provision of literate education in late-Roman Syria, and, at the same time, will suggest caution against an unqualified application of the twofold paradigm "monastic education" as opposed to "scholastic education" for the period under scrutiny (Part II).

Part I

SYRIAC TRANSLATIONS OF GREEK SECULAR LITERATURE:

NEW EVIDENCE FOR LITERATE EDUCATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

2. An enterprise of textual transmission

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Textual analysis of the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius

- 2.2.1 Christianisation
- 2.2.2 Omissions of anecdotes
- 2.2.3 Rendering of proper names
- 2.2.4 Minds at work
- 2.2.5 Chronology
- 2.2.6 Authorship

2.3 Early Syriac literature and Greek literary traditions

- 2.3.1 Early Syriac literature and religion: local cults, Judaism and Christianity
- 2.3.2 Greek influence on early Syriac literature
- 2.3.3 Translations of Greek secular texts

2.4 Conclusion

2.1 Introduction

As a classically trained student, I was intrigued to find that a work by Lucian of Samosata, the *De calumnia*, had been translated into Syriac. Lucian was born in c. 120 AD in Samosata, not far from Edessa in the province of Syria, and his self-identification as a Syrian prompted some debate about his native tongue, either Syriac or a local dialect of Greek.[21] While the Syriac translation of the *De calumnia* could not contribute to such a debate, the transmission nonetheless appeared as an indicator of the permeability of Greek and Syriac literary traditions in the region. In fact, by few generations Osrhoene and its main urban centre Edessa had become the cradle of Syriac scholarship and literature. The Syriac translation of the *De Calumnia*, however, confronted me with a less straightforward link between Greek and Syriac literatures than I had originally expected.

The transmission of Lucian into Syriac unearths a more ambitious cultural enterprise than scholarship has so far expected from this translation. While textual variants between the Greek original and the Syriac translation will not be surprising, not least because the Syriac translator made use of a majuscule manuscript, the translation reveals also textual differences that appear as deliberate changes applied to the original text. It is conspicuous, for instance, that sentences or entire passages of the Greek text had been left out in Syriac. The omitted passages included the invocation Ἡράκλεις "by Heracles," the references to the Greek literary world such as ὡς ὁ ποιητής φησι "as the poet [*i.e.* Homer] says" and τοὺς Λαβδακίδας καὶ τοὺς Πελοπίδας καὶ τὰ τούτοις παραπλήσια "(as for example) the house of Labdacus, the house of Pelops and (topics) such as these," and entire anecdotes reporting the slander against Bellerophon and against Hippolytus.[22]

[21] Lucian, *Bis accusatus* 27: ἐγὼ γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τουτονὶ κομιδῇ μειράκιον ὄντα, βάρβαρον ἔτι τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μονονουχὶ κάνδυν ἐνδεδυκότα εἰς τὸν Ἀσσύριον τρόπον [...]. For Lucian's mother tongue see Wilson 2005; Adams 2002, 14-15; Jones 1986, 6-8.
[22] Lucian, *De calumnia* xxvi.

It appeared as if such references and passages had been left out of the text on account of an underlying criterion that was possibly related to their mythological and religious contents. Indeed, other anecdotes drawn on Greek literature or history had, instead, been included in the translation of the *De calumnia*. For instance, the account of the painter Apelles being victim of slander in front of king Ptolemy, and the anecdotes about the Platonic philosopher Demetrius and about Alexander the Great had been faithfully rendered by the Syriac translator.[23] It seemed, then, that the Syriac *De calumnia* had undergone a process of censorship that resulted in the omissions of references to pagan religion as well as anecdotes of mythological contents, without affecting the anecdotes and the references of non-mythological nature, such as those about philosophers and about historical figures.

Was such a *modus agendi* common among Syriac translations from Greek? Or was it a specific characteristic of the translation of the *De calumnia*? Relying on an overview of Syriac translations from Greek, the present chapter will show that textual editing was not common practice among all Syriac translations composed in the same time frame (fifth and sixth centuries). Instead, such a process affected a well defined *corpus* of Syriac translations from Greek. Such texts have (i) common origin in being works of Greek non-Christian literature, (ii) similar nature in being short pieces proposing moral advice and a controlled behaviour, and (iii) a similar format in that the moral advice is mostly structured in the form of edifying anecdotes and gnomic recommendations. The texts are the following (the abbreviations used in the present work are in brackets):

- Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira* (*PI*)[24]
- Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (*PU*)[25]

[23] Lucian, *De calumnia* ii, xvi and xvii-xviii respectively.
[24] *Sin. Syr.* 16 (seventh cent.) and BL *Add*. 17209 (ninth century); ed. De Lagarde 1858, 186-195, only from BL *Add*. 17209; textual analysis in Ryssel 1880, II 55-56 and Baumstark 1894, 469-470.
[25] *Sin. Syr.* 16; ed. and English translation in Nestle 1894.

- Lucian, *De calumnia* (*LC*)[26]
- Themistius, *De amicitia* (*TA*)[27]
- ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* (*ID*)[28]

Although their Greek originals are lost, the following will be included in the analysis since they present the same features and a similar editing in Syriac:

- ps.-Plutarch, *De exercitatione* (*PE*)[29]
- Themistius, *De virtute* (*TV*)[30]

In addition to similar textual editing, the coherence of the *corpus* finds further support in the manuscript transmission. With the only exception of the *Ad Demonicum*, the translations are found together in the surviving manuscripts (ch. 3). Conversely, the ps.-Isocratean work, a gnomic and instructional composition that became a most popular scholastic text as school papyri show, reveals a similar process of editing but is found in different assemblages in Syriac, and it will thus be used as an external witness to test the assumptions that the present analysis will propose for the Syriac Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.

The Syriac Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius reveal a coherent process of editing. In addition to the practice of omitting passages, another conspicuous feature that characterises the

[26] *Sin Syr*. 16 and BL *Add*. 17209; ed. Sachau 1870, 48-65, only from BL *Add*. 17209; textual analysis in Ryssel 1880, II 45-54 and Baumstark 1894, 453-464.
[27] BL *Add*. 17209. Ed. Sachau 1870, 48-65; textual analysis in Baumstark 1894, 464-468.
[28] BL *Add*. 14658 (seventh cent.), 14614 (eighth cent.) and 14620 (ninth cent.); ed. De Lagarde 1858, 167-177, only from BL *Add*. 14658; textual analysis in Ryssel 1880, II 29-44 and Baumstark 1894, 438-453.
[29] BL *Add*. 17209 and *Sin. Syr*. 16; ed. De Lagarde 1858, 177-186 only from BL *Add*. 17209 (the beginning is missing), and Rohlfs 1968 only from *Sin. Syr*. 16 (only the beginning). A German translation from De Lagarde 1858 is available in Gildemeister 1872; an English translation is in Rigolio 2014.
[30] BL *Add*. 17209 and *Sin. Syr*. 14 (excerpts; tenth century); ed. Sachau 1870, 17-47, only from BL *Add*. 17209; a German translation from Sachau 1870 is available in Gildemeister 1872a; a Latin translation from Sachau 1870 in Downey 1971, III 8-71; an Italian translation in Conterno 2014. I haven't been able to consider here the Syriac translation of the Ps.-Aristotelian treatise *On virtue and vice* (*Sin. Syr*. 14, on which Sebastian Brock is currently working), which was composed in Greek in the second or first cent. BC, ed. Kellermann 1965.

translations is a peculiar way to render the proper names of the characters of the anecdotes that the texts contain. The contrast with the Greek shows that historical personalities have often been replaced with generic and anonymous formulas. For instance "Xerxes" was rendered as "a king of the Persians," "Pythagoras" as "one of the philosophers," "Scipio Nasica" as "a wise man" and "Socrates and Xanthippe" as "Socrates and his wife." The editing process had a deep impact on the texts, and its study prompts the question about the aims guiding the translators in this enterprise of transmission of secular literature into Syriac. The present chapter argues that the textual changes can reveal innovative uses of pieces of pagan literature by Christian scholars.

What the texts can say about early Christian cultural life and, more broadly, about the late Roman world is a question that awaits to be asked. Most scholarship on the texts is rather dated and it has exclusively followed a line of inquiry at the textual level. In the decades after Paul De Lagarde, Eduard Sachau, and Eberhard Nestle published the Syriac texts in 1858, 1870, and 1894 respectively, a number of scholars showed interest in the contribution that the Syriac translations could bring to the emendation of the Greek texts. The early date of the translations (believed to be between the late fifth and the early sixth centuries, which implies that the translator relied on a majuscule manuscript) enticed the interest of classical philologists as far as to prompt the reconstruction of the Greek text of the *De calumnia* that the Syriac translator could have used.[31] In fact, the translations could –and sometimes did– contribute to the understanding of corrupted passages of the Greek text.[32] A recently published papyrus of

[31] The texts were edited in De Lagarde 1858, Sachau 1870 and Nestle 1894; and textual analyses of specific texts are found in Hoffmann 1871 (about *LC*), Ryssell 1880, Rothstein 1888, 92-98 (about *LC*), Baumstark 1894, Nestle 1894 (about *PU*).

[32] The edition of Plutarch's *Moralia* by Max Pohlenz *et al.* in the *Bibliotheca Teubneriana* made use of the Syriac witnesses. Two examples of how the Syriac text could witness better readings than the surviving Greek manuscripts are: (i) a lacuna in the Greek manuscripts but not in Syriac (*PI* 460c : Syr 193.12): Οὐ γάρ πρὸς ἡδονὴν δεῖ [...] χαίρειν κολάζοντας <κολάσαντας δὲ> μετανοεῖν "Indeed, because of pleasure (we) should not rejoice when we punish and repent" : ܗܘ ܕܐܦ ܥܠ ܕܢܫܬܡܫ ܒܗ ܠܐ ܢܬܚܕܐ ܐܠܐ ܕܢܬܚܕܐ ܒܗ ܕܐܦ ܥܠ ܕܢܫܬܡܫ ܒܗ "(we should) not rejoice when we apply it (i.e. the punishment), but let us be sad when we have applied it"; (ii) the insertion of a gloss (*PU* 91e : Syr 16.10): πολιτικὸς ἀνὴρ [Ὀνομα]δῆμος "the statesman Onomademus" : ܕܝܡܘܣ ܚܟܝܡܐ "the wise Demus."

Plutarch's *De cohibenda ira* has raised new interest in the Syriac witness.[33]

Apart from studies of specific aspects, however, scholarship on the translations has not moved beyond the level of textual analysis functional to the establishment of the Greek text. The texts await to be studied as a *corpus*, to be put in relation to contemporary translations as well as to original Syriac literature, and, beyond it, to be organically understood within late Roman cultural life.[34] At the time of writing, the most recent contribution about the *corpus* as a whole (but with the exception of *PU*), remains the one by Anton Baumstark, who, in 1894, published his doctoral dissertation on the topic in two-hundred pages of Latin. Baumstark was the sole scholar to inquire into the historical origins of the works under analysis. Following the hypothesis of Georg Hoffmann, Baumstark argued that the translator of the entire *corpus* had to be identified in Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536), possibly the most well-known Syrian translator of medical, philosophical, and scientific works from Greek.[35]

Baumstark's argument, however, encountered the major problem of the absence of Christianising editing among Sergius' translations from Greek. Baumstark accounted for such a discrepancy by hypothesising that the editing had been carried out "by a Syrian monk" at a later stage of transmission.[36] As it will be shown, however, such a scenario presents a number of difficulties, and later scholars have not followed Baumstark on this point. Eberhard Nestle, who in the same year published and translated into English the Syriac translation of Plutarch's *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, argued for an almost antithetical scenario about the origin of the editing. Nestle suggested that the textual changes characterising the translations had to be understood as the mark of the translation technique of a sole translator.[37] Later scholars have similarly argued for the coincidence of the editing with the translation into Syriac, and a fresh

[33] See the agreement of *PI* with PHarrauer 1, which contains 456f-58b (ed. Funghi 2001).
[34] Macleod 1970 about *LC*; Fürst 1997 about *PU*; Brock 2003 about Syriac "popular philosophy"; Conterno 2010 about *TA*; Conterno 2014 about *TV*.
[35] Baumstark 1894, 436; the authorship of Sergius of Resh'aina had been suggested by Hoffmann 1871 in the review of Sachau 1870.
[36] Baumstark 1894, 436.
[37] Nestle 1894, ix; in fact, Nestle's analysis was limited to *PU* and *PI*.

investigation into the texts, together with a better understanding of the Syriac translation technique, will provide additional evidence for Nestle's hypothesis, but it will question the uniqueness of the translator.

The present chapter is structured into two parts. In the first part (2.2), a textual analysis addresses the criteria underlying the editing process of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, and, after gathering the evidence for chronology and authorship, it will make a case for the study of the texts as a *corpus* underpinned by an ambitious enterprise of cultural transmission that was carried out by Christian scholarly-oriented minds. The significance of such an enterprise should be understood by relating the present *corpus* to the translations of secular texts from Greek into Syriac composed between the fourth and sixth centuries, as the second part of the chapter shows (2.3). The analysis will address the Syriac cultural and historical background of the texts, and it will argue that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius were part of a broader enterprise of transmission of Greek moralising and instructional texts in the earliest stages of Syriac literary production. In fact, Greek literary traditions, and the tradition of literate education in particular, appear as important markers of Syriac literature from the third century onwards.

2.2 Textual analysis of the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius

2.2.1 Christianisation

The most striking feature of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius is represented by the neutralization of the references to pagan religion that the Greek originals contained. The comparison with the Greek reveals that the editing was consistent, and not a

sole reference to pagan religion has been left in the Syriac texts.[38] The absence of references to pagan religion in *PE* and *TV*, the two pieces whose originals have been lost, may well be taken as indicative of the same process of Christianisation that the texts underwent.[39] Christianisation is revealed not only by the consistent transformation of "gods" into "God," but also by omissions, additions and other changes that the Syriac texts show and are collected in the following list:

i	Μὰ Δί' "by Zeus"[40]	**omitted**
ii	Ἡράκλεις "by Heracles"[41]	**omitted**
iii	νὴ Δία "by Zeus"[42]	**omitted**
iv	θεοῖς "gods"[43]	**omitted**
v	καὶ Μούσαις πρὸ πολέμου θύουσιν "and before the battle they sacrifice to the Muses"[44]	**omitted**
vi	Εὖ γε, ὦ τύχη, ποιεῖς, εἰς τὸν τρίβωνα συνελαύνουσα ἡμᾶς. "**O Fortune**, you do well, (you) who push us into the (philosophers') cloak!"[45]	ܛܒ ܠܝ ܕܐܬܦܠܣܦ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܝ ܐܝܟ ܫܦܝ. "It is good for me that I turn to philosophy!"
vii	ταῖς ἀκτῖσι τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ "to the rays of **the great god**"[46]	ܠܢܗܝܪܐ "to the light"
viii	μάντεις "seers"[47]	ܢܒܝܐ "prophet"
ix	καθάπερ οἱ θεοί "**as the gods**"[48]	**omitted**
x	Διὸ καὶ τῶν θεῶν τὸν βασιλέα «Μειλίχιον», Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ «Μαιμάκτην» οἶμαι καλοῦσι· τὸ δὲ κολαστικὸν ἐρινυῶδες καὶ δαιμονικὸν, οὐ θεῖον οὐδ΄ ὀλύμπιον. For this reason, I believe, they (call) **the king of the gods Meilichios** (*i.e*. "the mild one"), while the Athenians call (him) Maimaktes (*i.e*. "the	**omitted**

[38] The Syriac text of *LC* is similarly Christianised (*e.g.* in v and viii "gods" have been replaced with "God"), with the exception of three anecdotes, where the Syriac text maintains the original "Gods" (xvii, xviii and xxix). Such references, however, pertain to the contents of specific anecdotes, respectively about Alexander the Great and Socrates. As it will be shown below, *LC* can be described as the most faithful translation within the *corpus*.
[39] Ch. 3.2.3 and 3.3.1.
[40] *LC* xiv : Syr 9.20.
[41] *LC* xxxi : Syr 16.11.
[42] *PI* 454d, 455d, and 459c.
[43] *PI* 455d : Syr 188.22.
[44] *PI* 458e.
[45] *PU* 87a : Syr 3.17-18.
[46] *TA* 53.14-15 : Syr 49.18.
[47] *TA* 55.4-5 : Syr 51.7.
[48] *TA* 55.5 : Syr 51.7.

boisterous one"), but punishment is a matter of the Erynnis and of the *daimones*, not of the divine or of the olympian.[49]

xi	Δεώμεθα οὖν ἐγώ τε καὶ ὑμεῖς τῆς Ὁμηρικῆς Ἀθηνᾶς, ἐάν πως ἡμῶν ἀποσκεδάσῃ τὴν πολλὴν ἀχλὺν τῶν ὀμμάτων, ὅφρ' εὖ διαγινώσκοιμεν οὐ θεὸν ἐν ταῖς μάχαις καὶ ἄνδρα, ἀλλὰ φιλίαν ἀληθῆ καὶ πεπλασμένην. **Let us pray**, you and I, **to the Homeric Athena**, that, so to say, she should dissolve the thick mist from (our) eyes, so that we may distinguish not a god from a man in the battles, but true friendship from the fictitious one.[50]	**omitted**
xii	ἀλλὰ φιλίας ἐχθρότατόν τε φύσει καὶ ἐπιβουλότατον ὑπὲρ τὰ ἄλλα, καὶ ὅπου ἂν αἴσθηται αὐτὴν εὐπραγοῦσαν, ἠρέμα εἰσοικισαμένη κατὰ σμικρὸν ὑπορύττει καὶ ἐλέγχει τὸν ἄφρακτόν τε καὶ ἀσθενῆ. but (slander) is by nature the most hostile to friendship and the most treacherous of all things; and, wherever it perceives a flourishing friendship, it quietly establishes itself (there), undermines and gets the better of the unguarded and weak person.[51]	ܐܠܐ ܕܚܒܪ ܠܚܒܪ̈ܐ ܡܢ ܟܠ ܫܢ̈ܐ ܐ̈ܦ ܒܐ̈ܝܟ ܕܐ̈ܝܟ ܕܚܙ̈ܐ ܠܗ̇ ܒܥ̈ܠ ܕܚܒ̈ܪ̈ܐ

The consistency of such changes reveals the agency of minds at work who, being aware of the non-Christian origin of the texts, nonetheless thoroughly Christianised the Syriac pieces. A similar Christianising agency characterises the Syriac translation of another piece of Greek secular literature, the pseudo-Isocratean *Ad Demonicum*, a work composed during the third or fourth century AD and structured as a collection of moral precepts addressed to a young boy.[53] The piece had considerable popularity in Late Antiquity, as shown by the numerous quotations by other authors from the fourth century onwards as well as by the great number of surviving papyri, most of which have scholastic origins.[54] The school papyri attesting the *Ad Demonicum* range from elementary school exercises to more advanced texts, notably the fourth-century wooden booklet from Kellis in Egypt that contains the entire *Ad Demonicum* together with notes of literary nature addressed to intermediate students.[55] While the Christian editing of the Syriac Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius is not attested in the surviving Greek manuscripts, a group of Greek manuscripts of the *Ad Demonicum* attest a concern for Christianisation, as shown by the frequent replacement of "gods" with "God."[56]

The Syriac translation of the *Ad Demonicum* (c. fifth century, see below ch. 2.2.5), however, presents more conspicuous changes underlying a Christianising editing than its Greek manuscripts do. The replacement of "gods,"[57] ἡ τυχὴ "fortune,"[58] and τὸ δαιμόνιον "divinity"[59] with ܐܠܗܐ [*alōhō*] "God" is a constant feature of the Syriac translation of the *Ad Demonicum*.[60] A more invasive Christianising change is attested in the following passage:[61]

Πρῶτον μὲν οὖν εὐσέβει τὰ πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς μὴ μόνον θύων ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ὅρκοις ἐμμένων· ἐκεῖνο

[169.30] ܡܢ ܩܕܡ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ ܒܠܚ ܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܒܡܘܡܬܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܚܠܦ ܘܐܦ ܒܫܘܒܥܐ ܕܫܩܪ [170.1] ܐܠܗܐ ܠܐ

1975, 95-98 and Murray 2006, 228-236 and 324-329.
[53] For the authorship and chronology see Mikkola 1954; Chadwick 1969, 1136-37; Mandilaras 2003, I 5.
[54] Ch. 4.2.4. Mandilaras 2003, I 319-354.
[55] Mandilaras 2003, I 177-179; Cribiore 2001, 203-4; Morgan 1998, 313; Worp 1997; Cribiore 1996.
[56] See *codex Σ* in Mandilaras 2003, II 11.
[57] *ID* 13, 16, 45 and 50.
[58] *ID* 3 : Syr 168.9.
[59] *ID* 13 : Syr 170.3.
[60] Ryssel 1880, II 37.
[61] *ID* 13: Syr. 167-177.

μὲν γὰρ τῆς τῶν χρημάτων εὐπορίας σημεῖον, τοῦτο δὲ τῆς τῶν τρόπων καλοκαγαθίας τεκμήριον. Τίμα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἀεὶ μέν, μάλιστα δὲ μετὰ τῆς πόλεως· οὕτω γὰρ δόξεις ἅμα τε τοῖς θεοῖς θύειν καὶ τοῖς νόμοις ἐμμένειν.

In the first place act piously towards the **gods**, not only by offering sacrifice but also by abiding by oaths: the former is a sign of abundance of means, the latter is a proof of nobleness of manners. Always honour the *daimonion*, especially along with the town, for in this way you will have the reputation **to offer sacrifice to the gods** as well as to abide by **the laws**.

ܠܟ ܠܐ ܚܙܝ ܐܠܐ ܐܠܗܝܐ ܕܬܗܘܐ ܕܚܠܡ ܘܠܗ ܬܣܓܕ ܐܢ ܐܠܐ ܒܟ ܕܬܚܫܒ ܡܛܠ ܕܗܢ ܐܢ ܐܠܐ ܒܟ ܕܬܚܫܒ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܒܟ ܕܬܗܘܐ ܘܒܪܝܫ

2.2.2 Omissions of anecdotes

An instructional feature of the texts by Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius found in Syriac is their frequent use of anecdotes reported in order to support a piece of moral advice or to illustrate a particular behaviour within the argumentation. The rendering of such anecdotes in Syriac reveals another major concern that guided the process of editing. The phenomenon is well illustrated by a passage from Plutarch's *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, on how one could benefit from enemies. In the opening sections of the text, Plutarch made the point that enemies are particularly keen in announcing one's shortcomings and mistakes, while friends, because of their affection, are rarely sincere. Accordingly, the reproaches and accusations that come from enemies should be taken as a constant and beneficial exhortation to adopt and stick to a morally sound behaviour. In addition, Plutarch recommended not to answer the enemies' reproaches with further rebukes, as such an attitude could easily become counter-productive. In order to illustrate the phenomenon, the author reported a series of anecdotes that were translated into Syriac as follows (the left column represents the Greek text, the right column the Syriac translation):[64]

[64] *PU* 5 (88e-89b): Ὁ μὲν οὖν Πλάτων ὁσάκις ἀσχημονοῦσιν ἀνθρώποις παραγένοιτο, πρὸς αὐτὸν εἰώθει λέγειν "μή πῃ ἄρ' ἐγὼ τοιοῦτος;" ὁ δὲ λοιδορήσας τὸν ἑτέρου βίον ἂν εὐθὺς ἐπισκοπῇ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ καὶ μεθαρμόττῃ πρὸς τοὐναντίον ἀπευθύνων καὶ ἀποστρέφων, ἕξει τι χρήσιμον ἐκ τοῦ λοιδορεῖν, ἄλλως ἀχρήστου καὶ κενοῦ δοκοῦντος εἶναι καὶ ὄντος. Οἱ μὲν οὖν πολλοὶ γελῶσιν, ἄν τις ὢν φαλακρὸς ἢ κυρτὸς ἑτέρους εἰς ταῦτα λοιδορῇ καὶ σκώπτῃ, γελοῖον δ' ὅλως ἐστὶ τὸ λοιδορεῖν καὶ σκώπτειν ὁτιοῦν ἀντιλοιδορηθῆναι δυνάμενον· ὡς Λέων ὁ Βυζάντιος ὑπὸ κυρτοῦ λοιδορηθεὶς εἰς τὴν τῶν ὀμμάτων ἀσθένειαν, "ἀνθρώπινον," ἔφη, "πάθος ὀνειδίζεις, ἐπὶ τοῦ νώτου φέρων τὴν νέμεσιν." οὐκοῦν μηδὲ μοιχὸν λοιδορήσῃς, αὐτὸς ὢν παιδομανής· μηδ' ἄσωτον, αὐτὸς ὢν ἀνελεύθερος. "ἀνδροκτόνου γυναικὸς ὁμογενὴς ἔφυς" πρὸς τὸν Ἄδραστον ὁ Ἀλκμέων. τί οὖν ἐκεῖνος; οὐκ ἀλλότριον ἀλλ' ἴδιον αὐτῷ προφέρων ὄνειδος "σὺ δ' αὐτόχειρ γε μητρὸς ἥ σ' ἐγείνατο." Πρὸς τὸν Κράσσον ὁ Δομίτιος, "οὐ σὺ μυραίνης ἐν ζωγρείῳ σοι τρεφομένης εἶτα ἀποθανούσης ἔκλαυσας;" καὶ ὁ ἕτερος "οὐ σὺ τρεῖς γυναῖκας ἐκκομίσας οὐκ ἐδάκρυσας;" οὐκ εὐφυᾶ δεῖ τὸν λοιδορησόμενον εἶναι καὶ μεγαλόφωνον καὶ ἰταμόν, ἀλλ' ἀλοιδόρητον καὶ ἀνέγκλητον· οὐδενὶ γὰρ οὕτως ἔοικε προστάττειν ὁ θεὸς ὡς τῷ μέλλοντι ψέγειν ἕτερον τὸ "γνῶθι σαυτόν," ἵνα μὴ λέγοντες ἃ θέλουσιν ἀκούωσιν ἃ μὴ θέλουσι. "φιλεῖ" γὰρ ὁ τοιοῦτος κατὰ τὸν Σοφοκλέα "γλῶσσαν ἐκχέας μάτην ἄκων ἀκούειν οὓς ἑκὼν εἴπῃ λόγους." Syr 8.3-9.6: ܡܢܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܐܢܫ ܒܫܢ ܠܐ ܝܩ ܡܫܠܡ ܐܝ ܡܢ ܕܐܢ

[**5**] *a.* Whenever **Plato** was among men who behaved in an unseemly manner, while leaving he used to say to himself: "can it be that I am like them?" If the man who reviles the way of life of another man looked at once at his own and readjusted it by redirecting (it) and turning (it) into the opposite direction, he would gain something useful from (his) reviling. Otherwise it seems, and also is, useless and empty.

b. Most people laugh when someone who is bald and hunchbacked reviles and mocks others for these things, for it is completely ridiculous to revile and mock with something which can be used as an insult in turn (against you).

c. As **Leo of Byzantium**, who was reviled for the weakness of his eyes by a hunchbacked man, said: "you reproach me for a human condition, when you bear (God's) retribution on your back." Therefore, do not revile an adulterer if you are mad after boys, or a profligate one if you are stingy.

d. "You were born of the same kind as the woman who killed her husband" (is what) **Alcmeon** said to **Adrastus**. How did **Adrastus** (reply) then? By making a reproach which was not another's but his own: "and yourself (are) the killer of (your) mother who gave you birth."[65]

e. **Domitius** (said) to **Crassus**: "didn't you weep when the sea-eel that was kept for you in the fish-pond died?" and the **other [i.e. Crassus]** answered: "Didn't you bury three wives without shedding a tear?"

f. Whoever is reproaching does not have to be naturally clever, loud-voiced and aggressive, but (he has to be) irreproachable and blameless.

g. It seems that God commanded "know yourself!" to nobody so much as to someone who is about to blame another, lest, by saying what they want (to say), they hear what they do not want to (hear). According to **Sophocles**,

[**5**] *a.* When **Plato** saw men who were worthy of reproach, after leaving them he used to say: "may I not become such (as they)!" Therefore, anyone who reproaches his fellow man, if he looks (also) into himself when he turns to (reproaching his) equal, is helped by the very reproach he makes, even if (the reproach) is injurious.

b. Many people laugh when they see a man who, being bald or hunchbacked, reviles others for these infirmities, for many fools reproach someone with something which turns back to them.

c. **Leo**, when he was called blind by a hunchbacked man, answered: "you have reproached me for a defect of the body, but you carry your (own) defects on your shoulders." So, do not call your fellow man "adulterer," when you are impure, or "presumptuous" when you are execrable.

d. **omitted**

e. **Domitius** wanted to reproach **Crassus**, who, when the animal that was kept for him in a cage died, wept about it. **Crassus** told him: "may I not be like you, who buried the three wives you had and shed tears for none of them."

f. A man does not have to be excellent in order to insult, and be impudent and raise his voice, but, when he reproaches, he should not give any room for the reproach to be sent back to him.

g. God also demands from (someone) who wants to reproach his fellow man, that he first observes his (own) person, in case, when he says what pleases himself, he hears what is not agreeable for himself, as his ears perceive

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[65] Adespota *fr.* 358 Nauck.

someone like that "when uttering words in vain, is used to hearing unwillingly the words that he willingly speaks."[66]

unwillingly what his mouth sent out willingly.

The series of anecdotes acts as an illustration of the advice that Plutarch proposed. The anecdotes about Plato (*a*), Leo of Byzantium (*b*) and Domitius (*d*) are regularly translated into Syriac, yet the anecdote about Alcmeon and Adrastus, which Plutarch drew from Greek tragedy, is entirely omitted (*c*).[67] Similarly, the reference to Sophocles is omitted (*g*), although Sophocles' quotation is readapted into the text.

The omissions of anecdotes are not rare in these translations, and their incidence can be related to their contents. Relying only on the texts whose Greek originals have been preserved, it has been possible to file a list of the anecdotes drawn from Greek culture, which have been grouped into three conventionally defined categories according to their contents. The group *historical anecdotes* includes events and individuals with an historical basis, such as the Graeco-Persian wars, Miltiades, and Antigonus; the group *philosophers' anecdotes* includes the anecdotes whose protagonists are known as philosophers, such as Pythagoras, Socrates, and Aristotle; and *mythology and literature* includes all what can be considered Greek mythology, such as Zeus, Achilles and Orestes, but also references to Greek literature, mostly epic and tragedy.

The survey reveals that the *philosophers' anecdotes* survive entirely in Syriac (right column):

Philosophers' anecdotes

PI	Socrates 455a	*A wise man* 188.5
	Plato 456d	Plato 189.20
	Diogenes 460e	Diogenes 193.25
	Arcesilaus 461d	*A philosopher* 194.15
	Socrates and Xanthippe 461d	*Socrates and his wife* 194.20
PU	Diogenes and Crates 87a	Diogenes and Crates 3.15
	Zeno 87a	Zeno 3.15

[66] Soph. *fr*. 843 Nauck.
[67] The translations of the other anecdotes, however, presents minor changes.

	Diogenes 88a	Diogenes 6.15
	Plato 88e	Plato 8.1
	Socrates and Xanthippe 90d	*Socrates and (his) wife* 13.10
	Pythagoras 91c	*One of the philosophers* 15.10
LC	Demetrius and the wine 16	Demetrius and the wine 10.15
	Socrates 29	Socrates 15.5
TA	n/a	n/a

As will be outlined in the next section, some of the proper names have been changed and replaced with generic formulas (in *italics*), such as Socrates, who was replaced by "a wise man", Arcesilaus, who was replaced by "a philosopher" and Pythagoras, who was replaced by "one of the philosophers." For the present purpose, however, the table shows that all the anecdotes based on philosophers and on their commendable conduct have been translated into Syriac.

Conversely, the treatment of *historical anecdotes* attests a number of omissions:

Historical anecdotes

PI	Thebans and Spartans 454c	**omitted**
	Callisthenes and Alexander 454e	**omitted**
	Xerxes 455d	*a Persian king* 188.20
	Spartans and Helots 455e	**omitted**
	Gaius Gracchus 456a	*a wise man* 189.5
	Ctesiphon and a mule 457a	Ctesiphon and a mule 190.5
	king Antigonus 457e	king Antiochus 190.20[69]
	Arcadion and Philip 457e	**omitted**
	Philip 457f[68]	*a king* 190.25
	Magas and Philemon 458a	**omitted**
	Ptolemy and a grammarian 458a	*a king and a philosopher* 190.25
	Alexander and Porus 458b	*Alexander and the king of the Indians* 191.1
	Philip in Olynthus 458c	*Philip in an illustrious city* 191.5
	A Rhodian and a servant 458d	**omitted**
	Agatocles 458e	**omitted**
	Antigonus 458f	Antigonus 191.15
	Satyrus the Samian 459a	**omitted**
	Phocion and the Athenians 459e	*a wise man and the Athenians* 192.25
	Tyrrhenian slaves 460c	**omitted**
	Marius 461e	**omitted**
	Nero and Seneca 461f	*Nero and a man* 195.5
PU	Chilon 86c	Chilon 1.10
	Xenophon 86e	Xenophon 1.15
	Nasica 88a	*a wise man* 6.10

[68] Here Philip is not mentioned explicitly but only referred to.
[69] The transformation of Antigonus into Antiochus could be a scribal mistake in Syriac. Alternatively, for Antiochus see *e.g.* Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 15.5 (*PG* 35.920), and Van Dam 2002, 191.

	Leo of Byzantium 88f	*Leo* 8.10
	Domitius and Crassus 89a	Domitius and Crassus 8.15
	Thessalian Prometheus (Jason of Pherae) 89c	*a man* 10.1
	Lacydes king of the Argives 89e	*the king of Argos* 11.1
	Pompey 89e	Pompey 11.1
	Crassus and a (Vestal) Virgin 89e	Crassus and a virgin 11.5
	Postumia 89e	Postumia 11.5
	Themistocles and Pausanias 89f	Themistocles and Pausanias 11.10
	Hiero 90b	Hiero 12.5
	Caesar and Pompey 91a	*Caesar and his enemy Pompey* 14.5[70]
	Scaurus and Domitius 91d	Scaurus and Domitius 15.15
	Cato and Murena 91d	**omitted**
	Demus in Chios 91f	*Demus in his town* 16.10
	Themistocles and Miltiades 92c	Themistocles and Miltiades 17.10
LC	Apelles and Ptolemy 2	Apelles and Ptolemy 2.5
	Solon and Dracon 8	Solon and Dracon 5.20
	Alexander and Hephaestion 17	Alexander and Hephaestion 10.20
	Aristides and Themistocles 27	Aristides and Themistocles 14.25
	Themistocles and Miltiades 29	Themistocles and Miltiades 15.10
TA	Chabrias and Iphicrates 271a	**omitted**

As opposed to the anecdotes based on philosophers, which all survive in Syriac, the anecdotes based on historical figures from the Greco-Roman world have been omitted on a number of occasions. At the same time, the adaptors seemed aware of the identity of the figures, as it is evident from their correct rendering of Arcesilaus and Pythagoras as philosophers, Xerxes ("a Persian king") and Porus ("the king of the Indians"), since these pieces of information would not be otherwise available within the text itself. There is the possibility, then, that the adaptors aimed at rendering some anecdotes more readily comprehensible to a readership that was not particularly familiar with Greek history.

The tendency to omit entire passages, however, is by far more frequent in the rendering of anecdotes drawn from Greek mythology and literature, which are mostly omitted from the Syriac translations:

Mythology and literature

PI	Helen and Electra 454d	**omitted**
	Achilles and Agamemnon 455a	**omitted**
	Thamyris and Pandarus 455d	**any reference to the characters is omitted**
	Athena 456b	*a musician* 189.10

[70] The Syriac added ܒܥܠܗ̇ ܕܚܝܠ̈ܗ̇ "his enemy."

	Marsia 456b	**omitted**
	Sophocles 458d	**omitted**
	Sophocles 460d	**omitted**
	Agamemnon 460e	**omitted**
PU	A satyr and Prometheus 86f	**omitted**
	Alcmeon and Adrastus 88f	**omitted**
	Telephus' wound 89c	Telephus' wound 9.15
	Merope 90a	Merope 11.20
LC	Labdacus and Pelops 1	**omitted**
	Anteia and Bellerophon 26	**omitted**
	Phaedra and Hippolytus 26	**omitted**
	Palamedes 28	Palamedes 15.5
	Homer's sirens 30	Homer's sirens 15.15
TA	Achilles and Patroclus 266a	*Achilles and his friend* 50.5
	Strophius' son [*i.e.* Pylades] and Orestes 269a	*Orestes' friend and his friend* 53.10[71]
	Sthenelus and Diomedes 271b	**omitted**
	Hippolytus 277d	**omitted**
	Orestes 278c	**omitted**
	Aesop 278c	Aesop 64.10
	Scylla 279b	**omitted**
	Heracles at the crossroads 280a	**omitted**

As a result, most of the mythological and literary references are removed from the texts. The occurrence of the omissions is not entirely systematic, but overall, while philosophers' anecdotes were entirely reported, mythological anecdotes were mostly omitted. The popularity of the anecdote of the Homeric sirens may have been a reason for its survival here, as it may have been the case for Aesop's fable.[72]

The present survey of the omissions of anecdotes suggests a trend. *Philosophers' anecdotes* are entirely translated, *historical anecdotes* are occasionally omitted, and *mythological anecdotes* are often omitted. Max Rothstein, who studied the Syriac *De calumnia* alone, argued that ignorance of Greek culture was the reason for omitting the *exempla*.[73] Such an explanation, however, cannot consistently account for the omissions in the texts, and, for instance, one is left wondering why Achilles and Agamemnon did not enter the selection, while the lesser known Demus of Chios and the sage Chilon of Sparta did. As opposed to a consistent pattern of intervention on the original text, the occurrences of the omissions show a *general*

[71] The identification of Pylades as Orestes' friend is not available within the text, although it may have been derived from the context.
[72] Conterno 2010, 181.
[73] Rothstein 1888, 92-99 about *LC*.

trend that affects *in primis* Greek mythology and literature. The omission of mythological material seems to respond to the same concern revealed by the neutralisation of the references to religious paganism and pagan mythology. In addition, the simplification and anonymisation of some of the characters responds to a didactic purpose, for the texts thus changed would not require from the reader knowledge of the figures, which are, on some occasions, already identified as kings, philosophers, or wise men.

2.2.3 Rendering of proper names

The anonymisation of proper names affected characters both within anecdotes and in the main text. A complete list of occurrences is given in the following table:

PI	Fundanus [*i.e.* the addressee] 452d	our beloved one 186.25
	Socrates 455a	a wise man 188.5
	Xerxes 455d	a Persian king 188.20
	Gaius Gracchus 456a	a wise man 189.5
	Athena (playing the flutes) 456b	a musician 189.10
	Antigonus 457e	king Antiochus 190.20[74]
	Philip 457f	a king 190.25[75]
	Ptolemy and a grammarian 458a	another king and a philosopher 190.25
	Porus 458b	the king of the Indians 191.1
	Olynthus 458c	an illustrious city 191.5
	as the poet said 459d	as a wise man said 192.15
	Phocion 459e	a wise man 192.25
	Arcesilaus 461d	a philosopher 194.15
	Socrates, Euthydemus and Xanthippe 461d	Socrates […] his friend […] his wife 194.20
	Nero and Seneca 461f	Nero […] a man 195.5
PU	Dionysian artists 87f	lyre-players 5.20
	Nasica 88a	a wise man 6.10
	Pindar 88b	another wise man 7.1
	Leo of Byzantium 88f	Leo 8.10
	the Thessalian Prometheus 89c	a man 10.1
	wrestlers 89d	athletes 10.10
	Lacydes, king of the Argives 89e	the king of Argos 11.1
	the Pontifex Maximus Spurius Minucius 89f	the judge 11.10
	as Hippocrates says 90e	as the physicians say 13.1
	Socrates and Xanthippe 90d	Socrates […] wife 13.10
	Pythagoras 91c	one of the philosophers 15.10

[74] For the transformation of Antigonus into Antiochus see the footnote on the same passage above.
[75] See the footnote on the same passage above.

	the statesman Demus 91f	the wise Demus 16.10
	Chios 91f	his town 16.10
TA	Acheans and Troians 264c	Greeks and barbarians 48.1
	Xerxes 264c	the king of the Persians 48.1
	Hellespont 264c	sea 48.5
	Darius' gold 266a	Cyrus' gold[76] 50.1
	Patroclus 266a	his friend 50.5
	Strophius' son [i.e. Pylades] 269a	Orestes' friend 53.10
	Hesiod 276a	that poet who said 60.15
	the father of the verses 276a	that poet 61.1

As a result, in the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius a conspicuous number of direct references to Greco-Roman history and literature are neutralised or removed; and the figures representing particular behaviours are often generic kings, wise men, and philosophers. It appears that the historical and cultural background of the anecdotes often did not raise enough interest to deserve translation, while the instructional and morally edifying contents of the text played a greater role in the transmission of the text into Syriac. The omission of mythological anecdotes reflects a similar aim at de-contextualization, where the choice to translate a passage and omit another can be related to the extent according to which a particular passage could assume a generic and moralistic connotation suitable for a Christian audience.

2.2.4 Minds at work

To sum up, the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius differ from the original texts in at least three aspects. (i) The translations are Christianised through the omissions of references to pagan religion, and, on one occasion, through an addition to the text.[77] The authors of the changes must have been aware that they were dealing with non-

[76] Conterno 2007, 175, put forward the hypothesis that this was a deliberate intervention on the basis of attestations of the treasure of Cyrus in the Bible (Ez. 1.7-11 and Is. 45.3).
[77] Passage *xii* above containing a reference to Psalm 107.

Christian texts, while one doubts that the Syriac audience of the works was expected to understand the strategy. (ii) The texts under analysis are rich in anecdotes used to illustrate and to support the argumentation. Such anecdotes are often translated, although a number of them (mainly the ones dealing with Greek mythology and literature) are omitted. (iii) In Syriac some anecdotes still contain precise references to Greek historical figures and philosophers, while many other characters have been replaced with generic formulas such as "a wise man," "a certain philosopher" and "a wise king." Working on *PU*, Nestle hypothesised that the textual editing derives from deliberate intervention on the text during the process of translation, and a fresh look into the texts provides additional ground for such a hypothesis.

Following the enthusiasm of the editors of the translations, Anton Baumstark was the first scholar to consider the Syriac translations of Plutarch (with the exception of *PU*), Lucian, ps.-Isocrates, and Themistius in a comprehensive fashion. He was confronted with a set of texts that had been profoundly changed from the Greek originals, and he concluded that such Christianised paraphrases must have derived from earlier and more faithful Syriac translations. According to Baumstark, the editing and Christianising intervention on the texts had to be attributed to later Syriac scribes who changed earlier faithful translations. Baumstark's argument could ultimately safeguard the Syriac translators' faithfulness to the Greek, and, in turn, the value of the translations in correcting the Greek texts despite the (later) changes. At the same time, such an argument could fit the guesswork attribution of the translations to the Syrian scholar and translator Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536), which had been suggested by Georg Hoffmann in 1871.[78] Indeed, Sergius' surviving translations are considerably more faithful to the Greek than the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.

A fresh look into the texts, however, suggests a dynamics of transmission that was much closer to that of the elementary *Ad Demonicum* than to that of the philosophical and

[78] Baumstark 1894, 436 and 520-524; Ryssel 1880, II 7; the authorship of Sergius of Resh'aina had been suggested by Hoffmann 1871 in his review of Sachau 1870.

medical texts that Sergius of Reshʿaina translated. In fact, Baumstark's hypothesis about a later Christianising editing of earlier faithful translations encounters a number of difficulties:

i. there survives no trace of Sergius' more faithful translations of the texts, either in manuscripts or in quotations;

ii. some textual changes in the translations reveal familiarity with Greek culture, as they provide pieces of information that are not otherwise available in the texts. The phenomenon is represented by the replacement of Porus with "the king of the Indians,"[79] Arcesilaus with "a philosopher,"[80] Dionysian artists with "lyre-players,"[81] and Strophius' son (*i.e.* Pylades) with "Orestes' friend."[82] The translators could identify such figures, possibly on account of their knowledge of Greek or, alternatively, relying on Greek *scholia*, while it is less likely that later Syriac scribes were equally familiar with Greek history and literature.

iii. *Sin. Syr.* 14 and *Sin. Syr.* 16 (containing *TA*, *PU*, *PE*, *PI* and *LC*), which were not known to Baumstark, contain the same text and they do not provide evidence for more faithful translations or for a gradual process of editing;[83]

iv. fourth- and fifth-century Syriac translations of Greek literature with references to religious paganism and Greek mythology did not undergo the process of editing hypothesised by Baumstark. The surviving translations include the *Apology* by Aristides,[84] the *Oratio ad Graecos* attributed to Justin[85] –two Christian apologies that

[79] *PI* 458b : Syr 191.1.
[80] *PI* 461b : Syr 194.15.
[81] *PU* 87f : Syr 5.20.
[82] *TA* 269a : Syr 53.10. The rendering of the following passage may perhaps be included here *PU* 87a : 3.17-18: "O Fortune, you do well, (you) who push us into the *tribon*!" into "It is good for me that I may turn to philosophy!" where the *tribon* is the philosophers' cloak.
[83] Ch. 3.2-3; for *PE* see Rigolio 2014.
[84] The Syriac translation dates back to the fourth or fifth century and was edited by Pouderon 2003.
[85] The Syriac translation, which is entitled *Ambrosios' Hypomnemata*, dates back to the fourth or fifth century and

openly condemn pagan religion and mythology–, and ps.-Nonnus' *Mythological Scholia*, which aim to explain the mythological references in four sermons by Gregory of Nazianzus.[86] It appears that the Christian orientation of the pieces allowed a more faithful translation into Syriac;

v. the Syriac manuscripts contain our translations together with other early translations of Greek texts with references to religious paganism and Greek mythology that did not undergo later editing;[87]

vi. there is a relation between the degree of editing of the texts and the translation technique. Within the *corpus*, *LC* is the most faithful translation and its editing was mostly limited to the transformation of "gods" into "God" and to the omission of few references to Greek mythology. Conversely, the freest translation in the *corpus*, *PI,* is characterised by profound changes and major omissions of anecdotes and longer sections of the text, to the extent that the even dialogue form that characterises the Greek original has been omitted;[88]

vii. since the extent of the editing is conspicuous and often tied up with the practice of paraphrasing, later scribal intervention would have meant an almost complete rewriting of the hypothesised earlier faithful translations;[89]

Without denying the possibility of an ordinary degree of unsystematic intervention on the texts by later scribes, Nestle's hypothesis that the editing was carried out at the same time of the translations accounts for the texts in a straightforward way and does not encounter major

was edited by Pouderon 2009.

[86] The earlier Syriac translation dates back to the early sixth century and was edited by Brock 1971. A translation of the Greek text is available in Nimmo Smith 2001.

[87] *Sin. Syr.* 16 contains Aristides' *Apology* together with *PU*, *PE*, *PI* and *LC*; BL *Add.* 14658 contains a number of non-Christian works (including Sergius' translation of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De Mundo*) together with *ID*. See ch. 3.2-4.

[88] See ch. 2.2.6.

[89] The editing affected also the textual form of the pieces, as will be shown in ch. 4.

obstacles. On the basis of their analyses of *LC* and of *TA* respectively, Macleod and Conterno arrived to the same conclusions.[90]

A look into Sergius of Resh'aina's Syriac translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *De mundo*, which is preserved in a sole seventh-century manuscript that contains also the edited and Christianised *Ad Demonicum*, provides decisive evidence.[91] In the preface to his translation (our translations do not have prefaces) Sergius remarked:

> What I have found in the manuscript that was sent from thee, oh Beloved, I have taken care to preserve completely, neither adding anything to what has been written here by the philosopher, nor instead taking away from it, according to my ability.[92]

Although the passage falls within the topic of a declaration of modesty, a common theme in Syriac prefaces,[93] Sergius' reference to additions and omissions in the text is rather specific, and it might evoke the practice of editing the text through significant additions and omissions.[94]

When translating the *De mundo*, Sergius adhered to his resolution of faithfulness.[95] Not only did he compose a remarkably literal translation in contrast to the freer standard of only few decades earlier,[96] but he also strove to translate what he thought was Aristotle's exposition in its entirety, including references to pagan mythology and Greek literature. Despite being contemporary to our translations, Sergius did not omit the references to Greek mythology and his translation was not Christianised. The following passages from the *De mundo* show the way in which Sergius dealt with references to Greek culture and religion:

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[90] Nestle 1894, ix; Macleod 1970; Conterno 2007, 49 and 175. Nestle also suggested a sole translator for *PI* and *PU*, because of the similar pattern of intervention in dealing with references to Greek culture. In fact, this feature characterises the entire *corpus* under analysis; and ch. 2.2.5 argues that there is no compelling evidence for the hypothesis of a sole translator.

[91] BL *Add.* 14658; King 2011.

[92] Ed. De Lagarde 1858, 134.23-7: ܐܝܟܐ ܕܫܟܚܬ ܒܟ ܒܟܬܒܐ ܕܐܬܐ ܡܢ ܠܘܬ ܚܒܝܒ ܐܢܐ ܢܛܪܬ ܒܗ ܕܠܐ ܐܘܣܦܬ ܥܠ ܡܐ ܕܟܬܒ ܗܟܐ ܦܝܠܣܘܦܐ ܐܦ ܠܐ ܐܢܩܨ ܡܢܗ ܡܐ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܝܕܝ ܐܢܐ ܒܗ ܒܟ ܚܫܒ ܕܝ ܒܟ ܚܫܒ ܕܝ ܐܢܐ ܒܗ

i [...] πάντας γε μὴν ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν ἀπλανῶν σφαίρας περιειλῆφθαι. Συνεχῆ δὲ ἔχει ἀεὶ τὴν θέσιν ταύτῃ ὁ τοῦ Φαίνοντος ἅμα καὶ Κρόνου [25] καλούμενος κύκλος, ἐφεξῆς δὲ ὁ τοῦ Φαέθοντος καὶ Διὸς λεγόμενος, εἶθ' ὁ Πυρόεις, Ἡρακλέους τε καὶ Ἄρεος προσαγορευόμενος, ἑξῆς δὲ ὁ Στίλβων, ὅ ἱερὸν Ἑρμοῦ καλοῦσιν ἔνιοι, τινὲς δὲ Ἀπόλλωνος· μεθ' ὃν ὁ τοῦ Φωσφόρου, ὃν Ἀφροδίτης, οἱ δὲ Ἥρας προσαγορεύουσιν, εἶτα ὁ ἡλίου, καὶ τελευταῖος [30] ὁ τῆς σελήνης μέχρι γῆς ὁρίζεται. ὁ δὲ αἰθὴρ τά τε θεῖα ἐμπεριέχει σώματα καὶ τὴν τῆς κινήσεως τάξιν.

[...] all (the planets) are encompassed by the sphere of the fixed stars. The [25] circle called '**of Phaenon**' and also '**of Cronus**' has always the position contiguous to this (sphere), then the (circle) said (to be) '**of Phaethon**' and '**of Zeus**,' then the Fiery One [*i.e*. Mars], which is called '**of Heracles**' and '**of Ares**,' then the Glittering One, which some call '**the Holy one of Hermes**,' others '**of Apollo**.' After this (there is) the (circle) of the Light-Bearer, which (some) call '**of Aphrodite**,' others '**of Hera**;' then the one of the Sun, and the last (circle) of the moon is bounded by the earth. [30] The ether, therefore, encloses the **divine bodies** and the pattern of the motion.[97]

Everything, therefore, is enclosed within the sphere of the fixed stars. Contiguous to this sphere (of the fixed stars) in the same position is the circle which is called '**of Phaenon**' and, also, '**of Kewon**;' after this, is set the one which is called '**of Phaethon**' and '**of Bel**.' Then (comes) the Red One which is named '**of Heracles**' [137.20] and '**of Ares**'; after this, (comes) the flashing one, which some name '**of the holy Hermes**' [98] and others '**of Apollo**'; after this, there is the one of the Star-Bearer, which some call '**of Belti**' (and) others '**of Hera**.' Above the one **of Hermes** there is the circle of the Sun, and the last of all, below, is the one of the moon, (and) throughout, from above until (the moon), comes [137.25] ether, and it is contained there, for (the ether) encloses within itself the **divine bodies** and the pattern of their motions.

ii Διὸ καὶ ἐν τοῖς Ὀρφικοῖς οὐ κακῶς λέγεται «Ζεὺς πρῶτος γένετο, Ζεὺς ὕστατος ἀρχικέραυνος· Ζεὺς καφαλή, Ζεὺς μέσσα, Διὸς δ'ἐκ πάντα τέτυκται [...]»

For this reason it is rightly written in the **Orphic books**: "**Zeus** was born first, **Zeus** (is) the last, the lord of the thunder; **Zeus** is the head, **Zeus** is the middle and all comes from **Zeus** [...]"[99]

Therefore, **Theorphus** was right to say: "**Zeus** is the first, **Zeus** is in the end and he (is) the lighter of lightning; **Zeus** is the end and the middle, and all is from him […]."[100]

iii [...] ὕπατός τε διὰ τοῦτο ὠνόμασται, κατὰ τὸν ποιητὴν [Ὅμηρον] «ἀκροτάτῃ κορυφῇ» τοῦ σύμπαντος ἐγκαθιδρυμένος οὐρανοῦ·

[...] for this reason he has been called Supreme, (as), according to **the poet [Homer]**, "on the highest crest" [*Il.* i 499] of the entire heaven he

[…] and therefore he has been called 'he who sees everything,' as **the poet Homer** said,

[97] Ps.-Aristoteles, *De Cosmo* 392a 23-31.
[98] One wonders whether the sequence may represent a different reading of the Greek.
[99] Ps.-Aristoteles, *De Cosmo* 401a 27-29.
[100] De Lagarde 1858, 157, 15-18.

	sits.[101]	because he dwells on the highest summit of the heaven.[102]
iv	[...] καθάπερ οἱ ἀνόητοί ποτε ἐπενόουν Ἀλῳάδαι.	[…] ܐܝܟ ܕܒܥܘ ܠܡܣܩ ܥܠ ܡܪܘܡ ܫܡܝܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܠܘܐܕܐ ܣܟܠܢ̈ܝܐ.
	[to leave the Earth and to explore that region of the sky] as once the **senseless Aloadae** attempted.[103]	[…] as once the **senseless Aloadae** conceived of doing.[104]
v	Τὸ γὰρ Καμβύσου Ξέρξου τε καὶ Δαρείου πρόσχημα [...]	[…] ܠܐ ܥܠ ܡܠܟܐ ܪܒܐ ܩܘܪܘܫ ܘܕܪܝܘܫ ܕܐܬܣܟܡܘ ܠܗܘܢ […]
	The pomp of **Cambyses, Xerxes and Darius** [...][105]	[…] about the great king **Cambyses, Cyrus and Darius** who decked themselves […][106]

The *De Mundo* (first or second centuries AD) is a treatise misattributed to Aristotle that takes the form of a letter sent by Aristotle to Alexander, and it describes the structure of the universe and the functioning of meteorological phenomena.[107] Sergius' translation is faithful to the original, and it strives to render the Greek text without additions or omissions. The structure of the sentences is usually respected and the proper names are duly translated.

The passages reported above contain references to Greek mythology and literature. Passage *i* is derived from a description of the Solar System, and it includes a list of celestial bodies named after pagan divinities. The Greek names of pagan deities are reported in translation, and they are at times replaced by Semitic divinities. Other early Syriac translations from Greek occasionally render Greek deities with their Semitic equivalents.[108] Passage *ii* contains a quotation from the *Orphic Hymns*, where "Zeus" has been simply transliterated. Passage *iii* reports the name of Homer as the Greek original does (although modern editors consider it a later interpolation on the Greek text). Passage *iv* contains a reference to Greek mythology that is not strictly required by the argumentation but is nonetheless translated.

[101] Ps.-Aristoteles, *De Cosmo* 397b 25-27.
[102] De Lagarde 1858, 150, 3-5.
[103] Ps.-Aristoteles, *De Cosmo* 391a 10.
[104] De Lagarde 1858, 135, 8.
[105] Ps.-Aristoteles, *De Cosmo* 398a 11-12.
[106] De Lagarde 1858, 150, 23-24. For different hypotheses about the replacement of Xerxes with Cyrus see Conterno 2007, 175.
[107] Forster 1955, 337-341.
[108] The *Apology* by Aristides and the *Oratio ad Graecos* attributed to Justin (Taylor 2004).

Passage *v* includes the names of three Persian kings that are instead replaced by generic formulas in the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. Overall, the translations of our *corpus* are considerably less faithful to the originals in dealing with references to Greek culture than Sergius' *De mundo*. In addition, the Syriac transmission of the *De mundo* does not attest any Christianising editing.

To conclude, the hypothesis of a later editing in Syriac is problematic, and it lacks any positive evidence since the manuscript tradition is uniform in transmitting the edited texts of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistus. A later process of Christianising editing is not attested in other early Syriac translations of Greek containing references to Greek mythology either. The *Apology* by Aristides, the *Oratio ad Graecos* attributed to Justin, the ps.-Aristotelian *De cosmo* and the ps-Nonnan *Mythological scholia* reveal an overall intact textual transmission. The simpler and more realistic scenario, then, is that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, ps.-Isocrates, and Themistius were edited at the time of translation, and it is thus possible to read in the changes the purposes and the uses that the translators expected for their works.[109]

2.2.5 Chronology

Different elements concur in supporting the view that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius were composed during the fifth or early the sixth century, at least one century earlier than the time when the surviving manuscripts were written. The chronology of the texts can be assessed through the analysis of two kinds of internal evidence. First, there exists a number of linguistic features that characterise the early stages of the development of Syriac language. In particular, the use of specific adverbial constructions and

[109] Another conceivable scenario is that the editing (or some of the editing) took place in Greek, before the translation, but, if so, the Christianised versions of the Greek texts are lost without leaving any trace. Ch. 4.1.3 will analyse some changes of a stylistic nature that were, beyond doubt, carried out in view of a Syriac readership.

the incidence of loanwords from Greek have a chronological significance that can contribute to the establishment of the date of composition of anonymous texts. Secondly, translations from Greek provide additional and complementary evidence for chronology. As Sebastian Brock has shown, the Syriac translation technique developed over the centuries towards a greater degree of faithfulness to the originals, and the degree of faithfulness to the original can act as another indicator of chronology.

Relying on a systematic analysis of the linguistic features of the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, Anton Baumstark argued for the late fifth century as their chronology. Among the features typical of an early stage in the development of the Syriac language, he noticed that the texts are characterised by the presence of ancient verbal formations that disappeared in later centuries. Also, they attest few Syriac linguistic innovations such as adjectives ending in ܐܝܐ- [*-āyā*] and abstract nouns ending in ܐܘܬܐ- [*-ūṯā*]. The presence of particular syntactic features characteristic of the early stages of the language are also indicative of an early chronology. Baumstark concluded that the translations were composed in a period consistent with the life of Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536).[110]

In recent years, scholars have identified more precise chronological indicators. The presence and the frequency of loanwords from Greek is another useful signal of the chronology of a text. The use of loanwords from Greek increased steadily over the centuries, and the sixth and seventh centuries corresponded to the transmission and diffusion of a considerable number of Greek loanwords in Syriac.[111] Loanwords from Greek are rare in our translations, and those found in the texts are already attested from the earliest stages of the Syriac language, such as ܝܘܢܝܐ [*yawnōyō*] "Greek," ܬܟܣܐ [*ṭaksō*] "order," and ܓܢܣܐ [*gensō*] "family." Moreover, as Maria Conterno has shown, a number of Greek words that would later enter common use in

[110] Baumstark 1894, 413-422.
[111] Brock 1990. A systematic study of the earliest attestations and diffusion of loanwords from Greek is currently being carried out by Aaron Butts based at Yale.

Syriac, such as παρρησία, ἀνάγκη, ὄχλος and ἄξιος, are instead translated in the text of *TA*.[112] The scarcity of loanwords from Greek in the translations strengthens the hypothesis of a chronology earlier than the sixth century for the Syriac Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.

Sebastian Brock showed that, among the linguistic innovations that the Syriac language developed over the centuries, particular adverbial formations can be a particularly helpful tool in dating anonymous texts. The Syriac language constantly developed new adverbial constructs through the application of existing suffixes to derivate verbal stems. The attestations of innovative adverbial formations often have chronologic significance, and they can thus be indicative of the date of composition of the texts.[113] As far as our texts are concerned, there are no instances of adverbial formations in ܐܢܝܬܐ [*-tānā'īt*], which became popular in the sixth century, and in ܐܢܝܬ [*-ānā'īt*] affixed on nouns with feminine ending, which was an innovation of the sixth century. Instead, our translations attest adverbial formations already productive in the fourth and fifth centuries, such as the ones based on *pa''el* participles, as attested in ܡܫܦܥܝܬ [*mšīpō'īt*] "lightly,"[114] ܡܦܪܫܝܬ [*mparršō'īt*] "separately,"[115] ܡܬܟܣܝܬ [*mṭakksō'īt*] "in good order,"[116] ܡܫܠܛܝܬ [*mšallṭō'īt*] "despotically;"[117] as well as the adverbial formations based on the participles of quadrilitteral stems,[118] as attested in ܡܥܪܩܠܝܬ [*m'arqlō'īt*] "confusedly,"[119] and ܡܗܝܡܢܘܬ [*mhaymnō'īt*] "faithfully."[120]

As opposed to texts that were originally composed in Syriac, translations from Greek contain additional evidence for their chronology. Brock's groundbreaking research on Syriac translation technique has shown that common translators' practice developed according to an identifiable pattern over the centuries. Brock showed that fourth- and fifth-century translators

[112] Conterno 2007, 142.
[113] Brock 1990.
[114] *TA* 56.8.
[115] *TV* 31.20.
[116] *TV* 41.14.
[117] *LC* 6.6.
[118] Brock 1990, 325 n. 10.
[119] *LC* 9.21.
[120] *PU* 5.25.

produced much freer translations than those living in the sixth century, following a tendency that developed into producing extremely literal translation in the seventh century. The shift was gradual, and one has to allow discontinuities in the model. Brock's research, however, is based on an extensive *corpus* of translations, and a steady and consistent increase in the interest in a faithful rendering of the textual format of the Greek original is well attested. The phenomenon can be usefully quantified by assessing the size of the unit of translation, and it can contribute to the establishment of the chronology of a text.[121]

Fourth- and fifth-century translators translated Greek into Syriac advancing paragraph by paragraph. As a result, the end of a paragraph or of a section of text of a similar extension in Greek would also correspond with the end of the paragraph or the section in Syriac. In later translations, and increasingly so over the sixth century, the unit of translation became the sentence; and it is often possible to find precise correspondence between the end of sentences in Greek and the end of sentences in Syriac. Following a progression towards greater fidelity to the original text, in the seventh century the unit of translation was further reduced, and translations attest an almost one-to-one correspondence between Greek and Syriac words. The translations under analysis belong to the first stage, and, according to Brock, the phenomenon suggests that a likely chronology is the fifth century.[122]

It has been recently argued that the last decades of the fifth century and the first decades of the sixth represented a crucial phase in such a development in translation technique. The time frame coincides with the life of Philoxenus bishop of Mabbug (d. 523). Philoxenus expressed criticism for the inaccurate Syriac translations of the Bible and of patristic works, as they would provide ground for theological misunderstandings. Accordingly he commissioned from Polycarp a revision of the Peshitta New Testament, which was concluded in 508. On the basis of the Syriac translations of the writings of Cyril of Alexandria and of other Greek

[121] Brock 1980.
[122] Brock 2003, 16; Wood 2012, 185-86.

patristic works, Daniel King has argued that Philoxenus' polemics and his revised Biblical version influenced contemporary translators from Greek into Syriac.[123] Although the Syriac translations of Greek secular literature had no theological relevance, it is nonetheless conceivable that an important step in the development of a more literal translation technique of the Bible and of patristic texts would have also affected the translators of other legal, medical, philosophical and in general secular works too. The translations of Plutarch, Ps.-Isocrates, and Themistius do not comply with the standard of faithfulness expected by translations from the sixth century onwards, and they are thus likely to belong to an earlier or contemporary period.

A more precise and more definitive tool for dating anonymous translations could be a searchable database of Syriac texts that individuates particular translation couplets in contemporary translations as well as original texts. Instances of specific translation couplets, loanwords, and linguistic features would help place the translations on the chronological ground with more precision. Without such an instrument available at the moment, it is possible to conclude that both stylistic features and translation technique suggest that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius were composed in about the fifth century, and it is unlikely that they were composed later than the early sixth century. A chronology as early as the fourth century, however, is also a viable hypothesis on linguistic grounds. Also, as it will be shown, the translations present a degree of variety in their translation techniques and in their faithfulness to the originals, thus suggesting slightly different chronology.

2.2.6 Authorship

The Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, Pseudo-Isocrates, and Themistius show a

[123] King 2008, 358-360 and 386-387.

degree of variety in their translation technique; and such a variance is particularly evident in the different degrees of faithfulness to the originals. The translations of Plutarch are generally freer than Lucian's *De calumnia*, while Themistius' *Περὶ φιλίας* and Pseudo-Isocrates' *Ad Demonicum* qualify for a middle position between Plutarch and Lucian. The unit of translation is a long section of text for *PI*, which at times combines different paragraphs together, the shorter paragraph for *PU*, while it is the sentence for *LC*. It appears unlikely, then, that a single author carried out all the translations, for such a hypothesis should imply that the translator changed his translation technique and adherence to the original text from a piece to another. The Syriac translations of Greek secular literature are likely to have been composed by different translators, perhaps over some decades. In particular, the more faithful *LC* might have responded to the changes in translation practice that were contemporary to the activity of Philoxenus of Mabbug, while *PI* and *PU* are most likely to predate this time and the diffusion of more faithful translation practice.

The hypothesis of multiple authorship finds some ground in the radically different renderings of the same passage that is attested in two texts, *PI* and *PU*. Conversely, Nestle had proposed that the comparison between the two passages could support the hypothesis of a sole translator for the two pieces.[124] Indeed, an addition (in **bold**) in the translation of *PI* does not seem to find any justification in the Greek text, but, according to Nestle, would rather derive from the translator's familiarity with the same quotation reported in a passage from the Syriac *PU*:

Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira* 456d

Διὸ κουφοτάτου πράγματος, ὥς φησιν ὁ Πλάτων, λόγου βαρυτάτην ζημίαν τίνουσιν, ἐχθροὶ καὶ κακολόγοι καὶ κακοήθεις δοκοῦντες εἶναι.

Therefore, as Plato says, for a word –the lightest thing– they pay the heaviest

ܗܝܟܢܐ ܐܡܪ ܐܦ ܦܠܛܘܢ ܕܥܠ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܚܫܝܒܐ ܠܡܗܘܐ ܩܠܝܠܐ ܡܫܠܡ ܥܘܠܒܢܐ ܕܡܬܚܫܒ ܠܡܗܘܐ ܩܠܝܠ ܕܒܥܠ ܣܢܝܐ ܘܡܪܝ ܒܝܫ ܗܘ ܕܡܬܬܚܫܒ ܠܡܗܘܐ ܒܥܠ ܣܢܝܐ ܘܡܪܝ ܒܝܫ ܗܘ

Rightly Plato said: "on account of the word, which is considered to be a light thing, a punishment that outweighs (it) the enemies

[124] Nestle 1894, ix-x; both the passages have their origin in Pl., *Lg.* 717c-d.

punishment, for they are considered hostile, slanderous and malicious.[125]

receive **from God and from men**."

Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* 90c-d

Λόγου δέ, κουφοτάτου πράγματος, βαρυτάτη ζημία, κατὰ τὸν θεῖον Πλάτωνα, καὶ παρὰ θεῶν ἔπεται καὶ παρ'ἀνθρώπων.

According to the divine Plato, the heaviest punishment is ordained for the word, the lightest thing, **from both gods and men**.[126]

ܗܟܝܕ ܐܡܪ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܒܗ ܕܐܡܪ ܕܩܠ ܡܠܬܐ ܟܕ ܡܬ ܥܠܝܗ ܥܘܢܫܐ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܘܡܢ ܒܢܝ ܐܢܫ.

For Plato said: "for a light word men are repaid with harm **by God and by men**."

In all likelihood, the words παρὰ θεῶν ἔπεται καὶ παρ'ἀνθρώπων "from God and from men," which do not have any equivalent in Plato, originated from Plutarch's pen in the composition of *PU*. On account of his knowledge of the Syriac *PU*, the translator of *PI*, when coming across the same quotation from Plato, added these words to the translation - if one follows Nestle's argument.

Nestle's reconstruction is certainly possible, but, in fact, it does not solve the problem of translatorship in a definitive way. While the addition of "from gods and from men" in *PI* could have equally occurred in the Greek manuscript that was used for the Syriac translation - and one can propose alternative explanations too-, the very same passage shows a considerable degree of variance in rendering the same text. The rendering of ζημία "punishment" once with ܥܘܢܫܐ "punishment" and once with ܗܟܝܕ "harm," the rendering of βαρυτάτη "the heaviest" with ܕܡܬ "that outweighs (it)" in *PI* despite its omission in *PU*, and the rendering of κουφοτάτου πράγματος "the lightest thing" with radically different constructions (ܕܡܬ ܠܡܠܬܐ ܕܩܠ ܗܝ ܕܚܫܝܒ "which is considered to be a light thing" and ܕܩܠ "light") underline remarkably different translation styles. Different translation techniques may easily result from different translators, and, as his argument follows, Nestle himself went as far as to remark that "thus we might suppose two different translators." The translations are characterised by

[125] *PI* 456d : Syr 189.23-25.
[126] *PU* 90c-d : Syr 12.24-13.1.

different translation techniques beyond the level of faithfulness to the original, and the present passages do not support a sole authorship for *PI* and *PU*. The identification of how many translators the present *corpus* reveals should rely on a detailed textual analysis that goes beyond the scope of the present work.

The textual analysis of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius carried out so far has shown that the translations were composed in about the fifth century, perhaps earlier but not later than the very first decades of the sixth century. There is no positive evidence suggesting a sole author for the works, which appear instead to have been composed by different translators, possibly over some decades. The translations have been edited and Christianised, and in all likelihood such changes were carried out as part of the translation process. It is now necessary to place the *corpus* of Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius within the literary and historical background. In particular, the manuscript tradition, which points to a West Syrian environment, and chronology, no later than the early sixth century, show that the translations were carried out in regions under Roman rule.[127]

2.3 Early Syriac literature and Greek literary traditions

2.3.1 Greek influence on early Syriac literature

The Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius are not the only link between Greek literature and Syriac-speaking communities, and they should be understood within the broader context of the endurance of Greek cultural traditions in Syriac. The striking mythological iconography of mosaics from Osrhoene show that Syriac speakers were exposed

[127] See ch. 3.2.5, and 3.4.2.

to Hellenistic traditions at least from the first centuries AD.[128] Early Syriac literature, however, shows that the artistic expression of the Hellenising interests by the Abgaric court in Edessa and by the Edessene elites must have been facilitated by the Roman control of Osrhoene from the early decades of the third century. Greek traditions are represented by works such as the *Book of the Laws of Countries* (early third century), the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion* (possibly third or fourth century), and wisdom literature often in the form of collection of sayings.[129]

The *Book of the Laws of Countries* is perhaps the most brilliant example of Hellenistic influence on early Syriac literature. Composed in the dialogue form, the work features the philosopher Bardaisan conversing with his disciples on issues of fate, astrology and religion.[130] As the dialogue reveals, Bardaisan's philosophic doctrine was characterised by a syncretism of gnosticism, Zurvanite theology, the cult of the Dea Syra, as well as Jewish Christianity and Christian apologetic literature.[131] Han Drijvers found conspicuous analogies between the anthropology and eschatology expressed in the *Book of the Laws of Countries* and the doctrines of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a collection of wisdom literature that originated in Hellenised Egypt.[132] Also, Bardaisan's cosmology relies on the atomic theory initially elaborated by Democritus of Abdera, and it accepts that the universe is composed of atoms characterised by different colours, smells, tastes, forms, and sound.[133] Bardaisan's doctrine that the original state of confusion that characterises the atoms constituting the universe implies the necessity of a purification appears to follow a view ultimately derived from Plato's *Timaeus*.[134] It has been argued that the doctrine of the contemporary Greek Neoplatonic philosopher Numenius of Apamea has important points in common with that of Bardaisan.[135]

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[128] Balty 2000.
[129] See also the *Apology of Pseudo-Melito*; Lightfoot 2007.
[130] Brock 1997, 15; Brock 2004, 162-163.
[131] Drijvers 1970, 190.
[132] Drijvers 1970, 206-207.
[133] Indeed, the philosopher from Abdera became particularly popular in the Hellenistic period, when a number of apocryphal works on magical qualities of plants and stones were attributed to him. Drijvers 1970, 198-99.
[134] Drijvers 1970, 202.
[135] Drijvers 1970, 207-208; Segal 1970, 35-38.

Whereas the *Book of the Laws of Countries* reveals the endurance of Greek philosophical traditions, the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion* to his son Serapion is aligned on the Greek tradition of literate, and possibly rhetorical, education.[136] The short piece, which occupies six pages in Cureton's edition, has received renewed scholarly interest, although scholars have not agreed on a Greek or Syriac origin of the text.[137] The curious text has the structure of a letter composed by an unidentified philosopher Mara bar Serapion in order to instruct his young son, "a child of few years, without anybody to guide you," for Mara bar Serapion is at the moment imprisoned far from his hometown. The occasion and the purpose of the *Letter* is not the only feature the piece in common with the *Ad Demonicum*, which purports to be the instruction sent by the wise Isocrates to the young orphan Demonicus. Indeed, like the *Ad Demonicum*, the *Letter* is mostly made up by moral recommendations of an elementary nature, which are not rarely presented in sentential formats. Its author boasts of his experience of the world (including the "instruction of the Greeks"), which he imparts to his young addressee.

Catherine Chin has proposed a penetrating reading of the *Letter* that ultimately brings it closer to the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. A first curious feature that Chin noticed is that the pieces of advice proposed in the *Letter* do not appear to respond to an established philosophical tradition. The philosophical advice by Mara bar Serapion is tainted by philosophical indifference, as represented by sentences such as "those who busy themselves with philosophy are looking to escape from the distress of the world,"[138] "to wise men every land is equal,"[139] and "a man is never loosed from his wisdom as one is from his

[136] Brock 2004, 168-169.
[137] Ed. Cureton 1855 and Rensberger 2013; Brock 1997, 18; McVey 1990. Much of the scholarly interest in the piece, however, had been long limited to the mention of a "wise king [*lacuna*] by Jews", which some scholars have taken as an early reference to Jesus. The *Letter* is now approached as a historical and theological witness of its time (Merz 2012).
[138] Cureton 1855, 43.19-20.
[139] Cureton 1855, 44.23.

possessions."[140] Another suspicious element of the *Letter* is that the description of the Roman conquest of Samosata, which is the only historical reference in the text, does not seem to fit into the known historical context. On account of these and analogous features of the piece, Chin has argued that the author was not describing actual events at first hand as he claimed, but he rather employed the material to produce a text with another purpose.[141]

Chin maintained that the original purpose of the work was in fact rhetorical. The text of the *Letter* provides many instances of rhetorical devices such as accumulations of direct questions, climaxes, and direct references to the addressee, and, crucially, its structure follows that of a *chreia form*, a brief narrative about a known historical figure that ends in a witty gesture.[142] The *chreia* was a common school exercise within late Roman rhetorical instruction, and, for instance, Theon listed several types of *chreiai* in his *Progymnasmata*, and Libanius likewise employed them in his teaching.[143] To develop familiarity with the composition of *chreiai* was one of the goals of rhetorical instruction, and such a skill was necessary in the composition of speeches as well as letters, an asset for individuals aspiring to a career in the civil service.[144]

If one follows Chin, then, Mara bar Serapion may well have been a character conceived for the occasion, and the *Letter* could have been originally designed to serve as a prosopopoietic exercise. Its real author, perhaps a student of rhetoric or a sophist, took the decision to depict his subject as a wise philosopher, whose didactic concerns appear in the instructional posture of the narrating voice and in the edifying contents of the text. As a result, the composition ended up as a piece with instructional contents in the form of a rhetorically-polished discourse written by an (unknown) philosopher. In addition, the very contents of the

[140] Cureton 1855, 45.25-26.
[141] The three hypotheses are the Roman takeover of the kingdom of Commagene in the late first century, the war between Rome and Parthia in the mid-second century and the conflict between Valerian and Shapur I in the mid-third century. Chin 2006, 16.
[142] Chin 2006.
[143] Theon, *Progymnasmata* 3.52-54; Libanius, *ep.* 777.6; Cribiore 2001, 216-17.
[144] Chin 2006, § 5; Kennedy 1983, 70-73.

Letter explicitly recall topics of the Greek historical and literary tradition, as shown by references to figures such as Darius, Polycrates, Achilles, Priam, Archimedes, Socrates, Pythagoras, and Palamedes, though not always apropos.[145]

It might be the case, I suggest, that we owe the survival of the *Letter* to a reader who was impressed by its instructional features. The fact that the text survives in a sole manuscript within a collection of instructional literature, which includes the very *Ad Demonicum* and collections of sayings with moral contents, prompts the hypothesis that the Syriac readers (and, if ever this might be the case, the Syriac translator or adaptor too) may have found in the instructional and edifying contents of the *Letter* the main reason of interest.[146] In the sequence of the manuscript, which will be addressed in more detail in ch. 3.4.2, the *Letter* follows the *Ad Demonicum*, the *Hypomnemata of Ambrose* (*i.e* an adaptation of Ps.-Justin *Oratio ad Graecos*), the *Sayings of Menander*, the *Short Articles on Terms of Logic*, the *Sentences of Pythagoras*, the *Apology by Melito*, and it preceeds the *Sayings of Plato*, the *Advice of Plato to his disciple*, *Plato's definitions of faith, God, love and righteousness*, and the *Sayings of Theano*.

In fact, the arrangement in gnomic and instructional formats characterises a considerable portion of early Syriac literature. It is a particularly intriguing aspect that many of such instructional texts in Syriac carry the visible mark of Greek literary traditions. Syriac collections of sayings are, perhaps surprisingly, often attributed to philosophers or eminent personalities belonging to the Greek world. At least thirteen Syriac manuscripts contain collections of sentences grouped under titles such as *Advice of Theano*, *Sayings of Menander*, *Sayings of Pythagoras*, *Sayings of the Philosophers on the Soul*, *Definitions of Plato*, *Advice of Plato to his Disciple* and *Instructions of Anton, Plato's Physician*.[147] The genre was

[145] Chin 2006.
[146] The conjecture of a Greek original of the letter may perhaps help reconcile the different hypotheses about chronology that have been proposed. Among them, Millar 1993, 460, proposed the late first century, and McVey 1990, 267-71, the fourth.
[147] Zeeger-Vander Vorst 1978; Possekel 1998; Brock 2005; Brock 2012; Wilson 2012, 10-11.

widespread in Greek,[148] as is exemplified by the *florilegium* composed by Stobaeus in the fifth century, but it became particularly productive in Syriac too.

The Syriac collections of sayings share among themselves a number of sayings that are presented largely in the same order, thus providing indirect evidence for the existence of a lost prototype collection. The search for a Greek original behind the reconstructed proto-collection, however, has so far been unsuccessful, as the Syriac collections do not share any passage with the works by Stobaeus, Maximus the Confessor or any known late antique Greek *florilegia*.[149] It appears, then, that much gnomic literature developed independently in Syriac, but it nonetheless presented the hallmark of Greek literary traditions. The Syriac collections are mostly pseudo-epigraphic, attributing general precepts to various Greek personalities, usually philosophers, solely on account of their authority and prestige.[150] Given the limited amount of research carried out in the field, however, such conclusions can only be provisional.

While most collections are under-researched and often await publication, the *Sayings of Menander* have received some scholarly attention and can thus offer a better insight into this literary genre.[151] The sayings have moral content, and they are arranged around themes such as adultery and fornication, eating and drinking, and treatment of servants. A resemblance between the Syriac *Sayings of Menander* and the Sirach has prompted the hypothesis of a Jewish origin for the Syriac *Menander*; yet the work's frequent references to "God" and twice to "gods" (263-264) point to an heterogeneous origin, and scholars could not agree on a Christian, Jewish, or pagan background for the text.[152] It seems likely, however, that the collection was composed in Syriac drawing on Greek, Jewish as well as Christian traditions at

[148] As well as in Mishnaic literature, such as the *Pirqe avot* "Sayings of the Fathers".
[149] Zeeger-Vander Vorst 1978, 174; Jaekel 1964. The only saying belonging to the proto-collection which is attested in Greek is Democritus' *Fr.* 304, in *Sin. Syr.* 16, text 31; and, in fact, the fragment attributed to Democritus is ὁ αὐτὸς εἶπεν· ἓν μόνον οἶδα, ὅτι οὐκ οἶδα. But see Possekel 1998.
[150] Brock 1983 deals with a Syriac collection of prophecies attributed to pagan philosophers aimed at converting the pagans from Harran.
[151] Ed. Land 1862; English trans. Monaco 2012 and Baarda 1985, 583-606; Baarda 1985, 589-590.
[152] Baarda 1985, 586.

the same time. Although the chronology of the work is debated, Baumstark's hypothesis of the first centuries AD on linguistic grounds,[153] matches the c. fourth century proposed by Baarda on account of the work's contents.[154] Rather disappointingly for classically oriented scholars, and like other Syriac collections, the Syriac *Sayings of Menander* is pseudo-epigraphic, and it contains only a limited number of parallels with the Greek *Sayings of Menander*, and, moreover, often in paraphrase.[155]

To sum up, the *Book of the Laws of Countries*, the *Letter of Mara bar Serapion* and gnomic pseudo-epigraphic collections, such as the *Sayings of Menander*, are pieces of early Syriac literature that attest to the impact and to the prestige of Greek literary traditions among Syriac literates. It is striking feature that a considerable part of such texts is characterised by instructional formats and edifying contents. Within this instructional tradition, it is argued, the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, Themistius should find their original setting. But before narrowing down to the contents of the texts in the next chapter, it is necessary to place the Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius within the other secular translations from Greek into Syriac.

2.3.2 Translations of Greek secular texts

The transmission of pieces of Greek literature into Syriac adds another facet to the impact of Greek literary traditions among Syriac literates. From as early as the second or third centuries AD, literary activity in Syriac included the composition of translations. If anything, the translation activity from Greek was a major feature of early Syriac literary production, as is

[153] Baumstark 1922, 487.
[154] Baarda 1985, 584-585. A possible reference to a law forbidding the murder of slaves (l. 159) could provide a *terminus post quem* of c. 150 and the reference to schools for gladiators could provide a *terminus ante quem* of c. 400.
[155] Baarda 1985, 588; Brock 2012. This may not be the case of the *Sayings of Pythagoras*, see Wilson 2012, 10-11.

shown by the great number of translations, in particular the Bible and patristic literature. The earliest dated Syriac manuscript, which was written in 411 in Edessa, is itself a collection of translations from Greek, and it contains Titus of Bostra's *Against the Manichaeans*, the *Clementine Recognitiones*, and the *Theophania* and the *Palestinian Martyrs* by Eusebius of Caesarea.[156] At the same time, one should not forget that the exchange between Greek and Syriac went also in the opposite direction, as is exemplified by the transmission of works by Bardaisan, Ephrem, and Isaac of Niniveh into Greek. Syriac hymnology, hagiography and, later, apocalyptical literature had an impact on Greek literature.

Some early texts, however, stand as a reminder that the boundary between original composition and translation was not as clear-cut as one may think. The *Odes of Solomon*, the *Acts of Thomas* and the *Life of Alexis* circulated in both Greek and Syriac, and, since neither version contain obvious mistranslations, the identification of their original language is an unsettled issue. While their Greek appears to have been influenced by the Syriac, the Syriac appears to have been similarly influenced by Greek. The phenomenon is exemplified by the transposition of linguistic category, for the texts contain instances of changes of grammatical category, most commonly the genre, under the influence of the other language.[157] Also, names of Greek gods such as Zeus and Aphrodite are at times replaced by their Semitic equivalents Mare Allahe and Belti. It has been argued that such works were products of Greco-Syriac bilingualism, in which the two languages influenced each other, and their authors evidenced high levels of literacy in both.[158]

Not unlike original literature, Syriac translations of secular literature attest to the impact of the Greek tradition of literate education. The translations of Plutarch, Lucian, Themistius, and the *Ad Demonicum*, are only some of the surviving translations that reveal the endurance

[156] BL *Add.* 12150; Brock 1997a, 718.
[157] For instance, a masculine Syriac noun can be treated as feminine under the influence of its Greek counterpart, which is, instead, feminine. At the same time, constructions typical of Greek are often adopted in Syriac, even when this results in a sequence markedly different from the linguistic norm of Syriac, and vice versa.
[158] Taylor 2004, 1190-1191; Brock 1982.

of Greek rhetorical, philosophical, and scientific studies among Syriac scholars. Among similarly instructional and edifying material with a philosophical outlook are ps.-Plato's *De anima*, ps.-Aristotle's *On virtues and vices*, and, possibly more closely aligned to the philosophical tradition, a curious dialogue featuring Socrates whose Greek original has not been identified. These texts are in need of scholarly attention, and more work needs to be carried out in order to establish the possible similarities with the transmission of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.[159]

As Maria Conterno has shown, the translator of Themistius' *Περὶ φιλίας* may have been familiar with another collection of edifying texts, Aesop's *Fables*, either in the original Greek or in Syriac translation.[160] The translation of the *Laments of the philosophers at the tomb of Alexander* can also be included among the instructional and edifying works, along with the Christianised *Life of Secundus the silent philosopher*, who maintained his vow even under threat of death. The *Physiologus* -in fact a work of Christian origin- was another translation of a didactic text that used descriptions of animals and fantastic creatures to present a variety of moral anecdotes. Another Greek literary text is the *Alexander Romance*, including the *Letter of Alexander to Aristotle* and the *Letter of Alexander to Olympias*, which may have been translated from Middle Persian; and, at a later stage, the Maronite scholar Theophilus of Edessa (d. 785) is reported to have translated Homer, although only fragmentary citations of Homer are attested in Syriac.[161]

A different strand of secular translations consists of scientific and philosophical works that likewise reveal instructional aims but appear removed from the morally edifying purposes that characterise the texts analysed above. Unlike the Arabic translation movement that moved from medical and scientific treatises and only later it addressed philosophical texts, Syriac

[159] Brock is currently working on ps.-Aristotle's *On virtues and vices*, and for the dialogue *Erostrophus* see my forthcoming translation.
[160] Conterno 2007, 183-84 (*TA* 25a-b); Brock 2003.
[161] *Il.* i 225, 226; vi 325; xvi 745; *Od.* xviii 26 (ed. Merx 1889, 210-211); Wright 1894, 164 n. 3; Baumstark 1922, 341 n. 4; Brock 1973, 417; Strohmaier 1980.

translations of philosophical treatises appear together with the translations of scientific literature from the beginning of the sixth century, particularly by Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536) and, perhaps, Probus of Antioch, whose chronology is debated. Aristotelian logic and the tradition of philosophical *prolegomena* made their way into Syriac, as is attested by the translations of Aristotle's *Categories*, *Prior Analytics* and *De Interpretatione*, Porphyry's *Eisagoge* and by various Syriac commentaries on the works.[162] Sergius of Resh'aina translated the already mentioned ps.-Aristotelian *De mundo* and Alexander of Aphrodisias' *On Aristotelian cosmology*. Scientific treatises translated from about the sixth century include Theophrastus' *Meteorology*, Ptolemy's *Almagest*, the *Synagoge* of Vindanius Anatolius of Beirut and at least thirty works by Galen, as well as Dionysios Thrax's *Techne Grammatike*.[163]

The Syriac translations of Greek secular literature reveal the manifold impact of Greek cultural traditions on Syrian scholars, and they constitute an understudied collection of evidence for the functioning of literate education in late Antiquity. On the one hand it is possible to recognise a strand of translations that mostly propose moral advice, and, on the other hand, a strand of scientific and philosophical (mostly about Aristotelian logic) texts. The former strand, on which the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius hinge, has been labelled as "popular philosophy" in order to mark the non-Christian and non-theological nature of the text. Such a label, however, does not make justice to the variety of historical settings of interaction between Greek culture and Syriac authors that the translations represent.[164] Each text awaits to be put in its historical setting, and it will provide ample scope for further research.[165]

[162] Hugonnard-Roche 2004, 133-134; King 2008, 371; King 2013.
[163] For the possibility of a Syriac intermediary behind the Arabic translation of Polemon's *Physiognomy*, see Swain 2007, 3-4, and Zonta 1992. Among the translations one should mention also the *Syro-Roman Law Book* and Josephus' *Jewish War* 6, where the latter should be perhaps considered among biblical translations; see also Rigolio 2013b.
[164] Brock 2003.
[165] The afterlife of these works in Arabic is not addressed here (see *e.g.* Arzhanov 2013 on Plutarch in Mubaššir b. Fātiq, and Conterno 2014 on Plutarch and Themistius in Miskawayh).

2.4 Conclusion

Pieces of Greek secular literature by Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius survive in Syriac translations composed during the fifth or early sixth century by different translators. A comparison with the Greek originals shows that: (i) the Syriac texts have been Christianised through the omissions of all references to pagan religion; (ii) the anecdotes drawn from Greco-Roman culture have been selected mostly through the omission of mythological material; and (iii) proper names of most of the figures drawn from Greco-Roman literature and history, such as Gaius Gracchus, Socrates and Philip, have been rendered with formulas such as "a wise man," "a philosopher," and "a king." In all likelihood, the editing took place within the translation process, and it reveals the didactic concerns that guided the translators. The translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius should be understood within an established strand of early Syriac literature, both original and translation, that is characterised by instructional purposes, morally edifying contents, gnomic forms, and the hallmark of Greek literary traditions. The next chapter narrows down on the instructional purposes and morally edifying contents of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.

3. The link to Christian asceticism: contents and manuscripts

3.1 Epictetus' *Encheiridion* and Christian asceticism

3.1.1 *Paraphrasis Christiana*

3.1.2 *Vaticanus Graecus 2231*

3.1.3 [Nilus]

3.2 Syriac Plutarch and Lucian

3.2.1 Anger – Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira*

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3.2.5 Syriac manuscripts of Plutarch and Lucian

3.3 Syriac Themistius

3.3.1 Philosophic life – Themistius, *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*

3.3.2 Friendship – Themistius, *Περὶ φιλίας*

3.4 Syriac ps.-Isocrates

3.4.1 'Philosophic instruction' – Pseudo-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum*

3.4.2 Syriac manuscripts of the *Ad Demonicum*

3.5 Conclusion

The present chapter explores the link between the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius (with an additional section on the *Ad Demonicum*) and early Christian asceticism. Such a link is revealed by two sorts of evidence, internal to the texts and external to the texts. The former includes textual transformation and the contents of the pieces, while the latter includes the manuscript transmission and the quotations and uses of the texts by Christian ascetic authors.[166] Although the definition of Christian asceticism is not exempt from problems for the period under analysis, the present chapter argues that the translations should be understood as pieces of Christian ascetic literature, or, in other words, that their Syriac readers found them in accordance with their conception of Christian asceticism.

Deliberate textual transformation is perhaps the least conventional sort of evidence that the present analysis takes into account. Its significance, however, is paramount in understanding the aims guiding the translators of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. It will be useful, then, to relate the textual transformation of the translations to that of an analogous yet better studied set of texts, the *Encheiridion* by Epictetus and its Christian paraphrases. The *Encheiridion* shares with the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius the morally edifying contents, the instructional format often relying on anecdotes, and a non-Christian origin hinging on the tradition of moral philosophy. Also, like the Syriac translations, the three Christian paraphrases of the *Encheiridion* reveal a Christian ascetic reading of Epictetus' text, and the agency of the Christian adaptors of the *Encheiridion* strikes for its similarity to the angency of the Syriac translators. As it will be shown, their aims were similar in many respects, and not least in that, while they omitted most references to Greek literature and

[166] It is a fortunate circumstance that some of the manuscripts were written as early as one or two centuries after the translations, and they thus provide some information about the early diffusion of the translations. Most of the surviving Syriac manuscripts that were written earlier than the tenth century (now in the Vatican and British Libraries) derive from a sole collection. Between 927 and 932, while in Mesopotamia, Moses of Nisibis acquired about two hundred and fifty manuscripts for the Syrian Orthodox monastery of Deir es-Suryān in Egypt, where he was abbot and where the manuscripts have survived. Other findings of pre-tenth-century manuscripts are sporadic. A major exception is the monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai: two manuscripts from this location contain the translations under analysis. Brock 2004b.

culture, they did not change the substance of the moral advice that the piece proposed.

3.1 Epictetus' *Encheiridion* and Christian asceticism

It is thanks to Arrian that the teachings of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus (55-135 AD) found their way to us. As a memorial to his teacher, Arrian compiled the *Diatribes*, allegedly an almost stenographic account of Epictetus' lectures. While composing the *Encheiridion* (*Ench*), however, Arrian followed a different criterion. Here -Arrian claimed- he selected "the most vital and necessary elements of Epictetus' philosophy, those that would most strongly influence the souls" of the readers.[167] As a result, the *Encheiridion*, "handbook," is structured as a collection of moral precepts that show how a person may apply Stoic philosophy to everyday life.

In the opening sections of the *Encheiridion*, Epictetus' explained that a number of things in our lives are not under our control, but they are rather subject to nature. For this reason, affection for such perishable things would ultimately and inevitably result in hindrance and suffering. The text takes, then, the format of a collection of anecdotes showing how painful the attachment to worldly objects can actually be and arguing that things beyond our control should instead be given their own little value. In order to help others achieve such a condition, the author provides pieces of practical advice collected in the format of a handbook.[168]

The later *fortuna* of the *Encheiridion* is of relevance here. On the one hand, the work was known to pagan authors –the Neoplatonist Simplicius, for instance, devoted a full-scale commentary on it– as well as to Christian authors, such as Clement of Alexandria, Ambrose,

[167] Boter 1999, xiii n. 3.
[168] Boter 1999, xiii.

Basil of Caesarea, and John Chrysostom.[169] Moreover, the *Encheiridion* was at the basis of as many as three Christianised Greek paraphrases, all of which were carried out independently from the Greek text of Arrian, though possibly at different times: the *Paraphrasis Christiana*, the version contained in *Vaticanus graecus 2231*, and the version misattributed to Nilus of Ancyra. The Christian adaptors of the *Encheiridion* transformed the text of Epictetus, and their agency responded to concerns that appear similar to those guiding the translators of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, especially in the case of the paraphrase attributed to Nilus.

3.1.1 *Paraphrasis Christiana*

The finest among the three Christianised versions of the *Encheiridion* is the so-called *Paraphrasis Christiana* (*Par*), which survives in twenty-four manuscripts.[170] The Christianising interventions on the text affected different aspects of the Greek original. A number of passages problematic to a Christian audience have been omitted, such as the mythological references to Diogenes and Heraclitus, who "were deservedly called gods,"[171] and to Eteocles and Polyneices;[172] and chapter thirty-two on divination. Also, the plural "gods" is constantly replaced with "God", the name of Socrates is constantly changed, usually into "the apostle" or "the martyr", and, in *Ench* 53, "Zeus" and "fate" become "Saviour" and "Holy Spirit" respectively. On other occasions, the adaptor intervened positively in the text by adding elements of Christian doctrine. A note on patience in *Ench* 11 is turned into a brief commentary to LXX *Jb.* 1.21;[173] *Ench* 12.10-11 (*Par* 16) becomes a discussion of *Matt.* 7.3

[169] Boter 1999, 116; Spanneut 1962.
[170] Among them the earliest one dates back to c. 960.
[171] *Ench* 15.8.
[172] *Ench* 31.17-18.
[173] *Par* 14.

and, in the close, *Matt.* 10.28 sheds a Christian light on a quotation from Plato.[174]

Another set of interventions in the text provides a clearer idea of the adaptor's agenda. For instance, the word φιλόσοφος "philosopher" is replaced by ἀναχωρητής "anchoret,"[175] ἡσυχαστής "hermit"[176] and ἐν παντὶ τῶν τῷ θεῷ μόνῳ ἀνακειμένων "those in everything consecrated to God alone."[177] Indeed, as shown by Michel Spanneut, the *Paraphrasis* is recognizable as a work designed for an ascetic community. The excursus on the trip to the public baths was skilfully readjusted into going for lunch;[178] instead of praising his horse, the monk may incur the risk of praising his ἱμάτιον "cloth;"[179] fraternal charity is emphasized[180] as well as silence.[181]

To the objection that the philosopher is useless to his country, while Epictetus answered "your country will not have porticoes and baths by your effort: so what?"[182] the *Paraphrasis* answers by adding the following passage:

> they will not elect you a *presbeutes* nor will they chose you as a magistrate: so what? Indeed, you have not assigned yourself to this, nor have you been called upon this. For you are not a magistrate, nor an administrator of public affairs. If some, who are not magistrates, nonetheless rush to such things, what is the matter to you, **who desire to be consecrated to God and proceed to this (purpose)?** It is enough if each one meets his own duty.[183]

The addition shows that the *Paraphrasis Christiana* was addressed to a group of people who were consecrated to God or aspiring to become so. It is worth noticing that in the *Paraphrasis* the name of Epictetus disappeared, and the original title was replaced with "Counsels that

[174] *Ench* 53 : *Par* 71.
[175] *Ench* 22 : *Par* 29.1.
[176] *Ench* 46 : *Par* 60.1.
[177] *Ench* 23 : *Par* 30.2.
[178] *Ench* 4 : *Par* 6.2-5.
[179] *Ench* 6 : *Par* 9.
[180] *Ench* 25.5 : *Par* 32.10-12.
[181] *Ench* 33.2-3 : *Par* 39; *Ench* 46.2 : *Par* 61; and the addition *Par* 58.
[182] *Ench* 24.4.
[183] *Par* 31.13-16: "οὐ χειροτονήσουσί <σε> πρεσβύτην, οὐδὲ ἄρχοντα αἱρήσονται. καὶ τί τοῦτο; οὐδὲ γὰρ εἰς τοῦτο ἔταξας σεαυτόν, οὐδὲ τοῦτο ἐπηγγείλω. οὐδὲ γὰρ ἄρχων εἶ, οὐδὲ τῶν τὰ κοινὰ πρασσόντων. εἰ δέ τινες μὴ τούτων ὄντες εἰς αὐτὰ μᾶλλον ὠθοῦσι ἑαυτούς, τί πρὸς σέ, τὸν ἀνακεῖσθαι θεῷ θέλοντα καὶ εἰς τοῦτο ὄντα; ἱκανὸν γὰρ ἑκάστῳ, εἰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ τάξεως ἄξιος φανείη." Spanneut 1972, 51.

zealous men (σπουδαῖοι) wrote as a reminder, and entitled *Encheiridion*."[184]

3.1.2 *Vaticanus Graecus 2231*

A more superficial Christianising enterprise is the version surviving in the *Vaticanus graecus 2231* (*Vat*) alone.[185] The passages on Eteocles and Polyneices,[186] Apollo[187] and Homer[188] have been omitted; "gods" are constantly rendered in the singular form and other minor Christianising interventions are equally attested. Passages that may have sounded less consistent with a Christian ascetic reading of the text are nonetheless left in the text, such as the passage on the baths,[189] on love[190] and on public shows.[191] Although being more respectful of the original text than the adaptor of *Par*, however, the adaptor of *Vat* indulged in a number of monastic clues. His main concern was the rendering of proper names, all of which were replaced. For "Socrates" one finds first "Paul,"[192] then "John Chrysostom,"[193] then "Arsenius"[194] and "Antony."[195] The couple "Socrates and Zeno" becomes "Gregory and Basil"[196] and "Diogenes and Heraclitus" become "Anthony and Euthymius."[197] Also, "philosophers" become φιλόσοφοι μοναχοί "philosopher monks."[198] In short, while the references to the lifestyle emerging from *Vat* are certainly not those of a monastery, a monastic colouring anyway emerges from the selection of the characters. Arsenius, Anthony and

[184] Carlini 2004, 102.
[185] The manuscript was written between 1317 and 1338 (Boter 1999, 257).
[186] *Ench* 31.17-18.
[187] *Ench* 32.16-21.
[188] *Ench* 49.11.
[189] *Ench* 4.
[190] *Ench* 33.8.
[191] *Ench* 33.10.
[192] *Ench* 5.3 : *Vat* 7.3.
[193] *Ench* 29.20 : *Vat* 35.23.
[194] *Ench* 46.4 : *Vat* 64.3.
[195] Three times in *Ench* 51.14-17 : *Vat* 71.14-17.
[196] *Ench* 33.34-35 : *Vat* 48.2-3.
[197] *Ench* 15.8 : *Vat* 21.8.
[198] *Ench* 46.5 : *Vat* 63.5.

Euthymius project the moral advice of the Stoic tradition on a monastic framework of authority.[199]

3.1.3 [Nilus]

The agency behind the third Christianised version of the *Encheiridion* resembles more closely the work of our Syrian adaptators. The piece (*Nil*), which survives in twelve manuscripts (and a further three were lost in the last few centuries), had been ascribed to Nilus of Ancyra, on the questionable ground that in a group of manuscripts it was transmitted together with works by Nilus. Unlike *Par* and *Vat*, *Nil* is particularly clumsy and at times incoherent, and it has been regarded as a "failure" by its modern editor.[200] The anonymous adaptor, [Nilus], did not hesitate to leave out chunks of text when they did not suit, such as the chapter on divination,[201] the passage on love,[202] on the behaviour in the theatre,[203] on Chrysippus,[204] on the tripartition of (Epictetus') philosophy,[205] the mention of Diogenes and Heraclitus as gods,[206] and the entire closing chapter containing various quotations from pagan authors.[207] Nonetheless, [Nilus] was coherent in rendering "Gods" in the singular, but unsystematic with proper names. While once "Socrates" is retained,[208] elsewhere he was

[199] Two changes in *Vat.* present similarities with the Syriac translations of the *Ad Demonicum* and of Themistius. The adaptor replaced "to make libations (σπένδειν) and to sacrifice" with "to pray (εὔχεσθαι) and to sacrifice" for (*Ench* 31.23 : *Vat* 37.20) as is attested in *ID* 13, and he employed "prophet" and "prophecy" for all the words deriving from the root of μάντις "diviner" (*Ench* 32.1-5 : *Vat* 38.1-5), as is attested in *TA* 55.4-5 : Syr 51.7. Neither the *Paraphrasis Christiana* nor the third Christianised version attributed to Nilus adopted the same renderings.
[200] Boter 1999, 160.
[201] *Ench* 32.
[202] *Ench* 33.8.
[203] *Ench* 33.25-31.
[204] *Ench* 48.3.
[205] *Ench* 52.
[206] *Ench* 15.8-9.
[207] *Ench* 72.
[208] *Ench* 5.3 : *Nil* 10.2.

substituted with "Paul,"[209] with "one among the wise,"[210] and with "philosophers."[211] "Eteocles and Polyneices" are replaced by "some senseless (men)"[212] and "Socrates and Zeno" with "some among the virtuous."[213] Yet, some passages that may look indigestible to a Christian reader have been left untouched,[214] and, on some occasions [Nilus]' changes have rendered passages of text simply incomprehensible.[215]

Although [Nilus]' Christianising enterprise is superficial and not always consistent, it is possible to recognise the Christianisation of a handbook of moral advice as the goal of the enterprise of textual transmission. The fact that the earliest manuscript of *Nil* dates back to the eleventh century, and the manuscripts of *Par* are not any earlier than 960, has made the establishment of chronology a problematic issue.[216] The inconsistency of [Nilus]' work, together with the considerable number of surviving manuscripts (fifteen, three of which now lost), however, led Spanneut to conclude that its origin would date back to an earlier period than the other works, presumably the sixth century. Spanneut assumed that the poor quality and inconsistency of *Nil* could point to an earlier date than that of the more self-conscious and explicitly monastic *Par* and *Vat*. A firm and conscious detachment from the pagan tradition must have followed the end of paganism, and the neatly monastic framework must have developed over the centuries.[217]

The argument, however, may run the risk of flattening out the diversity of the works on a mere chronological paradigm. To assume that a superficially Christianised adaptation, or non Christianised at all, is necessarily earlier than a thoroughly Christianised one may be too

[209] *Ench* 51 : *Nil* 71.
[210] *Ench* 29.20 : *Nil* 35.15.
[211] *Ench* 46.4 : *Nil* 65.8.
[212] *Ench* 31.17 : *Nil* 38.7.
[213] *Ench* 33.34-35 : *Nil* 48.2.
[214] For example: "it is also better for your slave-boy to be bad than for you to be unhappy" (*Ench* 12.4-5 : *Nil* 16.4-5); "if you want your slave-boy to make no mistakes, you are stupid" (*Ench* 14.3-4 : *Nil* 19.3-4); and for *Nil* 24 : *Ench* 18, where the cry of a crow is dealt with as a prophecy, see Spanneut 1972, 50.
[215] Boter 1999, 159.
[216] Boter 1999, 351.
[217] Richard 1962, col. 487; for the use of the same argument on paganism in establishing the chronology of anonymous texts see Possekel 1998, 32; Odorico 2004, 63; Bettiolo 2004, 296 n. 12.

simplistic. There is the possibility that the differences between the agency behind *Par* and that behind *Nil* may also reflect a variance in the origin of the two works as much as in their chronology. *Par* is a work deeply affected by ascetic literature, and specifically designed for a monastic readership. The changes are the product of a self-conscious mind, who, for instance, did not lose the occasion to interpolate passages from the Scriptures as well as to cast Christian light on Plato's quotations.

Conversely, [Nilus] was an unwieldy adaptor who intervened in the text on a case by case basis, and he dodged the issues without particular care for a coherent outcome of his work. While the adaptor of *Vat* took the chance to spell out monastic clues, as is evident in the proper names he chose, [Nilus] did not seem interested in making it as clear. It is not possible to decide whether *Nil* was produced by the hand of a Christian student, a weak teacher or an (aspiring?) monk, but it is a matter of fact that his piece attracted attention. *Nil* was copied again and again to fulfil the interests of some Christian readers who must have found in the moral advice a reason of attraction. Christian readers must have understood the pagan heroes described in the anecdotes as compatible with Christianity, and an equivalent assumption guided the Syriac translators of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius.

3.2 Syriac Plutarch and Lucian

As shown in ch. 2, the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius are characterised by the omission of references to Greek mythology and to pagan religion, and by frequent substitutions of the names of the figures belonging to the classical world with anonymous titles. In this respect, the textual changes in the paraphrases of the *Encheiridion* reveal a similar *modus agendi* of the adaptors. But the similarity of such enterprises of

transmission can be developed further, as the present section will show. First, some instances of textual transformation in the translations similarly reveal an interest in Christian asceticism. Secondly, the *Encheiridion* and the works by Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius share their instructional nature in that they are collections of moral advice often expressed in the form of sentences and anecdotes. Thirdly, common moral advice and imagery can be found in Epictetus and in the Syriac translations.

The works under the name of Plutarch that were translated into Syriac focus on three main concerns: anger (*PI*), which should be constrained for its effects are damaging, reproaches by enemies (*PU*), which should not be occasion for damaging confrontations but rather encouragement for self-improvement, and exercise and discipline (*PE*), which have the potential to benefit both the body and the soul. The piece by Lucian (*LC*) describes the functioning of slander and it provides practical advice on how to avoid it. The same moral concerns and practical recommendations can be found not only in the *Encheiridion* and its paraphrases, but also in early ascetic literature of Christian origin, such as the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, the Evagrian ascetic *corpus*, Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, and John the Solitary of Apamea.

3.2.1 Anger – Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira*

Anger is a common theme in ethical literature, and it is not great surprise to find a piece about it within a collection of moralizing pieces. The *De cohibenda ira* describes the perilous effects of anger and it provides practical advice on how to repress the passion as soon as it appears. *PI* has a format similar to that of the *Encheiridion* in that its advice is normative and is illustrated through series of anecdotes. Furthermore, a number of recommendations are

common in the *Encheiridion* and in *PI*. For instance, both works recommend not punishing the subordinates while on the wave of anger, invoking λογισμόν "reason" for Plutarch while ܡܟܟܝܬܐ "humility" for the Syriac translator.[218] As a strategy to fight anger, both *Ench* and *PI* suggest taking into account the fact that anger can also arise simply from opinions within oneself, such as the feeling of being neglected and despised Plutarch adds. According to both Epictetus and Plutarch, it is advisable, then, not to be carried away by first impressions but rather to gain delay.[219]

For Plutarch, it is prudent to lead a life based on simplicity, avoiding precious vessels in everyday life in order not to be upset when they are broken; and to the same purpose Epictetus recommends avoiding excessive attachment to worldly things, ranging from a drinking cup to family and people in general.[220] Overall, both *PI* and *Ench* provide a number of common sense tools to deal with anger, and it is possible to see the interest in the promotion of such readings within an environment concerned with a morally sound behaviour. In both *Ench* and *PI*, the moral advice was the reason for the transmission and transformation of the texts. The editing responded to similar concerns, and, for instance, not unlike the author of *Vat*, the Syriac translator of *PI* omitted passages on the ἐρωτικαὶ πράξεις, "the practices of the lovers," such as serenading and crowning the beloved one's door, and a passage on the baths.[221]

Advice on controlling anger was a recurrent topic within the monastic literature of the time. A Syriac example comes from the fifth-century ascetic author John the Solitary, who, in the *Four dialogues with Eusebius and Eutropius on the soul* reported the same anecdote about a drinking cup that, if broken, may become cause of an outburst of anger, whether or not relying on the very text of the *Encheiridion*.[222] In his treatment of the anecdotes, however, John

[218] *Ench* 12 : *PI* 459d.
[219] *Ench* 20 : *PI* 459e.
[220] *Ench* 3 and 26 : *PI* 461a-d.
[221] Respectively *PI* 455b : Syr 188.10 and *PI* 456b : Syr 189.10; *Ench* 33.8.
[222] Brock 1997, 31-32.

the Solitary attributed the narrative to a monk.[223] Also, the control of anger was one of the main concerns of the Evagrian ascetic *corpus* (end of the fourth century): almost each of the short works addressed to Christian ascetics comprises a section on anger and on its negative effects that not rarely present the same imagery proposed by Plutarch.[224] Plutarch and Evagrius would agree that anger is the most dangerous passion of the soul,[225] and –in addition to providing common sense advice on how to avoid it, such as that of being patient and gentle when it arises–[226] they would remark the physical disfigurement of the angry person (or "angry monk" for Evagrius), as he would gnash his teeth,[227] he would assume a different sight ("bloodshed eyes" for Evagrius) and the colour of his skin would change.[228]

A metaphor that was appreciated by Evagrius appears in the Syriac translation of the *De cohibenda ira*. According to Evagrius, the irascible would see in their dreams the aggression of "venomous wild beasts,"[229] in fact demons who attack the irascible part of the soul.[230] Perhaps relying on a similar imagery, the Syriac translator of *PI* rewrote two Plutarchan passages in order to introduce in the text comparisons between the irascible and the person who has been bitten by a snake and by an insect:

[...] ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τὰς τυραννικὰς μιαιφονίας τῷ πικρῷ τὸ μικρόψυχον αὐτῶν καὶ τῷ δρῶντι τὸ πεπονθὸς ἐνορώμενον ἔοικε τοῖς δήγμασι τῶν ἑρπετῶν, ὅταν διακαῆ καὶ περιώδυνα γένηται, τὴν φλεγμονὴν ἀπερειδομένων σφοδρὰν τοῖς λελυπηκόσιν.
ὡς γὰρ οἴδημα μεγάλης ἐστὶν ἐν σαρκὶ πληγῆς

[...] ܕܐܦ ܥܠ ܦܘܪܥܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܕܘܬܢ̈ ܕܐܢܫ̈ܐ ܐܟܣܢ̈ܝܐ
[190.10] ܕܥܡ ܡܪܝܪܘܬܐ ܕܒܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܚܝ̈ܬ̈ܐ ܕܡܪܥܠ̈ܐ ܕܡܬ̈ܐ ܒܚܠܡ̈ܐ ܕܒܗ ܡܬ̈ܐ ܕܡܪܝܪ

πάθος, οὕτως ἐν ταῖς μαλακωτάταις ψυχαῖς ἡ πρὸς τὸ λυπῆσαι ἔνδοσις ἐκφέρει μείζονα θυμὸν ἀπὸ μείζονος ἀσθενείας.	.ܥܒܝܬܐ ܕܚܝܬ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ ܥܒܝܕ ܕܐܝܟ ܕܐܡ ܕܠܐ
[...] but also in the murders by tyrants their meanness of soul (is visible) in their bitterness and their abnormal state is visible in their deeds, and **resemble the bites of snakes**, which, when they are greatly inflamed by pain, direct their excessive passion towards those who have disturbed them. As in the flesh a swelling results **from a severe blow**, so in the weakest souls the inclination to cause grief brings out a greater temper the greater the (soul's) sickness.	[...] as **those (individuals) who are bitten by** [190.10] **snakes**, because of the pain that rages in them are full of anger against those who outrage them, and they proclaim an insult against the magnitude of the pain; therefore, the magnitude of anger is a sign of the magnitude of sickness. As a big swelling tells about the passibility of **those bitten by an insect** [or similar animal], so anger is a sign of weakness and not of strength.[231]

In the two cases, the angry is described in Syriac as the person who has been -literally- bitten by a snake or by an insect. There is the possibility that the Syriac translator was aware of the theory of demons expressed in Evagrius and in the Macarian homilies, an integral part of the ascetic discourse in early monastic literature.[232] A concern for the control of anger is well attested in Christian ascetic literature, and the interest in *PI* by Christian ascetic readers is not surprising.[233]

3.2.2 Enemies – Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*

The *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* opens by pointing out that it is a normal condition to have enemies. Enemies are particularly keen in pointing out one's shortcomings, and it is in one's interest to accustom oneself to their frequent reproaches without falling into angry confrontations. Plutarch's recommendation that one should keep silence when he is reproached

[231] *PI* 457ab : 190.9-14.
[232] Cameron 1998, 151-52; Ps-Macarius, *Homilies* 2.26. Another passage that may support such hypothesis is the rendering of *PI* 461b : Syr 194.14-15: ἀσθενεῖ καὶ φιλαιτίῳ καὶ μεμψιμοίρῳ δουλεύων διαίτῃ καθάπερ ὑπὸ βηχὸς ἐνδελεχοῦς [ἢ] προσκρουμάτων πολλῶν ἔλαθεν ἑλκώδη καὶ καταρροϊκὴν διάθεσιν περὶ τὸ θυμοειδὲς ἀπεργασάμενος. "(the capricious person) is servant of a impotent, accusatory and querulous way of life, and by many frictions, as though by a continuous cough, he creates, without realising it, an ulcerated and catarrhal condition as regards anger" : ܥܠ ܕܡܢ ܗܠܝܢ ܕܥܒܝܕ ܕܚܡܬ ܕܟܚܕ ܕܡܢ ܕܥܒܝܬܐ [194.15] ܕܚܝܬ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܢ "from this travail, sores [194.15] of anger come into being in their soul(s)."
[233] For an overview on early monastic literature on the control of anger, see Sinkewicz 2003, 119-20 and n. 21.

and should renounce revenge would find Abba Achilles of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* in agreement.[234] Instead, if a person is wise, he should use such reproaches as a constant stimulus to stick to a morally sound behaviour, as the *Encheiridion* also explains. Every time one hears a reproach, and according to Plutarch this is more likely to come from enemies rather than from friends, he should not stop at the face value of the negative opinion that the enemies have of him, but he should seek in his behaviour the origin of that reproach, and he should strive to constantly improve in order not to leave any room for further reproach.[235]

In the fifth century, the Syriac monastic writer John the Solitary proposed the same piece of advice about enemies. His *Letter to Hesychius* is structured as a collection of advice for ascetics, and it includes a consideration on the enemies' reproaches:

> Rebuke hatred by your deeds rather than by your words. When you see anyone rebuked for some wrongdoing, do not pay attention to his wrong, but consider whether you yourself have done anything worth of rebuke.[236]

It is not possible to decide whether John was aware of Plutarch, for he may well have drawn this piece of advice from another source.[237] This, however, cannot be said of a later Syrian author who reproduced the same counsel and admitted his reliance on Plutarch.

Antony of Tagrit, a ninth-century Syrian Orthodox,[238] reproduces Plutarch's advice on enemies in the opening of the last book of his treatise on rhetoric:

> What Plutarch wisely counsels in the treatise on love (of enemies) (also applies to us): "It is right that when we are abused by our enemies, that if the matter is in truth, we should keep ourselves from it; but if it is not, we should seek the ground from which the abuse has been constructed, whether we

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[234] *PU* 90d-e; Achillas 4, 125A in Brown 1978, 88: "An old man who came to Abba Achilles found him spitting blood out of his mouth. He asked him 'What is the matter, Father?' The old man answered, 'The word of a brother grieved me. I struggled not to tell him so I prayed God to rid me of this word. So it became like blood in my mouth and I have spat it out. Now I am in peace, having forgotten the matter.'"

[235] *Ench* 42 : *PU* 89d-e.

[236] John the Solitary, *Letter to Hesychius* 50, trans. Brock 1987a, 93, from BM *Add.* 14609: ܒܥܝ ܠܡܚܫܘܬܟ ܒܥܒܕܝܟ ܘܠܐ ܒܡܠܬܟ. ܟܕ ܚܙܝ ܕܐܢܫ ܡܬܟܠܡ ܥܠ ܚܛܗ ܠܐ ܬܣܬܟܠ ܒܚܛܗ ܗܘ. ܐܠܐ ܬܬܒܘܢܢ ܐܢ ܐܦ ܐܢܬ ܒܗ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܡܕܡ ܕܫܘܐ ܠܡܬܟܠ ܥܠ ܢܦܫܟ.

[237] *PU* 90a (ed. Nestle 1894, 11.15-20): ܠ ܡܢ. ܡܢ ܕܫܩܪ ܐܦ ܡܢ ܕܫܩܪ ܠܐ ܡܫܬܟܚ ܡܢ ܟܕ ܡܬܚܫܕ ܒܫܩܪ ܐܦ ܡܢ ܕܫܩܪ ܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܡܕܡ ܕܫܘܐ ܠܡܬܟܠ ܥܠ ܢܦܫܟ. ܐܠܐ ܬܬܒܘܢܢ ܐܢ ܐܦ ܐܢܬ ܒܗ ܐܝܬ ܠܟ

> have neglected something, or done what is similar or equivalent to that which has been said." The reproach benefits us because it drives us away from laziness, gives us resolve, and forces us to be diligent and to take trouble to acquire what we lack.[239]

Antony's *Rhetoric* is an important witness of Syriac scholarship of the previous centuries, and its author was familiar with a considerable number of Greek works that must have been available to him in Syriac, and of which no other trace survives today.[240] Antony is likely to have come across the advice on enemies by reading the Christianised Syriac translation of the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* in a monastery under Abbasid rule.

The diffusion of the advice about enemies is easier to track than the more generic recommendations about the control of anger. Alfons Fürst has argued that the origin of the piece of advice about enemies should be sought within Cynic philosophy. *Parrhesia*, "outspokenness," was a common characterization of Cynic philosophers, whose reproaches were described as beneficial for their addressees. The point is made by a number of Greek authors from the Classical period onwards, and if one follows Diogenes Laertius, the biting behaviour was a characteristic of Antisthenes (fifth century BC), the founder of Cynism.[241] Another Cynic philosopher was Diogenes of Sinope, as Themistius reported in the *De Virtute*, for in "Diogenes' words, the aid lies hidden in their depth, and cheerfulness covers them (when Diogenes) reviles (through them)."[242] Possibly originating from Cynism, the advice about hostile criticism had a long life and can be found in many classical and post-classical authors.[243]

The Syriac translator of *PU* was standing in the same path of appropriation that two fourth- and fifth-century Christian authors had followed few decades earlier. One in Latin, the other in Greek, they were both well educated and influential writers who engaged in the same

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[239] Antony of Tagrit, *Rhetoric* 5, trans. Watt 1986, 3.
[240] Possibly also Homer and Eliodorus (Corcella 2008). This is the only so far identified quotation of the Plutarchian translations in Syriac.
[241] Diog. Laert. 6.1; Fürst 1997.
[242] *TV* 42.4-6: ܗܕܡܝܟ ܗܡܡ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܗܘܐ ܗܘܢ ܗܟ [42.5] ܡܡܟܣܝܢ ܕܒܟܘܢ ܘܡܟܣܝ ܡܡܠܐ ܡܡܘܕܥ ܗܟ ܡܢ ܕܒܟ ܗܘܐ .

[243] Fürst 1997.

exercise of Christianisation of the advice on the enemies' reproaches: Augustine and John Chrysostom.[244] The passage from Augustine's *Confessions* on how Monica defeated alcoholism is worth reporting in full:

> ... until she had fallen into the habit of gulping down almost full cups of wine. Where then was the wise old woman and her vehement prohibition? She could have had no strength against the secret malady unless your healing care, Lord, were watching over us. When fathers and mothers and nurses are not there, you are present. You have created us, you call us, you use human authorities set over us to do something for the health of our souls. How did you cure her? How did you restore her health? **You brought from another soul a harsh and sharp rebuke**, like a surgeon's knife, from your secret stores, and with one blow you cut away the rottenness.

In passing one should note that, in the same context, Plutarch used a similar anecdote about Jason of Pherae, who exposed a swelling of his body to a person who was attempting to kill him and, through the wound he received, the tumour was removed and Jason was instead saved.[245] Augustine went on:

> The slavegirl who used to accompany her to the cask had a dispute with her young mistress which happened when they were alone together. **Bitterly she insulted her by bringing up the accusation that she was a boozer.** The taunt hurt. She reflected upon her own foul addiction, at once condemned it, and stopped the habit. **Just as flattering friends corrupt, so quarrelsome enemies often bring us correction.** Yet you reward them not for what you use them to achieve, but according to their intention. **The maidservant in her anger sought to wound her little mistress, not to cure her.** That is why she spoke in private.

The anecdote is inserted into the Christian narrative, as is shown by the continuation of the passage:

> But You, Lord, ruler of heaven and earth turn to your own purposes the deep torrents. You order the turbulent flux of the centuries. Even from the fury of one soul You brought healing to another.[246]

A systematic explanation of the enemies' beneficial effects from a Christian perspective can be found in the *De civitate Dei*.[247]

At first sight, it may seem that Augustine gave a Christian colouring to what, in fact, looks very much like a practical consideration of common sense. Yet, Augustine assumed a

[244] Fürst 1997.
[245] *PU* 89c.
[246] Augustine, *Conf.* ix 18 (trans. Chadwick).
[247] Augustine, *De civ. Dei* xxii 2.

less relaxed attitude when dealing with the *Ciceronianus*, Jerome. In letter 74, dating back to 404, where he complained of the "missiles and merciless fists of a second Entellus," Augustine included the same consideration about the enemies' reproaches:

> If, however, through weakness, either common to human race or peculiar to myself, I cannot help feeling some pain from rebuke, even when I am justly reproved, it is far better to have to have a tumour in one's head cured, though the lance cause pain, than to escape the pain by letting the disease go on.

But with Jerome one had to be careful.[248] The passage continues:

> This was clearly seen **by him who said** that, for the most part our enemies who expose our faults are more useful than friends who are afraid to reprove us. For the former, in their angry recriminations, sometimes charge us with what we indeed require to correct; but the latter, through fear of destroying the sweetness of friendship, show less boldness on behalf of right than they ought.[249]

The credit was most likely intended for Cato Maior, who in Cicero's *Laelius de amicitia* pronounces the advice in the form of maxim. Augustine, then, was aware of the non-Christian origin of the piece of moral advice.[250]

The same can be said about John Chrysostom, who, independently from Augustine, also reproduced the maxim about enemies in a Christian context. In his third homily on David and Saul, he explained that the reproaches by enemies can be more useful than those by friends.[251] Since John Chrysostom had had an excellent Greek education and had attended Libanius' school in Antioch, he may well have read the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, as Basil of Caesarea probably had.[252] Yet, when Chrysostom wanted to add a witness (μαρτυρία) to illustrate the maxim about enemies in his sermon, rather than choosing the authority of Plutarch or that of one of the many philosophers available in the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*, he went for the Bible.[253] Chrysostom chose the parable of the Pharisee and the tax

[248] Jerome had used a similar pretext on the pagan origin of the *Sentences of Sextus* to strengthen the polemic with Rufinus (ch. 4.1.2).
[249] Augustine, *Ep.* 73.4 (trans. Cunningham).
[250] Cicero, *Lael.* 90; Testard 1958, ii 90.
[251] John Chrysostom, *Hom. de Dav. et Saul* 4.3 (*PG* 54.700; *CPG* 4412).
[252] Ch. 4.3.1.
[253] *Lk.* 18.9-14.

collector, despite the fact that such a choice required a dose of imagination. The *Gospel of Luke* reports that the Pharisee was standing by himself when praying "God, I thank you that I am not like other people –robbers, evil-doers, adulterers– or even like this tax collector." The tax collector was standing far off when, instead, sincerely declared to God his condition of sinner. Nonetheless, according to John Chrysostom's homily, the repentance of the tax collector was motivated by the very fact that the tax collector could hear the stigmatizing words pronounced by his enemy, the Pharisee![254]

Not unlike the Christian transmission of the *Encheiridion*, the transmission and transformation of *PU* in Syriac had a counterpart in the diffusion, among Christian authors, of the piece of advice about hostile criticism. Augustine, Chrysostom, John the Solitary and Abba Achilles of the *Apophthegmata* reproduced a piece of traditional moral advice with a view to a Christian readership. Also, there is the possibility that at least Chrysostom was familiar with the text of *PU*, for he may have came in contact with the maxim in the *cursus* of his literary studies. Whether or not the Syriac translators of Plutarch also went through a similar traditional *cursus* of literate education in Greek is, unfortunately, guesswork.

3.2.3 Exercise and discipline – Ps.-Plutarch, *De exercitatione*

If one follows the *Encheiridion*, the ideal life is the one that philosophers lead.[255] A philosophical life departs from the lives of common people: "if you long for philosophy, prepare yourself from the start that you will be laughed at, that many people will jeer at you," but "if you abide by the same principles, those who first laughed at you, will admire you

[254] Fürst 1997.
[255] *Ench* 46.

later."[256] In addition to solitude, an important component of a philosophical life is physical endurance, as the following passage shows:

> When you have become adapted to simple living with regard to your body, do not make show of it; and when you drink water, do not say on every occasion that you are drinking water. And if ever you want to train yourself to enduring physical discomfort, do it by yourself, and not in the presence of outsiders. Do not embrace statues; but on occasion when you are very thirsty, take a mouthful of water and spew it out, and do not tell anyone.[257]

If one follows the *Encheiridion*, a simple lifestyle, basic food and modest clothing, together with physical endurance, are features of a philosophical conduct. The recommendation to adopt a lifestyle based on simplicity and physical endurance was the main concern in the composition of the *De exercitatione*, a work attributed to Plutarch whose Greek original is lost.[258]

The *De exercitatione* is structured as an exhortation to exercise and discipline. The author begins by contrasting the advantages deriving from regular exercise with the benefit deriving from a good natural endowment; and it moves on to argue that exercise and discipline can benefit not only the body but also the soul, for they can help control the passions. Also, regular exercise can remedy deficiencies in a person's natural endowment. The *De exercitatione* closes with a moral exhortation to disregard the pleasures that the passions generate, and it instead invites the audience to practise a life pattern regulated by exercise and discipline.

The piece may have originally had the form of a speech, for the text includes (i) long series of rhetorical questions and (ii) references to its oral performance, and (iii) it addresses an audience of young Romans.[259] The author, however, illustrates and supports his argument through frequent use of anecdotes, not unlike the *PI* and *PU*, as is common in Plutarch. The anecdotes collected in the *De exercitatione* are based on figures of historical significance such as Aspasia, Philip, and Cleopatra, and on philosophers like Socrates and Plato. The text also

[256] *Ench* 22.
[257] *Ench* 47, trans. Boter 1999, 330.
[258] Rigolio 2014.
[259] (i) 178.25-179.5, 180.15, 181.5, 181.25, 184.1-185.15; (ii) 178.15, 186.10; (iii) 184.20, 185.15.

includes anecdotes about the painters Protogenes and Nicomachus; yet there are no references to Greek literary authors or anecdotes about mythological figures.

The ascetic undertone is a recurrent aspect of the exercise promoted in the *De exercitatione*. Most anecdotes show that behind great achievements, such as in sport, in war and in the arts, there is constant effort and lengthy commitment. Some anecdotes are provided about victorious athletes, as well as about the successful careers of Cimon, Demosthenes and Plato, and about the military victories of the Romans. Constancy, toil, and endurance of hunger, thirst, and lack of sleep are crucial features of the models of behaviour proposed by the author. An ideal of conduct is provided through reference to the philosophers, for they are content with a simple lifestyle, basic food and modest clothing:

> Are the customs of the philosophers not enough to show that exercise, as well as habit, strengthens nature? [182.20] For those same (philosophers), because of the self-control of their mind(s) and of the fortitude of their soul(s), endure walking barefoot, whilst being content with a sole garment for summer and for winter, they sleep on a mat without a mattress, they are sustained by simple food and they eat in measure to maintain life. They despise mockery, and it is as if they wear a body of adamant [182.25] and possess a heart of iron: in this way they are not weakened. For it is habit, discipline and continence that restrain and strengthen the souls as well as foster (growth) in resplendent bodies, for bodies are nourished by food and the soul by philosophy. Many mourn the philosophers because they see them in travails, but (the philosophers) rejoice that their self-denial provides them not only with dignity, but also with pleasure; for, through habit, [182.30] all good that is beneficial to nature becomes also [183.1] agreeable.[260]

The exercise and ascetic practice that the *De exercitatione* proposes played a role in its transmission into Syriac. The *De exercitatione* encourages the practice of regular training both of the body and of the mind, and it invites to impose toils and discipline on oneself. Like the *Encheiridion*, *PI* and *PU*, the transmission of the *De exercitatione* was grounded in an interest in its moralizing contents, and the principles guiding the lifestyle presented in the anecdotes must have appeared similar to those guiding Christian ascetic heroes.

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[260] De Lagarde 1858, 182.18-183.1: [182.20] ܠ ܗܟ ܕܝܢܐ ܕܦܝܠ ܣܘܦ ܕܣܡܐ ܕܣܡܐ ܠ ܕܩܢܘܢܐ ܕ ܕܣܝܬܐ ܠܝܢ ܕܣܡܐ. ܕ ܣܡܐ ܕ ܒ ܕ ܣܡܐ. ܒܗܝܢ ܣܡܐ ܠܚܠܣܐ ܒܚܣܡ ܕܣܡܐ ܕܦܝܠ ܕܣܡܐ ܕܣܡܐ ܕ ܕ ܣܡܐ ܠ ܕ ܣܡܐ ܕ ܣܡܐ ܕ ܣܡܐ

3.2.4 Slander – Lucian, *De calumnia*

The selection and the transmission of Lucian's *De calumnia* into Syriac was similarly grounded on an interest in the moral advice contained in the piece. Unlike many works by Lucian, the *De calumnia* is not satirical but instructional, and it aims to explain the functioning of slander. After opening with the description of the painting by Apelles representing slander (1-5), Lucian declared that he would similarly provide a depiction of the functioning of slander through words (6). The piece moves on with an analysis of the three people involved in slander: the slanderer, the slandered person and the hearer of the slander. The last part of the work is dedicated to the provision of common-sense precepts on how to avoid and how to deal with slander and slanderers.

Moral recommendations of a similar nature about slander can be found in early Christian ascetic literature. According to Lucian, the most important recommendation against slander consists of stopping up one's ears, as Odysseus did with the Sirens (30). In the same circumstances, according to Evagrius, a monk should equally stop up his ears.[261] Evagrius would agree with Lucian on the fact that the root of slander should be sought in jealousy, and he would emphasize the serious threat that malicious gossip can pose to the harmony of an ascetic community.[262] According to Evagrius, slander is a particularly serious problem of relationship since it involves also as many as three parties, and it is as if the malicious detractor steals the souls of his listeners, for the gossip is like deadly venom or noxious drug.[263]

The *Apophthegmata Patrum* are rich in anecdotes and recommendations on slander. The vice of slander (καταλαλιά) is described as eating the flesh of the brothers, or it is

[261] Evagrius, *Eulogios* 16.17.
[262] Evagrius, *Vices* 8 : *LC* 10.
[263] Evagrius, *Eulogios* 16; Gould 1993, 121-23.

disguised as a serpent.[264] Abba Isaias defined malicious gossip as a "failure to recognise the glory of God, and jealousy towards one's neighbour,"[265] and according to Abba Poimen "fornication and malicious talk are two thoughts that should never be discussed or pondered in the heart; for if one wants to discern them in the heart, there is no benefit. Rather, if you avoid them forcefully, you will find rest."[266] Basil of Caesarea was equally aware of the danger slander can pose to an ascetic community: "One ought to say nothing against an absent brother for the purpose of slandering him, even though what is said may be true, for that is detraction;"[267] and again: "he who makes a statement against someone in order to slander or disparage him is a detractor, even though the statement is true."[268] Elsewhere, Basil reported anecdotes drawn from Plutarch to illustrate the functioning of slander.[269]

The transmission of *LC* into Syriac was grounded in an interest in the moral advice on slander among Christians concerned with leading a morally sound behaviour. Slander is a recurrent concern in early monastic literature, and to find a work such as Lucian's *De Calumnia* among Christian readers is not as surprising at it may seem at first sight.[270] The Syriac translators of *LC* shared the same concern that the authors of the *Apophthegmata*, Evagrius, and Basil had of providing Christian readership with moral advice against malicious gossip.

3.2.5 Syriac manuscripts of Plutarch and Lucian

[264] Hyperechius 4 and 5 (N 225). Also, according to Eusebius, Clement of Alexandria composed also a (lost) work on slander, which was entitled περὶ καταλαλιᾶς (Eus. *HE* 6.13.3); Stählin 1970, xxiv-xxv.
[265] A257 = Isaias 10.
[266] A758 = Poimen 154.
[267] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep. 22, on the perfection of the life of solitaries*.
[268] Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae brevius tractatae* 25 (*PG* 31.1100D).
[269] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 24 and 94.
[270] Sinkewicz 2003, 18-19.

The Syriac manuscripts of Plutarch and Lucian add another piece to our understanding of the origins and the diffusions of the translations. Although manuscript evidence does not necessarily reflect the earliest stages of diffusion of the texts, the relatively short time-span (between one and four centuries) occurred between the composition of the translations and the writing of the surviving manuscripts makes the manuscript evidence of exceptional significance. The surviving manuscripts of Plutarch and Lucian, which were written with great care on parchment in the seventh and ninth century respectively, attest to the diffusion of the two authors together with monastic literature. It is conceivable that such assemblages of texts with ascetic contents derive from earlier collections of a similar nature. Manuscript *Sin. Syr.* 16 (seventh cent.) is preserved in Saint Catherine's Monastery on Sinai, MS *Add.* 17209 (ninth cent.) is preserved in the British Library.[271]

Sin. Syr. 16 (seventh cent.) contains a collection of monastic literature:[272]

a.	f. 1^{v}	*Lives of the desert fathers* (Palladius' *Lausiac History*) (trans. from Greek)[273]
b.	f. 87^{v}	*Life of Nilus the hermit*
c.	f. 93^{r}	Aristides, *Apology* (trans. from Greek)[274]
d.	f. 105^{r}	Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* (trans. from Greek)
e.	f. 112^{r}	Ps.-Plutarch, *De exercitatione* (trans. from Greek)
f.	f. 121^{v}	*Discourse of Pythagoras*[275]
g.	f. 126^{r}	Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira* (trans. from Greek)
h.	f. 132^{v}	Lucian, *De calumnia* (trans. from Greek)
i.	f. 140^{r}	*Opinions of the philosophers on the soul*[276]
j.	f. 143^{r}	*Sentences of Theano*[277]
k.	f. 145^{r}	*Sentences of the philosophers*
l.	f. 151^{v}	John the Solitary, *On Ecclesiastes*[278]
m.	f. 214^{r}	John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew* (trans. from Greek)[279]

The manuscript opens with the *Lives of the desert fathers*, which is the longest piece in the

[271] Non-dated manuscripts are normally dated on palaeographic grounds in comparison with dated manuscripts.
[272] Pouderon 2003, 137; Smith Lewis 1894, 18.
[273] This part is also entitled *History of the monks of Egypt*.
[274] *CPG* 1062. From fol. 93^{v}, i.e. after the beginning of Aristides' *Apology*, the manuscript is written on two columns.
[275] Levi della Vida 1910.
[276] German translation in Ryssel 1896.
[277] Possekel 1998. Gregory of Nazianzus may have been aware of the same Greek source employed in the Syriac translation (Possekel 1998, 15). Possekel 1998, 31, has noticed a similarity in the themes of the *Sentences of Sextus*.
[278] Brock 1987, 31-32; ed. Strothmann 1988.
[279] *CPG* 4424.

collection, to which a shorter piece about the life of Nilus of Ancyra (d. 430) is attached. The collection continues with the Syriac version of Aristides' *Apology*,[280] before the works by Plutarch and Lucian. In between one finds the *Discourse of Pythagoras* (unedited). There follows a work on the soul structured as questions and answers, before the *Sentences* attributed to Theano and to other philosophers. The treatise *On Ecclesiastes* was authored by the already mentioned John the Solitary (first half of the fifth century). Apart from the opening pieces on Christian ascetics, the manuscript mostly alternates works by monks and by (or attributed to) philosophers with ascetic and morally edifying contents. The last two works are exegetical.

The second manuscript presents a similar mixture of Syriac translations of secular literature with Christian literature. It is particularly regrettable that two thirds of the manuscript have been lost, for, as the numbering shows, only the last five quires out of seventeen survive. Manuscript BL *Add.* 17209 (ninth century), possibly of Syrian Orthodox origin, contains:[281]

a.	f. 1^{r}	Ps.-Plutarch, *De exercitatione* (the beginning is lost)
b.	f. 8^{r}	Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira*
c.	f. 15^{v}	Lucian, *De calumnia*
d.	f. 23^{v}	Themistius, *De virtute*
e.	f. 39^{r}	Themistius, *De amicitia*
f.	f. 47^{v}	Gregory of Nazianzus, (Select) *Letters*[282]
g.	f. 51^{v}	Subscription ending the manuscript

Since the two works by Plutarch are presented in the same order of *Sin. Syr.* 16, without the insertion of the *Discourse of Pythagoras*, it seems likely that both manuscripts ultimately derive the works from the same collection. The proto-collection may have included Lucian's *De calumnia*, since this work follows in both manuscripts. BL *Add.* 17209 proceeds with the two Syriac translations of Themistius, and it closes with the translation of select letters by

[280] As it has been discussed in ch. 2.2.4, the Syriac Aristides has not been affected by the modifications that characterise our translations – as much as it is possible to reconstruct since the Greek survives only partially. The *Apology* is the work of a Christian author who provides a convenient description and refutation of Greek mythology, including mentions of Egyptian religion and Judaism.

[281] Wright 1872, iii 1184-1186 (mii), and p. xv. I owe the considerations on the Christological affiliations of the manuscripts to conversations with Grigory Kessel.

[282] *CPG* 3032, *Ep.* lvi, ccxv, ccxiii, xcix, ccxiv, ccxvii, cxxi, cxxiii, clxviii, clxix, ccix, clxx, lxxxi, lxxii, lxxiii, cvii, cix, cviii, cxix, cx, cxvi, cxvii, cxviii, cxi, cxii, cxiii, xcv, cxxxix, clvii, cxiv, cxxxviii (the end is missing). The letters are thirty-two, although the author of the subscription that closes the manuscripts counted thirty of them. For this collection of letters see Taylor 2008.

Gregory of Nazianzus. In total, the thirty-two letters with titles occupy less than five folios, as they are short moral exhortations often including maxims. As a result, the last part of the manuscript is not remarkably different from a collection of morally edifying sentences.

Most of *Sin. Syr.* 16 and all what remains of BL *Add.* 17209 are composed by translations from Greek. Pieces by Christian and non-Christian authors alternate with ease in the two manuscripts. In BL *Add.* 17209, Gregory of Nazianzus is "holy Gregory the theologian," while Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius are accompanied by the attribute "philosopher." It looks as if being described as philosophers -no matter the religious affiliation- was an important feature to the readers of the collection. While the collection of *Sin. Syr.* 16 reveals ascetic interests, BL *Add.* 17209 brings together Syriac translations of Greek secular literature attributed to "philosophers" with the translation of letters by a Christian author. Further analysis of the letters will show whether the translator intended to excerpt short pieces of moral advice out of the Gregorian *corpus*.

3.3 Syriac Themistius

3.3.1 Philosophic life – Themistius, *Περὶ ἀρετῆς*

After the work by the "philosopher" Lucian, the manuscript BL *Add.* 17209 proceeds with the piece entitled, in Syriac, "discourse by the philosopher Themistius on ἀρετή, which is the virtue of the soul,"[283] an oration *Περὶ ἀρετὴς*, or *De virtute*, which does not survive in Greek. Themistius' oration brings together the tradition of Greek philosophy with the provision of moral advice, and the author exhorts his audience to adopt a philosophical lifestyle. The

[283] *TV* 17.1-2: ܡܐܡܪܐ ܕܬܡܝܣܛܝܣ ܦܝܠܣܘܦܐ ܥܠ ܐܪܬܝ ܗܝ ܕܗܝ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܢܦܫܐ .

purpose of the *De virtute* is a praise of virtue, which is immediately identified with the practice of philosophy.[284] Possibly adopting a Cynic *topos*, Themistius wrote that philosophy is like a road "full of good things and prosperity."[285] The road, however, is not the one that Epicurus showed, for he showed a road "planted with trees and with splendid meadows, and shadowed by myrtles and cypresses. (On this road) inns full of pleasures and delights are set in array, as well as wines, luxuries, fruits, delicacies, music, bird(s) that nest on trees, and cajoling and pleasing voices from sirens;"[286] but of all these good things "not even a little bit is possible to take without expense."[287]

Nor can the philosophical life that Themistius proposed be identified with the "road" that Aristotle showed[288] – ultimately a similarly dangerous path, for "it is rare to see one of them [*i.e.* the travellers] reaching home without spilling (some) blood. Indeed, (the road) is full of adversities, frequent vexations and vain toil; and he who goes through it should be well equipped with the wisdom of the poets and of the rhetoricians, in order to pass through it confidently."[289] Accordingly, Themistius is more sympathetic to the third road, which Socrates discovered and which was then covered by (the Cynic) Antisthenes, Diogenes and Crates.[290] "The beginning of this road is grievous and rugged, but, after a little, the land becomes very smooth and plain for its travellers; and serenity, clear sky and peace dwell in it" – Themistius

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[284] *TV* 17.16.

[285] *TV* 18.5: ܪܘܚܡܝܬܐ ܕܫܠܝ ܐܘܪܚܐ . It is possible that the third road described by Themistius, which represents Cynic philosophy, was in Greek a σύντομος ὁδός, "shortcut," in accordance to the Cynic imagery: see below *TV* 21.18-29 and Emeljanow 1965. Also, the three roads are presented as in a rhetorical competition: ܐܦܝܩܝܪ ܕܡ ܪܘܚ ܐܢ ܒܫܠܝܐ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܒܗܕ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܒܗ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܒܗ ܐܢ ܐܬ ܒܗ

wrote.[291]

According to Themistius, philosophy did not open a single road to men, but many.[292] In another simile, philosophy acts as a doctor, who treats different sicknesses with different medicaments.[293] Accordingly, through Epicurus philosophy can persuade men who are driven by desires, and through Aristotle it can persuade men who have not realised that virtue is higher than worldly goods.[294] Once past these stages, however, "he who is prepared in both soul and body to be self-controlled shall listen to Crates and Diogenes. They did not fabricate names, nor did they deceive with words, but they openly declared that only virtue can produce good things."[295]

The second part of the oration contains a number of anecdotes aimed at illustrating further the three roads of philosophy, in order to examine "which of them shall receive the victory."[296] As the text proceeds, however, Themistius adopts a less impartial attitude and he argues that many philosophers were mistaken in considering the perfection of men as something outside man himself. Instead, as opposed to the animals, "within men, the perfection lies in the soul alone."[297] For "what is that on which I have power? It is not one thing, my beloved, nor a small one, but they are many and great: kindness, meekness, justice –for your mind shall be high and not feeble–, wisdom, knowledge, upright discernment, quietness and modesty."[298]

Accordingly, the closing part of Themistius' oration is a praise of the third road, which requires the practice of philosophy: "If you really want to know what an excellent thing reason

[291] *TV* 21.18-20: .ﺔﻠﻴﻠﻗ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻬﺴﻟﺎﻓ ﺮﻬﻐﻟ ﺮﻬﺤﻔﻟ ﻢﻳ ﻞﻠﻣ ﺔﻫ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟﺍ ﻒﻠﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﻞﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺔﻫ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ [21.20] .

[292] *TV* 22.13-22.

[293] *TV* 23.12-20.

[294] *TV* 23.20-24.6.

[295] *TV* 25.2-6: ﺮﻤﻗ ﺮﻴﻣ ﻲﻟ ﺔﻴﺤﻴﺤﺻ ﺔﻴﻫﺎﻨﻟ ،ﺔﻴﺤﻴﺤﺻ .ﺔﻴﺤﻴﺤﺻ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺔﻴﻫﺎﻨﻟ ﺔﻴﻫﺎﻨﻟ ﺔﻴﺤﻴﺤﺻ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ .ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺔﻴﺤﻴﺤﺻ ﺮﻴﻣ ﻲﻓ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ .ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻐﻟ [25.5] ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ

[296] *TV* 26.9.

[297] *TV* 31.21-22: .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺔﻴﻫﺎﻨﻟ ﻢﻳ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ .

[298] *TV* 29.19-30.1: ﻲﻓ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ ﻢﻳ ،ﻢﻳ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ ﻲﻓ .ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ [29.20] ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ ،ﻢﻳ ﺮﻴﻣ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﺨﻟ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .ﺮﻴﺨﻟ [30.1] ﺮﻴﺧ ﺮﻴﻣ .

is, I do not call as witnesses Plato or Aristotle, but the wise Antisthenes, who taught this road."[299] On the third road, travellers do not look after worldly things, as animals instead do, or as the king of the Persians did, who was not interested in wisdom and, accordingly, was not considered a happy man by Socrates.[300] "Vexations and pleasures are equal for him who knows how to lead his soul"[301] –the argument proceeds–, and as the reader goes on, the description of the philosophers' behaviour gains a more marked ascetic connotation. For instance, Heraclitus, by following a modest diet, taught the Ephesians to lead a modest lifestyle. Indeed, "the philosopher should train himself in ascetical exercise,"[302] following the *exemplum* of Crates, who trained himself in self-imposed toils.[303]

Like *PI*, *PU*, *PE* and *LC*, Themistius' *De virtute* puts forward recommendations about leading a morally sound behavior, and it argues that the best lifestyle is the one that is characterised by an ascetic component. Also, as Themistius explained, the impeccable conduct of true philosophers will serve as a stimulus for everybody to improve, for "to the kings and to the rulers their ranks entrust the power to punish evil-doers, but to the philosophers, 'since they do not sin,' is given the power to correct the evil-doer."[304] It is of course not possible to say whether the sentence "since they do not sin" in this passage was an interpolation by the Syriac translator.

As in the translations of Plutarch and Lucian, the edifying advice appears as the reason behind the transmission and diffusion of *TV* among Christian readers. Themistius' praise of an ascetic lifestyle may have seemed compatible with Christian asceticism, and the Christian readers of *TV* may have easily applied the imagery of the philosopher to that of Christian

[299] *TV* 33.5-8: ܗܝܢ ܕܦܠܘܣܘܦܝܣ ܕܠܐ ܐܡܪ ܠܟ. ܐܦܠܘܛܘܢ ܐܦܠܛܘ ܘ ܐܦܠܘܓ. ܒܪܝܫܐ ܕܐܢܛܝܣܬܝܢܝܣ ܕܐܠܦ ܠܗ ܗܢ ܫܒܝܠܐ ܕܢܗܓ ܠܐ ܡܢ ܕܒܥܝ

ascetics. The philosophical lifestyle proposed in the *De virtute* does not necessarily require involvement in society in traditional forms, and the piece argues that "in spite of conferring goods to him who looks for it, (the philosopher) should teach that poverty is not a bad thing; and to whom strives for a magistracy he shows that it is not advantageous for everybody to be a ruler, but for him who rules with wisdom."[305]

Unlike the translations of Plutarch and Lucian, however, *TV* contains a considerable number of explicit references to Greek philosophers and to their doctrines, although through anecdotes.[306] In particular, some of the philosophers' doctrines are expressed through the simile of the three roads, and one wonders whether *TV* may have been translated in Syriac as a text to be used in philosophical instruction. Themistius' *De virtute* appears as a speech originally delivered in front of Themistius' pupils, who were following a curriculum that combined the training in rhetoric with the study of philosophy.[307] The hypothesis that *TV* was used as a text for similarly philosophically-oriented instruction in Syriac, however, does not find much ground. The variance with translation technique of philosophical texts has been already mentioned,[308] and, at the same time, what remains of BL *Add.* 17209 contains morally edifying works rather than philosophical *prolegomena*. The following work by Themistius, the *De amicitia*, is, again, a private oration containing moral advice and without philosophic content.[309]

That the readers of *TV* in Syriac were led by a philosophical interest loses further ground when one looks into the only other manuscript containing the translation, where four excerpts from *TV* were used in the composition of a monastic anthology (*Sin. Syr.* 14). With the usual caveat about using manuscripts as evidence for the readership of the Syriac

[305] *TV* 47.10-14: ܠܡܐ ܕܡܬܚܙܐ ܠܗ ܡܢ ܒܥܐ ܠܗ ܡܕܝ ܐܦ ܡܢ

Themistius in the earlier centuries, it is, nonetheless, equally plausible that the later manuscript of Themistius depended on earlier monastic collections rather than on collections of philosophical texts. In fact, the four passages from *TV* found in *Sin. Syr.* 14 illustrate the impeccable conducts of the philosophers Heraclitus, Socrates, and Lysimachus respectively, and another is a piece of moral advice by Plato. The selection of the four passages reflects edifying rather than philosophical interests.

Unfortunately, *Sin. Syr.* 14 awaits to be thoroughly studied, and the available catalogue does not describe it in much detail.[310] The anthology contains soundbites from the homilies by Macarius of Egypt (trans. from Greek), a passage from Nilus of Ancyra (trans. from Greek), sentences from Cassian (trans. from Greek), passages from Isaac of Nineveh, a hymn by Isaac of Antioch, excerpts from Gregory of Nazianzus or Nyssa (trans. from Greek), the *History of the holy Dionysius* the Areopagite, a passage from Mark the hermit, passages about Ephrem, and much more before concluding with selections from Anastasius' *Narrationes* on the fathers of Sinai (trans. from Greek). The portion of the manuscript containing the excerpts from Themistius' *De Virtute* is so composed:

a.	f. 128^{r}	l. 22	*(Moral excerpts) from the philosopher Plato*[311]		
b.	f. 128^{v}	l. 23	*On the philosopher Dandamis*[312]		
c.	f. 129^{v}	l. 9	*On the philosopher Secundus*[313]		
d.	f. 129^{v}	l. 16	*On Pythagorean philosophers*[314]		
e.	f. 130^{r}	l. 11	*(Moral excerpts) from the philosopher Themistius*		
		i.	f. 130^{r}	l. 11	Heraclitus[315]
		ii.	f. 130^{r}	l. 27	Socrates[316]
		iii.	f. 130^{v}	l. 11	Plato[317]
		iv.	f. 130^{v}	l. 22	(the philosopher) Lysimachus[318]

[310] Smith Lewis 1894, 3; Brock 1999.
[311] *Inc.*: "From the philosopher Plato. No one can know himself except by means of virtuous conduct..." Ed. and trans. Brock 2012.
[312] *Inc.*: "Concerning a certain Didymus, a philosopher who was naked and lived in the wilderness. When king Alexander (the Great) heard about him, that he was a sage, he sent his messenger to him..." Ed. and trans. Brock 1999, ii.
[313] *Inc.*: "Now Secundus the philosopher used to preserve silence all the days of his life, and he did not (ever) speak. The king of the Greeks..." Ed. and trans. Brock 1999, iii.
[314] *Inc.*: "In the time, one hundred and seven Pythagorean philosophers gathered and kept silence. While they were wondering in their silence about the course of this world..." Brock 1999, 48.
[315] *TV* 40.21-41.16.
[316] *TV* 34.11-14; 35.3-9; 35.20-23.
[317] *TV* 44.7-21.

f.	f. 131^{r}	l. 3	*Letter by Gregory to Basil*
g.	f. 131^{r}	l. 13	passage from Cyril of Alexandria [uncertain]
h.	f. 131^{r}	l. 28	passage from Cyril of Alexandria [uncertain]
i.	f. 131^{v}	l. 21	*(Excerpt) from a philosopher*[319]

The excerpts contained in the present section of the manuscript deal with praiseworthy deeds by various philosophers and take the form of anecdotes illustrating impeccable behaviours.

The piece (*b*) on Didymus (*sic*) is, in fact, an anecdote about the encounter between Alexander the Great and the Brahmin Dandamis, who, according to the account, used to live naked in the wilderness. The maxim he pronounced in front of Alexander –"learn this from me, that you shall not desire anything, and then everything will be yours! For desire is the mother of poverty!"– gained for Dandamis Alexander's highest respect, together with lots of precious presents that, with the exception of the oil, the Brahmin would return to the sender. The Syriac text appears to be an abridged version of a passage from the *De gentibus Indiae et Bragmanibus* attributed to Palladius,[320] although, interestingly, the closest textual similarities are with a second-century AD Cynic papyrus.[321]

The next passage (*c*) deals with the "philosopher Secundus." According to a widespread legend, Secundus –sometime a Cynic, sometime a Pythagorean, and sometime a martyr– did not give up his vow of silence even under threat of death by the Emperor Hadrian. The narrative had wide diffusion in Greek, Syriac, Arabic, Armenian, and Ethiopic.[322] Since the version attested in *Sin. Syr.* 14 shares some features with the one reported in the *De perfectione religiosa* by the Syrian Isaac of Nineveh (late seventh century) after a reference to Dandamis, it is likely that Isaac of Nineveh and the compiler of our anthology were dependent from an earlier common source where Dandamis and Secundus were already in sequence.[323] The following passage (*d*), which remains unedited, elaborates on the anecdote of a group of

[318] *TV* 45.9-46.5.
[319] *Inc.*: "Theon and SWNKWS went to Plato..." Brock 1999, 49.
[320] Palladius *De gentibus* 2.13-40 (*CPG* 6038); Brock 1999, ii. The attribution to Palladius is disputed. Also, the author claims to have collected the material from Arrian (1.15).
[321] *P. Geneva inv.* 271, ed. Martin 1959; Brock 1999, 40.
[322] Ed. Perry 1964; Bowersock 1969, 118-19.
[323] Brock 1999, 46-48, esp. 47 n. 21.

Pythagorean philosophers who made the vow not to speak for the rest of their lives.

The first excerpt from *TV* (*e.i*) is a passage about Heraclitus, who, through his example of a particularly modest diet, convinced the Ephesians to lead a simpler lifestyle than they were used to. Socrates (*e.ii*) follows, who, being questioned whether the king of Persia was a happy man, answered negatively, since the Persian king did not care for wisdom. It is in wisdom, according to Socrates, that the perfection of men lies. In the following passage drawn from *TV* (*e.iii*), Plato provides a comparison between dogs and philosophers: unlike dogs who love men whom they know and hate men whom they do not know, philosophers should not love men who give them presents but rather men who possess virtue. The fourth and last passage from Themistius' *De virtute* consists of an anecdote about Lysimachus (*e.iv*), who, thanks to the courage of a philosopher, entered a battlefield, walked calmly and unarmed between the two armies and, with a sign of the hand, put the battle to an end. The four excerpts from Themistius are edifying anecdotes about philosophers, and the underlying criterion of excerption is consistent with the edifying contents of the passages about Dandamis, Secundus, and the Pythagorean philosophers.

3.3.2 Friendship – Themistius, *Περὶ φιλίας*

Themistius' *De Amicitia* is a piece of moral advice about friendship. *TA* is a private oration likely to have been originally performed in a school environment, possibly at the presence of a "mixed urban audience."[324] In the description of friendship and in providing advice Themistius included a number of anecdotes drawn from Greek culture, from the natural world such as wild animals, and from men's customs such as hunting and the behaviour of

[324] Penella 2000, 17.

fathers and sons. The text follows an instructional tone, and it opens with an exhortation not to listen to and not "to exhort your children to read about Achilles' anger (*i.e.* the *Iliad*)," which in Syriac was replaced by "books full of anger and enmity." Indeed, Themistius lamented, despite its usefulness, the theme of friendship is not part of the students' curriculum (1).[325] As some anecdotes illustrate, true friendship is extremely precious (4).

The text proceeds by advising how one should select friends, for it is all-important to distinguish between good and bad ones (5). Themistius described what aspects one should look for in a friend, such as how he behaves with his family (7), how grateful he usually is (8), whether he is fond of money (11), and his moral behaviour in general (15). As for the behaviour to be kept with friends, to praise a friend according to measure is advisable (18), and constancy is necessary to preserve friendship (20). Competition between friends has to be condemned (21), and frankness is particularly important (22). It is necessary to admonish friends when they are wrong, but without excesses, like physicians who mix bitter medicine with something sweet (23). Slander, which is the most dangerous enemy of friendship, is the closing theme (24), and it is illustrated by a fable by Aesop (25). While the Syriac translation ends with the fable, the Greek text proceeds with two more chapters with mythological contents. Chap. 26 is a description of the Homeric Scylla as another symbol of slander; and chap. 27 is an account of Heracles at the crossroad drawn from Prodicus of Ceos. It is conceivable that the two passages have been omitted on account of their contents.

The advice proposed in the *De amicitia* is moral in nature and it closes with a long excursus on slander, the theme of *LC*. Again, to find the classical theme of friendship and its conventional imagery among readers with an interest in Christian asceticism is not as surprising as it may initially seem. In the early fifth century John Cassian had used literary traditions on friendship to describe and to explain how ascetic communal living could be

[325] *TA* 48.8-9: ܐܟܬܒܝܗܘ ܐܟܬ ܡܠܐ ܐܝܩܪ ܐܢܡܐ ܐܟܬ ܡܠܚܡ ܥܒܕ ܡܢܗ ܐܝܟ ܕܢܩܪܝ ܠܒܢܝܟ ܡܢ ܟܬܒ ܡܠܐ ܚܡܬ ܘܩܢܐ : τοὺς υἱεῖς ἀξιοῦτε μανθάνειν ἀρξάμενους ἀπὸ τῆς μήνιδος τῆς Ἀχιλλέως (ed. Downey 1971, 52.6-7).

achieved. Cassian's *Conference* sixteen juxtaposes references to classical literature, such as Cicero's *Laelius de amicitia*, with references to the Bible, such as *Psalm* 132, to deal with friendship. Following the literary and philosophical traditions, Cassian argued that friendship and charity, and ultimately ascetic communal living, can only exist among individuals of similar moral standing.[326] Cassian's choice to transmit the moralistic traditions about friendship from classical literature to Christian ascetic readers thus finds a counterpart in the Syriac transmission and transformation of *TA*. As one may expect, the Syriac translator omitted the reference to symposia, to the public baths, and to the theatre,[327] and, in the opening part of the oration, he added that the friendship he intended is ܗܘ ܕܐܝܬ ܒܗ ܫܦܝܪ ܚܝܐ ܠܓܒܪܐ ܓܡܝܪܐ ܕܐܬܝܠܦ ܠܗ ܠܡܗܘܝ "the one that is cause of an excellent life for perfect men," possibly referring to the ethical nature of the friendship relation that he had in mind.[328]

3.4 Syriac ps.-Isocrates

3.4.1 'Philosophic instruction' – Ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum*

Ch. 2 has shown that a process of editing and Christianisation similar to that affecting Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius characterises also the Syriac transmission of an instructional text widespread at school, the ps.-Isocratean *Ad Demonicum*. The *Ad Demonicum* is an instructional text structured as a collection of moral recommendations addressed to a young boy. The text purports to be the advice sent by Isocrates to Demonicus, the orphan son of one of Isocrates' friends, Hipponicus. Demonicus is in his youth, for now "you (Demonicus) are

[326] Cassian, *Conl.* 16.2-3; Leyser 2000, 56-57.
[327] *TA* 272b.
[328] *TA* 266c.

ripe for philosophy, and I direct students of philosophy" (3).[329] The author is

> going to give counsel [...] on the objects to which young men should aspire and from what action they should abstain, and with what sort of men they should associate and how they should regulate their own lives. For only those who have travelled this road in life have been able in the true sense to attain virtue – that possession which is the grandest and the most enduring in the world. (5)

Demonicus' father "did not belittle virtue nor pass his life in indolence; on the contrary he trained his body by toil, and by his spirit he withstood dangers. He did not love wealth immoderately, but he (ܘ ܥܡܠ ܚܕܐ "toiled and" –the Syriac adds–) enjoyed the available goods as a mortal, and he cared for the rest as an immortal" (9).

At present, though, the author shall not go into greater detail to describe Hipponicus' lifestyle, "after whom you should pattern your life as an example," but he rather provides practical advice, for "as it is the nature of the body to be developed by appropriate exercises, it is the nature of the soul to be developed by moral precepts" (11-12). The precepts are grouped by theme, and they are presented in a gnomic format. The attitude towards the gods ("God" for the Syriac) comes as the first concern (13), then the behaviour towards the parents and the training of the body (14). Demonicus should be considerate and respectful (15-17), he should constantly cultivate knowledge (18-19) and be courteous in manners (20).

Not unlike the advice proposed in the other translations and *PE* in particular, self-control and self-imposed exercise are guidelines for the moral recommendations of *ID*. The author of the *Ad Demonicum* advised: "Train yourself in self-imposed toils, that you may be able to endure those which others impose upon you. Practise self-control in all the things by which it is shameful for the soul to be controlled, namely, gain, temper, pleasure, and pain" (21). The topic of *TA*, friendship, is dealt with extensively (22-28). There is the possibility that the Syriac translator intended to emphasise the ascetic tone of the advice, for the author's recommendation to "be content with your present lot, but seek a better one!" was replaced in in

[329] Trans. Norlin.

Syriac by: "may your possessions be enough for you, and do not hope for other things!"[330] Flatterers should be abhorred (30), courtesy should characterise human relations (31) and drinking parties (ἐν τοῖς πότοις συνουσίαι) should be avoided altogether (32), which the Syriac transformed into ܐܬܪܫܘ ܐܘܪܝ ܥܡ ܚܡܪܐ ܕܫܟܪܘܬܐ "do fear the beguilement of wine!"[331]

Both the body and the soul should practise exercise, and Demonicus should "strive with your body to be a lover of toil, and with your soul to be a philosopher" (40). A recommendation that can be found in the *Encheiridion* and was emphasised in *Par* is to keep silence,[332] which the author recommended to Demonicus

> for with many the tongue outruns the thoughts. Let there be two occasions for speech – when the subject is one which you thoroughly know and when it is one on which you are compelled to speak. On these occasions alone is speech better than silence; on all others, it is better to be silent than to speak (41).

The same recommendation is found in the narratives *On the philosopher Secundus* and *On Pythagorean philosophers* already found in *Sin. Syr.* 14 - the former is contained also in a manuscript of the Syriac *ID*.[333] The closing recommendation of *ID* takes the shape of an exhortation to imitate the bees, which are used to seek the best of each flower, and to sample the poets and wise men in search of useful knowledge (52). The contents of *ID* respond to instructional and moralistic aims in much the same way the select pieces by Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius do.

3.4.2 Syriac manuscripts of the *Ad Demonicum*

[330] *ID* 29: στέργε μὲν τὰ παρόντα, ζήτει δὲ τὰ βελτίω : ܫܦܝܪ ܗܘ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܐܠܗܐ ܛܒ ܗܘ ܕܐܝܬ ܠܟ ܡܢ ܢܦܫܟ ܛܒ ܗܘ ܕܕܥܬ ܛܒ [172.25]. The following sentence about fate is omitted in Syriac: "Taunt no man with his misfortune; for fate is common to all, and the future is a thing unseen."

[331] Another Syriac omission is: "Consider that the best thing we have from the gods is good fortune, so the best thing we have in ourselves is good judgement" (34).

[332] *Ench* 33.2-3 : *Par* 39; *Ench* 46.2 : *Par* 61; and the addition *Par* 58.

[333] Ch. 2.3.1 and 3.4.2.

The manuscript transmission of the Syriac *ID* does not overlap with that of the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, or Themistius, and the three manuscripts of *ID* do not contain the text of any of the other three Greek authors. Whether such a phenomenon should be attributed to the limited number of surviving manuscripts or to the fact that the translation of *ID* originated from a different environment is hard to say. While two manuscripts of *ID* contain collections of Christian ascetic literature, another manuscript (BL *Add*. 14658, seventh century) contains a collection of secular texts, many of which have philosophical contents. The presence of *ID* in both traditions seems to attest to the impact of Greek literate education both among Syriac philosophical studies as well as among Syrian readers with an interest in ascetic practice.

Manuscript BL *Add.* 14658, possibly of Syrian Orthodox origin, dates back to the seventh century, it is written on two columns on parchment and, apart from the first quire and ten leaves throughout the manuscript, it is intact. Unlike the manuscripts previously encountered, the manuscript is not a collection of Christian texts. The heterogeneous, as much as unique, assemblage of philosophical, non-orthodox (though Christian) and non-Christian pieces, together with the lack of religious works, has prompted a scholarly debate about the origin of the collection. The manuscript contains:[334]

a.	f. 1^{r}	Sergius, *On the Aim of the Works of Aristotle* [the beginning is missing]
b.	f. 61^{r}	Porphyry, *Eisagoge* (trans. from Greek)
c.	f. 73^{r}	Porphyry, *Divisions* (trans. from Greek)
d.	f. 73^{r}	Aristotle, *Categories* (trans. from Greek)[335]
e.	f. 92^{r}	Extract from Dionysius Thrax, *Techne Grammatike* (trans. from Greek)
f.	f. 94^{r}	Anon., *On the Prior Analytics*
g.	f. 99^{v}	Alexander of Aphrodisias, *On the Cosmos* (adapt. from Greek)
h.	f. 107^{v}	Ps.-Aristotle, *On the Cosmos* (trans. from Greek)
i.	f. 122^{r}	Ps.-Aristotle, *On the Soul* (trans. from Greek)
j.	f. 124^{v}	Sergius, *On Genus, Species and Individuality*
k.	f. 129^{r}	[Bardaisan] Anon., *The Book of the Laws of the Countries*
l.	f. 141^{r}	Sergius, *On the Action of the Moon* (adapt. from Galen)
m.	f. 149^{v}	Paulus Alexandrinus, *Eisagoge*, chap. 28 on the sun (trans. from Greek)
n.	f. 149^{v}	Bardesanite *Signs of the Zodiac*
o.	f. 150^{r}	Anon., *Socrates* (dialogue with Erostrophus on the soul)

[334] Wright 1872, III 1154-60.
[335] King 2010a.

p.	f. 155^{r}	Ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* (trans. from Greek)
q.	f. 161^{r}	Ambrose, *Hypomnemata* (adapt. of Ps.-Justin *Oratio ad Graecos*)
r.	f. 163^{v}	*Sayings of Menander*
s.	f. 168^{r}	*Short Articles on Terms of Logic*
t.	f. 172^{r}	*Sentences of Pythagoras*
u.	f. 176^{r}	Ps.-Melito, *Apology*
v.	f. 181^{v}	*Letter of Mara bar Serapion*
w.	f. 185^{v}	*Sayings of Plato*
x.	f. 185^{v}	*Advice of Plato to his disciple*
y.	f. 186^{v}	*Plato's definitions of faith, God, love and righteousness*
z.	f. 186^{v}	*Sayings of Theano*

The collection has so far escaped a unitary explanation, and it may have originated as the private collection of a scholar.[336] Although the assemblage is diverse, it is possible to recognise that the texts are arranged in different groups according to their contents. Works *a* to *f* deal with Aristotelian logic and relate to the *Organon*, which occupied the first stage in the curriculum of philosophical instruction according to the late Antique Alexandrian tradition.[337] Since it responds to the same logical interests, *j* should also be included into the first group. In the first group of texts, Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536) appears as both author and translator.

The following works reveal an interest in cosmology. The second group of works, from *g* to *i*, is also characterised by the agency of Sergius, who translated *g* and *h*. There follow pieces about cosmology (*l* and *m*) and of Bardesanite origin (*k* and *n*). The fourth group of works, from *p* to *z*, however, is quite different, and it consists of pieces of much simpler contents. The *Ad Demonicum*, the short definitions and the elementary instructional texts mostly have morally edifying contents and are intended for a less advanced audience. Ps.-Justin's *Oratio ad Graecos* provides a handy (and condemnatory) summary of pagan mythology. In order to explain the group *p* to *z*, Daniel King put forward the hypothesis of a *corpus rhetoricum* – a *corpus* of texts chosen for their rhetorical structure to be used as instructional texts, which originated in Edessa or a centre where Greek and Syriac language and culture were blended to a considerable extent.[338]

[336] See different hypotheses in King 2011 n. 6; Camplani 1998.
[337] Zimmermann 1981; Watt 2008.
[338] King 2011.

The opening part of the manuscript is characterised by the agency of Sergius of Resh'aina (d. 536), a scholar and archiatros who, as Paolo Bettiolo has emphasised, was related to the lay town elites, as opposed to monastic environments. The interests of Syriac-speaking elites in the study of Aristotelian philosophy may have prompted the translations of texts contained in BL *Add*. 14658, and, perhaps, the very composition of the assemblage or of groups within it.[339] The group of edifying and instructional texts of Greek origin from *p* to *z*, however, is of a much simpler nature, and it found its way to the Syriac-speaking lay elites as well as to ascetic readers, as the other manuscripts of *ID* show, for they preserve *ID* among texts of a monastic nature (BL *Add.* 14614 and BL *Add.* 14620). The Syriac transmission of *ID* reveals the osmosis between secular traditions of literate education and the literary interests of Christian readers concerned with ascetic practice.

The last group of works in BL *Add.* 14658 (*p* to *z*), which includes the *Ad Demonicum*, appears self-standing and not obviously related to the rest of the collection. In fact, a reduced version of the group, including *ID*, found its way to another manuscript, a monastic anthology. The manuscript BL *Add.* 14614, which was possibly of Syrian Orthodox origin, was written in a neat and regular hand on parchment during the eighth century.[340] The manuscript lacks both beginning and end, and the surviving 48 leaves, which have been later rebound and are now numbered from f. 80, contain:

a.	f. 80^{r}		John the Solitary, *Paraenetic discourse*
b.	f. 90^{r}		Excerpts from *Lives of the Egyptian Fathers*
c.	f. 109^{v}		Two discourses by Ephrem
d.	f. 114^{r}		*Sayings of the philosophers*, namely
		i.	f. 114^{r} from Ps.-Isocrates' *Ad Demonicum*
		ii.	f. 116^{r} from the *Sentences of Menander*
e.	f. 117^{v}		*Counsels of the philosophers*
f.	f. 118^{r}		*Advice of Plato to his disciple*
g.	f. 119^{r}		*Sayings on the soul*
h.	f. 122^{r}		Four *Canticles* by Jacob of Sarug

It is possible to recognise traces of the fourth group of instructional texts attested in manuscript

[339] Bettiolo 2003, 99-103.
[340] Wright 1872, ii 745-746 (dcclxxiii).

BL *Add.* 14658. Passages from *Ad Demonicum*, the *Sentences of Menander*, –further research will show whether there is any relation between the *Counsels of the philosophers* of BL *Add.* 14614 and the *Sentences of Pythagoras* or *Sayings of Plato* of BL *Add.* 14658–,[341] and the *Advice of Plato to his disciple* are presented in the same order in the two manuscripts. The shortening process that affected the texts belonging to the fourth group of texts included a reworking of the *Ad Demonicum*, now formatted as a collection of sentences. *ID* and the accompanying instructional texts respond to an ethical interest.

Evidence for an interest in the morally edifying contents of *ID* comes also from its third Syriac manuscript, which also contains a monastic anthology. The manuscript BL *Add.* 14620, possibly of Syrian Orthodox origin, was written in the ninth century in a neat and regular hand on two columns on parchment. Out of the fourteen quires that constituted the manuscript, only portions of the last five remain, containing:[342]

a.	f. 1^{r}		A list of Greek names [the beginning is missing][343]
b.	f. 1^{r}		*On the philosopher Secundus*
c.	f. 2^{r}		Ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Demonicum* (trans. from Greek)
d.	f. 4^{v}		Account of the translations of the Old Testament and on works by Origen
e.	f. 5^{r}		Extracts from the sixth book of Eusebius, *HE* (trans. from Greek):
		i.	f. 5^{r} chap. xvi, on Origen
		ii.	f. 5^{r} chap. xvii, on Symmachus
		iii.	f. 5^{v} chap. xxv, on the Scriptural Canon of Origen
f.	f. 6^{r}		Epiphanius of Salamis, *On weights and measures* (trans. from Greek)
g.	f. 22^{r}		Basil, *To those entering ascetic life* (trans. from Greek; dub.; *CPG* 2890)[344]
h.	f. 25^{v}		Explanations of a few Greek words
i.	f. 26^{r}		Ahudemmeh of Tagrit, *On the composition of man*[345]
j.	f. 28^{r}		A geographical treatise: *Delineation of the habitable world*
k.	f. 29^{v}		David of Beth-rabban, *On Genesis chap. x* [the end is missing]

Here, the *Ad Demonicum* seems to have entered the anthology independently, and not within the group of texts mentioned above, since *ID* follows instead the edifying narrative on Secundus.

[341] Five *Sentences of Theano* of BL *Add.* 14658 reappear in BL *Add.* 14614 under the name of Plato, see Possekel 1998, 14.
[342] Wright 1872, ii 801-804 (dccc).
[343] Inc.: "[...] Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, Homer, QPLYNWS, Solon, Theognis, Heracles, Pericles, Euclides, Sophroniscus, Pythagoras, ..."
[344] Brock 2001, 175; Engl. trans. from Greek in Clarke 1925, 73-75 (*PG* 31.648-52).
[345] Excerpts; ed. in *Patrologia Orientalis* 1905.

It is not possible to know what texts originally opened the collection, but it seems that the surviving works have been arranged according an increasing degree of complexity. The surviving part of the collection begins with a list of names, and it moves on to the narrative *On the philosopher Secundus*, which states the importance the philosopher-martyr credited to silence, before proceeding with the moral precepts of *ID*, and then to the description of the structure and text of the Bible. With the caveat of the time gap between the composition of the Syriac *ID* and the Abbasid ninth century, the anthology of BL *Add.* 14620 appears to have been structured to serve as a collection of curricular texts within some sort of literate instruction (*b* and *c*) with prominent Greek elements (*a*, *b*, *c* and *h*), with an emphasis on biblical studies (*d*, *e* and *f*), and Christian ascetic life (*g*).

3.5 Conclusion

The present chapter has explored the relation between the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius and early Christian asceticism. Textual transformation carried out during the transmission into Syriac, the morally edifying contents that characterise the pieces, the manuscript transmission within monastic and instructional anthologies, and the quotations and uses of the texts by Christian ascetic authors have revealed that their Syriac readers were primarily interested in the moral advice proposed in the pieces and that they found them in accordance with their conception of Christian asceticism. Despite the fact that Syriac literature had Christian ascetic traditions of its own, the Syriac translators of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius understood the traditional imagery of the philosopher as coherent with

Christian asceticism, and the audience was similarly expected to do so.[346] Pieces of moral advice on themes such as anger, hostile criticism, ascetic exercise, slander, a morally sound conduct, and friendship are common within early Christian ascetic literature, primarily represented by Basil of Caesarea, Evagrius Ponticus, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Cassian and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.

[346] For Syrian ascetic traditions see Griffith 1998.

4. The link to literate education: textual form and choice of the texts

4.1 Early monastic literature and literate instruction

4.1.1 John the Solitary and the use of edifying anecdotes

4.1.2 Rufinus and the *Sentences of Sextus*

4.1.3 Instructional composition in the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius

4.2 Selection of the texts and Greek *paideia*

4.2.1 Plutarch's *Moralia* and literate education

4.2.2 Lucian and his fortunes

4.2.3 Themistius and the students

4.2.4 *Ad Demonicum* and elementary instruction

4.3 Conclusion

The present chapter addresses the connection between the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius and literate education in late Antiquity. Such a link is revealed by two sorts of evidence, internal to the texts and external to the texts. The former consists of instances of instructional composition that appear in the texts and result from the process of textual transformation (4.1). The latter is revealed by the choice of the texts to translate, whose selection betrays familiarity with late-Roman *paideia* (4.2). Building on the conclusions of the previous chapter, it will be argued that the Syriac translations under analysis bring together elements of early ascetic instruction with the tradition of rhetorical education in Greek.

4.1 Early monastic literature and reproduction of texts

A strand of Christian ascetic literature written between the fourth and the sixth century is characterised by conspicuous didactic features and has been labelled as "instructional monastic literature." In this strand, Andrew Louth included monastic rules, letters providing instructions in the monastic life, the Evagrian monastic *corpus*, John Cassian's works, and the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.[347] Such literature plays an important role in our understanding of late-antique cultural life, and it provides ample scope for a research approach that shifts the analysis from the level of the *opus operatum*, the instructional texts, to the level of the *modus operandi*, the cultural practice that can be inferred from the texts.

Among the earliest and most influential pieces of monastic literature, the *Life of Antony* presents its protagonist playing a teaching role, as is attested in Antony's long discourses on demons and with the pagans. Antony is repeatedly approached with requests for teaching and

[347] Louth 2004, 377-80.

advice; and he imparts wisdom and instructs others on occasions of encounters or of visits to the city, where he is conscious that his role is an exemplar to others.[348] A role parallel to that of Antony, however, is the one the *Life* asks from its very readers. By directly addressing the audience, the closing section of the *Life* breaks the fictional dimension, and it invites the reader to take action in the first person, by reading the *Life* to other brothers:

> Therefore, read (ἀναγνώτε) the present account to other brothers so that they may learn what kind of life monks ought to live and may believe that our Lord Jesus Christ glorifies those who give glory to Him. Not only does He lead into the kingdom of heaven those who serve Him to the end, but even here, although they hide themselves and are eager to withdraw from the world, He makes them known and celebrated everywhere, both on account of their own virtue and on account of the help they give to others.
>
> If the need arises, read this also to the pagans so that they too may know in the same way that not only is our Lord Jesus Christ God and the Son of God, but also that those who truly serve him and faithfully believe in him are repudiating the demons whom the pagan themselves believe to be gods. Not only do the Christians prove that these demons are not gods, but they also trample on them and run them off because the demons are deceivers and destroyers of humankind.[349]

Not unlike Antony, the readers are thereby invited to take action and address Christians and, if necessary, also pagans. A compatible scenario in the Latin-speaking world is depicted by John Cassian in *Conference* 14, where expert monks are intended to play the role of teachers.[350]

Accordingly, Claudia Rapp has demonstrated the importance of instructional monastic literature in understanding the role Christian ascetics played in late antique society. A research approach that is not limited to the analysis of the saints' lives and hagiographic literature written posthumously but that takes into account the documents written during the holy men's lifetime, such as letters and aphorisms, provides snapshots of Christian ascetics in action within specific historical contexts, *in primis* when they interacted with their followers or opponents. Rapp's approach does justice to the diversity that characterises early monastic literature, and it ultimately provides more encompassing models of analysis than that of a hagiographic codified literary genre that finds limited validation on the ground.[351]

[348] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Antony* 16-44, 70, 74-80; Cameron 2000, 77-79.
[349] Athanasius of Alexandria, *Life of Antony* 94 (trans. Vivian 2003, 259, at times different).
[350] Cassian, *Conf.* XIV 4.3, 9, 10, 13.3-4, 14, 16.6-9, esp. 17, 18; Leyser 2000, 53-56.
[351] Rapp 1999.

Building on the work of Hippolyte Delehaye, Rapp's definition of early hagiographic literature is functional, and it takes into account the didacticism characterising hagiographic writing. The hagiographical genre can be understood as sharing a common purpose, and "this common purpose was not the propagation of the cult of one particular dead saint, but the spiritual advancement of any number of disciples of an abba who followed his example in deed and adhered to his teaching in words." A characteristic feature of early hagiographic writing is the protreptic and educational intent. The primary aim of the hagiographic writer "is not to make a saint by celebrating the subject of his narrative, but rather to make saints out of those who encounter his work."[352] On the basis of instructional composition in the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, it will be argued that the enterprise of Syriac translation of our *corpus* of Greek secular literature responds to a very similar didactic concern.

The uses and re-uses of the *Apophthegmata Patrum* in ascetic literature, which were reproduced within early hagiographic writings, have provided a model of the functioning and development of early Christian hagiographic writing.[353] The instructional nature and the easily reproducible format of the *Apophthegmata* must have played a pivotal role in their diffusion and popularity. Recent research developed within the study of education in the social sciences has argued that the reproducibility of pieces of knowledge (a meaningful piece of text in our case) constitutes the goal of an instructional relationship. Accordingly, a fundamental concern by an instructor is the reproducibility of the knowledge he imparts.[354] By relying on the evidence of the textual form of the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, and it will argued that the changes applied to the texts are indicative of a concern for their reproducibility within Christian instructional settings.

[352] Rapp 2010, 129-30.
[353] Rapp 2010. Joest 2002, for instance, showed that a later redactor of Pachomius' *Letter* 3, possibly Pachomius' disciple Theodore, added to Pachomius' text words drawn from an *apophthegma* authored by Isidore of Scetis. Hermit Isidore's words are found woven into Pachomius' letter without any acknowledgement of their real author, following a practice similar to the use of passages from the Scriptures by Christian authors.
[354] For an example about the use of the concept of reproducibility in the social sciences see Bourdieu 1991.

4.1.1 John the Solitary and the use of edifying anecdotes

John the Solitary, a prolific Syriac author living in the first half of the fifth century has already been encountered in the present analysis. John was probably familiar with Greek, and his works show that he may have been trained in medicine before adopting an ascetic lifestyle.[355] John calls himself a ܝܚܝܕܝܐ [*iḥīdōyō*], a "solitary," and most of his literary output was primarily addressed to an ascetic readership and had a considerable diffusion.[356] Two among his surviving works are especially intriguing, since they have the form of dialogues, and they betray some familiarity with the dialogic genre of the Greek literary tradition. The two dialogues are relevant to the present analysis because of the instructional relations in ascetic settings that they reveal.

John's *Six dialogues with Thomasius* deal with philosophical and theological issues concerning the soul and its relation to virtues and passions, and with the spiritual and ascetic life;[357] the *Four dialogues with Eusebius and Eutropius on the soul* deal with the existence of the soul and the incorporeal, with the body, the angels, the creation and divine economy.[358] Both dialogues feature their author successfully arguing with less experienced monks, all of whom, incidentally, bear Greek names. Both works are set in Christian ascetic milieux –John's ܟܘܪܚܐ [*kūrḥō*], "cell," for the *Four dialogues*–,[359] as the repeated references to the daily prayer constantly remind us.[360]

The occasions of John's encounters with his interlocutors in the two dialogues are

[355] Ch. 3.2.1-2; Nin 2005, 95-96; Brock 1997, 31-32; Di Berardino 2006, 454-56.
[356] Brock 1997, 31-32; Hausherr 1939, 91-92.
[357] Edition and German translation in Strothmann 1972; French translation in Lavenant 1984, 47-119.
[358] Edition in Dedering 1936, and French translation in Hausherr 1939.
[359] 1.6.
[360] The references to the prayers are at the beginning of most dialogues.

intriguingly similar. Thomasius, Eusebius, and Eutropius have all spent some time as hermits (Thomasius after gaining the ܚܟܡܬܐ ܕܐܘܪܝܬܐ ܕܝܘܢܝܐ "wisdom of the education of the Greeks"),[361] when they got to know John through literary pieces that John himself had written: a book of hymns for Thomasius; and a letter for Eusebius and Eutropius. Positively impressed by the reading, which Eutropius described as cardinal as Paul's conversion, the young hermits took the decision to meet John in person; and they approached him with a number of questions about the soul, about the body and about divine economy.[362] Also, Thomasius confessed that his doubts derive from the variance he found among the opinions of pagan poets.[363]

The scholar who approaches John the Solitary's dialogues in search of traces of argumentative debate would probably be disappointed. The speakers raise their doubts and questions to John, but they gratefully accept the explanation they receive without any major objection. Their attitude towards John is well represented by their admiration for the solitary, which itself led the monks to John's cell, and thus provided the occasion for the encounter.[364] Despite his declarations of modesty, John's authority and superior experience in monastic life emerges from the tone of the dialogues;[365] and, in fact, in spite of contrasting arguments the reader is confronted with what looks very much like a teacher-pupil relation.[366]

The instructional relation among the speakers of John's ascetic dialogues becomes striking in the *Four Dialogues*. Here John drew anecdotes from straightforward imagery, such

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[361] 1.5.

[362] 15.4-7: ܟܝ ܗܝܢ ܕܗܘܐ ܠܦܘܠܘܣ ܗܘܐ ܠܢ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܫܒܚ ܘܚܕܐ ܒܟܝ ܕܗܘ ܡܗܝܡܢ ܕܒܢܡܘܣܐ ܕܫܪܝܪ ܗܘ ܐܦ ܗܘ ܕܫܪܝܪ ܗܘ ܕܟܠ ܡܕܡ ܐܠܐ ܕܥܕ ܕܩܒܠ ܝܕܥܬܐ ܕܡܫܝܚܐ. "what happened to Paul happened to us too. Indeed, he boasted and rejoiced for his Law-abiding conduct, for he believed that (following the Law) constitutes the perfection and that nothing else does so, until he received the knowledge of the Messiah."

[363] 1-7; in fact Thomasius uses the word ܦܘܝܛܐ [*pūyiṭē*] "poets" (1.21), see Lavenant 1984, 48 n. 1.

[364] *E.g*. 80.3-6: ܫܠܚ ܐܢܬ ܠܢ ܛܒܬܐ ܣܓܝܐ ܒܢܦܫܢ ܒܝܕ ܕܒܪ ܡܕܥܬܐ ܕܐܢܚܢ ܩܢܝܢ ܥܡ ܫܘܒܚܟ. ܫܒܚ ܘܫܦܪ ܠܡܢ ܕܝܗܒ ܠܟ ܗܟܝܠ ܡܬܢܐ ܗܢܐ. "you have laid a pile of good things in our soul through the acquaintance that we have (gained) with your virtue. We glorify and praise Him who gave you such a gift!"

[365] *E.g*. *Four Dialogues* 28.9.

[366] John the Solitary, *Four Dialogues* 55-56: when a monk named Isidore interrupts to argue against a Scriptural interpretation proposed by Thomasius, Thomasius replies, but it is only the intervention of John that once and for all states the correctness of Thomasius' point.

as the coxswain, animals and musical instruments.[367] The second book of the *Four Dialogues* closes with a series of morally edifying anecdotes, ܕܢܫܬܡܥ ܠܟܘܢ ܠܡܐ ܕܢܗܘܐ ܠܟܘܢ ܫܦܝܪ "so that their narration may be profitable for you" – John declared.[368] He then reports a series of fourteen anecdotes about generic wise men, saints, philosophers and hermits, all of which have moral contents.[369] For instance, the opening anecdote is about

> a **certain wise man**. In order not to be hindered from study, he ceased to live in the city, and he built for himself a cell outside the wall. He had next to his dwelling a piece of land that was cultivated with wheat, and he was always passing by its side. When somebody from his town asked him if its seed had sprouted, he replied: "I do not even know if it has been seeded!" Look how useful to the soul the love of study is! For, once the soul is accustomed to studying, it is not possible for the mind to wander outside it.[370]

It is regrettable that neither the editor nor the modern translator of the dialogue traced the origin of this and the other anecdotes reported by John. One exception is an anecdote about anger:

> a **solitary**, when his disciple broke the vessel that he used to drink and was expecting that (the solitary) would be angry at him since he did not own another cup, he said to his disciple: "Do not be worried about this, since nothing unbreakable has been broken!" He observed this precept in any situation.[371]

As mentioned in 3.2.1, Irénée Hausherr put the passage in relation with an anecdote reported in Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, although John the Solitary's anecdote on anger may derive from Epictetus or from a common source. Epictetus' text is as follows:

> For instance, when someone else's slave breaks a cup, our immediate reaction is, "It is just one of those things that happen." Realise, then, that when your own cup is broken, you must react in the same way as when someone else's cup was broken.[372]

Similarly, Hausherr proposed identifying another anecdote that John the Solitary ascribed to

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[367] Respectively 10; 26; 49.
[368] 50.15.
[369] 50.16-53.23.
[370] 50.16-23: ܗܘ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܐܢܫ ܐܝܬ ܠܗ ܕܢܩܘܡ ܠܡ ܡܢ ܣܦܪ ܕܢܫܬܘܩ ܠܡ ܡܢ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܘܒܢܐ ܠܗ ܒܪ ܡܢ ܒܝܬ ܣܦܪ ܘܗܘ ܠܗ ܒܪ ܡܢ ܒܝܬ ܣܦܪ ܐܪܥܐ ܕܙܪܝܥ ܚܛܐ ܘܗܘ ܒܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܥܒܪ ܥܠ ܓܢܒܘܗܝ ܘܟܕ ܫܐܠ ܠܗ ܚܕ ܡܢ ܐܢܫ ܡܕܝܢܬܗ ܐܢ ܙܪܥܗ ܐܬܦܪܟ ܐܡܪ ܠܗ ܠܐ ܝܕܥ ܐܢܐ ܐܢ ܙܪܥ ܐܬܙܪܥ ܗܐ ܚܙܐ ܡܐ ܢܝܚ ܠܢܦܫܐ ܕܢܣܒ ܠܝܠܦܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܐ ܕܐܢ ܐܬܪܓܠ ܢܦܫܐ ܠܠܝܠܦܢܘܬܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚ ܠܗ ܠܗܘܓܪ ܕܢܬܬܪ ܒܪ ܡܢ ܗܘ ܒܟܠ ܙܒܢ ܕܢܛܪ ܒܗ ܗܢ ܕܢܛܪ ܒܗ ܗܢ ܕܢܛܪ ܒܗ ܗ

ܓܒܪܐ ܕܐܠܗܐ ܘܒܫܘܦܪܐ ܐܦ ܒܦܝܠܣܘܦܝܐ ܐܬܦܢܝ ܗܘ ܓܒܪܐ ܗܢܐ “a man of God who was also admirably trained in philosophy” with the one pronounced by Abba Pityrion of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*.[373]

In the structure of the *Four Dialogues*, the switch from the use of themes of a philosophical nature to the narration of anecdotes in advertising an ascetic lifestyle is a considerable discontinuity. In spite of convincing through dialectic arguments, the anecdotes reiterate analogous models of worthy conduct, and they are intended to be inculcated in the mind of the interlocutors. After pronouncing the fourteenth and last anecdote, in the close of the second book, John admits that he narrated such stories

> on account of the simplicity of those brothers who were present (at the discussion) but have not completely understood what has been previously said; lest they withhold their good will, I wanted to help their minds through the narration of stories.[374]

In the fiction of the *Four Dialogues*, it is the expected background of the audience that prompted John to report such anecdotes. It is John’s assumption that a portion of the audience would be happy to hear about *exempla* of worthy conduct by generic wise men, saints, philosophers, and hermits. Instead, one should assume that Eusebius and Eutropius had experienced some sort of philosophical training to be able to understand and be happy with John’s preceding arguments. This must have been the case of Thomasius, who was allegedly educated in Greek, perhaps in Alexandria.[375]

To what extent this type of instructional interactions, either through philosophical arguments or through the narration of anecdotes, as it is depicted by the relation of John with his interlocutors, represents the cultural life of early ascetic communities is hard to say. One should be careful not to take the scenario evoked by John the Solitary as descriptive of the

[373] 77.7-13; Hausherr 1939, 92; *PG* 65.376; Wallis Budge 1904, 572-73; Ward 1975, 200.

[374] 53.23-54.1: ܒܓܠܝܐ ܕܐܚܝܢ ܕܗܢܘ ܕܗܘ ܒܗܘ ܒܫܡܥܬܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܐ ܫܡܥ ܗܘ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܗܘܢ ܕܐܬܝܢ ܠܗܘ

historical situation on the ground. Nonetheless, one can take the instructional setting as at least indicative of the didactic ambitions by the author, who plays a teaching role as a character of the dialogue, and it is possible to detect the instructional aims that guided the author in the composition of the dialogue.

While the dialogic outlook as much as the contents of about half of the *Four Dialogues* anticipate a learned audience, the same work also contains material that is more straightforward and could be used in an instructional relationship with disciples (or monks) with a less sophisticated training. In the fourth and last book of the *Four Dialogues*, Eusebius' request is surprisingly simple. Eusebius asks for the definitions of a series of more than sixty words with meanings more or less related to virtue, such as "sufferance," "poverty," "mercy," "charity," and so forth:

> in order that we may regard clearly the words that are said about virtue, we would like to learn the meaning of each of them, both physically and spiritually, for, with the understanding of their difference, our mind will be even more enlightened about the many varieties of virtue.[376]

John agrees in providing the definitions of this terminology, and, as a result, the fourth dialogue consists of a collection of definitions, not unlike those already encountered in the present analysis. As opposed to the dialectic arguments previously used in the *Four Dialogues*, which require familiarity with philosophic notions such as "element" (ܣܛܘܟܝܐܘܢ στοιχεῖον 1.14) and "substance" (ܐܘܣܝܐ οὐσία 2.1), the definitions respond to a concern for straightforwardness. The sentences could be easily understood and memorised without previous experience in philosophy, and they could be copied or reproduced in a wide range of contexts.

Outside the setting of the dialogue, the *Four Dialogues* can be understood as an instructional text containing material that could be used in instructional relations at different

[376] 80.7-11: ܕܢ ܕܢ ܠܟ ܡܢ ,ܡܠܐ ܕܒܗܝ ܫܡܝ ܒܟ ܕܚܙܝܢ ܕܢܬܒܝܢ ܕܡܬܩܪ ܒܪܫܬ ܡܢ ܡܐ ܕܢ ܕܚܙܝܢ ܒܗ ܕܢ ܕܒܫ ܕܫܡܝ ܕܒܟ

levels of advancement. In the *Four dialogues* John referred to the diversity of his audience's cultural background and he made assumptions about what could be reproduced in a particular context. John's choice to reproduce anecdotes and gnomic sentences was motivated by an instructional concern with a view to an audience not trained in philosophy. While there is no explicit reference to the historical audiences of the *Four Dialogues* as a whole, another instructional text of a similar nature provides precise indications about its intended uses as well as its afterlife, Rufinus' translation of the *Sentences of Sextus*.

4.1.2 Rufinus and the *Sentences of Sextus*

In the preface to his Latin translation of the Greek *Sentences of Sextus* (c. 400), Rufinus explained the reasons guiding his enterprise. The work was addressed to Apronianius, a Roman aristocrat, whose wife Avita, niece of Melania the Elder, had allegedly asked Rufinus to compose "a piece of text that would not require (great) effort to understand but equally instructive to read, in a straightforward language and intelligible enough." The reference was to the previous Latin translations by Rufinus, such as the one of Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν* (c. 398).[377] Rufinus accepted the task, and he chose to translate a booklet that was already circulating, a collection of Greek sentences attributed to a certain Sextus.[378]

The collection had been popular in Greek at least from the time of Origen, who drew quotations from it since it could provide gnomic summaries of aspects of Christian religion.[379] Rufinus, then, had an authoritative Christian predecessor, and he endorsed the circulating

[377] A similar emphasis of producing the translation of a straightforward work was premised to Rufins' translation of Origen's *Omilies* on Psalms 36-38 (c. 398), also addressed to Apronianus and also containing a reference to Avita: "so that the inspired utterance may reach not only men but also devout ladies, [...] for I fear that my pious daughter, your sister in Christ, may give me no thanks for my labour if she feels that because of the complexity of the questions it is always too difficult for her to comprehend." Chadwick 1959, 117 n. 1.
[378] Ed. Chadwick 1959, and Wilson 2012.
[379] Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.30; Chadwick 107-109.

tradition that behind the name Sextus one should actually recognize Xystus II, the heroic bishop of Rome who died under Decius' persecution.[380] The fact that the attribution to Xystus was not Rufinus' invention becomes clear from the comparison with the Syriac translation (fifth or sixth centuries), which derives the attribution to Xystus of Rome from the original Greek text. Also, Sextus' sentences preserved in John of Damascus' *Sacra parallela* (seventh century) are presented as by Xystus of Rome.[381]

In the preface to the Latin translation, Rufinus had been reasonably cautious about the authorship of the collection:

> I have translated Sextus into Latin, whom **they say** (*tradunt*) is the same person that among you, that is in the city Rome, is called Xystus, who was honoured by the glory of bishop and martyr.[382]

Possibly drawing on Evagrius Ponticus, Rufinus had also added to his translation a further concluding section (now lost), in the form of sayings by a religious father addressed to his son.[383] The diffusion of the Latin *Sentences* is witnessed by Jerome, who, fifteen years after the publication of the collection (and after the death of his one-time friend Rufinus),[384] was driven furious to see the success of Rufinus' venture (*per multas provincias legitur*),[385] especially because the book was "translated into Latin by a certain person who has tried to father it on the martyr Xystus, not observing that in the entire volume, which he purposelessly divided into two parts, the name of Christ and the apostles is not mentioned!"[386]

In fact, following Jerome's polemic, the issue whether the collection was authored by a pagan Sextus ("Sextus the Pythagorean, a man without Christ and a heathen!" according to Jerome)[387] or by a Christian Sextus, or by both at different stages, has occupied most modern

[380] Chadwick 1959, 133-34.
[381] Chadwick 1959, 130.
[382] Chadwick 1959, 9.6-8.
[383] Chadwick 1959, 117-18; Bogaert 1972.
[384] The Origenist controversy brought Rufinus and Jerome on opposing sides.
[385] Jerome, *Comm. in Ierem.* 4.41 (*CSEL* lix 276.13); another witness of the popularity of the work comes from Gennadius, *Vir. Inl.* xvii.
[386] Trans. Chadwick 1959, 119.
[387] Jerome, *Ep.* 133.3 (*CSEL* lvi 246-7); trans. Chadwick 1959, 120.

scholarship, which has instead not focussed on the dynamics and the aims of Rufinus' enterprise.[388] The work is a translation from Greek, and it has been chosen on account of its straightforward contents: it was allegedly translated for an aristocrat lady who did not have the chance to gain the philosophical and theological training necessary to understand a text such as Origen's *Περὶ Ἀρχῶν*. Behind the *tradunt* of Rufinus' preface, it may be even possible to see the translator's doubts concerning the Christian origin of the collection, but the uncertainty about authorship was not a problem for Origen or for Augustine. The latter, once confronted by Pelagius with some of the sentences in Rufinus' translation, did not at first venture to question their authority emanating from pope Xystus.[389]

Rufinus' translation is faithful to the Greek, and, in fact, there was no need to change the sentences in order to adapt them to Christian taste – and this had been one of the reasons behind their diffusion among Greek readers. Rufinus explained the choice of the piece on account of the contents of the work: Avita "will find it so concise that –she will see– it unfolds huge meanings in few lines, so mighty that a sentence of one line could be enough for the exercise of an entire life, so straightforward that a young woman, even if feeble-minded, may not beguile the person who reads claiming that she has missed the point. The work is so short that it could never leave her hand." And, accordingly, "I have added further chosen sentences addressed by a religious parent to (his son), but all (is) so brief that the little work may, in all right, be called *Encheiridion* in Greek, or *Anulus* in Latin."[390]

Rufinus' strategy proved successful, and what looked at first like a private enterprise – shrewdly placed in the hands of the aristocrat Apronianus in Rome– gained considerable

[388] For the link to the *Sentences of Pythagoras* see Wilson 2012.
[389] Chadwick 1959, 121-23.
[390] Chadwick 1959, 9-10: *hunc ergo cum legerit, inveniet tam brevem ut videat singulis versiculis ingentes explicare sensus, tam vehementem ut unius versus sententia ad totius possit perfectionem vitae sufficere, tam manifestum ut ne absens quidem legenti puella expertem se intellectus esse causetur. omne autem opus ita breve est, ut de manu eius numquam possit recedere totus liber [...]. Addidi praeterea et electa quaedam religiosi parentis ad filium, sed breve totum, ut merito omne opusculum vel enchiridion si Graece vel anulus si Latine apelletur*.

diffusion in the Latin-speaking world. Jerome's anathema was influential enough to affect Augustine, who in the *Retractationes* admitted that he learned too late that the *Sentences* were not genuine,[391] but not enough, for instance, to prevent Isidore writing that the collection had been, instead, *interpolated* by heretics, or to prevent the inclusion of some sentences in the monastic *Regula Magistri* (sixth century).[392] Rufinus' collection survives today in at least fourteen manuscripts, the earliest of which dates back to the seventh or eighth century.[393]

Rufinus' initiative was not unparalleled. Two independent Syriac translations were carried out from Greek in the fifth or early sixth century, of which the British Library alone possesses seven manuscripts.[394] The Syriac translations are freer than Rufinus', according to what one may expect from the Syriac translation of this period, and they attest to a tendency to import into the maxims a more explicit Christian slant.[395] A translation from Greek was carried out also into Armenian, where the *Sentences of Sextus* are found mingled in the tradition of Evagrius Ponticus; and, from Armenian, the *Sentences* were translated into Georgian.[396] The credit of being the earliest translation, though, goes to Coptic, since a fourth-century codex contains a translation possibly dating back to the end of the third century – around the middle of that century, in Alexandria, Origen was reading the Greek *Sentences*.[397]

The inclusion of some of Rufinus' *Sentences of Sextus* into the *Regula magistri* and into the ninth-century ps.-Isidorian *Decretals*, whose compiler regarded the *Sentences* as a genuine work by pope Xystus, as well as their translation and *fortuna* in Syriac and in Armenian ultimately attest to the diffusion of the *Sentences* in Christian ascetic settings. The expedient to present the second part (lost) of Rufinus' translation as the advice of a religious father to his son betrays the instructional purpose of the work, whose form is entirely gnomic. The piece

[391] Augustine, *Retract.* ii 47 (69); Chadwick 1959, 122.
[392] Chadwick 1959, 124.
[393] Chadwick 1959, 4-6; Bogaert 1972.
[394] The earliest manuscripts are dated to 562 and 569; De Lagarde 1858, xi.
[395] Bettiolo 2004; Carlini 2004; Brock 1980; Chadwick 1959, 6-7.
[396] For the translation into Armenian see Chadwick 1959, 7; for the Georgian see Poirier 1983, 17.
[397] Poirier 1983, 25; Wilson 2012.

Rufinus sent to Avita and Apronianus was intended to be used for educational purposes, and the gnomic form must have given the work a considerable potential for reproducibility and use as an instructional text, as Rufinus maintained in the preface.

Gnomic and easily reproducible formats contributed to the popularity and the diffusion of pieces of early ascetic literature such as the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the Evagrian monastic *corpus*. The *Apophthegmata Patrum* is, in fact, a collection of short anecdotes; and more than half of the Evagrian monastic *corpus* is configured as collections of sentences, which are at times presented in the format of a father's teaching to his son.[398] Some gnomic and instructional features in the texts of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius raise questions about the translators' efforts to render the texts, and meaningful excerpts in particular, easily reproducible in Christian instructional settings.

4.1.3 Instructional composition in the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius

As outlined in chapter 2, the contrast between the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius and their originals –and the case of the Christianised versions of Epictetus' *Encheiridion* is analogous– shows that a number of anecdotes have been omitted, proper names have been often generalised, and the references to pagan religion have been neutralised. Such changes contributed to the reproducibility of the texts, whose contents are primarily instructional, in Christian educational settings. Another set of changes, which is represented by the introduction or transformation of text into gnomic forms, similarly betrays instructional purposes.

[398] Sinkewicz 2003, xxi.

The analysis of the changes to the texts by Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius that betray familiarity with gnomic and instructional forms are by necessity limited to the texts whose original have survived: *PI*, *PU*, *LC* and *TA*. Here, the Syriac translators' additions are usually interpretative expansions that do not add anything new as far as the contents are concerned.[399] In a number of cases, however, the translators were concerned with the textual structure of the additions, and their expansions reveal the translators' familiarity with gnomic and instructional literature.[400]

The framework for the present analysis is provided by Alan Kirk's research on wisdom literature. Relying on the analysis of ancient wisdom literature in Greek (including the *Ad Demonicum*), Hebrew, and Syriac, Kirk proposed a definition of the features of the instructional speech genre. Kirk has shown that two elements are characteristic of the genre:

i. a *programmatic admonition*, which can be positive, negative, or both, and inaugurates the instructional speech composition;

ii. a more or less extended *course of argumentation*, which seeks to persuade of the reasonableness of the opening admonition, and motivates obedience to it through a variety of devices such as additional or reiterative admonitions, maxims, rhetorical questions, comparisons, examples, and so forth.[401]

When confronted with the rather puzzling transformation of the text in the following passage

[399] Two exceptions are the interpolation from Psalm 107.15 in *TA* 24a (277d-278a) : 63.11-18; and *TA* 17b (272c) : 56.18-19, where the addition of the second term of the simile, *i.e.* ܟܐܟܐ ܕܡܚܢ ܐܟܐܒܐ ܕܡܚܝܢ "as the sting that produces pain," possibly results from a too literal interpretation of κέντρον as "sting" rather than "spur" (Conterno 2007, 147).

[400] Further research on this aspect should rely on comparative analysis of Syriac interpolations in (possibly contemporary) translations. However, behind the additions in the earliest translation of Basil's *De Spiritu Sancto* (translated in the late IV century: Taylor 1999b, I xxv-xxvi) –a work rich in additions by the translator– there seems to be no similar stylistic concern for gnomic forms. See, for instance, Taylor 1999b, I 5.20; 6.1; 6.6-7; 6.15; 7.13; 7.14-15; 7.19-20; 7.21; 8.2-4; 8.14-16; 9.3-4; 9.15-17; 9.17-21; 9.23-24.

[401] Kirk 1998, 149-51; Wilson 2012, 29-32, for the *Sentences of Sextus*.

from *PU*, one suspects that the translator intended to rewrite the Greek text in order to create a similarly bipartite format, composed by a programmatic admonition followed by a course of argumentation:

i Ταῦτα μὲν οὖν αὐτοῦ τῆς δόξης ἔχει τεκμήριον μέγιστον, ἀλλὰ μεῖζον καὶ κάλλιον, ὅτι τῷ δικαίῳ χρῆσθαι καὶ πρὸς ἐχθροὺς ἐθισθέντες οὐδέποτε μὴ προσενεχθῶμεν ἀδίκως καὶ πανούργως τοὶς συνήθεσι καὶ φίλοις.

These deeds are the biggest proof of his [*i.e*. Cato's] repute; but a greater and nobler thing is that, when we are accustomed to be just even with enemies, we shall never deal dishonestly and knavishly with our acquaintances and friends.

ܗܠܝܢ ܥܒܕ̈ܐ ܠܐ ܒܠܚܘܕ ܡܣܬܟ̈ܢ ܠܗ ܡܢ ܫܡܐ ܕܫܘܒܚܐ. ܐܠܐ ܐܦ ܕܝܩܪ ܘܛܒ ܗܘ ܕܢ ܟܕ ܐܢܚܢ ܪܓܝܠܝܢ ܠܡܥܒܕ ܛܒ̈ܬܐ ܐܦ ܥܡ ܒܥܠܝ ܕܒܒ̈ܝܢ ܠܢ ܕܢܗܘܐ ܐܦ ܥܡ ܣܢ̈ܝܐ ܕܠܐ ܢܬܚܝܒ ܒܝܫ̈ܐ ܠܥܒܕ.

Not only do these deeds bring praise, but they are also very advantageous. Indeed, when we are accustomed to be just towards our enemies, we shall not be wicked at all towards our beloved ones.[402]

The Syriac translator substituted the reference to Cato with a moral exhortation, and the sentence that follows is rephrased so to constitute the supporting argument.

Kirk's survey shows that the basic bipartite format of instructional speech composition can be elaborated in different ways. In the following passage, the Syriac translator elaborated on an instance of instructional speech already present in the Greek text:

ii Φιλονεικίαν γε μὴν καὶ τὸ δύσερι καὶ πᾶσαν <***> ἐκποδὼν μεταστέον, οἷον σπέρματα ἔχθρας εὐλαβουμένους. Οὐ γὰρ ἐν ἀνταγωνισταῖς, ἀλλ'ἐν συναγωνισταῖς ἡ φιλία.

Competitiveness, contention and all <rivalry> should be put aside, (and we should) beware of them as seeds of enmity. For there is no friendship among enemies, but (there is) among fellow-combatants.

ܡܢ ܥܠ ܟܠ ܡܕܒ̈ܪ ܕܡܬܚܫ̈ܒ ܒܗ ܡܢ

of the words ܓܒܐ [*gabō*] "side" and ܙܟܘܬܐ [*zōkūtō*] "victory" attests to an interest in the format of the text as much as to the artificiality of the construction.

Among the stylistic conventions applicable to the basic bipartite format of instructional speech composition at the discretion of the composer, Kirk argued that "the most pervasive" is the practice of *repeating the programmatic admonition or maxim at the conclusion of the speech*, thus forming an *inclusio*. The repetition can be either verbatim or in synonymous expressions, and frequently the closing plays on the opening through inversions, antitheses, or reversals of various kinds. One wonders, then, how to understand the elaboration on a passage from *TA*, where the translator expanded the sentence in the following way:

iii Οὐκ ἄρα οὐδὲ ἐν φιλίᾳ τὸ σφόδρα. Ἑκατέρα γὰρ ταῖν <ὁδοῖν> ἄλλοσέ ποι ἐκφέρει ἢ ὅποι δεῖ καταλῦσαι. Ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπὶ κολακείαν ἄγει, τῆς δὲ ἐπ'ἔχθραν ἡ τελευτή.

Then, (there should be) no excess in friendship. Either <way> brings to somewhere other to where one should end up: the one leads to adulation, while the end of the other to enmity.

ܐܦ ܠܐ ܫܒܚ ܐܢܐ ܠܚܒܪܐ ܕܡܬܚܒ ܠܗ ܒܣܓܝ̈ܐ [63.1] ܐܠܐ ܕܐܦ ܒܚܒܐ ܕܣܓܝ̈ܐ ܠܐ ܡܫܒܚ ܐܢܐ ܠܚܒܪܐ ܕܡܬܚܒ ܠܗ ܒ

long to be reported in full. In *PU*, Plutarch reported an anecdote about the cytharedes who play much better when they are in competition with other players than when they train by themselves. Accordingly, Plutarch explained that one should take enemies as competitors for fame and he should regulate his actions and behaviour as if he were in competition with enemies. To this argument the Syriac translator added a reference to the specific example constituted by the cytharede mentioned only few lines above, thus forming an *inclusio*.[405] Another instance of *inclusio* is attested in *TA*, where, following a comparison between the practice of reproaching friends and that of healing the sick, the Syriac translator added a closing sentence that repeats the simile between the behaviour of a good friend and that of a physician.[406]

On other occasions, the use of additions and the restructuring of Greek passages as *inclusiones* is clearly aimed at the creation of self-standing gnomic sayings in Syriac. An example is provided by the two additions to the following passage:

iv	Καὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἄφιλα πολλὰ καὶ ἀπεχθῆ καὶ ἀντίπαλα τοῖς ἐντυγχάνουσιν, ἀλλ'ὁρᾷς ὅτι καὶ νόσοις ἔνιοι σώματος εἰς ἀπραγμοσύνην ἐχρήσαντο [...]	ܡܫܬܐ ܕܒ. ܐܝܟ ܕܠܚܫ ܒܢ ܐܒܝܟ ܕܐܒܝܟ ܡܢ ܐܒܝܩ ܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܒܝܟ ܐ. ܚܙܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܬ ܐ ܡܢ ܐ ܐ ܐ

Similarly, the following addition to the text of *PU* repeats the specific example of anger in the close of the course of argumentation:

v Αὕτη μὲν οὖν ἴσως οὐκ ὀργῆς ἰατρεία φανεῖται, διάκρουσις δὲ καὶ φυλακὴ τῶν ἐν ὀργῇ τινος ἁμαρτημάτων. Καίτοι καὶ σπληνὸς οἴδημα σύμπτωμα μέν ἐστι πυρετοῦ, πραυνόμενον δὲ κουφίζει τὸν πυρετόν, ὥς φησιν Ἱερώνυμος.

Perhaps this [*i.e.* gaining a delay] will not seem a cure for anger, but rather a respite and a guard for the mistakes of the irascible. Certainly the swelling of the spleen is a symptom of the fever, and once it has been calmed it assuages the fever, **as Hieronymus says**.

ܪܗܒܘܬܐ [193.15] ܐܦ ܠܐ ܐܝܟ ܪܗܛܘܡܝ ܒܥܝ. ܠܫ. ܟܕܐ ܕܐ ܕܟܝ ܐܬ. ܪܗܛܘ ܕܡ ܪܘܚܐ ܕܠܫ. ܐܦ ܗܝ ܪܗܛܘ ܪܗܛܘ ,ܡܠܐ ܕܡ ܪܗܛܘ. ܐܦ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛܘ. ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܐܦ ܪܗܛܘ ܪܗܛܘ. ܗܠܟ ܗܠܟ ܪܗܛ ,ܡܠܐ.

Hastiness is not therapeutic for anger, but it assuages it for a moment, as if it were a guard to it. Behold, the swelling of the spleen is due to fever, and the care of it brings the trouble to an end; *and the hastiness that comes from anger, it is the care of it that puts anger to an end*.[408]

The translation reveals a misunderstanding of the role of hastiness in quenching anger; yet, until the close, it follows the Greek. Here, the translator substituted the reference to Hieronymus of Rhodes with a reference to the already mentioned ܪܗܛܘܡܝ [*rhībūtō*] "hastiness" so to form an *inclusio*.

A few chapters above in the same work, the Syriac translator used a similar strategy to compose a gnomic sequence *ex novo*:

vi Καὶ πρῶτον μέν, ᾗ φησιν Ἱπποκράτης χαλεπωτάτην εἶναι νόσον ἐν ᾗ τοῦ νοσοῦντος ἀνομοιότατον αὐτῷ γίνεται τὸ πρόσωπον, οὕτως ὁρῶν ὑπ᾽ὀργῆς ἐξισταμένους μάλιστα καὶ μεταβάλλοντας ὄψιν, χρόαν, βάδισμα, φωνήν [...]

First of all, **as Hippocrates says**[409] that the most dangerous disease is that in which the aspect of the patient becomes most unlike how it was, so firstly I saw that those who are moved by anger are also changed in (their) countenance, skin, gait and voice.

ܡ ܪܗܛ ܪܥܝܚܬ ܪܝܫܐ. ܟܬܒ ,ܟܡ ܕܡܪܝ ܪܗܛ. ܠܫ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܚܫ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܪܗܛ. ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܐܦ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܐܦ ܪܗܛ ܪܗܛ ܕܡ ܐܦ

appearance of the irascible. The addition in the closing plays on the same correlation between the inner condition of the angry person and his appearance, ultimately rewriting the Greek in the form of a self-standing gnomic sequence that is not contingent to the reference to Hippocrates or to Plutarch's experience of the angry.

Conversely, other additions to the texts do not follow the structure of conventional gnomic composition, but they rather add instructional and moralising recommendations to the texts. In such additions too, it is possible to detect the translators' instructional and didactic aims. An example comes from *PU*, where the translator interrupted the Greek text in order to add a moral remark that follows the general meaning of the piece:

vii	Ἐφεδρεύει σου τοῖς πράγμασιν ἐγρηγορὼς ὁ ἐχθρὸς ἀεὶ καὶ λαβὴν ζητῶν πανταχόθεν περιοδεύει τὸν βίον, [...]	ܥܩܒ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܥܩܒ ܕܠܐ. ܡܬܒܥ ܠܟ ܟܠ ܕܐܪܚ ܕܠܐ ܢܢܘܚ ܡܢ ܡܒܥܐ ܐܪܚܝܟ. ܕܠܐ ܕܠܐ ܫܡ ܐܢ ܕܠܐ ܒܥܐ ܕܠܐ ܠܡܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ ܕܬܬ ܒܗ ܕܠܐ ܠܟ ܕܟܡܢ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ ܡܒܥܐ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ.
	The enemy, always awake, lies in wait of your deeds and patrols (your) life on every side seeking a grip; [...]	(The enemy) tracks your customs, he does not rest from inquiring into your ways, and he strives to find a cause against you, while he roams hither and thither. *Well then, his watchfulness does not harm you, but it recalls you to beneficial customs.*[411]

There is the possibility that this moral addition aimed to form a self-standing instructional sequence of text that could be extrapolated from the context.

Another instance in which the translator added a moral recommendation to the Greek text is found in *TA*:

viii	ἀπὸ τῶν σμικρῶν καὶ φαυλοτάτων ὡς ἂν δόξειεν ἀρχομένους, οἷον τοῦ προσορᾶν εὐμενῶς καὶ διαλέγεσθαι ἐπιδεξίως καὶ συμπαρακαθέζεσθαι καὶ συμβαδίζειν, καὶ δῆλον γενέσθαι ὅτι ἥδοιτο ὁρωμένῳ.	ܕܬܒܥ ܥܡܐ ܕܐܦ ܒܬܪܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܡܐ ܕܒܪ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܐܪܚ ܕܠܐ. ܕܥܒܕ [56.10] ܠܟ ܕܐܪܚ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ. ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܡܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܐܪܚ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܐܪܚ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܟ ܕܠܐ.
	We should begin with what might seem to be small and very insignificant steps, such as casting kind glances (at our friend), conversing with him tactfully, sitting and walking with him, and making it clear that	Let us begin from the very small things. First of all, let us look at them with (56.10) benevolence, and let us sit next to them with a pleasant talk; let us stick to their steps and let us show that we rejoice at their sight; *and let us implant in ourselves the customs that they*

[411] *PU* 3a (87b-c) : 4.6-9.

we are happy to see him. *have*.[412]

And a similarly instructional addition is found three chapters below:

ix [...] πρὸς ἑκάστην χρείαν τοῦ φίλου τὸ πρόσωπον οἰκεῖον μεταλαμβάνειν, ἐν ἀρρωστίᾳ μὲν ἰατροῦ, ἐν δίκαις δὲ συνηγόρου, συμβούλου δὲ ἁπανταχοῦ καὶ συνεργοῦ ἐπὶ τῇ γνώμῃ.

[...] you shall keep changing the role you play according to the need (of the friend). When he is sick, (play the role) of a physician; when he is in trials, (play the role) of a lawyer; play (the role) of an adviser on every occasion, and of a helper when he is taking a decision.

[59.10] ܐܢܬ ܗܘ ܒܪܝܫ ܡܢ ܕܝܠܗ ܕܚܒܪܟ ܒܟܝܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܝܥ ܐܝܟ ܕܐܣܝܐ ܒܥܕܡܐ ܕܡܪܝܥ ܐܝܟ ܕܦܣܩܢܐ ܒܥܕܡܐ ܕܕܝܢܐ ܐܝܟ ܕܦܣܩܢܐ ܒܥܕܡܐ ܕܡܫܬܠ ܐܝܟ ܕܡܫܪܝܐ ܒܥܕܡܐ ܕܥܒܕ ܠܗ ܒܛܝܒ ܥܡ ܕܠܐ ܢܦܪܫ ܡܢ ܥܢܝܢܐ ܕܝܠܗ ܐܦ ܐܢ ܥܢܝܢܐ ܡܬܚܫܒܝܢ ܠܗ ܒܝܫ.

But you yourself shall promptly (59.10) participate in his grief, being like a doctor when he is sick, like a defender in the issues that are disputed; and you shall give him advice *without being detached from the issues, but rather bearing with him part of their burden, even if the issues are impure*.[413]

Another moralizing expansion that has been added to the text of *PI* betrays the translator's interest in proposing the moral advice in the form of anecdotes that the text provides:

x Καὶ δεινὸν οὐδὲν ἀρξαμένους ἀπὸ τῆς τροφῆς σιωπῇ χρήσασθαι τοῖς παρατυγχάνουσι, καὶ μὴ πολλὰ χολουμένους καὶ δυσκολαίνοντας ἀπερπέστατον ὄψον ἐμβαλεῖν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ φίλοις τὴν ὀργήν.

To start with food, it is nothing unpleasant to stay quiet with guests, and not, by being angry and peevish about many things, to throw to ourselves and to (our) friends the most unpleasing food, anger.

ܕܠܐ ܕܢܬܟܥܣ ܒܙܒܢܐ ܕܣܥܘܕܬܐ ܡܫܟ ܕܡܬܐ ܕܢܣܝܡ ܩܕܡܝܢ ܠܢ ܒܡܣܝܢ ܕܢܣܝܡ ܩܕܡ ܚܒܪ

sequences no longer tied to specific contexts. Other additions betray the instructional and moralising concerns guiding the transmission and transformation of the texts (*vii-x*). Similarly, the dialogue form that characterises the opening of *PI* was left out by the Syriac translator, and the Syriac *PI* is configured as a plain treatise on how to control anger based on practical advice and anecdotes that illustrate different behaviours. Didactic and instructional purposes guided the agency of the Syriac translators.

4.2 Selections of the texts and Greek *paideia*

The instructional purposes that textual transformation reveals finds a counterpart in the choice of the texts to translate. The selection of texts by Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius betrays familiarity with the *curricula* of Greek literate education. The enterprise of transmission and transformation was not an isolated cultural enterprise, but it instead uncovers a link with late Roman *paideia*. At the same time, however, the instructional and moralising uses that the Syriac translators made of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius find important parallels in the uses of the same texts by early Christian authors in the Greek-speaking world.

4.2.1 Plutarch's *Moralia* and literate education

The popularity and the diffusion of Plutarch in late Antiquity was considerable. Plutarch was read, quoted and hint at in a variety of fields, ranging from rhetorical studies and Christian theology, as is shown by late-Roman authors.[415] The picture of Plutarch's afterlife

[415] Bouton-Touboulic 2005; Garzya 1999; Russell 1973, 143-47; Hirzel 1912, 83-90.

coming from literary authors can be complemented by the twelve papyri (mostly from Egypt) of the Plutarchan *corpus* that have survived. The documents include two pieces from *PI* of unknown provenance: a second-century fragment from a papyrus roll and, interestingly, a fifth-century piece of parchment that was possibly written by a Christian hand.[416] The two documents may be understood as indicative of the widespread diffusion of *PI* among late-antique literates.

The fact that the *Moralia* and the *Lives* include a huge collection of straightforward anecdotes often leading to moral recommendation contributed to the diffusion of Plutarch among late Roman individuals who had attended literate education. According to the manual of rhetoric attributed to Menander, "Plutarch's *Lives* are very useful for the 'talk,' as for many other and varied educational uses. They are full of stories, apophthegms, and proverbs; it is useful to use these as ingredients of talks, so that we can get pleasures from them all."[417] The use of the anecdotes may have been particularly appreciated in elementary schools as well as in rhetorical settings as a tool to convey or illustrate moral concepts. The sophist Himerius identified his son Rufinus as "a descendant of Plutarch, through whom you (Athenians) educate the word,"[418] although Rufinus did not live long enough to outdo his ancestors by speaking "more eloquently than Plutarch;"[419] and it is conceivable that Eunapius of Sardis had instruction in mind when he named Plutarch ἡ φιλοσοφίας ἁπάσης ἀφροδίτη καὶ λύρα "the beauty and the lyre of all philosophy."[420]

Plutarch was common reading among literates who had undergone higher literate education provided by late Roman schools of rhetoric, and a familiarity with Plutarch's works

[416] Respectively *De cohibenda ira* 1 (452f) (*PSI* inv. 565, ed. Lundon 2004), *De cohibenda ira* 8 (457a) (P.Harrauer 1, ed. Funghi 2001, 1-6). An overview of published Plutarchean papyri can be found in Lundon 2004: with two attestations the *De cohibenda ira* gaines the first position in the *Moralia*, being level on points with the *Quaestiones convivales* and the *Quaestiones Graecae*.
[417] Menander Rhetor *Treatise II*, 392.28-393.1 (trans. Russell and Wilson).
[418] Himerius, *Or.* 7.4 (trans. Penella 2007).
[419] Himerius, *Or.* 8.2; Penella 2007, 19.
[420] Eunapius, *VS* 2.1.3.

was part of the cultural baggage of late-antique *pepaideuomenoi*. Likewise, Christian literates could be familiar with Plutarch, and, in the fourth century, Basil of Caesarea may well have drawn from Plutarch when he explained how a Christian could benefit from the study of Greek literature:

> As the bees, which –as opposed to the other animals– not only enjoy the perfume and the colour of the flowers but also extract honey from them, in the same way those who do not seek only delight and pleasure in such works can also derive from them some benefit for the soul.

Indeed, Plutarch had repeatedly used the same image.[421] It should be noted here that Basil's *Ad adulescentes* contains also a reference to an anecdote reported in *PI*. The Plutarchan work provided a narrative about the moderate reaction of Euclides of Megara towards the anger of τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ "his brother" (in Plutarch), which Basil replaced with τις "a certain man," possibly responding to an instructional concern not too dissimilar from that of our Syriac translators.[422]

Basil of Caesarea's letters attest another aspect of the relation between Plutarch and *paideia*. In the letters to governors and statesmen, Basil chose to report quotations or references to classical literature that ultimately underline a common cultural and social background of both the author and the addressees.[423] The use of Plutarch in Basil's letters responds to the same function, and Plutarchan anecdotes are employed to emphasise shared *paideia* in the correspondence with lay individuals. The phenomenon is witnessed by an *exemplum* about Demosthenes to open a letter to the provincial governor Candidianus,[424] and by an *exemplum* about Solon as a call into action to close the letter to Martinianus, a Cappadocian high dignitary.[425] In one of Basil's letters addressed to Olympius, governor of

[421] Basil, *Ad adulescentes* 4.8; Plut. *Quomodo adul.* 32ef, Plut. *De aud.* 41e-42a and Plut. *De prof. in virt.* 79c-d; Morgan 1998, 262-63.
[422] Plutarch, *De cohibenda ira* 462c; Basil, *Ad adulescentes* 7. A reference to a maxim by Solon (*Ad adulescentes* ix 20) is attested in different works by Plutarch, including the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* 11 (*Life of Solon* iii 3; *Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus* 78c; *De tranquillitate animi* 472e).
[423] Brown 1992, 40-46.
[424] Basil, *Ep.* 3; Plut. *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* 817c.
[425] Basil, *Ep.* 74; Plut. *Life of Solon* xxx.

Cappadocia, the short anecdote about Zeno who then pronounced the maxim "Fortune, you do well, who push us into the (philosophers') cloak!" may have been drawn from *PU*.[426]

The instructional use of anecdotes drawn from Plutarch's *Moralia* by Christian authors is not a fourth century innovation, but it dates back to at least Clement of Alexandria. The following is a Plutarchan anecdote that Clement made use of:

> **Theano**, in putting her cloak about her, exposed her arm. Somebody exclaimed: "A lovely arm!" "But not for the public," said she. Not only the arm of the virtuous woman, but her speech as well, ought to be not for the public, and she ought to be modest and guarded about saying anything in the hearing of the outsiders, since it is an exposure of herself.[427]

But, in the *Paedagogus,* Clement wrote:

> It is not seemly for **a woman** to strip bare any part of her body. And yet she could very decently answer to the one who says "what a lovely arm!" **that witty saying**: "but not for the public!" and (to) "what beautiful legs!" (she could) say "but (they are) of my husband alone," and (to) "what a pretty face!" "but (it is) only for the one who married (me)."[428]

Clement's version of the anecdote is anonymised, for "Theano" was replaced by "a woman," and it is expanded in its second part. The fact that the very same anecdote is once more reported in Clement's *Stromata* with the explicit attribution to Theano, points to the fact that the generalization was required by the nature of the *Paedagogus*.[429] While the *Paedagogus* is strongly characterised as a Christian instructional work, the *Stromata* deal with the truth hidden in pagan culture and philosophic traditions.[430] Similar instances of generalization of Plutarchan *exempla* in the *Paedagogus* are not rare, and provide an important precedent to the didactic practice of the Syriac translators.[431]

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[426] Basil, *Ep. 4*; Plut. *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* 87a.
[427] Plutarch, *Praec. coniug.* 142c (trans. Babbit).
[428] Clement of Alexandria, *Paedag.* ii 114.2: οὐδὲ γὰρ μέρος ὁτιοῦν ἀγαγυμνοῦσθαι γυναικὸς εὐπρεπές. καίτοι δυνατὸν ἀποφθέγξασθαι μάλα κοσμίως τὴν ἀστείαν ἐκείνην φωνὴν πρὸς τὸν εἰπόντα 'καλὸς ὁ πῆχυς', 'ἀλλ'οὐ δημόσιος', καὶ κνῆμαι καλαί', 'ἀλλὰ μόνου', φάναι, 'τοῦ ἀνδρὸς τοῦ ἐμοῦ', καὶ 'πρόσωπον εὐπρεπές', 'ἀλλὰ μόνον τοῦ γεγαμηκότος.'
[429] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* iv 121.2: οὐχὶ Θεανὼ μὲν ἡ Πυθαγορικὴ εἰς τοσοῦτον ἦκεν φιλοσοφίας ὡς πρὸς τὸν περιέργως ἀπιδόντα καὶ εἰπόντα 'καλὸς ὁ πῆχυς' 'ἀλλ'οὐ δημόσιος' ἀποκρίνασθαι.
[430] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* i 1.
[431] *Paedag.* ii 15.1 reports a maxim by Socrates (the explicit attribution to Socrates is only in *Stromata* ii 120.5; from Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 661f; the anecdote may originally come from Xen. *Mem.* 1.3.6); *Paedag.* ii 49.2 where an aphorism by Xenocrates is generalised and readapted (Plut. *De audiend.* 38b and *Quaest. conv.* 706c-d); *Paedag.* ii 25.1 reports an aphorism by Archias (Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 619d-e); and possibly *Paedag.* ii 30.3 where

The structure of the *Lives* and the *Moralia* in easily reproducible anecdotes with moral significance contributed to the afterlife of Plutarch among Christian as well as non-Christian authors. As far as Christian authors are concerned - and in particular Clement of Alexandria, Isidore of Pelusium, and Basil of Caesarea who made large use of the Plutarchan *corpus* - Marcello La Matina argued that Plutarchan anecdotes were mostly used and reproduced to illustrate instances of control over the emotions. La Matina's survey shows that the provision of moral advice guided the uses of Plutarchan anecdotes by Christians, and, ultimately, that the Syriac translators followed similar interests to their Greek-speaking counterparts.[432]

The emphasis on decorum in social and political settings, however, constituted a fundamental feature of the behaviour expected by the members of the upper-classed who were instructed in *paideia* in the late-Roman world. The importance credited to the control of passions and to the display of dignity and self-restraint in social and political circumstances emerges clearly from the work of the historians of the period such as Ammianus Marcellinus and Eunapius of Sardis.[433] The selection of the Plutarchan works to be translated into Syriac, *PI*, *PU* and *PE*, responds to concerns that amply overlap with the values that late-antique *paideia* proposed. Clement of Alexandria, Isidore of Pelusium, Basil of Caesarea, as well as the Syriac translators, were all part of a society that valued Greek *paideia*.

4.2.2 Lucian and his fortunes

In late Antiquity, the writings by Lucian of Samosata were not as popular and

"Persian kings" became "senseless kings" (Plut. *De exil.* 601d). See also *Paedag.* i 22.2; ii 81.5; ii 100.1 and iii 33.1. In the *Paedagogus*, Clement makes large use of aphorisms and moral exhortations drawn from various authors without acknowledgement. Another case of a generalised anecdote from the *Moralia* is attested in Basil, *Hexaemeron* ix (153.22-154.1 ed. De Mendieta and Rudberg; Plut. *De sollertia animalium* 969ab).

[432] La Matina 1999.

[433] Brown 1992, 48-58. For a comparison see Basil, *Or.* 10, *Against those who are prone to anger*.

widespread as the ones by Plutarch. The fact that, before the ninth century, references to Lucian are rare has been explained either by a *damnatio memoriae*, or by the fact that Lucian was simply unknown to most.[434] In a letter to Harpocras Isidore of Pelusium expressed a condemnatory attitude towards Lucian's satirical dialogues,[435] Philostratus did not include him in the *Lives of the Sophists*, and Eunapius dismissed him with a brief and possibly ironic mention.[436] Apart from an indirect reference in Gregory of Nyssa,[437] explicit references to Lucian are of minor significance,[438] and an incidental note by Lactantius has been seen by some scholars as an interpolation.[439] At the same time, however, other scholars have argued that some authors who did not explicitly refer to Lucian were nonetheless aware of his works, such as Alciphron, the Emperor Julian, Claudian and, perhaps, Achilles Tatius, Libanius, and Choricius of Gaza too.[440]

Nigel Wilson has drawn attention to the provincialism of Lucian as a factor that may have affected the popularity of his works on a large scale. Late-Antique critics may have thought that Lucian's provincial origins had an adverse effect on his style,[441] and such a judgement may have affected the diffusion of Lucian's works in the major cultural centres of the late empire. The fact that Lucian was born in Samosata, not far from Edessa, and that he referred to himself as a Syrian, however, make it intriguing to find one of his works among the

[434] For the former argument see Bompaire 1993, xxxvii; for the latter Bowersock 1969, 114.
[435] Isidore of Pelusium, *Ep.* iv 55 (*PG* 78.1005C), where Lucian is described as a Cynic. At the same time the author was object of frequent and caustic attacks by scholiasts, who remarked on Lucian's paganism, as particularly evident from the notes attached to Lucian's *Life of Peregrinus*, a Cynic philosopher who after experiencing Christianity reverted to the previous Cynic faith. Apart from jokes on Lucian's sexual life and morality, some criticism concentrates on Lucian's mockery of pagan religion and philosophy (Baldwin 1981 and 1982).
[436] Eun. *VS* 2.1.9: "Lucian of Samosata, who usually took serious pains to raise a laugh, wrote a life of Demonax, a philosopher of his own time, and in that book and a very few others was wholly serious throughout."
[437] Gregory of Nyssa, *De professione christiana* 131-33; Lucian, *The fisherman* 36; see ch. 5.3.1.
[438] For the mentions of Lucian in the *Chronicon Paschale* and in the *Suda* see Baldwin 1982.
[439] Lact. *Inst. Div.* 1.9.8: "It is not a story by Lucilius, or Lucian, who spared neither gods nor men." Ogilvie 1978, 82; Bowen 2003, 77.
[440] Baldwin 1982. For Achilles Tatius see Schwartz 1976, for Julian see Helm 1906, 74-75, for Claudian see Nesselrath 1994; for Libanius, *Declamation* 12 see Mesk 1932. The letter reported within Theodoret's correspondence in *PG* 83.1489-91 (*Ep.* 180), which openly mentions Lucian is in all likelihood a later forgery, and it has not been included in the edition of *SC*.
[441] Wilson 2005, 55-56.

Syriac translations of Greek secular literature.[442] Is it a possible scenario that the popularity of Lucian was greater within his own lands than on a Mediterranean scale?

The nature of the *De calumnia* is quite different from that of the polemical and satirical Lucian of the dialogues that Isidore of Pelusium must have known (directly or indirectly). *LC* is configured as a moralising work not too different, in this respect, from *PI*, *PU* and *PE*. The translation of the *De calumnia* ultimately suggests that certain works by Lucian were read by some Christians – a scenario that would require further research given, for instance, the attestations of Lucian in the *Lexicon of St. Cyril*, where our author is the latest pagan figure that is mentioned.[443] Also, the favourable marginal commentary to Lucian by Basil bishop of Adada in Pisidia (ninth century) must have relied on the work of earlier scholiasts. On the basis of the marginal commentaries surviving in the Greek manuscripts of Lucian, Wilson suggested that "the main body of the notes may well be earlier (than the ninth century) and should probably be interpreted as evidence that Lucian was read in the schools."[444]

Lucian's works, however, did not remain outside our sources for much longer, as in the ninth century Photius witnessed the beginning of a new chapter in Lucian's afterlife, without omitting to add a Christian slant to his reading:

> Read Lucian's declamation *On Phalaris* and his various *Dialogues of the Dead and Courtesans*, and other works on different subjects, **in nearly all of which he ridicules the ideas of the heathen. Thus he attacks their silly errors in the invention of gods;** their brutal and ungovernable passions and lack of restraint; the monstrous fancies and fictions of their poets; […] **in a word, his aim is, as we have said, to hold up the heathen to ridicule in prose.** […] His style is excellent, his diction clear, suitable and expressive; he shows a special liking for distinctness and purity united with brilliancy and appropriate dignity. His composition is so well fitted together that the reader does not seem to be reading prose, but an agreeable song, whose nature is not too obtrusive, seems to drop into the listener's ears.[445]

Such a positive Christian take on Lucian might not have been entirely Photius' own work. Certainly, Lucian soon became a prominent source of inspiration for Byzantine authors, as

[442] Lucian, *Bis accusatus* 27: ἐγὼ γάρ, ὦ ἄνδρες δικασταί, τουτονὶ κομιδῇ μειράκιον ὄντα, βάρβαρον ἔτι τὴν φωνὴν καὶ μονονουχὶ κάνδυν ἐνδεδυκότα εἰς τὸν Ἀσσύριον τρόπον [...]. For Lucian's mother tongue see Wilson 2005; Adams 2002, 14-15; Jones 1986, 6-8.
[443] Wilson 2005, 54.
[444] Wilson 2005, 56-57.
[445] Photius, *Bibl.* cod. 128 (trans. Freese).

attested for instance in Arethas of Caesarea –despite his criticism–, Psellos, Tzetzes, Theodore Prodromos, Nikephoros Gregoras and the *Timarion*.[446] Fifteenth century humanists seem to have particularly appreciated the *De calumnia*, as witnessed by multiple translations into Latin as well as by the well-known canvas by Botticelli.[447]

4.2.3 Themistius and the students

In the last decades, scholars have shown an increasing interest in Themistius, although most interest has been focused on his official orations which were usually addressed to the Emperor or to the Senate of Constantinople.[448] The group of private orations is more heterogeneous and contains apologetic, polemical, programmatic, and philosophic pieces. It is in the private orations that Themistius appears as a teacher of philosophy and rhetoric, although his modesty on the social scene would prevent him from publicly accepting the denomination of sophist.[449]

In his surviving works, Themistius referred to education, and most remarkably in the encomium for his deceased father Eugenius when he praised the paternal *paideia*;[450] when he presented himself as a new teacher arrived in Nicomedia and described his scholastic programme;[451] and in an address to ὀλίγοι ἔμφρονες "few more educated men" where he defended his teaching of philosophy as an activity that benefits many.[452] With Constantinople as his base, Themistius was a teacher of considerable success, and his official orations are

[446] Bompaire 1993, xxxvii; Robinson 1979, 68-81. For Photius' position see also Kustas 1962, 166.
[447] Deligiannis 2006.
[448] Swain 2013a; Heather 2001; Leppin 1998; Vanderspoel 1995.
[449] Penella 2000; Them. *Or.* 26.
[450] Them. *Or.* 20.
[451] Them. *Or.* 24.
[452] Them. *Or.* 26.311b.

likely to have been read by his pupils as well as in other rhetorical schools.[453] When the student Dianius reached Constantinople from Antioch, he presented Themistius with a letter of recommendation written by his previous teacher Libanius, Themistius' counterpart in Antioch. "Besides all the reasons (mentioned above, by accepting Dianius as your student) –Libanius wrote– you will help a man whom you will find has many of your discourses in his possession –and these not in his backpack or in books, but stored in his memory and soul–, particularly those in which you showed that you were an ambassador."[454]

Another witness of the use of Themistius' works at school is a private oration, the *Encomium to agriculture*, a progymnastic exercise with standard content, which was presumably included in the surviving collection of orations on account of the autobiographical note that it contains.[455] The *Encomium* has many features in common with a work on the same theme that survives among Libanius' *progymnasmata*.[456] Additional evidence of the use of Themistius' works in a rhetorical setting beyond Constantinople comes from Choricius of Gaza, who possibly quoted Themistius' *De amicitia* –one of the two pieces surviving in Syriac– in his oration structured as an apology of the mime.[457] Themistius would nonetheless be pleased to read in Robert Penella's analysis that he "was not a teacher of rhetoric, and (that) the other private orations contain weightier stuff (than the *Encomium to agriculture*)," [458] as he would prefer being considered a statesman (senator, officeholder, adviser of emperors, "dinner guest and traveling companion" of the Emperor Constantius)[459] as well as a philosopher "like his father"[460] and both his grandfather and father-in-law.[461] According to Themistius, the two

[453] Cribiore 2007, 61-66.
[454] Libanius *Ep.* F376, trans. Cribiore 2007, 254.
[455] Them. *Or.* 30; Penella 2000, 33-34, has argued that the surviving collection was not designed to include *progymnasmata*.
[456] Libanius, *Progymnasmata* 8.7 (ed. Foerster).
[457] Choricius of Gaza, *Or.* 32 (ed. Richtsteig 370.8-9) possibly quoting Themistius: "somebody said: 'anger is a temporary madness' (Them. *Or.* 22.269d)."
[458] Penella 2000, 33.
[459] Them. *Or.* 34 xiv: "in fact he often took advice from me in council while I was wearing my philosopher cloak, and he also often made me his dinner guest and travelling companion" (trans. Penella).
[460] Them. *Or.* 20 preliminary comment.

things –adviser of emperors and philosopher– could only go together.[462]

The reconciliation of philosophy with rhetoric was something important to Themistius, and such a mixture had an impact on the curriculum that Themistius' students followed. Libanius was aware of Themistius' teaching activity when he wrote in a letter: "you can boast innumerable fortunate students that (in your courses) can learn the truth, but with it they can also improve in the art of speaking; for both the skills of Plato are found in you: to teach excellence and in a beautiful language."[463] The Emperor Julian wrote that Themistius taught him Plato's *Laws*;[464] and, in terms of afterlife, Themistius' philosophical works left conspicuous traces during the fifth and sixth centuries. The *Paraphrases* of Aristotle, which he later dismissed as a "work of his youth,"[465] were in fact appreciated by the philosophers of the following generations, and they had among their readers Simplicius in the East and Boethius in the West.[466]

Themistius' *De virtute*, preserved only in Syriac, can contribute to the composition of a less compartmentalised picture of Themistius' literary output by showing the interplay between the study of philosophy and the training in rhetoric that Themistius' pupils were exposed to.[467] *TV* is addressed to an audience who has been already introduced "to the wisdom of Plato and Aristotle, as much as you (pl.) were able to understand,"[468] and the ἀρετὴ praised in the piece is almost immediately identified with the study (and practice) of (Themistius') philosophy,[469] in

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[461] Them. *Or.* 5.63d; 11.145b and 21.244bc.
[462] Them. *Or.* 26.
[463] Libanius, *Ep.* F793.4 (W703): μαθητὰς δὲ πολλοὺς ἀριθμῶν πολλοὺς εὐδαίμονας λέγεις, οἷς ἔστι μὲν τὴν ἀλήθειαν λαβεῖν, ἔστι δὲ μετ'ἐκείνης εἰς εὐγλωττίαν ἐπιδοῦναι. ἄμφω γὰρ δὴ παρὰ σοὶ τὰ Πλάτωνος, γενναῖά τε διδάξαι καὶ γλώττῃ καλῇ. Hadot 1984, 228-29.
[464] Julian, *Ep. to Themistius*, 257d (= Swain 2013a, 166 § 5): λέγοιμ'ἂν ἤδη σοι τὰ τοῦ Πλάτωνος ἐκ τῶν θαυμασίων Νόμων, εἰδότι μὲν καὶ διδάξαντί με, ἀπόδειξιν [...], and below § 6: ὅτε τῆς παρ'ὑμῖν ἠρχόμην παιδείας.
[465] Them. *Or.* 23.294d.
[466] Todd 2003, 60. Robert B. Todd published translations of Aristotelian paraphrases by Themistius in the *Ancient Commentators on Aristotle Series* (London).
[467] Them., *Or.* 24; for the *De re publica gerenda* addressed to Julian and preserved only in Arabic translation see Swain 2013a, 22-41, and Conterno 2014.
[468] 17.7-9: ܒܝܬ ܕܟ ܫܡ ܕ.ܚܟܡܬܐ ܘܐܠܦܠܛܘܢ ܚܠܦ ܡܫܬܟܚ ܒܟ ܕܝܢ ܕܟܝ ܕܝܢ ܒܟ ܒܝ ܒܝ ܒܝ ܐܢ ܐܡ ܚܠܦ ܚܟܡܬܐ ܘܐܒܘܡ.
[469] 17.16

which "today" Themistius "will be a guide."[470]

"In order that you follow me easily while I show how many differences there are between this road and those that have been opened by previous philosophers, […] to start with, I would like to mix my speech with a pleasant example"[471] – Themistius said. It follows an explanation of the 'roads' of Epicurus, Aristotle and Socrates, mostly through *exempla* and similes, in an admittedly didactic way.[472] *TV* should be probably understood as a speech related to the school and performed on a public occasion.

Not unlike Libanius', Themistius' students are likely to have included Christians. In a letter composed between 365 and 369, Gregory of Nazianzus recommended the young Amphilochius to the care of Themistius playing on the fact that "the most important thing, especially for a man who is a philosopher, like you, is that, without having done anything wrong, Amphilochus is in trouble."[473] In the letter Gregory addressed Themistius as both a philosopher and a βασιλεὺς τῶν λόγων "king of eloquence."[474]

There is the possibility that Themistius' works were less problematic to Christian readers than the ones by Libanius.[475] In his record Libanius had the *Antiochikos*, a panegyric of Antioch where not a single word is spent on Christian churches or on the sizeable Christian community, and the scenario is that of "an idealized (pagan) city;"[476] a regretful funeral oration for the Emperor Julian;[477] and, remarkably, the oration in defence of the pagan temples, where the author did not spare a collection of insults against Christians.[478] Theodoret of Cyrrhus'

[470] 17.19-18.1: ܒܗܝܢ ܕܟܐ ܗܢܐ ܕܐܡܪ ܐܢܐ ܒܫ ܠܟ ܐܕܡܝܢ .ܠܟܝܢ ܒܗܝܢ ܐܝܟ ܕܐ ܠܟ ܠܡܫܡ ܟܬܒ .

[471] 18.7-12: ܡܬܒܗܝܢ ܒܠܝ ܒܫܠ ܕܐܝܢ ܐܢܐ ܒܕ ܒܫ ܕܐܬܦܬܚ ܟܬܒ ܗܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܒܫ .ܐܝܟ ܠܟܝܢ ܒܗܝܢ ܒܟܠܐ ܒܐ ܒܫ ܐܝܟ ܕܒܗܝܢ ܟܠܐ ܐܒܘܫ ܠܟܝܢ ,ܒܗܝ ܐܝܟ ܐܬܐ ܗܢ ܟܝ [...] ܟܬܒ ܒܫܦܠܘ ܟܡ .

[472] Themistius adopted the Lucretian simile of the physicians who spread honey on the edge of the cup containing the bitter medicament for a child.

[473] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 24.2 : καὶ τὸ μεγίστον, ἀνδρὶ μάλιστα κατὰ σὲ φιλοσόφῳ, ὅτι μηδὲν ἀδικῶν ἔχει πράγματα.

[474] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 24.1; see also *Id.*, *Ep.* 38 to Themistius.

[475] I am grateful to Raffaella Cribiore for the remark.

[476] Libanius, *Or.* 11; Cribiore 2007, 25.

[477] Libanius, *Or.* 17.

[478] Libanius, *Or.* 30.

harsh account of Libanius' death reveals a contempt for the Antiochene sophist.[479] Conversely, Themistius often referred to God in the singular,[480] as far as evidence goes he did not attack Christians openly,[481] and he probably ended up with a reputation of religious tolerance.[482]

Themistius spoke of religious tolerance before Jovian,[483] and, according to Socrates, he attempted to moderate Valens' persecution of Nicene Christians by pointing out to the Emperor "how much variance there is among the dogmas of the Christians, although this variance is much less than that among the *hellenes*, whose opinions are more than three hundred."[484] As a result Valens would be mitigated, if one believes Sozomen.[485] The same successful account of Themistius, who persuaded the Emperor to mitigate the persecution of Christians by pointing out the divisions among the "more than three hundred sects" of the pagans, made its way to the Syrian tradition, as is attested by the Syrian scholar Barhebraeus (d. 1286), who, instead, referred the anecdote to the Emperor Julian.[486] It might be equally interesting to trace back the tradition of another anecdote about Themistius attested in Barhebraeus, according to whom, when the corpse of Julian was moved to be buried in Tarsus, a (Christianised) Themistius "reproached his contemporaries (by saying:) 'it is not a god but purple that they are glorifying and carrying!'"[487]

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[479] Theodoret, *HE* 3.18: "now Libanius was a heathen expecting the victory and bearing in mind the threats of Julian, so one day, in ridicule of our belief said to the (above mentioned Christian) paedagogus (who worked for him): 'What is the carpenter's son about now?' Filled with divine grace he foretold what was shortly to come to pass. 'Sophist' said he, 'the Creator of all things, whom you in derision call carpenter's son, is making a coffin.' After a few days the death of the wretch was announced. He was carried out lying in his coffin. The vaunt of his threats was proved vain and God was glorified" (trans. Clark).

[480] With some exceptions, see e.g. *Or.* 26.

[481] For the discussion about the interpretation of the word Ἀσσύριον, which has been sometimes interpreted as meaning 'Christian,' see Penella 2000, 128 n. 1.

[482] On this topic see also Watt 2013; Heather 1998, 138-39 and 146-49.

[483] Themistius *Or.* 5. For the discussion about the extent according to which Jovian's religious policy was the result of Themistius' advise see Heather 2001, 154-58.

[484] Socr. *HE* 4.32; Penella 2000, 3-6; recommendations of clemency were not rare among Themistius' advices to emperors.

[485] Sozom. *HE* 6.36.6-37. A spurious oration entitled *Ad Valentem de religionibus* survives in Latin: Dagron 1967, 22; ed. Downey 1971.

[486] Barhebraeus, *Historia dynastiarum* 140 (trans. Taj Pur 1985, 82, and Pocockius 1650, 88). According to the passage, Themistius would have mitigated Julian with the *Epistula de re publica gerenda*, in which, on the contrary, there is no reference to this fact.

[487] Barhebraeus, *Chron.* 1.9 (ed. Budge 1932, II 25r i; trans. Budge 1932, I 62); Bouyges 1924, 17.

If one follows Ritter and Walzer, an additional witness to the afterlife of Themistius' orations among Christians, and Syriac-speaking Christians in particular, may come from an Arabic manuscript of the eleventh century. The two scholars argued that an edifying piece in the form of a letter written by al-Kindī (ninth century) is in fact the Arabic translation of Themistius' lost *Περὶ ἀλυπίας* "on controlling sadness," through a (lost) Syriac intermediary. Both the contents and the structure of the piece attributed to al-Kindī provide a plausible comparison with other works by Themistius and, in fact, with *TV* in particular. The work provides recommendations aimed at controlling sadness and argues that sadness derives from the loss of worldly goods. The analysis and description of sadness, the use of anecdotes, a lengthy exposition framed as a comparison of different groups of passengers travelling by sea, which adopts a similar format to the passage on the roads of philosophy in *TV*, are only some of the elements that Ritter and Walzer adduced in favour of the attribution of the work to Themistius or, perhaps, to a later imitator.[488]

The loss of the Greek text precludes a definitive conclusion, and Ritter and Walzer's hypothesis has been questioned by later scholars.[489] Nonetheless, both the theme of the piece, which proposes the detachment from worldly goods (potentially of interest for an ascetic readership), and the four anecdotes contained in the work have attracted our attention. The first *exemplum* is by a Socrates who is never sad since –he declares– he does not own anything that, once lost, would make him sad.[490] The second anecdote is provided by Nero and "a philosopher," and it corresponds to the anecdote of Nero and Seneca reported in *PI*, which, in the Syriac *PI*, was similarly replaced by "Nero and a man."[491] The third anecdote is, curiously,

[488] Ritter 1938. The witness of a *Περὶ ἀλυπίας* by Themistius comes from Stobaeus, who mentioned also a homonymous (and lost) work by Plutarch (Lamprias' catalogue n. 172).
[489] Pohlenz 1938; Rosenthal 1940; Adamson 2012, although admitting that "*On dispelling Sorrows* is unusual in the Kindian corpus in drawing heavily on ideas from Hellenistic philosophy" (p. 246) and "the Stoic references and parallels in this treatise are puzzling, as no Stoic woks were diretly translated from Greek into Arabic. [...] Al-Kindī's exact sources for this epistle will probably remain a mystery. But he certainly drew on Greek 'popular' ethical writing" (p. 248).
[490] Ritter 1938, 56.
[491] Ritter 1938, 56; *PI* 13i (461f): 195.5.

about a Socrates in a barrel who states that it is necessary not to own anything in order not to be sad, although, in the original version of the anecdote, the barrel must have contained Diogenes instead of Socrates.[492] Last, the lengthy explanation about the travelers by sea follows the lengthy narrative pattern of the roads of philosophy of *TV*.[493] The moral contents of the work, its instructional nature, the absence of mythological anecdotes, and the substitutions in the proper names of the characters may suggest a scenario of transmission and transformation similar to that of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius. The discovery of some chapters from our *Περὶ ἀλυπίας* (if this was its title) in a Christian Arabic work, which may predate al-Kindī, further suggests an originally Christian diffusion of the piece.[494]

Themistius was an influential figure at Constantinople, and, as a teacher of rhetoric, he composed *progymnasmata* as well as works addressed to his advanced students, who followed a curriculum that brought together rhetoric and philosophy. The use of works by Themistius as instructional texts among Greek-speaking individuals, both Christians and non-Christians, sets the scene for the transmission of select edifying orations into Syriac. Also, the fact that Themistius did not gain the reputation of a convinced pagan could have influenced the diffusion of his works among Christians.[495] Moreover, the very themes of the *De Virtute*, to lead a self-controlled behaviour framed on the practice of philosophy, and of the *De amicitia*, to develop friendship with individuals of an equal moral standing, witness to important aspects of social relations among the late Roman elites; and the selection of the texts reveals the endorsement of important social values that characterised late Roman *pepaideuomenoi*.[496]

[492] Ritter 1938, 56 and 24-25.
[493] Ritter 1938, 57-59. The work includes also a passage allegedly from a letter by Alexander to his mother, which curiously opens with: "oh mother of Alexander!" (Ritter 1938, 52).
[494] Ritter 1938, 8-9.
[495] With this in mind, one could consider why the *Epistula de re publica gerenda*, addressed to Julian, did not survive in Greek.
[496] Brown 1992, 48-58.

4.2.4 *Ad Demonicum* and elementary instruction

The transmission of the *Ad Demonicum* into Syriac proposes the similar scenario of a text that was particularly popular at school, though at an elementary level, and was selected for translation. The *Ad Demonicum* is a plainly didactic piece:[497]

> Do not be surprised that many things which I have said do not apply to you at your present age. For I also have not overlooked this fact, but I have deliberately chosen to employ this one treatise, not only to convey to you advice for your life now, **but also to leave with you precepts for the years to come.**

A side effect of the use of the *Ad Demonicum* in literate education was that the text was well-known among late-Roman individuals who had attended a *cursus* of literate education, Christians and non-Christians alike. The Alexandrine exegete Didymus the Blind (fourth cent.) qualifies as one of the earliest Christian authors who quoted *ID*:[498]

> "I was made great and I improved beyond all those who lived before me in Jerusalem" (*Eccl.* 2.9). The wise man is always in the (occupation of) improving, as he proceeds. But in life it is the end and the beginning that attain accomplishment. (The Scriptures) say: "when a man reaches the end, then he begins" (*Sir* 18.7). By all means, then, "when they attain the completeness" allowed in this life [*lacuna*] "from the part we come to know (the entirety)" (*1Cor* 13.10). Therefore, the zealous is always in the (occupation of) improving. **Isocrates –I believe– said this too: "what you have learned, maintain with cares, but add to (your) knowledge (what you haven't learned)!"** (*Ad Dem.* 18) He who adds (to his knowledge), always improves!

There is the possibility that Didymus was actually remembering by heart the passage from the *Ad Demonicum* that he quoted in his commentary to the Ecclesiastes, since the wording slightly differs from the transmitted text.[499]

The nature of *ID*, which is presented as a collection of precepts sent to the orphan Demonicus and shares many features with wisdom literature, certainly contributed to its fortune as an instructional text. The moral precepts are addressed to a young boy with the exhortation to keep them in mind for adulthood and they are grouped into three main themes:

[497] *Ad Dem.* 44; transl. Norlin.
[498] Didymus the Blind, *Comm. in Ecclesiasten* 47.23-29, ed. Binder 1983.
[499] For the instructional setting that Didymus the Blind's exegetical commentaries represent see Layton 2004.

the relation with the gods, the relation with men and society, and the development of the personality. Precepts are put together thematically, and accordingly the lack of unity undermines the attribution of the work to Isocrates. Also, the earliest references to the work date back to the third century AD.[500]

The use of *ID* in the schools is well attested, and, if anything, *ID* is one of the most popular texts in scholastic papyri from Egypt. Passages from *ID* were used at different levels in Egyptian schools, from basic writing practice to more advanced exercises of commentary, as attested, for instance, in a teacher's wooden booklet from Kellis,[501] which contains also Isocrates' *Ad Nicoclem*. Dating to the fourth century, the heavily annotated booklet was designed to serve in a classroom, as shown by the durable physical nature of the support, by the non-professional hand and by the disposition of the texts, primarily aimed at saving space. Also, several glosses and lemmata, which are of an elementary level, appear in the normalised form (nouns appear as nominatives and verbs as first person singular forms), regardless of how the related word is inflected in the oration. The codex was used to teach pupils "just past the stage of learning to write and read, and ready to embark on the study of whole texts of literature."[502]

Evidence for the popularity of Isocrates in the schools comes from frequent attestations of the *Ad Nicoclem* and other Isocratean works in scholastic papyri, as well as the frequent use of anecdotes or sentences about Isocrates in school exercises –particularly the *chreia elaboration*– included in the manuals of rhetorics composed in the fourth and fifth centuries by

[500] Cribiore 1996; Mandilaras 2003, i 5 and *passim*.
[501] Cribiore 1996; Morgan 1998, 313.
[502] McNamee 2001, esp. 911; Cribiore 2001, 203-204. Ed. Worp 2007. At the primary level, teachers from Egypt employed notebooks, usually wooden, containing selected passages from a variety of works, probably designed to be handed to students for copying practice, or to be used as a collection of texts for dictations and similar exercises. Texts attested in teachers' notebooks include passages from the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, Hesiod, the *Ad Demonicum*, the *Sentences of Menander* –together with the *Psalms* in a booklet from the fourth century (Cribiore 1996, no. 396)–, but also *Psalms* and Christian prayers, models of declensions and mathematical operations (Cribiore 1996, 269-284, nos. 379-412).

Libanius, Aphthonius, Athanasius, and Nicolaus.[503] Nonetheless, the *Ad Demonicum* was popular outside schools too. Both Christian and non-Christian authors refer explicitly to it, possibly drawing from the pool of texts stored in their memory since youth, or choosing to quote something easily recognizable by their audience.[504]

Themistius quoted the *Ad Demonicum* in the oration delivered in front of the Constantinopolitan senate (c. 355), in which he praised the Emperor Costantius II for making him senator;[505] and Julian used the ps.-Isocratean piece at least twice in his surviving works. In the *Oration against Heracleius* he spoke of a stark contrast between the empty reproaches by the cynic philosopher Heracleius, which resemble those by the worst rhetoricians, and the good exhortations by (ps.-)Isocrates;[506] and in the *Against the Galilaeans* he pointed out that (ps.-)Isocrates' exhortations (παραινέσεις) are more valuable than Solomon's proverbs (παροιμίαι).[507]

The *Ad Demonicum* was popular among Christians too. Besides the above mentioned passage by Didymus, Gregory of Nyssa reported the opening passage of the *Ad Demonicum* in the accompanying letter sent with a copy of his *Contra Eunomium I* to two Christian students, John and Maximian, who were probably attending Libanius' school in Antioch. Gregory's *Contra Eunomium I* is implicitly put in comparison with the ps.-Isocratean work, perhaps betraying its author's aspiration for a similarly wide diffusion.[508] In the following century, Theodoret of Cyrrhus was familiar with *ID*;[509] Stobaeus drew a considerable number of sentences from *ID*, and so did the grammarian Orion of Thebes, and at least once the sophist

[503] Mandilaras 2003, I 319-347; for some examples see Kennedy 2003, and for the *chreiai* Hock 1986 and 2002.
[504] For instance passages from the *Ad Demonicum* are used to illustrate key points of Libanius' argumentation in *Ep.* F19.14 (about friendship; trans. Norman 1992, 493) and *Or.* 57.43.
[505] Themistius, *Or.* 2.6 (28C ed. Downey), which quotes *Ad Dem.* 2.
[506] Julian, *Or.* 7 (II 23.38-47 ed. Bidez).
[507] Julian, *Contra Galilaeos* 204CD (203.6-10 ed. Neumann).
[508] Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 15 (3.3-4.1 ed. Pasquali); Silvas 2007, 158-59: "I have sent the treatise on to you – not, as Isocrates says, as a gift, (*Ad Dem.* 2) for I do not reckon that there is anything in it that it might be a prize to one who receives it, but as an invitation from us meant to hearten those who are in the full vigour of youth to do battles with our adversaries, through stirring up the boldness of youth by the eagerness of old age."
[509] Theodoret, *Graecarum affectionum curatio* 8.14.1-3 (*Ad Dem.* 50); ch. 7.6.

Phoebammon.[510]

The Neoplatonic philosopher Syrianus mentioned passages from the *Ad Demonicum* in his rhetorical commentaries to the Hermogenian *corpus*, and the Neoplatonic Ammonius reported a passage from *ID* when dealing with moral laws.[511] Among Christian authors, Procopius of Gaza reported a passage in a letter to a certain Peter, where the *Ad Demonicum* again provided a model for an upright behaviour;[512] and Choricius of Gaza tried to mitigate the sorrow of his audience in the funerary oration for his teacher Procopius by reminding them of the passage from the *Ad Demonicum*: "(consider that nothing in human life is stable,) for then you will not exult overmuch in prosperity, nor grieve overmuch in adversity."[513] Choricius again quoted the *Ad Demonicum* twice in his oration structured as an apology of the mime;[514] and allusions to the work can be found throughout his *Declamations*.[515]

The Neoplatonic Olympiodorus of Alexandria used the passage "always honour the *daimonion*, especially along with the town" to illustrate and support his philosophical argument about the existence of three typologies of *daimones* –the highest ones (those that can be said κατὰ ἀναλογίαν) can indeed be predicated of the divine (τὸ θεῖον) as in the passage–;[516] and the Neoplatonist John Lydus, who quoted twice the passage "wealth is the attendant of vice more than of nobility of soul" to provide a moral justification to those Roman pagan festivals that required the rich to give alms.[517]

The list could continue with John of Damascus who reported the same passage in his *gnomologion Sacra Parallela*.[518] Overall, the number and the contexts of references to the *Ad Demonicum*, both by Christian and non-Christian authors, reveals the popularity and the

[510] Mandilaras 2003, I 319-347.
[511] *Ad Dem.* 16; Ammonius, *In Porphyrii isagogen* 15.21-23.
[512] Procopius of Gaza, *Ep.* 135.1-6 mentions *Ad Dem.* 18; Amato 2010, 402-405.
[513] Choricius of Gaza, *Or. fun. in. Proc.* 34 (ed. Richtsteig 122.14-15); *Ad Dem.* 42 (transl. Norlin).
[514] Choricius of Gaza, *Or.* 32 (ed. Richtsteig 358.8 and 363.24-364.1).
[515] See the *Index Auctorum* of Foerster's edition; a number of declamations are available in translation in Penella 2009.
[516] Olympiodorus, *In Platonii Alcibiadem Commentarii* 15.13-15 (ed. Westerlink); *Ad Dem.* 13.
[517] John Lydus, *De Mensibus* iv 73.12 and 140.21 (ed. Wuensch); *Ad Dem.* 6.
[518] John of Damascus, *Sacra Parallela* 95.1340.4-5 (ed. Pitra); *Ad Dem.* 6.

diffusion of the piece over the centuries as well as the unquestioned authority of Isocrates beyond the religious boundary, notwithstanding the references to paganism and Greek mythology that are found in the work. The fact that the Syriac *Ad Demonicum* has been preserved in three manuscripts may be taken as evidence of its diffusion among Syriac readers too.[519]

4.3 Conclusion

The morally edifying nature of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, which are mostly structured in anecdotes, and the familiarity with gnomic literature by their translators suggest a link to Christian ascetic literature, as represented by the dialogues by John the Solitary and Rufinus' translation of the *Sentences of Sextus*. At the same time, the instances of instructional composition and the choice to translate these very pieces establish a connection with literate education in late Antiquity. The selection of the pieces reveal familiarity with the texts that constituted the cultural baggage of late-antique *pepaideuomenoi* and it indicates the endorsement of moral values that were central to late-antique *paideia*. The transmission of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius into Syriac is an instance of instersection between the world of schools and that of Christian asceticism, and it betrays minds aware of Greek literate education who intended to use works by non-Christian authors as instructional texts in a Christian environment interested in ascetic behaviour.

[519] Ch. 3.4.2.

Part II

LITERATE EDUCATION BEYOND SCHOOLS AND MONASTERIES

5. Educational projects beyond the classroom: the Cappadocians

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Secular *paideia* in action

5.3 The Cappadocian Fathers and Christian educational projects

5.3.1 Gregory of Nyssa

5.3.2 Basil of Caesarea

5.3.3 Gregory of Nazianzus

5.4 Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Two main features of the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian and Themistius, namely their literary origin and their Christian ascetic destination, direct our analysis towards innovative forms of instructional relations that combined a literary component with an ascetic interest. The literary origin of our texts and the interest in Christian ascetic practice guide our historical search towards the cultural pursuits of Christian members of the late-antique elites who underwent a *cursus* of traditional literary instruction. *Paideia* played a crucial part in the identity definition of the members of late-Roman elites, and it constituted an important asset in the practical implementation of their social and political roles. Upon the diffusion of Christianity and its imperial endorsement, however, local aristocracies found in Christianity a new important addition to their identity.[520]

Well-documented representatives of the first generation of such individuals in the Eastern empire are the Cappadocian Fathers.[521] Their works and careers provide evidence of their didactic ambitions, when not direct involvement, in non-traditional educational relations that combined Greek *paideia* with an interest in Christian ascetic practice. The innovative instructional roles that the Cappadocians played cannot be straightforwardly identified with those played by grammarians or sophists of the time. At the same time, however, their roles cannot be easily accommodated in a clear-cut model of monastic education. Such educational relations are diverse and experimental, but they nonetheless reveal intersectional instructional spaces that touched the two worlds.

5.2 Secular *paideia* in action

[520] An remarkable example is represented by the career of Amphilochius of Iconium (Maxwell 2006, 36-39; Thonemann 2011).
[521] Van Dam 1986; Elm 2012.

Paideia is a familiar concept to scholars of late Antiquity. It refers to the shared knowledge and language skills that characterised the *pepadeuomenoi*, the individuals who had successfully attended a mostly standardised *cursus* of higher education. Through literary instruction, the *pepaideuomenoi* acquired familiarity with a *corpus* of texts consecrated as classic by the tradition, such as Homer, Thucydides, and Plutarch. The texts provided a literary language as much as a gallery of widely known examples and allusions that the *pepaideuomenoi* could use in spoken as much as in written interaction.

Paideia was a luxury good, and it could only be acquired through an expensive and sophisticated training. Once achieved, however, such a training granted its graduates the chance to show their social status throughout the Roman world in rather economic ways, either simply by speaking publicly, for instance in a political context, or by writing, for instance in the composition of letters. In addition to literary and rhetorical skills, a training in *paideia* was also intended to instill the sensibility for a mannered behaviour to be demonstrated in public. This was another feature widely recognised as a prerogative of the members of the upper classes.[522]

Traces of the enduring functioning of *paideia* in late Antiquity are tangible, for instance in the *corpora* of letters that have survived. Church figures instructed in *paideia*, such as Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, Firmus of Caesarea, Isidore of Pelusium, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, could display their secular education in particular contexts of interaction. While in their dealings with other church figures the Scriptures would provide most of the material for literary references, traditional literature would still provide quotations and allusions in the letters destined for the members of the secular elites, such as notables and provincial governors. In both cases, the textual references could reveal a common identity between the

[522] Brown 1992, 35-70.

sender and the addressee by underlining a shared cultural capital.

Since literary education dominated late-Roman public life, and especially politics and law that were carried out in the literary language learned at school, higher education provided the offspring of the upper class with the practical skills required to move within the job opportunities that the administration of the empire could offer. On the practical side, the implementation of the effective system of social demarcation represented by *paideia* was in the hands of grammarians and sophists. Their social role was not wiped out by the diffusion of Christianity, nor did it undergo any macroscopic restructuring until the fifth or sixth centuries. Higher literary education continued to play its role as a tool for the elite to construct its social and cultural identity, and ultimately to reproduce itself within society at large.[523]

The Syriac translations and instructional literature addressed so far, however, escape a narrow understanding of this model of higher education. Their authors and translators did not aim to provide their readership with rhetorical skills to be put to use in the Greek-speaking world, nor with sophisticated references to the Greek literary tradition. Instead, the addressees of the instructional texts were expected to find in the moral advice the primary feature of interest of the texts. The Syriac translations addressed in Part I uncover an instructional environment that did not have the same purposes of a school aimed at training its pupils in rhetoric with a view to their participation in the social and political life of the Empire.

A crucial feature of the action of higher education on the social scene, however, applies also to the instructional space beyond schools and monasteries that is addressed in the present work. A side effect of *paideia* was that literate education provided by grammarians and by sophists gave the pupils (as well as the teachers) the chance to become part of a network that could play an important role in subsequent professional careers.[524] The establishment and development of strong and long-term social ties between teachers and pupils (and their

[523] Browning 2000.
[524] Liebeschuetz 2001, 223-48; Kaster 1988.

families) was a most important practical repercussion of higher rhetorical and philosophical education. One cannot ignore the indirect social consequences of teaching and discipleship that educational projects both within and beyond schools implied.[525]

5.3 The Cappadocian Fathers and Christian educational projects

5.3.1 Gregory of Nyssa

By bringing together the tradition of literate education, and philosophical instruction in particular, and the interest in Christian asceticism, some of the works by Gregory of Nyssa provide a useful counterpart to the instructional texts addressed so far. When describing ascetic brotherhoods Gregory used the traditional philosophical language derived from non-Christian ascesis, and he equated the life in a Christian ascetic brotherhood to a life framed by the pursuit of philosophy.[526] Accordingly, the philosophical language that both Gregory of Nyssa and Synesius of Cyrene employed to describe ascetic communities have been taken by some scholars as an indicator of a strand in early monasticism that was strongly characterised by philosophical pursuit.[527]

Gregory's use of a philosophical language, however, parallels that of the authors of the

[525] At the same time, the motivations behind such enterprises can reveal concerns for social legitimisation in a changing religious setting. Given the crucial role that education played in the process of construction of identity and elite definition, the competitive process leading to social (and religious) legitimization manifested itself also as a debate about the contents and the structure of higher education, see Cameron 2004, and Elm 2012.

[526] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* (*CPG* 3165), *De instituto christiano* (*CPG* 3162), *De professione Christiana* (*CPG* 3163), *De perfectione Christiana ad Olympium monachum* (*CPG* 3164), *Life of Macrina* (*CPG* 3166), *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* (*CPG* 3149).

[527] Lizzi Testa 1987, 16-21. Rita Lizzi Testa has also argued that, in the *De virginitate*, Gregory appears engaged in an attack on a too strict sort of non-philosophical ascesis, which is characterised by excessive physical rigor and self-mortification. In ch. 22, Gregory maintained that excessive mortification is as damaging for attaining perfection as much carnal indulgence, proposing a form of ascesis that included a philosophical, and possibly literary, dimension. Other scholars have suggested identifying the object of Gregory's polemic with the early ascetic strand represented by Messalianism (Wood 2011, 56-59).

Christianised versions of Epictetus' *Encheiridion*, especially *[Nil]*, and of the Syriac translators of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, in which the customs of the philosophers provided viable models for a Christian ascetic behaviour. The use of a non-Christian philosophical language to describe Christian asceticism stands as a reminder that a Christian ascetic lexicon developed gradually, and, for example, the word μοναχός appears only once in Gregory of Nyssa, while it is attested in four instances in Gregory of Nazianzus, in twenty-one instances in Basil of Caesarea, and in one-hundred-thirty-three instances in John Chrysostom one generation later.[528]

Gregory's earliest ascetic treatise, the *De virginitate*, which was composed in 370-71 (about one year before he was appointed bishop), outlines an ascetic educational project described in philosophical terms. The treatise, which is characterised by a markedly didactic tone, is presented as an addition to Basil of Caesarea's ascetic rules; and it expressly aims to provide advice to ascetic communities. As the author stated in the preface, the two purposes of the *De virginitate* are to compose an eulogy of virginity and to propose moral instruction. The treatment of both topics betrays the dependence of Gregory's understanding of Christian asceticism on the *vita contemplativa* of the philosophical tradition.

The very composition of the text presents Gregory playing the role of an advisor to ascetic communities, for the piece foreshadows the expectation of a readership of young people (τοὺς νέους pr. 2.24) in an ascetic setting.[529] At the same time, Gregory's advisory posture has a counterpart in the contents of the work, for the text itself argues for the importance of instructional relations *within* ascetic brotherhoods, as the closing chapters spell out in detail. Gregory argued that those who aim at living according to "this philosophy" (ταύτῃ φιλοσοφίᾳ), Christian asceticism, should be taught by a person who has already achieved the status. Ascetic life cannot be self-taught; and it is necessary that its adherents have a teacher (τοῦ παιδεύοντος

[528] According to the *TLG*; Gregory of Nyssa, *Liber de Cognitione Dei* 272.57 (fragm.).
[529] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* pr. 2.20-29 (trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 7).

23.1.10). Guidance in deeds is better than guidance in words, as someone who

> is eager to learn the language of a certain people cannot teach himself, but is taught by those who know it, and thus comes to speak the foreign tongue, making quick progress because of the habit of hearing the language; in the same way, I think, one's nature does not make progress in this life automatically, since it is foreign to the novelty of the regime, unless the person is taken in hand and learns the details from someone who has succeeded in it.[530]

According to Gregory, finding a teacher plays a crucial role in the life of young ascetics, for youth is a precarious counsellor in every matter (ἐπὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἐπισφαλὴς σύμβουλος ἡ νεότης 23.2.33-34). Also,

> since the majority of persons who intend to live a life of virginity are still young and immature, they must concern themselves with this before all, the finding of a good guide and teacher on this path, lest, on account of their ignorance, they enter upon trackless places and wander away from the straight road.[531]

Gregory advised that aspiring ascetics should first of all find a teacher among those who have succeeded.

The fact that the closing sections of the *De virginitate* emphasise the importance of ascetic instruction raises the suspicion that, among Gregory's aims, one should identify that of presenting himself as a viable ascetic teacher or advisor, who could add to the recommendations already proposed in the text. In fact, other works show that Gregory implemented such an advisory role on other occasions. The *De instituto christiano*, the *De perfectione christiana*, and the *De professione christiana* are pamphlets dealing with Christian ascetic life in which Gregory adopted an instructional posture.

The *De instituto christiano* is presented as Gregory's response to a specific ascetic community (ἀδελφότης "brotherhood" 67.6) that had requested Gregory's advice; it expounds the goals of religious life, and it provides advice about some practical problems that may arise from life within a brotherhood.[532] The treatise focuses on practical issues such as authority within the community, personal relations among brothers, and the practice of fasting, working

[530] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 23.2.2-9 (trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 69).
[531] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* 23.3.1-6 (trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 70).
[532] Gregory of Nyssa, *De professione christiana* (ed. Jaeger 1952; trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 123-58).

and enduring toils. Not unlike the *De virginitate*, Gregory foreshadowed a sort of supervision system *within* the members of the community, for he recommended that the individuals who are in charge of others (ἑτέρων προεστάναι) and direct them towards the heavenly life should work harder than the rest of the brothers. Such supervisors, to whom the text was in fact addressed, should provide instruction to less advanced brothers according to the need of each one (τὴν μὲν διδαχὴν κατὰ τὴν ἑκάστου χρείαν ἐν φανερῷ ποιούμενοι), caring for others *as* "*paidagogoi* of tender children entrusted to you by their fathers" (οὕτως οὖν ἐπιμελεῖσθε αὐτῶν ὡς ἂν χρηστοὶ παιδαγωγοὶ παίδων ἁπαλῶν, οὓς ἐπιστεύθησαν παρὰ τῶν πατέρων αὐτῶν 69.17-19). The passage proceeds with the simile of the doctor who provides different treatment for different sicknesses.[533]

Gregory invited more experienced brothers to supervise less experienced ones ("disciple" μαθητής 70.12) within a brotherhood that is described in terms of philosophical ascesis, and one wonders whether the instruction that, in Gregory's view, should be provided within the brotherhood was also framed on traditional philosophical formats. The community to whom the work is addressed had assembled to follow the apostolic ideal, and it is described as a "chorus of philosophy" (τὸν τῆς φιλοσοφίας χορόν 41.20-21). Despite the title (περὶ τοῦ κατᾶ θεὸν σκοποῦ καὶ τῆς κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἀσκήσεως), the word "monk" (μοναχός) is never used in the treatise, and ascetic life is expressed in the formula "road of philosophy" (φιλοσοφίας ὁδός 83.4). To adopt a Christian mode of life is expressed as to "philosophize rightly" (ὀρθῶς φιλοσοφεῖν 64.4); and the greatest achievement of this philosophy is to subordinate excellence in deeds to the excellence of the heart (66.4-6). Those who have chosen the philosophic life (τοῖς φιλοσόφως ζῆν ᾑρημένοις 66.14-15) are brothers in God (τοῖς κατὰ θεὸν ἀδέλφοις 67.1).

Unlike the *De virginitate* and the *De instituto christiano*, the other two pamphlets in

[533] Gregory of Nyssa, *De professione christiana* (ed. Jaeger 1952, 68-70; trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 146-47).

which Gregory adopted a didactic tone, the *De perfectione christiana* and the *De professione christiana*, reveal instructional relations between Gregory and specific pupils, (possibly) Olympius and Harmonius respectively. The *De perfectione christiana* is addressed to a single individual whom some manuscripts identify with Olympius, the addressee of the *Life of Macrina*. The topic of the work is Christian life, which is not strictly intended as life within an ascetic brotherhood, but is rather understood as the life of those who call themselves Christians. Gregory intends to provide an accurate description of the life (τὸν ἀκριβῆ βίον 173.12-13) towards which Christians should tend; and, since -he declared- he cannot do so in deeds yet, he opted for instruction (διδασκαλία 173.7) in written words.

It is necessary, Gregory argued, that those who call themselves Christians become aware of what the name implies, lest they are only superficially Christian thus resembling invented mythical creatures, such as the Minotaur. Accordingly, the goal of the piece is to explain the significance (τὸ σημαινόμενον 175.15) of the name of Christ by systematically addressing all the epithets (πάσας τὰς φωνάς 209.14-15) that are used to describe Christ in the Pauline epistles, such as "light inaccessible," "sanctification and redemption," "maker of the world," and so forth. The work treats these formulas in a systematic fashion providing the significance of each, and the approach to the subject is patently didactic. Furthermore, in the conclusion Gregory invites his addressee to keep such formulas in mind and to review them (τὴν τῶν μνημονευθέντων ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι μνήμην 209.19-10), so that they may be of guidance to lead a Christian life.

The *De professione christiana* is a pamphlet of a similarly didactic nature that foreshadows an instructional relation between Gregory and another Christian pupil. The now older Gregory (γηραιὰν κιθάραν 130.11) composed the piece to provide advice to Harmonius. Harmonius had long before been tutored by Gregory in person:

> I think that it will be good for me to imitate in my epistolary style the conversations we used to have

> when we were face to face. Indeed, I remember very well that the starting point of our discussions on every occasion was a concern for virtue and exercise related to the service of God. You always reacted attentively to what was said, although you did not accept it without examining it, while I, on account of our having anticipated it, came to a final solution to what we were seeking on each occasion as a consequence of our discussion. Surely, if it were possible, even now, for the impetus to argument to be derived from your presence, it would be better in every way; there would be a mutual benefit from our seeing each other (what in life is sweeter to me than this?) and, under the plectrum of your intelligence, our old lyre would reawaken.[534]

Gregory and the younger Harmonius had been involved in an instructional relationship with a Christian outlook.

A curious element qualifies the instructional relationship between Gregory and the younger Harmonius. Not unlike the mention of the Minotaur in the *De perfectione christiana*, in the *De professione christiana* Gregory made use of an anecdote taken from secular literature. Gregory reported a short story that was tacitly derived from Lucian's *The fisherman*, and he employed it to emphasise the danger of leading a lifestyle that is only superficially Christian. In order to mock the philosophers who do not live up to the expectations expressed in their own precepts, Lucian narrated the story of a monkey that, being disguised as a dancer in a mime spectacle, managed to beguile the spectators until the moment when, in the middle of the performance, somebody offered him some almonds. Attracted by the food, the monkey suddenly abandoned the dance and got rid of his mask, thus showing his true bestial nature. After signalling its origin in secular literature (παρὰ τοῖς ἔξω), Gregory used the simile to describe the behaviour of those Christians who do not follow moral precepts with sincerity.[535]

The literate background of Harmonius (as well as of Olympius) must have played a role in Gregory's choice of anecdotes drawn from secular literature, as would have been common practice in the epistolary style. The instructional relationship between Gregory and Harmonius is reminiscent of the literary curriculum of higher education that both underwent. There is the possibility that earlier face-to-face instructional relation between the two on ascetic matters had

[534] The work should then be dated to an advanced stage of Gregory's life. Gregory of Nyssa, *De professione christiana* 129-30 (*CPG* 3163; trans. Woods Callahan 1967, 81).
[535] Gregory of Nyssa, *De professione christiana* 131-33; Lucian, *The fisherman* 36; Jaeger 1960, II 434-36. For a comparison, see Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 2.2.12.705-08 (ed. Meier 1989).

also a literary component, possibly providing a Christian instructional setting for a morally-oriented use of Greek literature.

Instructional and advisory roles on moral matters, like that played by Gregory with Olympius and with Harmonius (and on more strictly ascetic matters in the *De instituto christiano*), will emerge again in the writings of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. It should be noticed, however, that the practice of composing pamphlets centered on moral advice to particular addressees builds on an old tradition. Among the predecessors of Gregory's posture in the composition of the *De professione christiana* one may recognize, for instance, the figure of Plutarch in the composition of the *Moralia*. A number of pamphlets in the collection propose moral recommendations addressed to young members of the elites who had undergone a traditional literary training. Accordingly, the treatment of the moral recommendations is soaked of references to Greek literature and historical anecdotes.[536] The posture of Gregory in the *De professione christiana*, like that of Plutarch in many *Moralia*, reveals ambition for the provision of advice of an ethical nature (presented in philosophical terms) that was directed to members of the elite not necessarily within a formal instructional setting like a school.

The texts analysed so far have revealed two aspects of Gregory's involvement in ascetic teaching, the provision of face to face instruction, such as to Harmonius, and the composition of didactic pamphlets such as the *De instituto christiano* and the *De professione christiana*. A more ambitious piece, the *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* (c. 384), however, betrays a less straightforward educational enterprise. The setting of the dialogue, Macrina lecturing Gregory on the immortality of the soul from her deathbed, is framed on the setting of Plato's *Phaedo*. Macrina plays the role of the philosophical teacher that Socrates played in the *Phaedo* before being executed; and following the same literary pattern of the dying person who consoles the

[536] Van Hoof 2010, 66-80.

survivors, a composed Socrates addressed frantic pupils while a self-controlled Macrina lectured an emotional Gregory "in a torment of grief."[537] Although her philosophical treatment of the soul is ambitious and it aims to propose an alternative understanding of the soul based on Scripture, her arguments reveal deep knowledge of, and not rarely a problematic reliance on, Plato and the Platonic tradition.

It is significant that the author is one of the characters of the dialogue, since the piece presents Gregory himself being accredited as a pupil of the holy Macrina. Macrina herself is characterised as an ascetic teacher, for she leads the argumentation, she rejects some of Gregory's objections as impious or subversive,[538] and she is constantly addressed as παιδαγωγός, σύμβουλος and διδάσκαλος. At the same time, through her person she represents the absence of vice and the detachment of the soul from the body; and she has the features of a female counterpart to the model proposed in the *Life of Antony*.[539] In fact, it has been argued, Macrina serves as a mouthpiece for Gregory's philosophical (*i.e.* theological) instruction, and her figure provides an alter ego for Gregory.[540]

The *Dialogus de anima et resurrectione* was addressed to a philosophically sensible readership, and the work ultimately presents Gregory as a viable Christian philosophic teacher solidly grounded in, although highly critical of, the Platonic tradition. The dialogue reveals the self-fashioning efforts by its authors, and it betrays Gregory's ambition for philosophical teaching. Furthermore, the twofold attitude towards the Platonic tradition, which is represented by both familiarity and detachment, might even have a practical outcome if we understand Gregory in a setting where, as a philosophical teacher and advisor, he was in competition with other philosophical advisors.

[537] Plato, *Phaedo* 63C; 66C-67A; Kr. 2 = Silvas 2008, *Introduction*.
[538] Respectively Kr. 32 = Silvas 2008, 2.41 and Kr. 142 = Silvas 2008, 10.64-66.
[539] *Life of Macrina* 2b; Giannarelli 1980, 34-38; Momigliano 1985.
[540] Clark 1998.

5.3.2 Basil of Caesarea

Basil of Caesarea's writings allow us to locate his teaching projects with more precision within his professional life. Basil moved from a secular career, which had culminated with rhetorical teaching in Caesarea -his father's job- until 356, to a priestly career that combined both ascetic experiences and pastoral duties. The experience of solitary life at Annisa in Pontus (357-362) and his priestly ordination (365), however, marked a radical shift in the terms that Basil used to describe ascetic life. Anna Silvas showed that the writings composed between 357 and 365 reveal a transformation in the characterisation of ascetic communities "from a philosophical discourse, virtually indistinguishable from that of the pagan ascetic traditions, to one which is thoroughly Christian and scriptural in tone."[541]

The shift is evident in the letters. In letter 1 to Eustathius "the philosopher" (of Sebasteia; 356-7), Basil described Christian ascetic life as the pursuit of philosophy, he wrote of ἀνάγκη, εἱμαρμένη and τύχη, and he alluded to classical literature.[542] In letter 14 to Gregory of Nazianzus (357-8), he described his ascetic dwelling place in literary terms, as, for instance, it is so beautiful that "it surpasses Calypso's island, which Homer seems to have considered the most beautiful spot on earth."[543] In letter 4 to Olympius (358-59), Basil presented himself as an admirer of Zeno, Cleanthes and Diogenes, and he took the chance to report short anecdotes about these figures (one of which appears also in the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate*).[544] Conversely, in letter 2 (358), Basil drew from the Bible and avoided explicit references to classical literature to invite Gregory of Nazianzus to join him at Annisa. Similarly, in letter 22 to a group of ascetics (c. 367), Basil based his description of ascetic life entirely on the

[541] Silvas 2005, 86-89.
[542] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 1; two literary references are to Tantalus, and to Odysseus and the Sirens.
[543] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 14 (trans. Schaff).
[544] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 4; Plutarch, *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* 87a; Pouchet 1992, 87-102.

Scriptures, avoiding any reference to classical literature.[545] Although, given the variety of their addressees, one may be tempted to allow more room than Silvas did for the contingent circumstances of the letters, Basil's shift is tangible. The contents of letter 2 and 22 avoid language derived from the secular tradition, and they indicate how Basil had moved away from the language previously used to describe ascetic life.

Basil's writings represented an important shift in ascetic literature, and his own life experience has been sometimes taken as indicative of (when not even the cause of) the developments in Christian asceticism at large. In particular, the Pontic experiment has been understood as an intermediate step towards the development of institutionalised forms of Christian monasticism by Sozomen, who was followed by Bernardi.[546] Basil proposed to Gregory an ascetic ideal of relative solitude and radical detachment from civic life. In letter 2, Basil endorsed the pursuit of an interior tranquillity that derived from the rejection of one's house, possessions, friends, and civic life; and the rejection of the world was to be ultimately understood as a detachment of the soul from the body.

As far as education was concerned, however, at Annisa Basil proposed rejection of secular learning (ἀμαθῆ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων διδαγμάτων) in favour of the practice of prayer and of reading the Scriptures (ἡ μελέτη τῶν θεοπνεύστων Γραφῶν). The surviving traces of Basil's involvement in education within ascetic settings point to Basil's preaching and episcopal career in the 370s rather than to his Pontic experience. So, for instance, when in the *De virginitate* Gregory of Nyssa described his brother as "the only one capable of teaching such things" (ὡς μόνου δυνατῶς ἔχοντος τὰ τοιαῦτα παιδεύειν), with reference to the *Asketikon*, Basil had long left Annisa, and had already been ordained bishop of Caesarea.[547] Basil's acknowledgement that he had acted as a teacher for individuals who had chosen to pursue an ascetic life (ἔχειν

[545] Pouchet 1992, 179-82.
[546] Bernardi 1968, 19; Sozomen, *HE* 4.17; in general, to speak of a Basilian model of ascetic life does not leave enough room for the variance in ascetic experiences that Basil's career provides.
[547] Gregory of Nyssa, *De virginitate* pr. 2.18-20.

ἄνδρας παρ᾽ ἐμαυτῷ, ὑπ᾽ ἐμοὶ διδασκάλῳ, τὴν ἄσκησιν ταύτην προελομένους) in an apologetic letter sent to the clergy of Neocaesarea dates to the late episcopate too (376).[548]

The evidence for Basil's educational projects implemented within the ascetic experiment at Annisa is meagre. The time spent in the Pontic retreat with Gregory of Nazianzus was characterised by solitude and detachment from the world, and there are no elements that should make us believe that either of the two was involved in a teacher-pupil relation. Rather, the retreat must have provided the two friends with enough time to reflect upon the Christian ascetic way of life and, possibly, gave them the chance to compose written works on the topic. While the view that the *Philokalia* was compiled at Annisa remains not more than a hypothesis, the origin of the *Asketikon* may instead be sought in the Pontic retreat.[549] The composition of the *Asketikon*, a normative piece on ascetic life in the form of questions and answers, was a work in progress that Basil might have begun at Annisa, but that he kept on editing over the years. New questions were added, and old questions were changed or expanded. A major revision was carried out in the 370s, during the episcopate; and the *Asketikon* had reached more than twice its original length at the time of Basil's death, in 379.

It is the revised version of the *Asketikon* that Basil compiled later in his life, during the episcopate, that contains two recommendations about the provision of instruction within Christian ascetic communities. The first is Basil's reply to the question whether an ascetic brotherhood should provide instruction for children who are not destined to become ascetics:

> *Ought there be a school (διδασκαλεῖον) in the community (ἐν ἀδελφότητι) for children of seculars (παιδίων βιωτικῶν)?*
> The apostle says: *Fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath: but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord* (ἐν παιδείᾳ καὶ νουθεσίᾳ Κυρίου; *Eph.* 6.4). Therefore, if those who present them do so with such a goal in view, and those who accept them are fully persuaded that they can bring them up *in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*, then let the Lord's charge be kept: *Let the children come to me and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven* (*Lk.* 18.16). But without such a goal and such a scope, I do not consider that it is

[548] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 207.2.
[549] McLynn 2004; Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 6: Τίς ἄμιλλαν ἀρετῆς καὶ παράθηξιν, ἣν ὅροις γραπτοῖς καὶ κανόσιν ἠσφαλισάμεθα;

either pleasing to God or proper and fitting for us.[550]

The provision of instruction to individuals who would not pursue an ascetic career has been a crucial topic in the discussion on the history of education in this period, and scholars have not reached an agreement on the interpretation of this passage. They have variously read a negative answer (παιδία βιωτικά are not allowed),[551] an answer of compromise (παιδία βιωτικά are gingerly allowed),[552] and a positive answer (παιδία βιωτικά are allowed, and monasteries should provide instruction for them).[553]

Despite the interpretative problem, the passage has often been taken as indicative of a crucial step in the history of education. Marrou argued that here Basil was attempting to implement an educational system based in monasteries, which was primarily addressed to aspiring monks and was thus an alternative to the schools. Although mostly limited to monks, Basil would thus mark an early stage in the future development of monastic communities into providers of instruction that could occasionally cater for the needs of lay individuals. Also, relying on an article by Louis Bréhier, Marrou reported that the Council of Chalcedon similarly forbade monasteries to undertake the education of any children who intended to return to secular life (παῖδες κοσμικοί): the norm would reiterate Basil's recommendation, although it may in turn suggest that some monasteries actually accepted παῖδες κοσμικοί as pupils.[554] As already noticed by A.H.M. Jones, however, there is no such a statement within the Acts of the Council of Chalcedon; and Bréhier's argument is ultimately misplaced.[555]

Whichever reading of the passage one accepts (and another reading could be that of an exercise of tightrope walking), Basil's proposal should not be extrapolated from its historical

[550] Basil of Caesarea, *Short Rules* 292 (*PG* 31.1288; trans. Silvas 2005, 435).
[551] Clarke 1925, 341-42; Jones 1973, 1007.
[552] According to Marrou 1956, 332, instruction in monasteries was intended for young monks, but in this instance Basil would allow, though hesitantly and gingerly, to open the doors of the monastery to the children of the world, if the parents wished to send them. Browning 2000, 868, follows Marrou.
[553] Murphy 1930, 68: "instruction in secular branches to those whose parents request it (are to be given), but always with the understanding that lessons in Christian virtue are to be included." Silvas 2005, 435 n. 775; Giorda 2011, 146-49.
[554] Marrou 1959, 332-33; Bréhier 1941, 63; Browning 2000, 868, follows Marrou.
[555] Price 2005; Jones 1973, 1007 n. 51.

setting. The recent edition and textual analysis of the *scholia* to the *Asketikon* have revealed that *Short rule* 292 is part of a set of rules (287-313) that were associated with the establishment of the complex eventually known as *Basileias*, an ambitious ascetic foundation in Caesarea that Basil set up in the first years of the episcopate and that obtained imperial endorsement.[556] The passage, then, should be taken as less programmatic than was done in the past, and the vein of social concern and ambitious experimentalism that characterised the early years of Basil's episcopate, and the foundation of the *Basileias* in particular, should guide our understanding of this rule.[557]

Recent philological analysis has also revealed the chronology of *Long Rule* 15, which is the only other section of the *Asketikon* that deals with the provision of instruction in a Christian ascetic setting. The passage reads: "we deem any time, from the earliest age, suitable for receiving applicants (πρὸς τὴν τῶν προσιόντων παραδοχή);" and children "we receive before several witnesses, so as to give no pretext (for blame) to those who are on the look-out for one." The early version of the *Asketikon* proceeded by recommending that children "may be credibly grounded in every exercise of virtue, in word as much as in understanding and in deed;" and that "the care of little children should be assigned to those who have credibly afforded proofs of their exercise of patience."[558] The rule should be understood within the practice by ascetic communities of accepting the donation of children, who may or may not then become ascetics.[559]

During the 370s, the last two recommendations in *Long Rule* 15 were replaced by a lengthy piece of advice about how the ascetic brotherhood should deal with children. Again, the programmatic nature that characterises the section should be understood against the background of Basil's episcopacy and possibly within the establishment of the *Basileias* in

[556] Rousseau 1994, 357.
[557] Rousseau 1994, 139-51.
[558] Silvas 2005, 199-200.
[559] Papaconstantinou 2012, 81-82, 2008, and 2002; Krawiec 2002; according to Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 26.4, the monk Heliodorus entered the monastery at the age of three.

Caesarea. According to Basil, children should not be "immediately numbered and enrolled with the body of the brothers, so that if they fail, no reproaches are brought against the life of piety." With the exception of the time for prayer, they should live separately from the more advanced and from the elders of the community, so to observe reverence towards the masters as well as not to disturb communal life with the noise produced in the lessons.[560] Crucially, the ascetic foundation shall also provide instruction for children who would then become members of the ascetic community:

> The care for the letters (τῆν τῶν γραμμάτων μελέτην) also needs to be in accord with the goal. Thus their teachers will use the names in the Scriptures. Instead of myths they will tell them the histories of wonderful deeds (ἀντὶ μύθων τὰς τῶν παραδόξων ἔργων ἱστορίας) and educate them by maxims from the *Proverbs* and offer rewards for remembering both names and events, so that they attain the goal with delight and recreation, finding neither grief nor vexation.[561]

Basil foresaw a text-based instruction alternative to that provided in the secular world aimed at children who would then become members of the community. Memorization was the main concern of what was an elementary level of instruction that would have the *grammaticus* as its secular counterpart.

The uneasiness with myth and the tolerance for historical accounts of admirable deeds betray an opposition to secular instruction; and one should notice that Basil's concern about myth ultimately responded to the same preoccupations that the agency of our Syriac translators reveals. Nonetheless, the text does not indicate whether Basil had in mind secular literature, or, as Marrou speculated, the Old Testament as a provider of the necessary anecdotes for the children's instruction. Basil himself regularly drew edifying anecdotes from the Old Testament in the homilies, and his proposal here may have been similar to that of the contemporary compiler of the *Apostolic Constitutions*. In the 380s, the anonymous author based in Syria recommended avoiding the books of the heathen by replacing them with stories from the

[560] Basil of Caesarea, *Long Rules* 15 (*PG* 31.952-57; trans. Silvas 2005, 201).
[561] Basil of Caesarea, *Long Rules* 15 (*PG* 31.952-57; trans. adapted from Silvas 2005, 201).

Bible.[562]

With a view to the instruction of the children of the community, Basil encouraged the memorization of names and facts by enticing the pupils with rewards, and he recommended the use of the book of *Proverbs*, a collection of wisdom literature that could be easily memorised. Similarly, other authors proposed the used of the *Proverbs* in instruction in the same years. Gregory of Nyssa contrasted the education of Macrina the Younger based on the study of the *Psalms* and of the *Proverbs* with the secular curriculum based on poems, and Jerome recommended the study of the *Psalms* and of the *Proverbs* for the education of the young Paula.[563] School documents similarly reveal the use of lines from *Proverbs* as the basis of elementary exercises.[564]

Instead, Basil proposed a different educational project that also entailed the use of the book of *Proverbs* in another set of writings. The educational project foreshadowed in the *Asketikon* responds to the concerns of Basil in his episcopal role, and it was directed to the provision of elementary instruction to children within an ascetic community. In two speeches delivered at an earlier stage of his career, *In principium Proverbiorum* and *Ad adulescentes*, Basil had proposed a different educational project addressed to pupils who were not part of a monastic community.

Basil pronounced the homily *In principium Proverbiorum* at the presence of the bishop between 363 and 370, when he was deacon or priest. According to Paul Fedwick's reconstruction, the homily was one of the first preaching experiences of Basil. The homily dealt with the use of *Proverbs* in the education of the young, and it proposed the study of

[562] Marrou 1956, 331; Quasten 1986, 147-52; the compiler of the *Apostolic Constitutions* was probably based in Syria, and he made use of *Didascalia apostolorum* 1.6 (early third century), which was widely regarded as an authoritative text of apostolic origin (trans. Connolly 1929, 12): "But avoid all books of the heathen. For what hast thou to do with strange sayings or laws or lying prophecies, which also turn away from the faith them that are young? For what is wanting to thee in the word of God, that you shouldst cast thyself upon these fables of the heathen? If thou wouldst read historical narratives, thou hast the Book of Kings; but if wise men and philosophers, thou hast the Prophets, wherein thou shalt find wisdom and understanding more than that of the wise men and philosophers; for they are the words of the one God, the only wise." .
[563] Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Macrina* 3; Jerome, *Ep.* 107.12.
[564] Cribiore 1996.

Proverbs to students already involved in secular education. The nature of this educational enterprise prompts a so far unseen connection between the *In principium Proverbiorum* and another speech, the *Ad adulescentes*. Despite the relevance to the discussion on education, the homily *In principium Proverbiorum* has rarely figured in modern scholarship and it still awaits a modern translation.[565]

Basil presented himself as a beginner preacher who had been asked to comment on a difficult subject, the opening lines of the book of *Proverbs*. He argued that *Proverbs* is a particularly useful book, despite the fact that it has been written with some moderate obscurity. On the one hand, it provides much benefit at a superficial reading, and, on the other hand, it hides much utility in its depth (8.2); for the book was composed out of experience of the world as well as knowledge of the divine (8.4-5). The study of *Proverbs* would benefit individuals familiar with traditional instruction:

> literature, rhetoric and the composition of sophisms kept many employed - but their subject is falsehood. For literature cannot stand together without myth, or rhetoric without the art of speech, or sophistry without false reasoning. Since many who busied themselves in these occupations paid no heed to the knowledge of God and grew old in search of vain matters, the recognition of *paideia* (ἡ τῆς παιδείας ἐπιγνώσις) is necessary, both for the acceptance of the beneficial *paideia* and for the avoidance of the unprofitable and harmful (*paideia*). The person who devotes himself to the *Proverbs* and actively takes from them the benefit can also apprehend the grounds of discernment (νοῆσαι λόγους φρονήσεως).[566]

The passage argues that the study of *Proverbs* is functional to the acquisition of the discernment necessary to deal with traditional *paideia*, given that *paideia* can be beneficial but also harmful.

Basil stated the presence of both useful and perilous elements in traditional instruction,

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[565] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12 (*PG* 31.385-424); Bernardi 1968, 56-58; Fedwick 1981, 10 and n. 50. Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 8 (*CPG* 2852), which was pronounced during the famine of 369 and passionately invites the audience to give alms, attests to the presence of children absent from school among the audience (*PG* 31.309C and 317BC; Bernardi 1968, 64-65).

[566] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.6 (*PG* 31.397BC): Ἀλλὰ καὶ ποιητικὴ, καὶ ῥητορικὴ, καὶ ἡ τῶν σοφισμάτων εὕρεσις πολλοὺς ἀπησχόλησεν· ὧν ὕλη τὸ ψεῦδός ἐστιν. Οὔτε γὰρ ποιητικὴ συστῆναι δύναται ἄνευ τοῦ μύθου· οὔτε ῥητορικὴ ἄνευ τῆς ἐν τῷ λέγειν τέχνης· οὔτε σοφιστικὴ ἄνευ τῶν παραλογισμῶν. Ἐπεὶ οὖν πολλοὶ τῇ περὶ ταῦτα σπουδῇ τῆς περὶ Θεοῦ γνώσεως κατημέλησαν, ἐν τῇ τῶν ματαίων ἐρεύνῃ καταγηράσαντες, ἀναγκαία ἡ τῆς παιδείας ἐπίγνωσις, πρός τε τὴν αἵρεσιν τῆς ὠφελίμου παιδείας, καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀποφυγὴν τῆς ἀνονήτου καὶ βλαβερᾶς. Ἔστι καὶ νοῆσαι λόγους φρονήσεως τῷ προσέχοντι ταῖς Παροιμίαις, καὶ τὸ ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν ὠφέλιμον μὴ ἀργῶς δεχομένῳ.

but he did not question *paideia* itself by proposing a replacement. *Paideia* is firm on the background of Basil's speech, and so are rhetorical schools and rhetorical contests. According to Basil, the book of *Proverbs* offers help to resist the assaults of skillfully crafted rhetorical arguments, and the strength of truth of the *Proverbs* can defeat the superficial verisimilitude of rhetorical contests.[567] Also, the person who is fortified in the study of *Proverbs* can intercept the twists of a sophistic argumentation.[568] Indeed, once trained in the book of *Proverbs*, the mind will not be confounded, even when it is involved in a debate where the speakers seem to attack each other with arguments of equal power.[569]

Proceeding on a more conventional line of argumentation, Basil explained that *Proverbs* offer the understanding of true justice; and, by teaching and showing true and divine justice, they can rescue men from bestial passions (8.8). Possibly stretching the argument too far, Basil concluded that, unlike the person who is driven by money or friendship, the person instructed in *Proverbs* can understand and apply the true and divine justice following the example of Solomon (8.9-10). According to Basil, the study of *Proverbs* is of paramount importance in order to develop perception and cogitation (αἴσθησιν καὶ ἔννοιαν), where the former refers to the present human condition, and the latter refers to the future events (8.13). The contents of *Proverbs* surpass the wisdom of wise men (σοφοί), which, Basil explained, is an ambiguous term since it has also been used to identify men unaware of God. Indeed, while there are countless students (μαθηταί) of other teachers, it is the pupils (ἀκροαταί) of this book

[567] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.7 (*PG* 31.400C-401A): Πρὸς οὖν τὸ δύνασθαι ἡμᾶς ἰσχυρῶς ἀντέχειν τῇ ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνικῶν λόγων προσβολῇ μέγα ὄφελος αἱ Παροιμίαι χαρίζονται. Διότι ὁ προσέχων αὐταῖς, καὶ τὰς ἀπ' αὐτῶν παραινέσεις μὴ ἀργῶς προσιέμενος, οἱονεὶ καθωπλισμένος τῇ ἐμπειρίᾳ, δέχεται ἀβλαβῶς τὰς στροφὰς τῶν λόγων, μήτε περιτρεπόμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν, μήτε ἐξανιστάμενός που τῆς ἀληθείας. Ὅταν γὰρ ἄλλως μὲν φύσεως ἔχῃ τὰ πράγματα, ἄλλως δὲ οἱ λόγοι περὶ αὐτῶν ἀναπείθωσι, στροφή τίς ἐστι, μᾶλλον δὲ διαστροφὴ, ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου περὶ τὴν ἀλήθειαν γινομένη.

[568] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.7 (*PG* 31.401A): Ἤ στροφαί τινές εἰσι λόγων αἱ ἐκ τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως ἀντιθέσεις. Οὐ καταδεχόμενοι γὰρ τὸ ἁπλοῦν τῆς πνευματικῆς διδασκαλίας, οἱ ἐκ τῆς διαλεκτικῆς πρὸς τὰς ἀντιλογίας ἠκονημένοι, περιτρέπουσι πολλάκις τὴν ἰσχὺν τῆς ἀληθείας τῇ πιθανολογίᾳ τῶν σοφισμάτων. Δέχεται οὖν ταύτας τὰς στροφὰς τῶν λόγων ὁ ταῖς Παροιμίαις ὠχυρωμένος.

[569] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.7 (*PG* 31.401B): Κἂν εὕρῃ ποτὲ προβλήματα, ἰσοπαλεῖς τὰς ἐφ' ἑκάτερον ἐπιχειρήσεις ἔχοντα, ἐν οἷς δυσδιάκριτος τοῦ πιθανωτέρου ἡ εὕρεσις· ὅμως διὰ τὸ ἐγγεγυμνάσθαι ταῖς Παροιμίαις, οὐ συγχυθήσεται τὸν νοῦν, κἂν ὅτι μάλιστα δοκῶσιν οἱ προσδιαλεγόμενοι ἐξίσου τὰς ἐκ τῶν ἐπιχειρημάτων πληγὰς ἀλλήλοις ἀντεπιφέρειν.

that are wise.

The pagans too will benefit once they come to the healthy instruction in the *Proverbs*,[570] and they will:

> become wiser, once educated in the divine doctrines as much as taught in the human (ones), for the book banishes vice in manifold ways and it introduces in its stead virtue in many manners. It bridles an obstinate mouth, it educates the eye that looks to worthless things, it does not permit that one should come to blows; it chases away idleness, it chastise foul desires, it teaches discernment, it teaches manliness, it extols wisdom. For the person who has been educated in these things and has in his own person a strong aversion from the worst, once has gained an appetite for righteousness through a greater effort, such as through a (lauder) response, while being wise for his own effort, he is made wiser for the completion derived from the instruction.[571]

Basil appears then to promote instruction in the book of *Proverbs*, ultimately presenting himself as a viable teacher for it, as his exegetical samples on *Proverbs* scattered in the homily can prove.

The instructional and advisory posture that Basil assumed in the homily *In principium Proverbiorum* can be related to that adopted in the *Ad adulescentes*. *In principium Proverbiorum* contains references to the study of rhetoric and to the practice of rhetorical contests; and it argues that the study of *Proverbs* can be an asset for those involved in rhetorical training with a view to rhetorical contests. Basil thus seems primarily concerned to impress the young students of rhetoric and their families, for the study of *Proverbs*, possibly under Basil's guidance, is presented as an addendum to a traditional *cursus* of studies in rhetoric.

The dangers of traditional *paideia* was the ground on which Basil proposed Christian instruction in *Proverbs* in the homily *In principium Proverbiorum*. Similarly, in the *Ad*

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[570] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.14 (*PG* 31.416C): τοὺς ἔξωθεν ὄντας τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς λόγου, ἐπειδὰν προσέλθωσι τῇ ὑγιαινούσῃ τῶν Παροιμιῶν διδασκαλίᾳ, σοφωτέρους ἔσεσθαι ὁ λόγος κατεπαγγέλλεται.

[571] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 12.14 (*PG* 31.416D-417A): σοφώτεροι ἔσονται, πολλὰ μὲν περὶ τῶν θείων παιδευθέντες δογμάτων, πολλὰ δὲ καὶ περὶ τῶν ἀνθρωπίνων ἐκδιδασκόμενοι, ποικίλως μὲν τὴν κακίαν ἐξοριζούσης τῆς βίβλου, πολυτρόπως δὲ πάλιν ἀντεισαγούσης τὴν ἀρετήν. Γλῶσσαν ἄδικον χαλινοῖ, ὀφθαλμὸν παιδεύει πονηρὰ βλέποντα, χειρῶν ἀδίκων ἄρχειν οὐκ ἐπιτρέπει· ἀργίαν ἀποδιώκει, ἐπιθυμίας ἀτόπους κολάζει, διδάσκει φρόνησιν, διδάσκει ἀνδρίαν, σωφροσύνην ἀποσεμνύνει. Ὁ οὖν ταῦτα παιδευθεὶς, καὶ τήν τε πρὸς τὰ χείρονα διαβολὴν ἰσχυρὰν ἔχων παρ' ἑαυτῷ, καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ ἔφεσιν μείζονι τῇ ὁρμῇ, οἷον διά τινος ὑποφωνήσεως, προσκτησάμενος, σοφὸς ὢν διὰ τὴν οἰκείαν ὁρμὴν, σοφώτερος γέγονε διὰ τὴν ἐκ τῆς διδασκαλίας τελείωσιν.

adulescentes, which may likewise have been pronounced in the early years of Basil's preaching career, he warned school pupils against the dangers of studying classical literature, and he encouraged them to be selective about the contents of the texts that constituted their *curricula*.[572] On both occasions Basil presented his role as that of a well-informed advisor in the matters of secular education.

A crucial aspect of the performance of the *Ad adulescentes* is the figura of Basil that was conveyed to the audience. Basil ultimately displayed his confidence in acting in a school setting and using the language of the literary tradition. The work is particularly rich in literary references and anecdotes drawn from secular literature. Through a subtle mythological cleansing, however, Basil made the point that the contents of Classical literature undermined the edifying goal that the pupils' education was meant to achieve.[573] In the close of the *Ad adulescentes*, Basil added that the Scriptures would teach virtue in a more complete way than secular literature (10.1 τελειότερον); and, it is understood, he himself would be in a good position to provide further and better advice to the students in due course.

In both homilies Basil, as a deacon or priest, presented himself as a viable teacher or advisor, whose guidance was crucial when Christians should deal with higher education. While the elementary instruction foreshadowed in the *Asketikon* was primarily directed to future monks possibly within the *Basileias* in Caesarea, the two homilies defined Basil's role in relation to lay pupils and teachers, to the tradition of rhetorical studies, and perhaps to other Christian preachers too.[574] As a member of the clergy, Basil nonetheless engaged with higher rhetorical education in a Christian advisory role, and his engagement was not confined to the establishment of an alternative educational system based in monasteries.

[572] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 22; McLynn 2010, 112-13.
[573] Basil of Caesarea, *Or.* 22 10.8-9; McLynn 2010, 116-17.
[574] If we imagine the performance of the sermons in a competitive setting, when acting as a teacher at school Basil's edge over his competitors was Christian discernment, while, when acting as a Christian preacher, he could play the card of his training as a sophist.

5.3.3 Gregory of Nazianzus

The writings by Gregory of Nazianzus reveal his participation in the world of higher education. Gregory's ordination implied a less radical career change than for Basil, and his former involvement with professional *paideia* overlapped with his priestly career. The *corpus* of letters reveals Gregory's post-ordination exchanges with sophists such as Eustochius, whom Gregory had known for a long time (*Ep.* 190), the younger Stagirius, who succeeded in having Gregory's great-nephew Nicobulos as his student (*Ep.* 188), and even Libanius, to whose fatherly cares Gregory commended another student (*Ep.* 236). Over the years, possibly covering a publicly recognised rhetorical role in Nazianzus, Gregory had developed a solid network of sophists that his family and his fellow citizens were aware of, and which his admission of the incompatibility of a public display of *logoi* with the priestly ordination could not easily erase (*Ep.* 10.2).[575]

A direct outcome of his earlier teaching activities may be sought in the description of a *symposion* that was held in 371 in Nazianzus (*Ep.* 58). Participants in the drinking party were Gregory and Gregory's friends, who included associates from the time of Athens as well as ascetics, who clearly opted for a less solitary brand of monasticism than Basil had conceived at Annisa. Such convivial gatherings included the performance of poetry; and, it has been argued, this occasion provided the setting for Gregory's virtuoso performance of the poem *To Hellenius, an exhortation concerning the monks* (2.2.1). The exchanges between Gregory and sophists went on during the decade that followed, and there is the possibility that old as well as current students could take part in such parties.[576]

The *corpus* of Gregory's poems contains rich evidence for his familiarity with the

[575] Cribiore 2007, 165-69; McLynn 2006, 224-28.
[576] McLynn 2012, and 2006, 233-34.

world of *paideia*. Another poem (2.2.4), which appears to have been performed in a similarly symposiastic setting, is presented as pronounced by Gregory's great-nephew Nicobolus addressing his father.[577] In the poem, which opens with a list of anecdotes on the behaviours of animals (1-36), the young Nicobulus asked his father to move on in his education to study rhetoric, history, grammar, and logic (58-76), but with the plan to proceed to adjust his life to Christian teaching (77-88), perhaps having Gregory as his tutor (89-98). Another poem is presented as the reply of Nicobulus' father, in which the latter entrusted the instruction of his son to the cares of Gregory. Such a performance, in front of a wider group of friends, could have had the intention of displaying the Nicobulus family's literary culture, as well as showing Gregory's only indirect but certainly effective involvement in arranging the provision of first-rate higher instruction.[578]

Another poem, the *De virtute*, matches closely the poetic performance with Gregory's experience in the provision of literary instruction (1.2.10). The poem, which argues for the superiority of Christian doctrine over that of the pagans, is addressed to an unidentified young man. The addressee has allegedly shown excellent proofs of life, and is now aspiring to greater (Christian) achievements. Gregory conceded much to the literary culture of his addressee (and possibly his audience), for he reported anecdotes from classical literature presented in a positive light. The anecdotes, however, are in turn employed to emphasize the triumphant superiority of Christian *exempla* and virtues. Contrastive oppositions permeate the piece, including a curious section where Gregory invites his young addressee to be critical of the bad advice from the books of the ancients that he may be given to read, ostensibly at school.[579]

In order to exemplify, Gregory reported two short *florilegia*, both with a pagan outlook, showing that the sentences of the former are despicable (*e.g.* "nobody is more wretched that a

[577] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 2.2.4, and the father's positive answer 2.2.5 (ed. Moroni 2006).
[578] McLynn 2006, 235-37; for an overview of the scholars' views on the authorship and performance of the two *carmina*, see Moroni 2006, 32 n. 33.
[579] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 1.2.10 l. 4-5 and 1-24; ed. Crimi 1995; McLynn 2006, 233-34.

poor man"), while those of the latter may be accepted (*e.g.* "do not invoke Pluto, for I do not admire a god that the wicked acquire easily").[580] By contrast, however, the subsequent section argues for the pre-eminence of Christian virtues and religion. The poem closes with an exhortation to the young addressee to reject pagan falsity and mundane life for truth and confidence with God (παρρησία). A performance of the poem would expose the dangers of a traditional schooling, and, accordingly, it would show not only Gregory's familiarity with literary instruction but also his profile as a viable teacher or advisor with an edge over competitors.

In fact, the circulation of Gregory's instructional poems among friends and beyond must have had the effect of reinforcing Gregory's advisory profile in the competitive field of professional *paideia*. At the same time, the didactic nature of many of the *carmina*, which overall add up to more than seventeen thousand lines (almost two thousand more than the *Iliad*) reveal a considerable ambition and makes it likely that Gregory's involvement in the provision of Christian instruction went beyond the mere advisory role.[581] In the *De vita sua*, he called poetry "a teaching tool as well as source of pleasure for the young" (l. 7 παίδευμα καὶ γλύκασμα τοῖς νέοις ἅμα); and in the programmatic poem *In suos versus*, one of the four reasons that Gregory adduced to explain why he wrote verse is "to offer the young, especially those who enjoy the *logoi*, this cure as a healing that leads to more useful things than the inducement (itself), and sweetens the bitterness of the precepts with the art (of poetry)."[582]

The use of poetry in teaching was no innovation, and a number of Gregory's poems show familiarity with the formats used within school *curricula*, such as prosopopoietic

[580] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 1.2.10 l. 369-92.
[581] Simelidis 2009, introduction; Moreschini 2006, 61-83, has an overview; Demoen 1996; *PG* 37-38. For the chronology of the *carmina* see Moreschini 2006 and McLynn 1997.
[582] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 2.1.39 l. 37-41: Δεύτερον δὲ τοῖς νεοῖς, καὶ τῶν ὅσοι μάλιστα χαίρουσι λόγοις, ὥσπερ τι τερπνὸν τοῦτο δοῦναι φάρμακον, πειθοῦς αγωγὸν εἰς τὰ χρησιμώτερα, τέχνῃ γλυκάζων τῶν ἐντολῶν.

exercises, gnomic literature, and acrostic compositions.[583] Prosopopoietic compositions are exemplified by the *Comparatio vitarum* (1.2.8), which is structured as a dialogued *agōn* between the personifications of the spiritual and the secular life in front of a judge; and by the *Dialogus adversus eos qui frequenter iurant* (1.2.24), which is similarly arranged as a didactic dialogue. In the composition of the five-hundred verses long *Adversus iram* (1.2.25), a common theme of *paideia*, Gregory drew edifying anecdotes from Christian and pagan figures (such as Alexander the Great, Pericles, and Diogenes) showing a greater degree of dependence from the secular literary tradition than Basil did in his homily on the same subject.[584] Another programmatic *carmen*, the *De se ipso et de episcopi*, lists the topics that Gregory would consider the core of Christian doctrine, such as the Trinity, the nature of God and of the Incarnation, and the Resurrection, which should be treated, as by a philosopher (and possibly a teacher), in simple language (ἐμφιλοσόφει τῇ εὐτελείᾳ τοῦ λόγου 2.1.12 l. 307).

The presence of gnomic formats in the *carmina* is perhaps the most openly instructional feature in the collection. Poem 1.2.39 is built around one of the *Sentences of Menander*, and the already mentioned *De virtute* draws heavily on *gnomai* that were already circulating.[585] Furthermore, Gregory's *carmina* include a section of five poems in gnomic formats that have been put in direct relation with literary instruction. Their main themes are ascesis, refusal of wealth and secular life, and the conduct of a morally sound behaviour.[586] The *Monostichae sententiae iambicae et acrosticae* (1.2.30) and the *Distichae sententiae* (1.2.31) consist of collections of moral advice in a gnomic format.[587] The *Aliae generis eiusdem sententiae* (1.2.32), in elegiac couplets, are considered spurious and will not be taken into account here.[588] The *Tetrastichae sententiae* (1.2.33) are a singularly complex collection of sentences structured

[583] For the use of poetry in Libanius, Cribiore 2007, 159-65.
[584] Basil of Caesarea, *Hom.* 10.
[585] Azzarà 2003, 56-60.
[586] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 1.2.30-34; Chadwick 1969, 1145-46, where Gregory's gnomic *carmina* are understood as a reaction to Julian's edict.
[587] Giannarelli 2003, 269-82.
[588] Werhan 1966, 39-40.

in iambic tetrastichs. The *Definitiones minus exactae* (1.2.34) consist of 267 moral sentences of one line each, and include a section on the life of Jesus presented in a sentential format.

Some of the material at the origin of the gnomic *carmina* derives from non-Christian literature, to which Gregory occasionally applied a Christian slant.[589] Behind the author's skilful efforts in composing the gnomic *carmina*, one can reckon the aim to provide sentences that could be easily copied or put to mind. In a letter to Nicobulus, Gregory himself explained that a moderate use of sentences (γνῶμαι, παροιμίαι, and ἀποφθέγματα) can add much to the style of an epistolary composition. The skill to effectively compose letters was a major asset for a member of the ecclesiastical as well as civic elite.[590]

There is no explicit indication of the instructional setting that Gregory expected for his didactic compositions, and such a setting remains object of debate. Referring to the *carmina* on the Bible (1.1.12-28), John McGuckin put forward "the education of children in grammatical schools." Neil McLynn proposed to search for the use of Gregory's didactic compositions among the peripheral activities that a training in *logoi* involved, such as music and poetry. He identified Gregory's ambition for the eventual diffusion of such *carmina* at school, possibly through the medium of students such as Nicobulus.[591]

The ascetic colouring of some compositions, however, leaves the possibility open for instructional settings not limited to schools traditionally conceived. A passage from the gnomic *Distichae sententiae* (1.2.31) foreshadows a Christian readership with ascetic interests:

> Instruct your mind, those who a chaste marriage tied to life,
> to carry more fruit to the heavenly vats.
> You who take in your arms the Word of the Mighty God,
> virgin girls, set everything before God.
> Solitary life (μονότροπος) is a radiant splendor, but from the world
> may (you) keep the soul(s) away, may (you) stand far from the flesh.[592]

[589] Giannarelli 2003, 269-82; Azzarà 2003, 56-60.
[590] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 51.5.
[591] McGuckin 2001, 376; McLynn 2006, 234-35.
[592] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Carmina* 1.2.31.33-37 (*PG* 37.913): θέσθε νόον, βιότῳ μὲν ὅσους γάμος ἁγνὸς ἔδησε / ληνοῖς οὐρανίοις πλείονα καρπὸν ἄγειν. / Ὅσσαι δ' ἂν μεγάλοιο Θεοῦ Λόγου ἀγκάζεσθε, / Νύμφαι παρθενικαὶ, πάντα Θεῷ προσάγειν. / Αἴγλη παμφανόωσα μονότροπος, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ κόσμου / θυμὸν ἔχειν, σαρκῶν τηλόθεν

One wonders whether Gregory expected a diffusion of some of his *carmina* in a didactic setting characterised by an ascetic interest, if not even by ascetic practice.

The contents of some of the *carmina*, including the gnomic *carmina*, reveal Gregory's ambition for the diffusion of his compositions in innovative didactic settings with an interest in Christian asceticism. Without necessarily providing much information about the sort of ascetic destination they in fact aimed at, other Gregorian poems with explicit ascetic themes are represented by the series 1.2.1-5: *In laudem virginitatis*, *Praecepta ad virgines*, *Exhortatio ad virgines*, *Ad virginem*, *Ad monachos in monasterio degentes*. The educational project represented in the didactic *carmina* builds on the tradition of literate education as well as on an interest in Christian asceticism, and it can thus be related to cultural enterprises such as Rufinus' translation of the *Sentences of Sextus*.[593]

5.4 Conclusion

A close look at the instructional writings by Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus has revealed instructional relations that brought together the secular tradition of literate education and a new interest in Christian asceticism. Unlike rhetorical schools, such relations were not aimed at building rhetorical skills, but like rhetorical schools, a consequence of such relations was the development of social bonds between teachers and pupils, such as between Gregory of Nyssa and Harmonius or among the more advanced and less advanced members of the ascetic community addressed in the *De Virginitate*. The

ἱστάμεναι.

[593] At the same time, the poems that Gregory composed in the form of hymns and prayers may have been intended to accompany the practice of Christian (and perhaps ascetic) life, such as the *Hymnus vespertinus* (1.1.32), *Praecatio ante Scripturae lectionem* (1.1.35), *Praecatio matutina* (2.1.24), *Praecatio vespertina* (2.1.25), and *Praecatio postridiana* (2.1.26).

interactive space of such relations went beyond the limited dimensions of schools and monasteries. Basil proposed a Christian instructional addendum to students enrolled in rhetorical studies; and Gregory of Nazianzus' didactic poetry uncovers instructional settings that intersected school practice and ascetic life.

6. Educational settings beyond schools and monasteries: John Chrysostom in Antioch

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Chrysostom and Libanius

6.3 Chrysostom and Diodore

6.4 Chrysostom and the Syrian ascetics

6.5 The diaconate

6.6 An ascetic proposal

6.7 Preaching about ascetics and ascetic preaching

6.8 Back to school?

6.9 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The analysis of the works and careers of the Cappadocian Fathers has revealed educational projects that combined pedagogical practices of literate education with a new interest in Christian asceticism. By moving a couple of generations forward, one finds historical traces of instructional settings that combined the tradition of higher literate education with an interest in Christian asceticism. In Northern Syria, the works and career of John Chrysostom indicate that a model based on the dualism school/monastery does not make full justice to the historical milieux in which literate instruction took place during the last decades of the fourth century.[594]

John Chrysostom's (c.349-407) career as a priest and preacher in Antioch and Constantinople, as well as his engagement in the Christological controversies as a bishop of Constantinople (from 398) have been the object of uninterrupted academic interest.[595] The research focus on Chrysostom's preaching activities and community-building efforts, however, may run the risk of making us lose sight of the years of his life that preceded his ordination, and thus to underestimate the impact of the early professional experiences upon his later career. One should not forget that Chrysostom underwent a traditional *cursus* of higher studies aiming at a legal career, which brought him to the philosophical instruction of Andragathius and to the rhetorical school of Libanius (314-c.393).[596] Later, in 367, Chrysostom became a member of the brotherhood led by Carterius and Diodore (later to become bishop of Tarsus), and he abandoned the forensic profession that he had practised for a short time.[597] The continuity between the rhetorical pursuits that Chrysostom left behind and the membership in the

[594] For Antioch at the time, Liebeschuetz 1972; for Libanius, Cribiore 2007; for John Chrysostom, Maxwell 2006, Mayer 2000, and Kelly 1995; for Theodore of Mopsuestia, Schwartz 2013, 27-46; Socrates *HE* 6.3; Sozomen, *HE* 8.2.
[595] Recently Maxwell 2006, and Mayer 2000.
[596] Socrates *HE* 6.3.
[597] John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 1.2.20: τὸν ἐν τῷ δικαστηρίῳ προσεδρεύοντα.

brotherhood should be emphasised; and such a continuity is well represented by the fact that Chrysostom brought with him two fellow students from Libanius' school, Maximus and Theodore, who likewise had in the meantime accumulated some professional experience in the forensic field.[598]

The brotherhood of Diodore represented a setting that combined pedagogical practices of the school tradition with an interest in Christian ascetic behaviour. The brotherhood was a circle of learned Christians who accepted ascetic rules, and it provided an instructional setting in which Chrysostom himself was trained in Scriptural exegesis. At the same time, Chrysostom's preaching activities reveal his mastery of the rhetorical as well as exegetical techniques in which he had been trained in youth. The works that he composed before his priestly ordination uncover grey areas between the two worlds, and ultimately prompt the question whether Chrysostom played an instructional role outside the setting of a school of rhetoric or philosophy. What was the relation between Chrysostom and his fellow students Maximus and Theodore both at Libanius' school and at Diodore's brotherhood? What was the setting in which Chrysostom pronounced the *De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles*, when he described the early Christian martyr as a traditional philosopher? How should one understand his proposal, in the *Adversus oppugnatores*, to send children to be instructed by monks outside the city? Chrysostom's early works and career showcase his engagement in educational projects that combined features of rhetorical and philosophical instruction with Christian asceticism.

6.2 Chrysostom and Libanius

[598] Socrates *HE* 6.3; Sozomen, *HE* 8.2.

The rhetorical training that Libanius had provided acted as the bedrock on which Chrysostom could build his later preaching (as well as forensic) career. While the rhetorical techniques that Chrysostom's homilies reveal have been object of academic attention, however, the analysis of Chrysostom's early professional experiences and his practical involvement in the world of rhetorical education remains a *desideratum*.[599] Chrysostom's vocational pursuits await to be understood within their historical setting, and his early professional ambitions have to be related and contrasted with those of aspiring sophists, rhetoricians, and political figures of the time. Also, the study of Chrysostom's early professional career should take into account the input and the guidance that his teachers and mentors, Andragathius and Libanius, must have provided. While nothing is known of Andragathius' philosophic school, much more is known about Libanius.

The approach to Chrysostom and Libanius that scholarship has followed during the past decades, however, has not focused on Chrysostom's education and early professional career. Most scholarship has followed a rather stylised model that addressed the ways in which a pagan and a Christian living in the same city saw, depicted, and reacted to the major events of the late fourth-century. Building on such a framework, which was first presented by Sozomen and Palladius,[600] the pair Libanius and Chrysostom provided the historians with an attractive case study for comparative analysis of late fourth-century religion and society. The deeds of both figures have been taken as representative of Christianity and paganism respectively; and, for instance, scholars have suggested that Chrysostom's choice to leave Libanius' school was a move motivated by a refusal of the cultural and religious underpinnings that the education in the *logoi* implied.[601]

An oppositional framework to understand Libanius and Chrysostom, however, found

[599] Maxwell 2006; Mayer 2000, 5: "It is at this point [i.e. ordination to the priesthood] that John's career becomes of special interest to us in terms of his experiences as a pastoral carer and preacher."
[600] Sozomen *HE* 8.2; Palladius, *Dialogue* 5.6-7; and perhaps also Theodoret *HE* 3.18.
[601] Maxwell 2006, 39 n. 117; Hunter 1988, 7-8; Festugière 1959, 211-40.

some support in the fact that the two Antiochenes rarely appear to interact with each other in their works. Neither the huge *corpus* of letters by Libanius or the more modest surviving *corpus* of letters by Chrysostom contains a letter, or even an explicit mention, of the other person. In addition, in the huge *corpus* of works by Chrysostom Libanius is never mentioned by name, and he is simply referred to as "my sophist, who was of all men the most attached to pagan superstition,"[602] or as "the sophist of the city."[603] It has been suggested, then, that Chrysostom chose not to interact with Libanius after his rhetorical schooling.

In fact, to take the references to Libanius at face value as indicative of Chrysostom's animosity towards his pagan teacher on religious grounds may be too simplistic for a satisfactory explanation, and a closer reading yields less straightforward results. In the *Ad viduam iuniorem*, Chrysostom reported the admiration of the pagan sophist (identified with Libanius) for the behaviour of Chrysostom's mother Anthusa. Libanius was surprised to find out that Anthusa chose not to get married again after being widowed around the age of twenty, and he reacted with astonishment upon finding such a behaviour in a Christian woman. Within his treatment of virginity, then, Chrysostom chose to narrate such an event in order to show that pagans too estimate virginity as a virtue.

In the *De Babyla*, Chrysostom adopted a more polemical attitude, for he denigrated at length Libanius' plaintive tone in a monody that the sophist composed on the arson of the Antiochene temple of Apollo. Chrysostom quoted some passages from the monody, but, as he had done in the *Ad viduam iuniorem*, he in fact employed Libanius' text as a basis to build his own point. Chrysostom invited his audience to reflect on the report of a pagan, and he argued that Libanius' passionate lament should be ultimately taken as indicative of the power of Babylas' relics.

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[602] John Chrysostom, *Ad viduam iuniorem* 2.95-97 (ed. Grillet 1968, 120): τὸν σοφιστὴν τὸν ἐμὸν - πάντων δὲ ἀνδρῶν δεισιδαιμονέστερος ἐκεῖνος ἦν; Kelly 1995, 7.
[603] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles* 98-99 (ed. Schatkin 1990, 224-26): ὁ τῆς πόλεως σοφιστής.

The two mentions of Libanius date back to more than ten years after Chrysostom had left the sophist's school. In the meantime, Chrysostom had been a member of the brotherhood of Diodore and Carterius; he had lived as an ascetic under the guidance of a Syrian man outside Antioch; and, after returning back to the city, he was ordained reader in the church of Antioch. The two works were composed when Chrysostom was close to the clergy of the city, respectively soon after he had returned to Antioch in 378, and in 380-81 after his ordination as a deacon. Chrysostom's role as a deacon was likely to have included the provision of guidance and instruction to members of the Christian community, and one suspects that Libanius may have appeared either as a competitor, or as an opponent in the public and political role that he covered. It is a significant coincidence that only few months earlier Libanius had addressed Theodosius with *Or.* 24 *On avenging Julian*.[604]

The two references to Libanius should be understood within the historical context of the pieces, taking into account the circumstances and the audiences for which the works were intended. Given that Gregory of Nazianzus' statement of refusal of *logoi* did not imply, in practice, a rejection of his involvement in the world of higher rhetorical education, there is the possibility that the relation between Libanius and Chrysostom, teacher and grown-up pupil, should likewise receive a different and perhaps better rounded explanation than personal animosity ultimately grounded on religious difference.[605] Is it possible, for instance, that that Libanius and Chrysostom did in fact do business together without leaving conspicuous traces in public and thus in our sources?

The usefulness of a religious paradigm based on the dualism paganism versus Christianity to understand Libanius and Chrysostom in Antioch has been increasingly questioned in recent years. Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, who has described Libanius as "ein Fixpunkt in einer Zeit, die einem tiefgreifenden und unumkehrbaren Wandel ausgesetzt war,"

[604] Swain 2004a, 399-400.
[605] Ch. 5.3.3.

has nonetheless concluded that religious allegiance did not matter much in Libanius' relations with his contemporaries, as the analysis of his private letters reveals.[606] Libanius' complaints about the loss of students to other sophists and to alternative sorts of education is not a straightforward indicator of his opposition to Christianity. Libanius' classes were open to Christian students, who had included, for instance, Chrysostom, Maximus, and Theodore.[607] The sophist's complaints may be better understood against the backdrop of the competitive nature of rhetorical education. Stark competition to Libanius' school was posed by legal instruction, which, increasingly during the fourth century, could easily provide employment in the bureaucratic apparatus of the empire.[608]

The gap between Libanius and Chrysostom appears thus diminished in the scholarship produced in the last years. Isabella Sandwell has proposed to replace the paradigm of paganism versus Christianity to understand Libanius and Chrysostom with a new model of analysis that addresses the variance in the concept of religious identity. Sandwell argued that "for Chrysostom, people had to choose whether they were a Christian or a Greek and there was to be no space for ambiguity between the two because religious identity had to be displayed visibly in every action at all times." Instead, Libanius did not see religious identities as clear-cut entities, and "he allowed people a more flexible approach to religious interaction in which they could play down their religious allegiance in certain circumstances in order to ease relations with others and then emphasize it again when it was useful or necessary to do so." She argued that Chrysostom described and promoted a world characterised by clear-cut religious identities, while Libanius was rarely concerned with the construction of religious

[606] Nesselrath 2012, 5 and ch. 5; see for instance Libanius' exchange with Amphilochius of Iconium (Libanius, *Ep.* 1543, which congratulates the previous student Amphilochius for his ordination) in Maxwell 2006, 36-39.
[607] Petit 1957, 196.
[608] Cribiore 2007, 205-13; Cameron 1991, 140; Liebeschuetz 1972, 242-55. See also Libanius *Or.* 62 *Against those who criticize his teaching system*, where Libanius responded to the alleged criticism that he failed to train young people for profitable careers.

boundaries, and, when he was, this was required by particular circumstances.[609]

Sandwell's analysis put under scrutiny the effectiveness of the divide pagan/Christian to understand fourth-century society. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's *Outline of a theory of practice*, she wrote of a greater degree of "feel for the game" emerging from Libanius' writings than from Chrysostom's. Libanius' approach to religious identity complied with the "habitus" of the time, the habitual and shared sense of how to deal with issues of religious difference and religious allegiance in the Roman imperial period. In this context, Libanius could move with confidence, and he was able to invoke religious allegiance when it was necessary for a particular purpose. Instead, Chrysostom's attempts at boundary construction in the religious field and his rule-based approach to religious identity was in fact closer to that of the Emperor Julian than to that of Libanius.[610]

The implications of Sandwell's work are far-reaching. Her book, which described Chrysostom's approach to religious identity as "unnatural" and "untimely," ultimately shows that the two-generation gap between Libanius and Chrysostom had been a period of crucial change in the official role of Christianity (as well as in the practical effects of an orthodox affiliation within Christian communities, as Chrysostom would later experience). [611] Chrysostom cannot have lacked some degree of "feel for the game" in absolute terms when one takes into account the brilliant career that led him to the bishopric of the capital city of the empire. Rarely could Libanius' students (not least Libanius himself) achieve so much.[612]

6.3 Chrysostom and Diodore

[609] Sandwell 2007, 6 and 8.
[610] On the dangers of the approach, however, see Kahlos 2007, 26-28; König 2012, 190-200, studies the attitudes of the three figures towards the symposium.
[611] Sandwell 2007, 17-20 and 26.
[612] Van Hoof 2011.

After the studies with Libanius and Andragathius, Chrysostom moved to new instructional settings that were characterised by ascetic practice. First he joined the brotherhood of Diodore and, later, he spent years in ascesis under the guidance of an unidentified Syrian man. How far instructional and how far ascetic these settings actually were is relevant to the present analysis. Was either or both settings similar to the scenario depicted by John the Solitary in the *Four dialogues with Eusebius and Eutropius*? The main character of the dialogue, a solitary, instructed pupils who had followed a traditional *cursus* of higher education (as well as less learned brothers) within the ascetic dwelling of his own hut. The solitary was a member of a community whose daily routine was marked by common gatherings for prayer at fixed times. The *Four dialogues* are likely to have been composed not later than two or three generations after Chrysostom joined Diodore's brotherhood, and possibly in the nearby region of Apamea.[613]

The brotherhood of Diodore and Carterius provided an instructional setting that drew together literate instruction and ascetic life. Instruction in the Scriptures was one of the common activities in which the members of the brotherhood were occupied, and in this context Diodore transmitted to Chrysostom the predilection for the literal strand of Scriptural exegesis that would emerge in later works.[614] Also, Daniel Schwartz examined the evidence for Theodore's exegetical pursuits while he was a member in Diodore's brotherhood.[615] As far the ascetic nature of the brotherhood is concerned, Chrysostom himself wrote that membership had some conditions, and there existed a list (ὁ κατάλογος τῶν ἀδελφῶν) containing the names of the brothers who had subscribed to a contract (συνθῆκαι) with Christ.[616] J.N.D. Kelly argued that the brothers used to meet for occasions such as praying and studying the Scriptures, and that they were committed to an ascetic life that included the rejection of marriage as well as the

[613] Ch. 4.1.1 and 7.4.
[614] Sozomen, *HE* 8.2; Socrates, *HE* 6.3.
[615] Schwartz 2013, 29-33.
[616] John Chrysostom, *Ad Theodorum lapsum* 1 (*SC* 117.46 = *PG* 47.309).

luxury that members of their class would usually accept.[617]

On the basis of a passage from the *De sacerdotio* where Chrysostom appears to have been based in the city and living in his mother's house at this stage, Kelly speculated that Chrysostom, Theodore, and Maximus would still live at home, and they would gather with Diodore only on designated occasions.[618] As Mayer pointed out, later witnesses describe the brotherhood in more markedly ascetic terms. Socrates described it as ἀσκητήρια "monastery", which seems to imply common living in ascesis. Given the seventy years or so that passed before Socrates composed his account, however, the monastic connotation that Socrates applied may well be an anachronism. In later years, Chrysostom too emphasised the ascetic nature of the brotherhood, as it emerges in the *Laus Diodori episcopi*, a speech in praise of his former teacher Diodore (διδάσκαλος *PG* 52.747) that was pronounced in Antioch on occasion of a visit of the latter.[619] Here, the lifestyle of Diodore in Antioch is described in markedly ascetic terms, and it follows the imagery that the Scriptures apply to the ascetic lifestyle of John the Baptist in the desert. In the *Laus Diodori episcopi* the ascetic emphasis may well have been part of an agenda, although the indication that Diodore "preached, and lived on the other side of the river in deserted places (*i.e.* outside the city, but not on Mount Silpius); and (that), when he visited (the city), he instructed the entire population with healthy teaching" may well be genuine.[620] There is the strong possibility that Diodore was an ascetic living just outside town, whom Chrysostom, Theodore, and Maximus visited on regular occasions for common prayers and Scriptural instruction.

When Chrysostom joined the brotherhood in 367, Diodore was in fact a priest, whom Meletius had ordained between 361 and 365. As a priest, Diodore could preach in a civic

[617] Kelly 1995, 19-23.
[618] John Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 1.3-5; Kelly 1995, 19-23, and 25.
[619] Mayer 2005, 376.
[620] Mayer 2000, 5; John Chrysostom, *Laus Diodori* 4 (*PG* 52.764): Ἐκήρυξεν ἐκεῖνος, πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ διατρίβων ἐν ταῖς ἐρημίαις· καὶ οὗτος πέραν τοῦ ποταμοῦ ποτε τὴν πόλιν πᾶσαν λαβὼν, τὴν ὑγιῆ διδασκαλίαν ἐπαίδευσεν.

environment, and, in addition, he may well have played the role of Meletius' deputy during the bishop's absences from Antioch. Diodore's brotherhood, then, overlapped with the church at Antioch, and it must have brought Chrysostom closer to the activities of the Antiochene clergy. Chrysostom was soon promoted to the church readership; but, at the same time, he was a fresh product of the world of *paideia*. Chrysostom brought to the brotherhood the literary contents and the rhetorical skills accumulated through literate education, a particular understanding of the attitude that should guide personal relations among the *pepaideuomenoi*, and, concretely, two fellow students and perhaps colleagues from the world of *paideia*, Theodore and Maximus. One suspects that the format of higher rhetorical education, where the rhetorical performance could bring together the role played by advanced students, such as Chrysostom, and the role played by the teacher, had an impact on Chrysostom's personal involvement in the ascetic brotherhood.

Two early works by Chrysostom raise the question whether Chrysostom himself played an instructional role within the brotherhood. An instructional posture by Chrysostom is attested in the *Ad Theodorum lapsum*, whose circumstances of composition are supplied by the contents of the piece itself. The (eventually successful) purpose of the piece was to convince Theodore to revert to Christian life, for the youth had considered to leave the brotherhood in order to get married and to proceed to a secular career. Does the work indicate that Chrysostom was playing a teaching or instructional role towards Theodore, and perhaps towards Maximus, while being a member of the brotherhood? A similar question arises from another early work by Chrysostom, the *Comparatio regis et monachi*, which Kelly attributed to the period preceding the composition of the *Ad Theodorum lapsum*.[621] The precise chronology of the *Comparatio*, however, remains a matter of debate.[622] The work follows the scholastic genre of the 'comparison' (σύγκρισις), and it is a reminder of the literary compositions that a training in

[621] Kelly 1995, 20-23; Hunter 1988, 26-27; both Hunter and Kelly have rejected the doubts that had been raised on the authorship of the *Comparatio*.
[622] Kelly 1995, 20 n. 22; Hunter 1988, 36-41, proposed not long after 379.

rhetoric would entail. Betraying enthusiasm for Christian asceticism, however, Chrysostom attributed the commonplace virtues of the philosopher to the monk, and he argued for the superiority of the lifestyle of a monk to that of a king.

If one accepts Kelly's chronology, the *Comparatio*, which attests lingering traces of the secular literary tradition in a Christian ascetic setting, reveals the endurance of rhetorical genres in Chrysostom's literary activity as a member of the brotherhood. The *Comparatio* contains also a number of unacknowledged quotations from pagan authors as well as from Libanius, which recall Chrysostom's previous rhetorical instruction. If one accepts that the *Comparatio* was addressed to Theodore, as Kelly suggested, such references to Libanius may be more important than it initially seems. Theodore, as well as Maximus, had been Chrysostom's fellow students under Libanius, and, as a more advanced student, Chrysostom may have played an instructional role towards them already within Libanius' school. According to both Socrates and Sozomen, it was Chrysostom who convinced Theodore and Maximus to leave the forensic career and to join Diodore's brotherhood. One wonders whether the *Comparatio* represents a trace of the continuity of an instructional relation between Chrysostom and Theodore from the study of rhetoric to Christian instruction within Diodore's brotherhood.

Hunter made a further step, and argued that three of the borrowings from Libanius' orations in the *Comparatio* should be interpreted as "as Chrysostom's subtle rejoinder to his teacher." Out of the many quotations from classical literature and from Libanius contained in the *Comparatio*, three are of particular significance. In order to describe the figure of the monk, three passages of the *Comparatio* reproduce the exact terminology that Libanius had used to praise the Emperor Julian (*Or.* 12 and 13) and Socrates (*Decl.* 1) as true philosophers. The use of terminology drawn on the tradition of philosophical ascesis is not uncommon in Chrysostom, but in these instances Chrysostom used the exact same formulas that he, and

possibly his audience, had already heard or read from Libanius'. Hunter suggested that these instances should be in fact interpreted as an attack "against the former teacher, Libanius, and, beyond him, against the Emperor Julian," although Kelly did not follow up on this point.[623]

6.4 Chrysostom and the Syrian ascetics

In the years that followed, Chrysostom experienced another ascetic setting that may have similarly combined ascetic life with instructional activities. Palladius reported that Chrysostom acted as an assistant to bishop Meletius for about three years, after which he was ordained reader within the clergy of Antioch.[624] Whether or not Valens' brief visits to Antioch in 370 and 371, during which Meletius must have held a low profile, meant greater pastoral responsibilities for Chrysostom, this must have been the case from the time when Valens moved his residence to Antioch (winter 371). The presence of the Arian imperial court in town resulted in Meletius' exile to Armenia, where he remained until Gratian's turn in religious policy following Valens' death at Adrianople. In the months following Meletius' flee to Armenia, Chrysostom refused to be ordained priest (what his friend Basil instead did not), and, not unlike other members of the clergy such as Diodore who likewise fled to Armenia, he left the city and moved to the outskirts of Antioch, possibly on Mount Silpius, in order to lead an ascetic life under the guidance of an old Syrian man.[625]

The sources that describe the period are unfortunately few, and, in addition, they need to be carefully weighted.[626] If one follows Palladius and Kelly's reconstruction, Chrysostom's ascetic experience lasted between 372 and 376, before he embarked in a more ambitious

[623] Hunter 1988, 24-29, and 1988a.
[624] Palladius, *Dialogue* 5.8-15.
[625] Palladius, *Dialogue* 5.18-20: περιτυχὼν γέροντι Σύρῳ, ἐγκράτειαν τημελοῦντι, ἀπομιμεῖται τὴν σκληραγωγίαν; with Kelly 1995, 24-26 and Liebeschuetz 1972, 235.
[626] Mayer 2006 has addressed the distorting agenda of Palladius' account.

solitary experiment between 376 and 378. As Palladius reported, however, the precarious physical condition that the ascetic life had caused forced Chrysostom to leave the ascetic solitude and to return to the city in 378. The chronology of Chrysostom's ascetic retreat, however, does not dispel every suspicion of a more complex sequence of events during those years, for it coincides with Valens' presence in Antioch and, following his death, with Gratian's decree that allowed the return of all exiled bishops. On this occasion, Meletius returned to Antioch, and, one suspects, Chrysostom and other members of the Nicene clergy could come out and expect an imminent reorganization of the church hierarchy.

Given the apologetic nature of Palladius' *Dialogue*, some scholars have tended to downplay or to limit themselves to the admission of the inadequacy of its witness to reconstruct Chrysostom's ascetic experience.[627] However suspicious its chronology may seem and leaving aside any consideration about the motivations guiding Chrysostom, there is no need to conclude that Chrysostom's ascetic retreat was merely literary fiction. Others scholars, in fact, have complemented Palladius' account with Chrysostom's description of his own ascetic experience in the *De compunctione*, as well as with the mentions of ascetic life outside Antioch that he later pronounced in his homilies.[628] Chrysostom reported that the monks based on the mountains outside Antioch lived in single-occupancy huts, and the outlook of their settlement could resemble that of a military camp. The communities were subject to a superior (ὁ προεστώς), and the monks spent much time in communal activities. According to

[627] Mayer 2006; Maxwell 2006, 34; Mayer 2000, 5-6.

[628] Kelly 1995, 24-35; John Chrysostom, *Ad Demetrium de compunctione* 1.6 (*PG* 47.403): Ὅτε γὰρ πρώην ἐγὼ ἐγνώκειν, τὴν πόλιν ἀφεὶς, ἐπὶ τὰς σκηνὰς τῶν μοναχῶν ἐλθεῖν, πολὺς ἦμην τοῦτο ἐρευνῶν καὶ πολυπραγμονῶν, πόθεν ἡ τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἔσται χορηγία, καὶ εἰ δυνατὸν ἄρτον ἐσθίειν ἐφήμερόν τε καὶ νεαρὸν, καὶ εἰ μή τις ὁ καταναγκάζων ἐλαίῳ χρῆσθαι τῷ αὐτῷ πρὸς λύχνον τε καὶ τροφὴν, εἰ μή τις ὁ πρὸς τὴν τῶν ὀσπρίων ταλαιπωρίαν ὠθῶν καὶ εἰς ἔργον ἐμβάλλων χαλεπὸν, οἷον σκάπτειν ἢ ξυλοφορεῖν κελεύων ἢ ὑδροφορεῖν, καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα τὰ τοιαῦτα ὑπηρετεῖν· καὶ ὅλως ὁ περὶ τῆς ἀναπαύσεως λόγος ἦν πολὺς ἡμῖν. "When I previously took the decision to leave the city and to go to the tents of the monks, I very much inquired and was concerned whence the supply of the necessary things would come, if it were possible to eat bread of the day and fresh, if anybody would force me to use the same oil for the lamp and for food, if anybody would force me to the regular consumption of pulse and assign me to hard work such as digging, carrying the wood and fetching the water, and to serve in all other such things. In short, I was very much concerned about the rest (of the body)." According to Kelly 1995, 29 n. 17, the work was written in 381-82, after Chrysostom had returned to Antioch.

Chrysostom's report, the most time-consuming activity carried out in common was the singing of hymns and psalms. The daily routine was divided into four parts marked by common assemblies and psalm-singing, and during the rest of the time the monks read the Scriptures but were also involved in practical tasks such as digging, planting and watering the ground, as well as copying books - Chrysostom reported.[629]

Chrysostom's later account of the angelic life in the ascetic communities outside Antioch is certainly eulogistic, and, at the same time, it left much to the imagination of the audience. One issue is whether, in addition to the Scriptures, members of the communities had other written material at their disposal, and, in general, whether this ascetic lifestyle gave them the chance for literary, as well as instructional, pursuits. In particular, the report that some monks had learned to write books (εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ καὶ βιβλία γράφειν μεμαθηκότες) has been differently interpreted. On the one hand, Kelly has taken the view that the monastic routine and the austere lifestyle of monks on Mount Silpius would not allow extensive literary activity, while, on the other hand, Liebeschuetz took the opposite view, and he went as far as to argue that Chrysostom composed the *Adversus oppugnatores* while living in ascesis.[630]

It is not necessary to suppose, with Kelly, that, in the monastic settlements outside Antioch, ascetics lived in an egalitarian community and invariably followed an extreme lifestyle. Accounts of non-destitute ascetic experiences are witnessed, for instance, by Basil's account of his experience at Annisa, by Theodoret's *Historia Religiosa*, and by John of Ephesus' narrative about the community of Mar John Urtaye in the outskirts of Amida during the late fourth century. For instance, the ascetic settlement of Mar John Urtaye allowed wealthier ascetics from the city to erect their own dwelling places, as well as to supply the community with buildings made of stone.[631] One suspects that, although Chrysostom repeatedly remarked that the sons of rich parents lived a simple life within the communities on

[629] Kelly 1995, 24-35; Liebeschuetz 2011, 105-9; esp. John Chrysostom, *In 1 Tim. hom.* 14.3-6 (*PG* 62.574-80).
[630] John Chrysostom, *In 1 Tim.* 14.3 (*PG* 62.576); Kelly 1995, 31; Liebeschuetz 2011, 142.
[631] John of Ephesus, *Lives* 58 (ed. and English trans. in *PO* 19.206-27); Harvey 1990, 57-59.

the mountains, he and his upper-class peers could nonetheless move out of town with a better camping equipment, and they could perhaps expect a special treatment by the monks and by the heads of other communities. Chrysostom himself described his initial concerns about too basic a lifestyle.[632]

There is the possibility that Chrysostom's ascetic setting in the outskirts of Antioch, perhaps on Mount Silpius, had an instructional component. Chrysostom reported that monks "had learnt to write books" (βιβλία γράφειν μεμαθηκότες, above), and works that Chrysostom pronounced in later years, such as the *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* and the *Homilies on Matthew* assume that ascetics could be providers of instruction to pupils from the city (see below). Palladius reported that Chrysostom was first attached as a disciple to an old Syrian ascetic, but later retired in solitude to a cave, where he aimed to learn the Scriptures by heart. One wonders whether, in this setting, Chrysostom may have played a teaching or instructional role, whether towards younger disciples, followers, or visitors.[633] If Chrysostom, who was fresh from the church appointment as reader and had already played an instructional role with Theodore, wanted to attempt something similar with the ascetic disciples too, both his training in Scriptural exegesis under Diodore and his secular instruction could be put to good use.

Again, there is the possibility that the scenario depicted in John the Solitary's dialogues may be of relevance for Chrysostom's ascetic retreat. The *Four dialogues with Eusebius and Eutropius* are set in John's ascetic hut, and thus outside a civic milieu. In this setting he instructs other brothers, among whom there are the younger Eusebius and Eutropius who both carry Greek names. John the Solitary responds to their questions about ascetic life drawing on a tradition of philosophical literature on asceticism, while being interrupted only by the prayers in common that beat the time of the day. Admittedly, the different cultural backgrounds of the

[632] John Chrysostom, *Ad Demetrium de compunctione* 1.6 (*PG* 47.403) reported above.
[633] Palladius, *Dialogue* 5.18-25.

monks, who had not all undergone Greek instruction like Thomasius, prompted John to recount edifying anecdotes and gnomic sentences on the meanings of virtue.[634] Whether, perhaps in the latter part of his ascetic retreat, Chrysostom could have played the role of an ascetic teacher is certainly possible, although it remains matter of speculation.

Chrysostom's early career nonetheless opens a window on the relation between members of the town elites and Christian asceticism. Ascetic experiences by members of the elites who had undergone secular instruction could bring them in contact with monks of different cultural backgrounds, and, in a Syrian environment, with Syriac-speaking ascetics too. These contacts provide a possible setting for the use, translation, and transformation of secular literature. Such enterprises would not necessarily imply an extensive literary activity, which Kelly ruled out, or a particularly well-supplied library. Also, the focus on the moral contents rather than on literature and history that ascetic instructional literature reveal appears appropriate for an audience who would not be expected to interact with the civic populace following the performative formats and the (Greek as well as literary) language that a traditional rhetorical training would have developed. Chrysostom's years spent in a Syrian ascetic setting during the 370s, provide a possible space for the transmission of Greek secular literature to Christian ascetics, and to Syriac-speaking ascetics in particular.[635]

6.5 The diaconate

After Meletius' return to Antioch, Chrysostom abandoned his ascetic dwelling and

[634] Ch. 4.1.1.

[635] Libanius, *Or.* 42.31, witnessed the presence of Syriac- or Aramaic-speakers in Antioch (πάντες οἱ τῇ φωνῇ τῶν Σύρων καλοῦντες), and, according to Millar 2013, 35, "we cannot strictly exclude the possibility that [Chrysostom] had some personal knowledge of Syriac/Aramaic" for he did call on Syriac to elucidate the meaning of a name in the Hebrew Bible (*Hom. on Gen.* 9.3 = *PG* 54.624-25).

settled back in the city.[636] A literary piece that Chrysostom composed during these very years (c.378-80), when he resumed his duties as a reader before being ordained deacon in the late 380 or early 381, confronts us with another setting that combined the rhetorical element of the school tradition with an ascetic interest. The work is entitled *De Babyla contra Julianum et gentiles*, and it aimed to laud the life of the third-century Antiochene martyr as well as to celebrate the miraculous power of his relics. It is particularly significant that, after his own ascetic experience, in the description of Babylas Chrysostom drew from philosophical (and literary) asceticism rather than from Christian (and possibly Syrian) heroes. The piece marks the distance from the letters by Basil of Caesarea, in which the years that he had spent in ascesis (and possibly his priestly ordination too) corresponded to a radical change in the terminology he adopted to describe Christian asceticism, from a language based on philosophical ascesis to a language that was Scriptural in tone. One suspects that the setting for which the *De Babyla* was intended played a role in Chrysostom's philosophical characterisation of the martyr.

The six years that Valens had spent in Antioch, as well as the activities of an Arian clergy that the Emperor had openly supported, should guide our understanding of the revival of the cult of Babylas at this particular time. Unlike those Christians in Antioch who aided and abetted the presence of the Arian Emperor and clergy, Babylas had given a remarkable proof of courage and integrity. According to the story, the saint chased out of the church an emperor, possibly Philip the Arab, who had soiled his hands with the killing of an innocent young hostage. Babylas did not feel intimidated by the imperial entourage, and addressed the Emperor boldly and openly. Meletius' promotion of the cult of Babylas can be understood as a pre-emptive strike to state that the Nicene church of Antioch in fact had, notwithstanding the recent

[636] Kelly 1995, 36-54.

events, a tradition of standing up against evil emperors.[637]

Such were the circumstances in which Chrysostom pronounced the *De Babyla*. Justin Stephens has argued that the characterization of the exemplary behaviour of Babylas had a practical political counterpart in the figure of the church leader, and in the office of the bishop in particular. The evidence that Stephens adduced is taken from the close of the piece. In Stephens' translation:

> (Babylas) defended the outraged laws of God; exacted proper punishment on behalf of the deceased; showed the great gulf between priesthood (ἱερωσύνη) and kingly office [...]; taught emperors not to carry their authority beyond the measure given them by God; and showed **bishops** (τοῖς ἱερωμένοις) how they ought to exercise this office.[638]

One may question, however, Stephens' translation of τοῖς ἱερωμένοις *lit.* "those who are consecrated" with "bishops." Elsewhere Chrysostom used the verb ἱεράομαι to indicate the exercise of priesthood by presbyters; and the word ἱερωσύνη, "priesthood," was applied to both presbyters and bishops.[639] In the *De Babyla*, Chrysostom was careful not to ever use the word ἐπίσκοπος, and he regularly employed ἱερωσύνη in its stead.[640] Meletius' poor performance in raising his finger against Valens was not a memory that Chrysostom would have wanted to bring up too openly. Instead, as a reader and member of the Antiochene clergy himself, Chrysostom was proposing a paradigm of behaviour, which was strong of an old tradition, as a measure to assess his fellow clergymen.

Chrysostom's attack was a pre-emptive strike by somebody who, like Meletius, had in fact left Antioch under Valens, but was nonetheless about to be promoted, or aspiring to be, to a more important pastoral role.[641] One wonders, then, what the setting in which Chrysostom pronounced the piece may have been. The emphatic praise of Babylas, as well as of his act of courage in pointing the finger against a wicked emperor, may have put Chrysostom in a

[637] McLynn 2004a, 256-58; for the problematic identity of this emperor see Schatkin 1990, 59-60.
[638] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla* 127.4-11 (ed. Schatkin 1990); Stephens 2009; trans. Stephens 2009, 184.
[639] Lampe, *s.v.*
[640] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla* 127.4-11 and 156.5.
[641] Few years later, in a sermon Chrysostom addressed the same recommendation to the deacons (*Hom. in Matt.* 82.6); McLynn 2004a, 256.

somewhat difficult position if Meletius was present at the performance of the piece, and one doubts that such a work was intended to be performed in front of the broad audience of a church sermon. In this context Chrysostom may not have wanted to incur in the risk of bringing out the memory of Meletius' behaviour. Also, Chrysostom was not a priest yet, and it is highly unlikely that he could use the church pulpit as his platform.

The characterisation of Babylas as a pagan philosopher may have been better targeted to a selected audience, possibly composed by individuals who had undergone some sort of rhetorical or philosophical training. Chrysostom's characterization of Babylas' behaviour was that inherited from the philosophical tradition of pagan ascesis. Babylas chased the Emperor out of the church "with the calmness (ἀταραξία) and fearlessness (ἀφοβία) of a shepherd that removes a sheep full of scab and sick from the flock, in order to avoid that the disease of the sick one may affect the rest of the flock."[642] Chrysostom praised the holy man's outspokenness (παρρησία), moderation (συμμετρία), and rationality (λογισμός);[643] he then moved to a ten-chapter long digression built as a contrast between Babylas and the pagan philosophers (40-49). A few chapters after putting in the mouth of Jesus a modified line from the gospel of John now resembling a Stoic aphorism, Chrysostom argued that, unlike Babylas, pagan philosophers did not act according to measure (συμμέτρως) but used to indulge in inconsiderate passions (πάθοι ἀλογιστοί) (37), in fact reiterating an argument already used by the Emperor Julian.[644]

The use of philosophical language and imagery should be related to the audience that Chrysostom expected. Chrysostom structured the contrast between Babylas and the pagan philosopher as an address to a fictitious admirer of Diogenes of Sinope. To him Chrysostom explained that Babylas' deeds did not result from boastfulness and arrogance; but boastfulness and arrogance characterised the behaviour of Diogenes, whose flashing acts, such as closing

[642] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla* 30.
[643] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla* 33 and 36; Liebeschuetz 2011, 149.
[644] John Chrysostom, *De Babyla* 31 (ed. Schatkin 1990, 130 n.1); *Gospel of John* 8.34; Liebeschuetz 2011, 149. For the same argument on the behaviour of philosophers see Julian, *Or*. 9.6.

himself in a barrel or dressing up with rags, do not deserve any praise as they were accomplished through the devil's mischief (45). According to Chrysostom, Diogenes' outspokenness, unlike that of Babylas, was led by personal interest and vainglory; and, most importantly, it was not meant to be advantageous for others (46-47). In addition, Diogenes' continence and chastity, which Chrysostom's addressee may praise, were in fact filthy and shameful (48). After the tirade against Diogenes, there follows an attack to the remnant pagan philosophers, "above whom Diogenes shone" (ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἄλλους λάμψαντος 49).

The work expects of his audience a basic knowledge of a number of pagan philosophers, but one wonders why, on this occasion, Chrysostom went into such a detail to describe the behaviour of Diogenes, just in order to then condemn it by showing the superiority of Babylas' deeds. It is an intriguing possibility that Chrysostom was again acting in an instructional setting in some respect similar to that he had experienced at Libanius' school. In a study on the uses of the anecdotes on Diogenes during the fourth century, Derek Krueger has related the popularity of Diogenes in late-antique authors with the training provided within higher rhetorical education. Diogenes was a trendy figure within the curriculum of rhetorical studies, as is shown by the fact that rhetorical textbooks presented a considerable number of *chreiai* attributed to him, which were intended to provide the basis for rhetorical exercises. During the fourth century, individuals educated in the art of public speaking would have been familiar with the figure and the deeds of Diogenes, and one suspects that the audience that Chrysostom expected for his work had some experience of rhetorical training.[645]

It is an intriguing possibility that the performance of the *De Babyla* reveals a more restricted setting than that of a church sermon. Chrysostom may have performed in front of a selected audience composed by individuals who had undergone, or were experiencing at the time, some sort of rhetorical training. In a sermon pronounced on the same topic after the

[645] Krueger 1993.

ordination (386), instead Chrysostom did not employ the language of philosophical ascesis to describe Babylas.[646] The figure of Diogenes as a rival model to Christian figures, however, appeared again in later years. Never mentioned by name, the philosopher from Sinope was put in relation with John the Baptist in a homily on the *Gospel of Matthew*; and with the apostle Paul in a homily on the *First Corinthians*. Like Chrysostom had explained in the *De Babyla*, while the actions of Diogenes and the Cynics were led by vainglory, the Christian heroes, through their actions, aimed at benefiting others.[647]

6.6 An ascetic proposal

There is the possibility that a similar performative setting in front of a selected audience may be the original destination of another piece that Chrysostom composed in the same years. The *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* draws together the language of philosophical asceticism and Christian asceticism. Its precise chronology is debated, although most scholars agree on the period 379-83 (between 380 and 381 Chrysostom obtained the promotion to the diaconate by Meletius - an office that implied greater advisory responsibilities in front of the Antiochene community but still did not allow him to preach). Instead, on grounds that appear more questionable, Liebeschuetz proposed c. 377/78, when Chrysostom was still living in ascesis before returning to Antioch.[648]

Kelly has described the works that Chrysostom composed before the priestly ordination

[646] John Chrysostom, *De sancto hieromartyre Babyla* (ed. Schatkin 1990).
[647] John Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matthew* 10.4 (*PG* 57.188) and *Hom. on I Cor.* 35.4 (*PG* 61.301-02).
[648] For the former hypothesis see Hunter 1988, 36-41; for the latter Liebeschuetz 2011, 142 (for 380/81 Illert 2000, 13-17; for 379/83 Kelly 1995, 51-52; for 381/86 Festugière 1959, 192). The ground for Liebeschuetz' argument lies in Chrysostom's surprise at the report of hostilities to the monks within the city of Antioch. Liebeschuetz concluded that Chrysostom must have been away from the city, "otherwise he would surely have known what was happening there." One wonders, however, whether his alleged surprise may be instead understood as a rhetorical device -not unlike Chrysostom's reluctance to compose the work on account of his alleged lack of rhetorical skills (*diaporēsis*; Hunter 1988, 80 n. 8)- to emphasise the absurd nature of the attacks towards the monks.

as pamphlets, and he did not address the question whether some of the pieces may have been composed with view to a performative setting and later redacted in written form.[649] Rhetorical performance followed by written redaction is in fact the scenario that the opening *logos* of the *Adversus oppugnatores* foreshadows, although such a statement is certainly liable to be part of Chrysostom's construction of the circumstances for the composition of the piece:

> He said: '[...] we must see to it that we do our part and stop the plague [*i.e.* the violence against the monks]. And if you listen to me, you will put aside these lamentations and compose a *speech* (ἔργασαι λόγον) which has advice for the sick and the rebellious [...]. And I will take this *book* (τὸ βιβλίον) and put into the hands of the sick [...].' I responded: 'You are measuring our abilities according to the measures of your love. But I am not a skilled speaker (ἐμοὶ δὲ οὔτε πάρεστί τις λόγων ἰσχὺς) and I would be ashamed to exercise my apparent talent for a purpose such as this.'[650]

In addition, the considerable frequency of rhetorical devices such as series of questions, introductions of fictitious addressees, and direct addresses to the audience make a rhetorical performance the most natural setting for the *Adversus oppugnatores*. Also, both the manuscripts' identifications of the three sections as *logoi* and the frequent references to Chrysostom's own spoken performance of the piece strengthen the possibility that the *Adversus oppugnatores* was originally designed for a performative setting.[651]

The *Adversus oppugnatores vitae monasticae* concerns us here because it proposes an educational project in an ascetic setting, and, at the same time, it brings together the traditional imagery of the philosopher with that of the Christian ascetic. If one follows the argument outlined in the text, a point that could associate philosophers and ascetics was the provision of instruction and advice. Chrysostom proposed that, not unlike philosophers who had followers around them, ascetics could also have pupils to instruct. After the opening section that reports of violent verbal and physical attacks to the monks in the city, there follow two further *logoi*, which are respectively addressed to the "pagan parent," and to the "Christian parent." The two

[649] Kelly 1995, 36-54; so also Sandwell 2007, 75-77, on the *De sancto hieromartyre Babyla*.
[650] John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.2 (*PG* 42.321; trans. Hunter 1988, 80).
[651] For instance John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores PG* 42.355 (Ταῦτα δέ μοι εἴρηται νῦν, ἵνα μάθωμεν ὅτι...); *PG* 42.356 (καὶ μή τις θυμοῦ τὸ λεγόμενον εἶναι νομιζέτω); *PG* 42.375 (Καὶ τί δεῖ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα λέγειν); *PG* 42.323 (τῶν λόγων ἡπτόμην τούτων); *PG* 42.324 and 325 (ἀναγκαῖον εἰπεῖν); *PG* 42.328 (Εἰ δὲ μὴ ὤκνουν μακρὸν ποιῆσαι τὸν λόγον); *PG* 42.335 (Ἀγάγωμεν δὴ τὸν λόγον τοῦτον); *PG* 42.337 (Οὔπω γάρ σοι λέγω).

sections similarly invite the pagan parent and the Christian parent not to oppose but possibly to incentivise their children to be instructed by ascetics who lived on the mountains outside Antioch.

In the *Adversus oppugnatores*, which Hunter described as a discourse of exhortation (*logos protreptikos*), the reader can nonetheless detect apologetic undertones.[652] The piece is structured as a response to those individuals hostile to "philosophy," *i.e.* Christian ascetic life, for "they drive away those who lead others to philosophy, and with many threats they forbid them to speak at all or to teach anyone anything like it."[653] The first section of the *Adversus oppugnatores* expresses Chrysostom's surprise at hearing a report about the attacks to the monks that took place in the city. Following Festugière, some scholars have proposed that Chrysostom would identify in Libanius one of the opponents to monastic life. Hunter argued that the *Adversus oppugnatores* shows Chrysostom's familiarity with the image of Socrates depicted by Libanius in his first *Declamation*; while, according to Martin Illert, the work is an apologetic effort generating from the same polemic against monasticism represented in Libanius' second oration, composed in 380-81.[654] Whether or not Libanius was one of the addressees of Chrysostom's polemic, Kelly has argued that the work nonetheless reveals that the activities by monks in the city could attract hostile responses, and that the ascetics' proselytising efforts had some impact on the Antiochene youth. Following Kelly, in such circumstances the best option available to Chrysostom in order to defend the image of the monks was to present them as philosophers.[655]

Indeed, as Marrou and Kelly have shown, Chrysostom's proposal to send the youth to

[652] Hunter 1988, 25; Kelly 1995, 52-53.
[653] John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 1.2 (trans. Hunter 1988). Martin Illert's hypothesis to understand the work as prompted by the Nicene church-faction, who aimed to win the Antiochene monks round against the Messalian faction, which had a stronghold in Edessa (Illert 2000, 47-53) does not find further ground, given the generic nature of the references to historical figures mentioned by Chrysostom; and it has not been taken up by Liebeschuetz 2011, 141 n. 31.
[654] Festugière, 1959, 192-210; Hunter 1988, 27-28 and 119 n. 48 (Libanius, *Decl.* 1.18); Illert 2000, 17-18.
[655] Kelly 1995, 51.

experience ascetic life does not appear organically structured.[656] The practicalities of a life with the ascetics are not addressed, and there is no precise outline of the instruction that the pupils should obtain from the monks. Also, it is not clear how long the instruction with the monks should last, and how old the pupils should be when experiencing such a training. Was this a sort of primary instruction? Or was it an addendum to a more traditional *cursus* of studies? What would follow in their professional careers after the time spent among the ascetics? In addition, the contrast between the proposal addressed to the pagan parent and the proposal addressed to the Christian parent reveals a number of inconsistencies. To the pagan parent Chrysostom would say that "virtue among Christians does not require many days, since it grows by divine grace," and the parents would soon see the virtue displayed in the action of their sons (2.10). To the Christian parent, instead, Chrysostom suggested leaving the son with the ascetics until "being trained to perfection; […] (for) if he returns incomplete, he will be a laughing stock and an object of reproach, harmful to himself and to others. Let us not create such a monster!" and the training could last as long as ten or even twenty years (3.18).[657]

Inconsistencies appear also within the same *logos*. Addressing the Christian parent, Chrysostom first proposed a *cursus* of instruction that would be entirely run by monks, while below in the text he accepted that the ascetic experience should not be intended as a replacement of the traditional rhetorical education, but rather as an addendum to a traditional *cursus* of rhetorical studies. "«What then? Shall we completely eliminate schools (τὰ διδασκαλεῖα)?» you say. I do not say this, but let us not destroy the edifice of virtue nor bury the soul alive" (3.11). Then, Chrysostom pointed out that the practice of philosophy can be more powerful than rhetoric; and he reported that Socrates disparaged rhetoric since rhetoric is not appropriate for philosophers. He explained that early Christians, although ignorant and unlettered, have "overturned the whole world" (τὴν οἰκουμένην ἐπιστρέφωσιν ἅπασαν) by

[656] Kelly 1995, 51; Marrou 1956, 332; *contra* Giorda 2011, 151.
[657] In the *De sacerdotio*, which takes into account Chrysostom's own experience as a reader and deacon, he adopted a more nuanced view of ascetic training; Liebeschuetz 2009, 166-76.

persuading it to adopt Christian religion. Religious and moral education should come first, although "no one should think that I am mandating that children should be unlearned! If someone could guarantee that the essentials would be cared for, I would not object in their receiving an education in addition to this."[658]

Overall, Chrysostom's polemical and apologetic efforts appear to overcome the protreptic ambitions of the piece. Chrysostom's design had not been systematically thought through, and the reader is confronted with a series of arguments that do not provide a consistent and organic picture of the educational project that Chrysostom intended to put forward. In fact, the author does not appear to have been primarily concerned with the practical implementation of an educational project, but he was instead focused in providing an apology. The victims of the violent attacks, which provide the occasion for the piece, are the monks who come to Antioch, and, at a first reading, Chrysostom was involved in a defence of the monks in front of those individuals who were hostile to them, both pagans and Christians. According to Kelly, the *Adversus oppugnatores* represents Chrysostom's apologetic efforts in constructing a new, and more palatable, identity for the Christian ascetics with a view to the Antiochene civic audience.

The fact that Chrysostom had recently left ascetic life and had returned to the city when he composed the work, however, should be kept in mind. By proposing to send the Antiochene youth to experience ascetic life, Chrysostom ultimately advertised the experience that he himself had just undergone. Accordingly, the modern reader is puzzled by the trajectory of this apologetic enterprise. Was Chrysostom truly defending the monks? Or, alternatively, could the proselytizing activities of the monks help defend the young deacon Chrysostom, somehow? The close similarity between Chrysostom's own ascetic experience and the experiences he proposed in the piece prompts the question whether Chrysostom was again defending his own

[658] John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.12 (*PG* 47.368); trans. Hunter 1988, 151.

conduct under Valens, like he had done in the *De Babyla*. Could the *Adversus oppugnatores* be understood as an answer (or a pre-emptive strike) to possible accusations related to Chrysostom's earlier exile? To the accusation to have fled, the *Adversus oppugnatores* would answer that the reason why Chrysostom left is that monks can be, in fact, providers of philosophical instruction, as is well shown by the violent reactions that they do elicit in the city.

Moreover, some features of the work seem to envisage a setting compatible with that proposed above for the *De Babyla*, a rather selected audience with some experience of rhetorical instruction. The *Adversus oppugnatores* contains a considerable number of rhetorical devices, and, in the second *logos* addressed to the pagan parent, Chrysostom again employed the language of philosophical ascesis to characterise the behaviour of Christian ascetics. Chrysostom argued that Christian asceticism corresponds to the pursuit of true virtue. The young person who opts for an ascetic life in the mountains is led by pure virtue, and poverty will come for him together with freedom from evils (2.4). To support the argumentation he drew a number of anecdotes of virtuous conduct of figures such as Socrates, Diogenes, Aristides, and Epaminondas from writings by Plato, Plutarch, and Diogenes Laertius (2.4-5). The model of virtue that Chrysostom described is the one inherited from the tradition of philosophical ascesis.

Chrysostom's overall argument is built on the identification of Christian asceticism with true virtue, which is exemplified by the conduct of Socrates and Diogenes. Chrysostom appears to have conceded much to the secular culture of his expected addressees, whom he confronted with a question of coherence: the way to truly pursue (pagan) virtue is to become a (Christian) ascetic. Chrysostom's account of the character built up by ascetic practice is a reminder of the characterization of the Stoic sage; and the pursuit of ascetic virtue is described, following a *topos* of the Stoic tradition, as the pursuit of happiness (εὐφροσύνη) and pleasure

(ἡδονή).[659] In this particular context the religious definitions are blurred; and Chrysostom is even happy to concede that, while the young ascetic will abandon his wealth and the evils that come with it, he will become nonetheless illustrious on account of his virtue, and he will bring honour to his (pagan) father (2.8-9)!

Are such features of the work enough to conclude that Chrysostom engaged in a Christian-pagan dialogue? A careful reading suggests a negative answer. A closer look reveals that, in fact, the pagan and the Christian parents are only fictitious characters around which Chrysostom structured his work, not unlike the admirer of Diogenes in the *De Babyla*. The pagan parent is an admittedly imaginary figure that Chrysostom introduced to his audience (2.2), and used as a model to structure the ascetic proposal.[660] Likewise, the Christian parent is not the addressee of Chrysostom's work, but rather another fictitious figure that he employed in the argumentation.[661] The audience of the piece was not composed by the Christian and the pagan parents that Chrysostom constructed, and the structure of the *Adversus oppugnatores* is a more sophisticated one than it initially seems.

The bipartite structure of the work, which is made up by two different speeches proposing the same argument but arranged around two opposing figures may well recall practices drawing on rhetorical instruction. Also, the care for the structure of the piece and for the rhetorical devices that it contains is in contrast with the less-carefully thought-through proposal to send young boys to the mountains. One is left with the suspicion that Chrysostom was acting in a setting that valued (or required) rhetorical technique and performance. Moreover, the shrewd expedient of introducing the pagan parent provided Chrysostom with a considerable degree of freedom in displaying his familiarity with the literary tradition of

[659] Respectively John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.7 (*PG* 47.341-2) and 2.10 (*PG* 47.347); Liebeschuetz 2011, 143-44.
[660] For instance, John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 2.3 (*PG* 42.335; trans. Hunter 1988): Πόθεν οὖν ἀρξόμεθα τοῦ λόγου τοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν; "How shall we begin the speech to him?"
[661] For instance John Chrysostom, *Adversus oppugnatores* 3.1 (*PG* 42.349; trans. Hunter 1988): Διαπλαττέσθω τοίνυν καὶ ὁ πιστὸς ἡμῖν ἤδη τοιοῦτος, οἷος ὁ ἄπιστος, καὶ πάντα ἐκείνῳ προσεοικέτω, πλὴν τῆς περὶ τὸ Θεῖον δόξης "Imagine, then, a father who is a Christian, one like the pagan in every way, except for his religious belief."

philosophical ascesis. One should conclude that the rather sophisticated *Adversus oppugnatores* can be understood as a carefully-designed virtuoso performance, which fulfilled the function of an apology for Chrysostom's recent exile, and it was addressed to a setting in which rhetorical performance was crucial.

6.7 Preaching about ascetics and ascetic preaching

The apologetic enterprise represented in the *Adversus oppugnatores* could only work in a setting where the civic populace was confronted with the proselytising deeds by ascetics. In fact, the monks remained in the background of Chrysostom's Antiochene preaching career, which began in 386 when he was ordained priest by the new bishop of Antioch, Flavian. As a priest, Chrysostom encouraged the interaction between the civic population with ascetics. In an homily, he invited the audience to:

> inquire diligently for holy men, men that are truly such, who, in the retirement of the desert, cannot beg, but are wholly devoted to God. Take a long journey to visit them, and give with your own hands. For you may profit much in your own person, if you give.[662]

In another homily, Chrysostom explained that a visit to the holy men would benefit the visitor too:

> these living men you ought to see. But there is no one to lead you? Come to me, and I will show you the places of refuge of these holy men; come and learn of them something useful, [...] that they may instruct you to despise the tumult of the world. For they, as being strong, are able even in the midst of the raging of the waters to enjoy a calm; but you, who are leaky on every side, have need of tranquillity, and to take breath a little, after the successive waves. Go then there continually.[663]

The interaction with the monks could have a pedagogical effect on those who saw them, and, interestingly, Chrysostom reserved for himself a guiding role in the interaction between the townspeople and the ascetics.

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[662] Chrysostom, *Hom. on 1 Tim*. 14.3 (*PG* 62.574; trans. Schaff 1890, xiii 455).
[663] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matthew* 72.4 (*PG* 58.672; trans. Schaff 1890, x 421).

In another homily on the *Gospel of Matthew*, Chrysostom argued that the spectacles one can see in the theatres have a damaging effect on the behaviour of their audience. For instance, the spectators can be inflamed at the view of illicit love; and, if poor, they may be rendered discontent at the sight of harlots living in the luxury and they may despise their wives who own nothing of the kind, "hence the insults, and the affronts, hence the enmities, the wars, the daily deaths." Accordingly, Chrysostom confessed that he "would even wish to take one of those who are mad about these matters (*i.e.* the spectacles), and to lead him off there, and to show him the choir of those saints, and I should have no more need for these words."[664] Chrysostom advocated for himself the role of intermediary in the interaction between the civic populace and the ascetics.

The homily proceeded as a contrast between the damaging effects of attending the theatre and the positive effects of visiting the ascetics. While the voice, countenance, and clothes of the actors confound the beholders, the view of holy men singing and praying, of sons of rich men clothed in poor garments, and of the purity of their life has beneficial effects on the spectators. Despite the differences with the theatre, the vision of holy men, even when they read their books or converse with the apostles, is a pleasing spectacle for the beholders (τερπνὸν τι θέαμα τοῖς ὁρῶσίν εἰσιν).[665] In Chrysostom's homily, the contrast between actors and ascetics closes with the image of the ascetics being fed on the "honey" of God, which, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, is laid in their souls. The holy men are described, following a literary *topos*, as imitators of the bees, who hover around the honeycomb of the holy books.[666]

Such an idealised scenario, however, betrayed a less straightforward situation on the

[664] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matthew* 68.4 (*PG* 58.646); Maxwell 2006, 131-32.
[665] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matthew* 68.4 (*PG* 58.646); in *Hom. on Matthew* 69.4 (*PG* 58.653-54), Chrysostom described the conversation (διάλεξις) of holy men as full of calm and dealing with heavenly matters. It is curious to notice that the dramatic aspect of the holy men's behaviour was taken up by Libanius for rather opposite purposes: "that crew who pack themselves tight into the caves, those models of sobriety, only as far as their dress is concerned" (Libanius, *Or.* 2.32; trans. Norman 1977, ii 27).
[666] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Matthew* 68.5 (*PG* 58.646).

ground. The ascetics constituted a social force that could be mobilized and drawn to intervene in the civic life of Antioch; and both Libanius and Eunapius were highly critical of the ways in which the actions of Christian ascetics ended up affecting civic life in the late fourth century. Eunapius denounced the violent destruction of the Alexandrian Serapeum in 391, which was then occupied by ascetics who "led the life of the swine, and openly did and allowed countless crimes. [...] For in those days every man who wore a black robe and consented to behave in unseemly fashion in public, possessed the power of a tyrant!"[667] Libanius reported to the Emperor Theodosius a curious event which occurred once when the Christian governor of Antioch was chairing a trial in the colonnade in front of the temple of Dionysus. "Just as the case was due to begin, (the governor -possibly Tisamenus, a Christian-) heard the chanting of hymns from the cave-dwellers (τῶν ἐν τοῖς σπηλαίοις οἰκούντων), who had then come to town as they usually do in summer;" and he left his seat, abandoning the trial and never coming back to preside it.[668]

Ascetics were active in the countryside surrounding Antioch, where pagan temples and festivals were attacked increasingly often from the 380s, possibly with the acquiescence of members of the Antiochene clergy or local Christian authorities.[669] It is possible, however, that these and similar acts of violence were not limited to the deeds of well-defined ascetic groups as Libanius and Eunapius depicted them, and they involved more broadly the population of the hinterland as well as of the city. Although the exact nature and the practical dynamics of the involvement of the ascetics in the riots is an issue that modern scholars have not addressed yet, Chrysostom may have found himself in the somewhat uncomfortable position of explaining to the civic flock the ascetics' involvement in the violence.

[667] Eunapius, *Vitae* 472 (trans. Wright 1922, 423).
[668] Libanius, *Or.* 45.26 (trans. Norman 1977, ii 185). See also Libanius, *Or.* 30.8 (trans. Norman 1977, ii 107): "but this black-robed tribe, who eat more than elephants and, by the quantity of drinks they consume, weary those that accompany their drinking with singing of hymns, who hide these excesses under an artificially contrived pallor - these people, Sire [*i.e.* the Emperor Theodosius], while the law yet remains in force, hasten to attack the temples with sticks and stones and bars of iron, and in some cases disdaining these, with hands and feet."
[669] Liebeschuetz 1972, 236-37.

There survives a collection of homilies that Chrysostom pronounced during the events following the Riot of the Statues (387), the year following his priestly ordination. As a response to Theodosius' introduction of a special tax, the Antiochene population broke into a violent riot; and, during the clashes, statues of the Emperor Theodosius were defaced. Theodosius reacted by sending to Antioch commissioners to put the offenders on trial, which eventually took place one month after the event. The outcome of the trial was milder than expected, but Libanius and Chrysostom did not agree on whom to thank for it. Libanius explained the Emperor's benevolence through the embassy led by the *magister officiorum* Caesarius; while Chrysostom credited the mission that had been led by Flavian, bishop of Antioch.[670]

Overall, Chrysostom maintained that Christians were to be credited with particular merit for the outcome of the trial. He recounted that, on the day of the trial, ascetics from the Antiochene "mountain tops" (οἱ τὰς ἀκρωρείας τῶν ὀρῶν κατοικοῦντες) entered the city and "showed their own philosophy" (τὴν οἰκείαν ἐπεδείξαντο φιλοσοφίαν).[671] In front of his civic flock, Chrysostom reported:

> Although they had been shut up for so many years in their own cells, when they saw such a great cloud encompassing the city [*i.e.* the trial], at nobody's behest and on nobody's advice, they left their tents and caves and flew together from every direction, just like angels arriving from heaven. […] On approaching the magistrates, they frankly (μετὰ παρρησίας) engaged in discussion on behalf of the accused and were all prepared to shed their blood, and to lay down their lives so that they might snatch the captured from the expected adversities. They stated that they wouldn't leave until either the judges spared the people of the city or sent themselves together with the accused to the Emperor.[672]

According to the same account, that evening, after successfully convincing the magistrates to act with mildness, the ascetics left the city and returned to their monastic dwellings in the mountains. If one follows Chrysostom, the ascetics had been instrumental to the positive outcome of the trial.

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[670] Respectively Libanius, *De stat.* 21, and John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 17.1; De Paverd 1991, 131-48; Kelly 1995, 72-82.
[671] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 17.2 (*PG* 49.172).
[672] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 17.2 (*PG* 49.172-73; trans. Mayer 2000, 107).

Unfortunately Chrysostom did not provide enough evidence for us to decide whether the ascetics who spoke to the magistrates had been the same ones that were involved in the riot that took place four weeks before. The same question arises for yet another group of individuals, possibly ascetics too, who, four weeks after the trial, were again in town in order to celebrate the religious festival on the Sunday before Ascension Day. Their identity has generated much debate.[673] What it is possible to know about them is entirely derived from the homily *De stat.* 19, which Chrysostom delivered in front of the mysterious group which was attending the homily together with the civic flock. The sermon opened with a praise of such individuals that drew from the traditional imagery of the philosopher:

> [These individuals,] a people foreign to us in language (λαὸς κατὰ μὲν γλῶτταν ἡμῖν ἐνηλλαγμένος), [know] no horse racings, nor harlots, nor any of that riot which pertains to a city, but every kind of licentiousness is banished, and great sobriety flourishes everywhere. […] These are our philosophers, and theirs the best philosophy (οὗτοι μάλιστά εἰσιν οἱ τὴν ἀρίστην ἡμῖν φιλοσοφοῦντες φιλοσοφίαν), exhibiting their virtue not by their outward appearance, but by their mind. The pagan philosophers are in character no wise better than those who are engaged on the stage, and in the sports of actors; and they have nothing to show beyond the threadbare cloak, the beard, and the long robe! But these, quite on the contrary, bidding farewell to staff and beard, and the other accoutrements, have their souls adorned with the doctrines of the true philosophy, and not only with the doctrines, but also with the real practice.[674]

The remark on the language has been taken as indicative that the individuals were Syriac-speakers, although it is conceivable that they had at least a working knowledge of Greek in order to understand Chrysostom and interact effectively with the populace at large. It has been suggested that such individuals were simply village farmers, as many participants in the riot had certainly been. Chrysostom's emphatic remarks on their philosophical pursuits and virtues, which he had previously and repeatedly applied to ascetic life, however, are hardly accountable for merely through the pure and unsullied of villagers. The description of the practice of philosophy that characterised their behaviour seems in fact indicative of an ascetic lifestyle.[675]

Moreover, after praising their simple and agriculture-based lifestyle, Chrysostom added

[673] De Paverd 1991, 260-89; Millar 2007, 111-112; Millar 2013, 118.
[674] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.2-3 (= *Epul. ss. mart.*; *PG 49.189*, trans. Schaff 1890, ix 464-65); Maxwell 2006, 22-36, has emphasised the influence of Stoic and Cynic preaching on early Christian preachers; and Chrysostom and his Christian audience must not have been immune from such force.
[675] For the two hypotheses Millar 2007, 111-112; for the former alone Jones 1940, 291.

that each of them would "ascend the holy pulpit (τὸ ἱερὸν βῆμα) and cultivate the souls of the listeners."[676] They were, then, members of the clergy, and, moreover, "they lead to wisdom the people assigned to them (τὸν ὑποτεταγμένον αὐτοῖς δῆμον)."[677] Also, not unlike pagan philosophers

> these know how to philosophize also concerning God (οὗτοι καὶ περὶ Θεοῦ φιλοσοφεῖν ἴσασι ταῦτα), even as God has determined; and if, taking one of them, you were now to bring forward some pagan philosopher; -or rather, now you could not find one!- but if you were to take one of these, and then open the books of their ancient philosophers, and go through them, and institute an enquiry by way of parallel as to what these now answer, and the others in their day philosophically advanced; you would see how much wisdom belonged to the former, and how much folly to the latter.[678]

Chrysostom presented these individuals as Christians who led an ascetic lifestyle based on the practice of agriculture, but who were also involved in preaching, and perhaps teaching activities. Chrysostom invited his civic audience to question directly such ascetic individuals on dogmas of Christian religion, of which they are aware on account of their wisdom:

> And were you to question any one of these, who live a rustic life at the spade and plough, as to the dogmas respecting which the pagan philosophers have discoursed an infinite deal, and have expended a multitude of words, without being able to say anything sound; one of these would give you an accurate reply from his store of wisdom.[679]

The provision of advice and instruction, then, was part of the construction of identity that Chrysostom put forward for such ascetics. Although Chrysostom did not identify them as "monks," nor did he speak of their affiliation to ascetic communities, they are depicted as ascetics, possibly Syriac-speakers, who were based outside Antioch. There they interacted with the lay population, but, Chrysostom hoped, they could also interact with the Antiochenes, and they could even compete with philosophers.

Frans van de Paverd argued that these preaching ascetics were in fact country parish presbyters, rather than fully-fledged monks, who visited Antioch on the occasion of religious

[676] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.2 (*PG* 49.189): Τούτων ἕκαστον ἴδοις ἄν, νῦν μὲν ζευγνύντα βόας ἀροτῆρας καὶ ἄροτρον ἕλκοντα καὶ βαθεῖαν αὔλακα κατατέμνοντα, νῦν δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν ἀναβαίνοντα βῆμα καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς ἀροτριῶντα τῶν ὑπηκόων, [...].
[677] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.4 (*PG* 49.190): ὅθεν καὶ εὐκολώτερον τὸν ὑποτεταγμένον αὐτοῖς δῆμον εἰς σωφροσύνην ἄγουσι.
[678] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.4 (*PG* 49.189, trans. Schaff 1890, ix 465).
[679] John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.3 (*PG* 49.189, trans. Schaff 1890, ix 465).

festivals, when they could also interact with the civic clergy.[680] Given the imprecise nature of the evidence, one may even settle on a more blurred division between country preachers and ascetics, and appreciate that country preachers, as well as ascetics, could be in a position to play an important role in the mobilisation of villagers in religious festivals, as much as in civic riots and destructions of pagan landmarks. At the same time, one wonders whether such ascetic preachers could also interact with the inhabitants of the city on occasions of their visits, and whether Chrysostom and the Antiochene church may have provided the setting for them to give samples of their philosophical wisdom. As mentioned above, Kelly argued that the violent opposition to the ascetics in Antioch that the *Adversus oppugnatores* reveals is indicative of the success of the proselytising activities by ascetics in town.[681]

6.8 Back to school?

Chrysostom put forward the possibility that the Antiochene populace could interact with ascetic members of the clergy who were involved in preaching and teaching activities. One wonders whether such individuals would instead use Syriac as the language of interaction with those segments of the population who spoke Syriac, either in or outside Antioch. Were these individuals bilingual? Were they providers of instruction, either formally or informally? And if so, could they have used instructional texts of Greek origin? Chrysostom reported that they could preach, and one suspects that they had undergone some sort of training in the Scriptures, to which the clergy at Antioch may have contributed. For instance, both Chrysostom and Theodore would have been in a good position to supply such a training. There is the possibility that members of the church at Antioch could be involved, either directly or

[680] *E.g.* John Chrysostom, *De stat.* 19.4: "They eat just as much as suffices for subsistence. Let us then not despise them because of their outward appearance, but let us admire their mind." De Paverd 1991, 260-92, esp. 286-90.
[681] Kelly 1995, 52-53.

indirectly, in the provision of instruction to individuals who were either Syriac speakers or who would have to interact with the Syriac-speaking populace. Not unlike what Chrysostom had done within Diodore's brotherhood, one suspects that Chrysostom, Theodore, Maximus, and their peers in the clergy would have brought together Scriptural exegesis with practices of the school tradition of secular education.

The scenario in which young members of the clergy, such as Chrysostom, Theodore, and Maximus, were involved in the provision of instruction has been already encountered in the present analysis. Their provision of instruction may be put in relation to the teaching based on the Scriptures that Basil proposed in the homilies *In principium Proverbiorum* and *Ad adulescentes*. Basil had suggested an additional training in the Scriptures to individuals who were involved or had undergone a secular *cursus* of studies. A key aspect of Basil's proposal was that the instruction was not confined to individuals who would then become members of the Christian clergy.[682] Chrysostom may have had a similarly open scenario in mind on another occasion, when he proposed to his flock a catechetic instruction based on the Scriptures, which was intended as an addendum to a traditional *cursus* of secular instruction. This appears in a homily on the *Ephesians* that is almost entirely dedicated to the best way of educating the young. Unfortunately, however, the homily cannot be securely placed in Antioch or in Constantinople.[683]

Following the same line of argumentation that Basil had pursued, the homily remarks on the folly contained in the anecdotes derived from the heathen tales that students are made acquainted with, and it argues that children should become diligent hearers of the Scriptures. Chrysostom addressed the laity, and he did not aim at converting the youth into ascetic life:

> never say this [*i.e*. studying the Scriptures] is the business of monks. Am I making a monk of him? No. There is no need that he should become a monk.[684]

[682] Ch. 5.3.2.
[683] Mayer 2005, 471.
[684] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Ephesians* 21.2 (*PG* 62.152; trans. Schaff 1890, xiii 154).

Chrysostom accepted that children should follow a traditional educational pattern, but with an additional training in the Scriptures:

> I do not say this to prevent your teaching him these things, but to prevent your attending to them exclusively. Do not imagine that the monk alone stands in need of these lessons from Scripture. Of all others, the children just about to enter the world (εἰς τὸν βίον τοῦτον ἥκειν) specially need them.[685]

Chrysostom allowed traditional instruction, as long as it was complemented with Christian instruction in the Scriptures. Chrysostom addressed pupils who were already engaged in a rhetorical training, and who did not mean to spend the rest of their lives in isolation, but rather in the world.[686]

Not unlike that of Basil, the preaching career of Chrysostom contains traces of an involvement, either direct or indirect, in the provision of instruction. In both cases, to assess the historical implementation and the impact of their proposals remains matter of guesswork. The witness of the two figures, however, reveals that the development of traditional secular instruction cannot be straightforwardly reduced to a shift from secular schools to Christian instructional settings limited to the clergy or to monks. Not unlike Basil's educational project presented in the homily *In principium Proverbiorum*, the instruction that Chrysostom proposed in the homily on *Ephesians* appears directed to a broader pool of individuals that were not necessarily aspiring to the ordination or to ascetic life. Earlier works by Chrysostom, such as the *Comparatio*, the *De Babyla*, and the *Adversus oppugnatores* reveal that the boundary between the world of professional rhetoric and the world of Christian commitment may not be easy to trace at this stage.

[685] Chrysostom, *Hom. on Ephesians* 21.2 (*PG* 62.152; trans. Schaff 1890, xiii 155).
[686] Chrysostom, *De inani gloria et de educandis liberis* (*CPG* 4455; ed. Malingrey 1972) is a treatise possibly composed in the middle or late 380s in which the author provides advice addressed to parents on how best to educate children at home. Children are not invited to become monks, but rather to attend a secular school. Kelly 1995, 85-87.

6.9 Conclusion

It has been suggested that the rejection of a simplistic paradigm of paganism versus Christianity in understanding Libanius and Chrysostom can reveal important points of contact between the professional careers of the two figures. The rhetorical performance in front of selected audiences, the effort expended in self-fashioning and apologetic, and the involvement in the provision of instruction, are activities that bring Libanius and Chrysostom closer than a paradigm of analysis framed on religious difference allows. Although the early works by Chrysostom still lie in the margins of current scholarship, I hope to have shown that they can play a key role in showcasing the endurance of his participation in the world of *paideia*. At the same time, the analysis of the rhetorical strategies that they employ should be complemented by questions about the historical circumstances of their composition and of their performance.

The few works by Chrysostom that contain references to Libanius were initially addressed to particular and selected audiences in specific historical circumstances. The *Comparatio*, the *De Babyla*, the *Ad viduam iuniorem* (and possibly the *Adversus oppugnatores* too) are not homilies directed to broad audiences, but instead reveal a rather selected and possibly learned public. In addition, Chrysostom made use of Libanius for quite specific purposes within his argumentation, and he aimed at strengthening particular arguments by complementing them with the witness of an eminent pagan figure. Accordingly, the rejoinder to Libanius that the *Comparatio* reveals may be alternatively understood within the competitive framework that the world of higher rhetorical studies implied.

The absence of surviving letters between Libanius and Chrysostom has limited the ground for research on the nature of the relationship between the two figures to the isolated references to Libanius in Chrysostom's works. That the silence of both letter collections should be understood as indicative of personal animosity between the two individuals on religious

grounds is a questionable argument; at the same time, the hypothesis that Libanius and Chrysostom had developed a relation that outlived the end of Chrysostom's rhetorical studies would not be surprising. Could the two Antiochenes, teacher and pupil, have simply interacted outside our sources? After all, Chrysostom never acted in the official capacity of bishop while in Antioch.

The complete lack of exchanges between Chrysostom and contemporary sophists and rhetoricians in the surviving letter collection, however, demands an explanation.[687] The (possibly Constantinopolitan) agency of the ancient editors of the collection of Chrysostom's letters, which still lie in need of specific academic attention, should be included in the range of possibilities. The letters by Nilus of Ancyra (one generation later) stand as a reminder that hostility and animosity could well find their ways into epistolary exchanges. Nilus, whom a tradition has identified as a disciple of John Chrysostom, took his duty as a monk in a singularly serious way. Most of the letters that he sent to teachers, grammarians, sophists, rhetoricians, and forensic prosecutors are caustic attacks against their morally unsatisfactory behaviours.[688]

A complete silence between Chrysostom and the sophists of the time would be a rather unusual scenario. The letters by Firmus bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, who lived about one generation later (d. 439) reveal the bishop's engagement with lay figures, including rhetoricians and sophists.[689] Given the scarcity of the sources about him, Firmus remains an enigmatic figure, but his letters show that he was in touch with sophists and rhetoricians, employing a language if possible even richer in references to classical literature then one would normally expect from such exchanges.[690] The fact that his epistolary collection (forty-

[687] *PG* 79.57-582.
[688] Nilus of Ancyra, *Letters* (*PG* 79.57-581; *Ep.* 2.265 and 3.279 to the Emperor Arcadius state Nilus' allegiance to Chrysostom; *Ep.* 2.294 might imply Nilus' acquaintance with Chrysostom).
[689] Socrates, *HE* 7.48.
[690] Firmus of Caesarea, *Letters* (ed. Calvet-Sebasti 1989); Firmus quoted directly from, or made reference to works by Homer, Plato, Theocritus, and perhaps Herodotus.

six letters) contains only pieces of similarly short length, but at the same time provides a wide range of typologies of letters, might be taken as indicative of one of the criteria followed by the editor, who may have wanted to collect specimens of different types of letters.

Firmus' addressees include two rhetoricians, Olympius, who was possibly also from Caesarea (*Ep.* 27, which sanctions friendship but remains rather enigmatic to the modern reader, may be a follow-up to the unsuccessful attempt represented in *Ep.* 13, where Firmus recommended Olympius to a bishop named Atticus, perhaps Atticus bishops of Constantinople in 406-25), and Domitianus, perhaps a Christian (*Ep.* 33, which refers to a previous exchange possibly about a successful trial, makes mention about a celebration to honour certain martyrs). Also, Firmus wrote to two sophists, Cytherius (*Ep.* 2 begs a reply) and Eleusinius (*Ep.* 31 begs a reply). The familiarity with a range of classical literature that the documents reveal may imply that Firmus underwent a traditional *cursus* of literate studies. Yet, since the historical circumstances behind the letters cannot be reconstructed, one cannot easily qualify Firmus' involvement in the world of professional rhetoric and of rhetorical schools while he was acting as a bishop. A better-known bishop provides the subject for the next chapter.

7. Classroom strategies from a bishop: Theodoret of Cyrrhus

7.1 Theodoret and the sophists

7.2 Theodoret as a teacher

7.3 The *Historia Religiosa* as a teacher's enterprise

7.4 Solitary companies

7.5 Ascetics and the Scriptures in a letter by Theodoret

7.6 Conclusion

7.1 Theodoret and the sophists

There survives better evidence about the involvement in the world of professional rhetoric by a bishop in the following generation, who has increasingly attracted scholarly attention over the last years.[691] Like Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c.393-466) was born in Antioch, but unlike that of Chrysostom, the surviving correspondence of Theodoret reveals its author's exchanges with sophists and lay individuals. Theodoret must have followed a traditional *cursus* of literate education that enabled him to write in literary Greek as well as to speak in public with confidence and to interact effectively with secular leaders and patrons. At the same time, the bishop of Cyrrhus composed the richest account of fourth- and fifth-century asceticism in North-Western Syria; and he wrote about the provision of instruction by Greek- as well as Syriac-speaking ascetics, which Theodoret claimed to have experienced. In fact, Theodoret stated that he "lived in a monastery" at Nikertai outside Apamea before being ordained bishop (*Ep.* 80.10-11 and *Ep.* 116.7-9). Such a statement does not exclude that he opted for an ascetic life only *after* having undergone rhetorical and philosophical instruction, as Chrysostom had done in Antioch.[692]

Theodoret's career brought together literate education and Christian asceticism. That Theodoret was an active player in the world of professional *paideia* does not emerge from his later, and most studied, works. The *Historia Religiosa* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, which were both composed during the episcopate (he was ordained in 423), do not make any mention of his secular schooling, but they rather describe Theodoret's own ascetic instruction and experiences. The two works report that Theodoret was exposed to Christian ascetics as a child

[691] Papadogiannakis 2012, Schor 2011, Siniossoglou 2008, Pásztori-Kupán 2006, and Urbainczyk 2002.

[692] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 80.10-11, 81, and 116.7-9, about his ascetic experience; and *Cure* 1.18 and 2.95 refer to the use of the *Iliad* and of Hesiod respectively in literate education; Siniossoglou 2008, 9-10 and 42, Millar 2007, 114-7, Urbainczyk 2002, 18-19 and 101, and Canivet 1957, 34-38, argued for a traditional literate education, replacing the view that Theodoret "fu educato nelle scuole monastiche di Antiochia" as in Festa 1931, 8. Also, Canivet 1957, 34-38, put forward the hypothesis that Diodore of Tarsus could have acted as a teacher to Theodoret.

and as a youth, before he joined an ascetic community outside Apamea as he wrote in three letters. Although partial in their accounts, the *Historia Religiosa* and the *Historia Ecclesiastica* provide precious information about asceticism in Northern Syria during the fourth and the first decades of the fifth century, in a setting where Syriac-speakers, like Macedonius and Maësimas (*HR* 13.7-8 and 14.2), and Greek-speakers, like Chrysostom and Theodoret, could interact.

Theodoret's letters provide a rather different picture. In the letters one finds that Theodoret could engage in a conventionally elevated language with notable figures of the secular world, Christians and non-Christians alike. His two epistolary collections contain exchanges with several statesmen, such as Anatolius (seven letters, *magister utriusque militiae*), Aspar (*Ep.* xviii and 23, *magister utriusque militiae*), Senator (*Ep.* 44 and 93, high dignitary), and Eutrechius (*Ep.* 57, 80, and 91; possibly *praefectus urbi*). Also, the letters show that, after his election as bishop in 423, Theodoret was in contact with sophists.[693] Two lay figures from the world of secular *paideia* appear in the letters: Aerius, who received six of the letters in the collections, and Isocasius, who received five letters. Both individuals were involved in the provision of higher education, but they were related to Theodoret with a link that was not limited to their professional activity.

Aerius, whom Theodoret addressed as a native of Cyrrhus, the see of Theodoret's bishopric (*Ep.* 66), acted as a teacher who instructed the young in rhetoric (*Ep.* x) and perhaps in philosophy.[694] Also, he belonged to a circle (τὴν ὑμετέραν ἀκαδημίαν *Ep.* 30.10) of "men magnificent for their illustrious birth and pure in the tongue, and whose discourses deal with virtue, the immortality of the soul and the issues that relate to these topics."[695] Aerius was a rhetorician. Theodoret asked Aerius to help Celestiacus, a man from Carthage (likely to have escaped the Vandal invasion) who was in need of Aerius' eloquence, presumably with a view

[693] Ed. Azéma 1998.
[694] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 50.3-4: παρὰ τοῦ σοῦ μάνθανε Πλάτωνος. *Ep.* x.19: ἡ Πυθαγόρου σιγή.
[695] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 30.12-15: τὸ συνέδριον ἐξ ἀνδρῶν εἶναι προγονικῇ περιφανείᾳ σεμνυνομένων, καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν κεκαθαρμένων, καὶ τοὺς λόγους ὑμῖν γίνεσθαι περί τε ἀρετῆς καὶ ἀθανασίας ψυχῆς, καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα τούτοις συμβαίνει.

to a judicial issue (*Ep.* 30). Another fugitive from Africa was Maximian, a nobleman whom Theodoret likewise directed to Aerius for help (*Ep.* xxiii). In order to strengthen his case, Theodoret referred to Alcinous' hospitality of Homeric memory in the former letter, and to classical Athenian history of Thucydidean memory in the latter. Conversely, it is not clear what lies behind the symbolic language of *Ep.* vii to Aerius, whose eloquence and philosophy is again praised, nor what Aerius' silence mentioned in *Ep.* x implied in practice.

It is perhaps unexpected that *Ep.* l to Aerius closes with a Christian-sounding remark. In the letter, Theodoret pressed Aerius, who was involved in a trial either as a judge or as a prosecutor, for a harsher judgement on the accused. "If you say that the laws by that (philosopher, *i.e.* Plato) do not apply to the present circumstance, -Theodoret wrote- then listen to the Master of the world framing his laws."[696] The passage, then, may be indicative of an interest in Christianity by Aerius. Ian Tompkins, instead, argued that Aerius was a pagan because, in the letters addressed to him, Theodoret made regular use of pagan literature instead of the Bible. Such an argument, however, is by no means decisive for Aerius' paganism, and the use of secular literature was not a prerogative of pagans.[697] Furthermore, another letter seems indicative of Aerius' interest in Christianity or, at least, of some degree of cooperation between the bishop and the sophist. On occasion of the consecration of a new church in Cyrrhus, which Theodoret had duly supplied with relics of prophets and apostles, the bishop organised a festival to which Aerius received a personal invitation: "Do honour the festival with your presence, draw the blessings that will gush from it, and make the celebration more delightful for us" (*Ep.* 66, composed between 423 and 431; *HR* 21.20).[698] The relation between Theodoret and Aerius marks the distance from the scenario proposed by past scholarship for Chrysostom and Libanius.

[696] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* l.4-6: Εἰ δὲ λέγεις μὴ τοὺς ἐκείνου νόμους ἐπὶ τοῦ παρόντος κρατεῖν, ἄκουσον τοῦ δεσπότου τῶν ὅλων νομοθετοῦντος.
[697] According to Tompkins 1993, 141-44, it is "almost certain that neither man was Christian."
[698] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 67.2-4: Κοσμήσατε τοίνυν τῇ παρουσίᾳ τὴν ἑορτήν, καὶ τὰς ἐκ ταύτης ἀναβλυζούσας εὐλογίας ἀρύσασθε καὶ θυμηρεστέραν ἡμῖν ἐργάσασθε τὴν πανήγυριν.

The second sophist that appears in Theodoret's letters is the Cilician-born Isocasius, who was based in Antioch (at least from 441), and whom Malalas identified as a philosopher.[699] Unlike Aerius, Isocasius was certainly a pagan, and his relation with Theodoret brings us back to the same questions raised about the relation between Libanius and Chrysostom. Despite the religious difference, however, Theodoret's relationship with Isocasius may have been even stronger than the one that connected the bishop of Cyrrhus with Aerius. Theodoret did not make too large a use of literary references in the five letters addressed to him, and their tone appears more straightforward than in the correspondence with Aerius.[700] Also, their contents might indicate a relationship that was not limited to professional exchanges. While Theodoret's request to Isocasius to intercede with the court of the praetorian prefect on behalf of a young heir burdened by taxes reflects a common practice (Theocles; *Ep.* lii), Theodoret's despatch of a woodcarver to decorate Isocasius' home is certainly more curious (Gerontius; *Ep.* xxxviii). At the same time, Theodoret sent pupils to Isocasius to be instructed in rhetoric (Theodotus *Ep.* xxviii; Philippus, who then obtained a job in the administration of the city thanks to Isocasius *Ep.* xxvii; and *Ep.* xxvii). About two decades later, in c. 467, when Isocasius was promoted as *quaestor sacri palatii* in Constantinople, he was still a pagan.[701]

While being involved in the construction of the monastic identity of himself and of other holy men through the *Historia Religiosa* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the bishop of Cyrrhus was also an active player in the network of rhetorical education. The exchanges with Aerius and Isocasius show that Theodoret could move confidently in the world of the sophists to ask for favours as well as to arrange literate instruction for young pupils. Theodoret's position towards the two figures, which was grounded in a shared cultural capital, must have matured over the years, and their relation was built on Theodoret's membership in the world of

[699] Malalas, *Chronographia* 369.18 (*PG* 97.549-52).
[700] Brown 1992, 77, wrote of "warm relations between Theodoret and Isocasius."
[701] Kaster 1988, 301-02; Schor 2011, 142-43.

paideia developed through secular instruction during his youth. Writing of himself in the *Historia Religiosa*, however, Theodoret only mentioned his ascetic instruction, and such an instruction must have constituted an addendum to a more traditional *cursus* of rhetorical studies, like it had been for the young Chrysostom.[702]

7.2 Theodoret as a teacher

Other works by Theodoret are indicative of educational projects that were not confined to the traditional setting of rhetorical and philosophical classrooms like those of Isocasius and, possibly, of Aerius. One of the earliest literary works by Theodoret, the *Cure for the Hellenic maladies*, makes use of a considerable number of pagan texts and philosophical traditions and may have been composed when Theodoret was attached to a monastery at Nikertai outside Apamea before his ordination as bishop.[703] Most scholarship so far, however, has focused on the contents of the *Cure* and on its sources, and it has neglected the rather prickly issue about whether the work was intended for performance, and if so what was the audience that Theodoret expected to address and instruct.[704]

If the *Cure* was indeed performed in front of an audience, it could reveal an instructional setting that does not entirely follow the format of a rhetorical or philosophical school, and that combined the study of pagan philosophy with an interest in Christian religion and, possibly, in ascetic practice. The *Cure* consists of twelve *lectures* (διαλέξεις) arranged by theme, adopting a format that was framed on the perfomative delivery of lectures in a school setting of a higher level. Yannis Papadogiannakis put forward the possibility that Theodoret

[702] Schor 2011, 116-17, argued that, under the episcopate, Theodoret applied to members of the Antiochene clergy a "push for sophistic learning."
[703] The chronology is 427-37 according to Papadogiannakis 2012, 4 (following Richard 1935); and 420-22 according to Millar 2007, 115 (following Canivet 1957, 17).
[704] Canivet 1957, 1977, and 1977a; Siniossoglou 2008, 34-43, addressed the issue of the readership of the *Cure*.

had previously delivered the twelve *dialexeis* orally, and that he then redacted them in written form with a broader audience in view. In this respect, the *Cure* presents affinities with a later instructional enterprise by Theodoret, the *Ten orations on the Divine Providence*, which date back to the years 435-37 when Theodoret was bishop of Cyrrhus (and will thus concern us below).[705]

If one accepts the chronology provided by Pierre Canivet and followed by Fergus Millar (420-22), the *Cure* was composed in the years when Theodoret was attached to the monastery at Nikertai, which was located three miles outside Apamea (*Ep.* 119.20-21). The problem arising from the library of this only three-decade-old monastic foundation outside the city (in other words the improbable scenario that the library contained a collection of pagan authors as broad as those quoted in the *Cure*) could perhaps be eased by allowing the possibility of Theodoret's engagement with the cultural life in city, at walking distance. After all, Apamea was a centre of Neo-Platonic studies from which Theodoret may have benefited.[706] Nonetheless, Canivet has shown that most of the literal quotations of pagan authors contained in the *Cure* have been drawn from a limited number (five) of (extensive) sources, mostly by Christian authors, which could have more easily found their way into a monastic library.[707]

Does the *Cure* reveal an instructional relation in which Theodoret played the role of the instructor? If we take the numerous traces of a performative setting that the *dialexeis* contain at a face value, we may understand the *Cure* as the redacted version of a series of lectures that Theodoret had previously delivered in an instructional setting. The redaction may have involved the composition of the preface as well as some changes in the text itself, and this is what Theodoret may have meant in the following passage:

[705] Papadogiannakis 2012, 5-7.
[706] Siniossogou 2008, 39.
[707] Canivet 1957, 257-90, suggests Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius of Caesarea, Aëtius' *Placita philosophorum*, the lost *Epitome of Plutarch* (once included in Eusebius of Caesarea, *PE* 14), and a *source X* that contained, for instance, passages from Plato's *Republic*. See also Papadogiannakis 2012, 131-32, and Ulrich 2009.

> If I didn't guess that I would wear *you out and those who will read in the future* on account of the length of the speech, I would supply you with the very predictions by inspired prophets.[708]

It is a common assumption that the target audience of the *Cure* was made up by individuals who were to a certain degree familiar with pagan philosophy and literature, and, possibly, had some interest in Christianity.[709] If this was the case, one may well doubt that the ascetic community at Nikertai outside Apamea had a sufficiently large audience of individuals, possibly pagans, with a traditional rhetorical/philosophical upbringing willing to listen to Theodoret's attack on paganism in twelve sessions.

Alternatively, one could think of an instructional setting in a city, perhaps the very Apamea or Antioch, in front of an audience of fellow or younger students trained in philosophy with an interest in Christianity.[710] One may think, for instance, of the instructional relation that linked Chrysostom and his fellow (but younger) student Theodore when they both were members of Diodore's brotherhood in Antioch (ch. 6.3). Chrysostom's *Comparatio*, which draws together features of the author's previous rhetorical instruction with a new interest in ascetic life framed in philosophical terms, may provide a useful comparison. In the case of Theodoret, the philosophical circle of Aerius (perhaps a Christian), the *academia* of "men magnificent for their illustrious birth and pure in the tongue, and whose discourses deal with virtue, the immortality of the soul and the issues that relate to these topics," might have represented something similar to the performative setting that the *Cure* foreshadows.

At a careful reading, however, the search for an historical performative setting of the *Cure* encounters some problems. It is a prominent feature of the work that the text contains frequent references to a spoken performance as well as to possible spoken objections by an

[708] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 6.90: Ἐγὼ δέ, εἰ μὴ τῷ μήκει τοῦ λόγου καὶ ὑμᾶς καὶ τοὺς εἰς ὕστερον ἐντευξομένους ἀποκναίσειν ἐτόπαζον, καὶ αὐτὰς ἂν ὑμῖν τῶν θεσπεσίων προφητῶν τὰς προρρήσεις παρέθηκα. The use of ἐντυγχάνω with the meaning of "to read" is not uncommon, and it can be found in *Cure* 10.24 and 11.21.

[709] Papadogiannakis 2012, 123-27; Siniossoglou 2008, 34-43, instead, argued for influential pagans as the addressee of the *Cure*, as is discussed below.

[710] Millar 2013, 36, related the work to the literary culture that could be attained in Antioch.

audience that is addressed in the second person plural "you".[711] Theodoret is quite specific and seems to have in front of him an audience that he addressed as ὦ φίλοι ἄνδρες (or ὦ φίλοι, ὦ ἄνδρες, ὦ φιλότης) for at least thirty-six times throughout the twelve *dialexeis*.[712] Yet, accepting that Theodoret himself knew whom he was talking to, to figure out the identity of the *philoi andres* is not an easy exercise for us today.

If the post-redaction *Cure* was addressed to learned pagans, one may have expected that the individuals that Theodoret addressed in the second person plural could simply be pagans in general, as Siniossoglou has argued.[713] The hypothesis, however, encounters a problem, for, in the *Cure*, the pagans in general (Ἕλληνες) are normally referred to in the third person (*e.g.* 1.19; 1.41; 2.97; 5.58; 6.4; 7.16; 8.24-25; 2.91 as "opponents to the truth"; 3.79 as "today's pagans"). Conversely, the individuals that Theodoret directly addressed in second person appear to be a more selected group, perhaps the ones who attended the performance of the *Cure*, despite the fact that the frequent direct addresses to them (at least thirty-six) were not erased from the written version.

However, the hypothesis of two groups of pagans, the ones attending (and addressed directly) and the pagans in general addressed in third person, similarly presents a problem. In fact, the group of pagans who were attending, whom Theodoret addressed directly in second person plural, does not appear homogeneous either, and Theodoret's attitude towards them alternates throughout the work. The *Cure* is not consistent in the attitude kept towards them, and the authorial voice varies between addressing them as pagans who are positively tuned to

[711] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 1.128 (τὴν Πυθαγόρειον σιωπὴν ἀγαπήσατε καὶ τὰς ἀκοὰς ἡσυχῇ τῷ λόγῳ παράσχετε, πιστῶς δεχόμενοι τὰ λεγόμενα·); 2.56 (Ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἴσως εἴποιτε ἄν, ὡς ...); 3.23 (Ἀλλ' ἐπανέλθωμεν ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο, ὃ τούσδε ἡμῖν τοὺς λόγους γεγέννηκεν); 3.87 (Ἀλλὰ γὰρ οἶμαι ὑμᾶς ἐρεῖν, ὡς ...); 5.16-17 (Ἃ δέ γε ξὺν Θεῷ λέξω, ἐκ τῶν Πλουτάρχῳ καὶ Πορφυρίῳ καὶ μέντοι καὶ Ἀετίῳ ξυγγεγραμμένων ἐρῶ.); 5.60 (ἅπαντες τῆς ἀληθείας οἱ κήρυκες, προφῆταί φημι καὶ ἀπόστολοι); 5.65 (Εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἀληθῆ λέγω, εἴπατε, ὦ ἄνδρες, τίνα ...); 6.74 (τοῖς εἰρημένοις); 8.24 (Καὶ σιωπῶ [...]· αἰσχύνομαι γὰρ λέγειν ...); 8.68 (Καὶ τί λέγω φιλοσόφους καὶ βασιλέας καὶ στρατηγούς;); 9.1 (κεκαλλιεπημένων ποθεῖτε λόγων ἀκούειν); 10.50 (Ἀκούσατε τοίνυν); 10.51 (ἠκούσατε, πρὸς δὲ τῆς ἀληθείας εἴπατε, εἴ τι ...); 10.72 (Ἀκούσατε); 11.1 (ὦ ἄνδρες, ἀκούετε).

[712] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 1.41; 1.90; 1.120; 2.38; 2.43; 2.57; 2.116; 3.3; 4.68; 4.73; 5.7; 5.65; 5.76; 6.38; 6.90; 8.2; 8.34; 8.70; 9.1; 9.64; 9.71; 9.72; 9.73; 10.12; 10.57; 10.74; 10.89; 10.91; 11.21; 11.69; 11.75; 11.83; 12.4; 12.35; 12.80; 12.95.

[713] Siniossoglou 2008, 34-43.

accept the Christian teaching and attacking them frontally as extreme pagans. On some occasions, the attitude towards them is rather conciliatory, such as when the author is confident that they will acquire the truth (1.128), when he excuses them for not knowing the Scriptures (2.57), when he states that Christian teaching will save them (4.3), when he invites them to learn (4.68) and not to postpone to take care of their salvation (5.7), when he suggests to use pagan rhetoricians as witnesses rather than Euripides (6.92), when he invites them to abandon their prejudices (9.73), and when he recognises that they too want to improve their condition (12.72). Conversely, elsewhere the addressees appear to be hardcore pagans who are greeted more harshly. Here, Theodoret plays on the opposition *we* Christians versus *you* pagans that seems less immediately conducive to persuasion (1.120; 3.99; 9.57), and likewise on the opposition of enemies versus friends (10.12; 12.97); he assumes and condemns the fact that they do practise sacrifice (7.36; 7.49; 8.33) and they are indignant about the martyrs (8.11, 8.29); and he attacks them openly and at length (4.73; 6.55-56).

In order to safeguard the hypothesis of performance in relation to the *Cure*, one may then hypothesise that Theodoret was speaking to two different groups of people at the same time. Some, the ones addressed as *philoi andres*, may be individuals with a traditional education and an interest in Christianity who were eager to listen to Theodoret's teaching; and towards this group Theodoret had a conciliatory attitude. Conversely, others were considered extreme pagans, who, if also present at the delivery of the *dialexeis*, would have to tolerate Theodoret's attacks over twelve sessions. If so, Theodoret must have been speaking from an unassailable spot and in a setting that was supportive to him. Alternatively, one could think of the extreme pagans as a symbolic opponent, such as a pagan temple or landmark that Theodoret could point at, or, more easily, at an *adversaire méthodique*. One is reminded here of Chrysostom's performance of the *Adversus oppugnatores*, in which he presented his audience with the fictitious personae of the "pagan parent" and the "Christian parent" (ch. 6.6).

Yet, such an explanation is not entirely satisfactory either. In the *Cure*, the dividing line between the "you" that Theodoret addressed directly as *philoi andres* and sincerely strove to persuade, and the "you" that was made the object of strong assumptions and attacks is very narrow. If anything, the two "yous" are at times conflated, and they cannot be distinguished from one another; and the *philoi andres* ended up being themselves attacked directly and at length by Theodoret (*e.g.* 2.116-17; 3.95-99; 4.72-73; 5.76). The confusion caused by the direct attacks on the audience attending the performance hinders the possibility that the *Cure* was a virtuoso performance that implied a pagan symbolic adversary (possibly an *adversaire méthodique*) in front of individuals who were instead interested in Christianity. As a result, one has to accept either that the *Cure* is the result of a particularly poor work of revision (which would have added the direct attacks to the pagans that are found in the text without erasing the very many references to a spoken delivery of the *dialexeis*), or, alternatively, that the *Cure* was not intended for performance in the first place.

Either way, the *Cure* takes the form of lectures that are delivered in a performative setting, and it contains frequent references to their spoken delivery. In fact, another set of references to the spoken delivery of the work is rather puzzling. On few occasions Theodoret included in the text descriptive remarks about the attitudes or reactions of the attending audience. At the beginning of the ninth *dialexis*, Theodoret stated that "you," the *philoi andres*, "long to hear well-embellished speeches and seek to be enchanted by them. And if, by chance, you do not get them, then you jeer and mock, and stuff up your ears, and refuse to listen to what is said" (9.1-2).[714] Should this be understood as part of the ninth performed *dialexis*, or as an addition to the later revision? The same question arises from a passage in which Theodoret invited his audience to raise an objection, but immediately afterwards added that, in fact, there

[714] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 9.1-2; trans. Papadogiannakis 2012, 124-25.

could be no objection from the audience to his argument (9.72).[715] Again, further below, Theodoret remarked that, as a reaction to one of his statement, you *andres* "have blushed" (10.57).[716]

One could argue that the three remarks are primarily descriptive of the audience and of their reactions, and it was thus unnecessary (and possibly even counterproductive) to convey them to the attending audience of *philoi andres*. Nonetheless, these remarks assume greater significance for the subsequent readers of the *Cure*. A reader of the *Cure* who would not have been present at its performance would detect in such hints traces of Theodoret's dialectical victory, however unsubtle. Thus, the textual form of performed *dialexeis* could nonetheless play a function in the written version of the *Cure*. The form of the *dialexis* can add to the display of Theodoret's *figura* playing a lecturing role and successfully conducting an encompassing dialectic argumentation against paganism. In other words, the question is whether Theodoret's self-fashioning that the *Cure* reveals included also the construction of a fictitious interlocutor to persuade, on the same lines as the *Eranistes*, the dialogue that Theodoret composed few years later. In literary dialogues, the construction of an opponent and of his reactions plays a crucial role in the argumentative strategy.

It may be the case, then, that the *Cure* does not immediately reveal a historical instructional setting that combined an interest in Christianity with familiarity with secular literature and philosophy. Did Theodoret aim, instead, at an audience of readers? Did Theodoret conceive the work as a handbook, perhaps addressed to learned Christians who would be in a position to encounter literary pagans, perhaps like Aerius and the members of his circle? Did Theodoret's efforts for self-fashioning as a Christian *pepaideuomenos* play a role in the enterprise? Papadogiannakis has emphasised the compilatory nature and the anthologizing

[715] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 9.72: Δειξάτω τις ὑμῶν, ὦ ἄνδρες, ἕνα γοῦν Σπαρτιάτην ὑπὲρ τῶν Λυκούργου νόμων ἀποθανεῖν ἀνασχόμενον, ἢ ἕνα Ἀθηναῖον ὑπὲρ τῶν Σόλωνος, ἢ ὑπὲρ τῶν Ζαλεύκου Λοκρόν, ἢ Κρῆτα ὑπὲρ τῶν Μίνωος· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἄν τις ὑμῶν τοῦτό γε δείξειεν.
[716] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 10.57: Ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐρυθριάσητε, ὦ ἄνδρες· αἰδεῖσθαι γὰρ οὐ τὴν ὁμολογίαν τῆς ἁμαρτίας, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρᾶξιν προσήκει.

thrust that characterise the *Cure*, and he has put forward the possibility that the *Cure* may be understood as a manual, an *aide-mémoire* arranged by theme, which, in this respect, follows a common strand in the literature of the time.[717]

The present analysis thus suggests caution in understanding the instructional format of the *Cure* as springing directly from an instructional setting on the ground. Nonetheless, its literary form strives to reproduce the performative delivery of lectures in a didactic setting. Such a form, one presumes, must have looked familiar to its readers, who would have hopefully found in the written text a veritable witness of Theodoret's confidence with an academic setting. Other works by Theodoret, however, similarly reflect instructional practices and betray their author's aim for a didactic use. The understudied *Quaestiones in libros Regnorum et Paralipomenon* and the *Quaestiones in Octateuchum*, addressed to the "φίλτατε παίδιων" Hypatius (composed after 453), deal with exegetical themes following the question-and-answer form that could be of use in an instructional setting. The pieces reveal one of the practical formats that could be used in the study of Scriptural exegesis.[718]

Another work by the same author that presents conspicuous instructional features is the *Ten Orations (λόγοι) on the Divine Providence*, which have been attributed to the years 435-37, more than a decade after Theodoret was ordained bishop.[719] A performance of the *Ten Orations* does not present the same problems that the *Cure* does, and the current scholarly consensus is that the work originated from an instructional setting.[720] The *Ten Orations* are directed to an audience of φίλοι καὶ θιασῶται "friends and disciples" (5.1; 3.23 ὦ φιλότης), and make use of straightforward didactic anecdotes about animals (*e.g.* 3.22; 5.7-8), about the

[717] Papadogiannakis 2012, 136-39.
[718] *PG* 80; Guinot 2013; Hill 2007; Papadogiannakis 2006.
[719] *PG* 83.555-774; trans. Halton 1988.
[720] Papadogiannakis 2012, 7; Halton 1988, 2-3; Quasten III 544-45. There is, however, a perhaps problematic (and certainly curious) passage that asks the audience to reject their blasphemy in the form of a *palinode*: Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ten Orations on the Divine Providence* 8.59: Καὶ ἔκ τε τῶν εἰρημένων, ἔκ τε τῶν ὁρωμένων, καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως τὸ αὐτεξούσιον διδαχθεὶς, καὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ προνοίας τὴν σοφίαν καταμαθὼν, παλινῳδίαν ᾄσον, καὶ τὴν νῦν ἀνακρουομένην ὑπὸ σοῦ βλασφημίαν εἰς ὑμνῳδίαν μετάβαλε, καὶ τὰ κρούματα τῆς γλώσσης τὰ νῦν κατὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ γιγνόμενα, ὑπὲρ Θεοῦ γιγνέσθω, καὶ τοῦ Ποιητοῦ τὴν πρόνοιαν ᾀδέτω, Χριστοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡμῶν.

human body (*e.g.* 3), about everyday life (*e.g.* 4.2), not rarely drawing from secular literature (*e.g.* 9.32) as well as from the Old Testament (8). The *Ten orations* make a moderate use of Scriptural quotations, thus suggesting that the audience had some interest in Christianity. At the same time, they make reference to pagan philosophers as positive models of behaviour (Socrates, Diogenes, and Anaxarchus 6.14), and they concede that the doctrines of the *Hellenes* (in third person) have some degree of truth (9.24).

Not unlike the *Cure*, the language of the *Ten Orations* contains references to their oral delivery, and it addresses an audience in the second person, while the pagan *adversaire méthodique* is addressed in third person (6.1-6, 9.24).[721] As scholars have noticed, the contents of the work betray a rather selected audience different from that of a homily. The *Ten Orations* draw from secular literature, they treat secular themes such as physics and medicine, and their argumentative style betrays a philosophically minded audience. Furthermore, Theodoret's positive depiction of wealth (6) and his lengthy (and stilted) justification of slavery (8) appear to have been tuned for an upper-class audience. Accordingly, it has been argued that such an audience was unlikely to be found in a town like Cyrrhus, and that a bigger city like Antioch could be a more viable setting for the delivery of the work. One must admit, however, that the search for such a setting remains speculative.[722]

Nonetheless, one may attempt a further step and try to understand the other references to a performance contained in the text as indicative, if not necessarily of the historical delivery of the *Ten orations*, at least of the setting that Theodoret had in mind for them. The beginning of the eighth *logos* opens with a reference to "yesterday's" promise to deal with slavery (8.3: τοῦτο γὰρ χθὲς ἐρεῖν ὑπεσχόμεθα), which constitutes the topic of the eighth *logos*. Were, then, the orations intended to be delivered in a series, perhaps one a day? Another curious feature is

[721] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ten orations on the divine providence* 1.15; 1.39, 3.21-23; 7.14; 8.1-2; 9.24; 10.12. There is, however, an oscillation between second person singular and second person plural that would require further analysis.
[722] Halton 1988, 3 and n. 22.

Theodoret's inclusion in the ninth *logos* of two *prosopopoiai* (9.25-26: *what the soul may say to the Judge*; and 9.27-30: *what the body may say to the Judge*), which stand as a reminder of rhetorical exercises; and they bring us back to Gregory of Nazianzus' poem *Comparatio vitarum* (1.2.8), which is structured as a dialogued *agōn* between the personifications of the spiritual and the secular life in front of a judge (ch. 5.3.3). Another intriguing feature of the delivery of the *Ten orations* is represented by the exhortations to the audience, at the close of three *logoi*, to sing a hymn of praise.[723] Did the instructional setting that Theodoret foresaw for the *Ten oration* involve the performance of poetry? Although one should be careful to take such instances literally and as indicative of a historical setting for the *Ten orations*, such references nonetheless shed light on the instructional setting that Theodoret had in mind.

7.3 The *Historia Religiosa* as a teacher's enterprise

The *Cure* and the *Ten Orations* contain traces of instructional settings, real or imagined, that can hardly be described as traditional rhetorical or philosophical classrooms, for they combined practices of the rhetorical and philosophical studies with an interest in Christianity and ascetic practice. Two later works by Theodoret, the *Historia Religiosa* and, to a lesser extent, the *Historia Ecclesiastica* reveal other unconventional instructional settings characterised by ascetic practice, some of which involved Syriac-speaking individuals. The composition of *HR* and *HE* dates back to the 440-4 and 450s respectively, more than two decades after Theodoret's ordination as bishop of Cyrrhus.[724] *HR* and *HE* describe Theodoret's interaction and encounters with ascetics of the region, and they provide filtered references to

[723] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Cure* 5.41 (τὸν προμηθούμενον ὕμνησον); 7.39 (Ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ παρόντος τὸν καὶ κοινὰς καὶ ἰδίαις τοῖς ἀνθρώποις δωρεὰς χορηγοῦντα, καὶ μυρίοις ὅσοις ἀγαθοῖς τὸ ἡμέτερον περικλύζοντα γένος, ὑμνήσωμεν); and 8.59 is reported in a footnote above.
[724] Tompkins 1993, 39-40.

Theodoret's own education. The secular instruction that he underwent is kept under silence, and, instead, references to Theodoret's youth are selected and fashioned with a view to his future ascetic and ecclesiastical career. For example, one discovers here that Theodoret's consecration to God had fulfilled his mother's vow before Theodoret's birth.

The modern reader of the *Historia Religiosa* should be aware that the work was designed around Theodoret's *persona*, and aimed to showcase Theodoret's relationship with holy men. The *Historia Religiosa* is a more sophisticated literary enterprise than it appears at first sight, and, before making use of the historical evidence that it contains, it is necessary to reflect on its literary nature, on the circumstances of its composition, and on the purposes that guided its author. The work presents ample scope for further literary as well as historical analysis, and, with the exceptions of Canivet and Theresa Urbainczyk, scholars have mostly proposed incursions on the *Historia Religiosa* rather than following broader lines of enquiry.[725]

The *Historia Religiosa* is a collection of biographies of Christian holy men. Although having many original features, the form of the work calls for a comparison with similar instances of collective bibliographies composed during the previous decades, such as Eunapius of Sardis' *Vitae Sophistarum* (after 396, possibly 399),[726] the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* (c. 405) soon afterwards to be translated by Rufinus,[727] and Palladius' *Historia Lausiaca* (419-20).[728] Despite the many points of contacts among the four works, however, they still await a systematic comparative study.[729]

In approaching collections of biographies, the first important issue to bear in mind is the authors' agenda that laid behind the inclusion or exclusion of individual figures. Eunapius collected the lives of sophists and philosophers that were related to the network of his own

[725] Canivet 1977a, Urbainczyk 2002; Wood 2010, Rousseau 1998, Krueger 1997, Tompkins 1993, Brown 1971.
[726] Swain 2004, 373-79; Buck 1992; Penella 1990, 9.
[727] Russell 1980, 166.
[728] Katos 2011, 99.
[729] Studies that propose partially comparative approaches are Tompkins 1993, 42-43, Cox Miller 2000, and Urbainczyk 2002, 45-51.

teacher Prohaeresius, and the *Vitae Sophistarum* thus reveal Eunapius' understanding of his own intellectual "family tree." The anonymous author of the *Historia Monachorum* dealt with selected holy men chosen from among those that he and his party had visited on their trip in Egypt, possibly following a geo-ecclesiastical criterion. Demetrios Katos argued that the criterion for inclusion in Palladius' account responded to theological grounds, for Palladius mostly selected holy men with Origenist sympathies. Theodoret selected his subjects (as well as deeds to recount about them) according to their Christological affiliation, orthodoxy of practice, and geo-ecclesiastical allegiances.[730]

Another important aspect in the composition of the four collective biographies was the personal connection of the figures described with the authors of the collections. Eunapius was a sophist in Sardis who had studied under Prohaeresius and Chrysanthius, and he was thus a full member of the network that he described. The anonymous author of the *Historia Monachorum* reported the story of the holy men he had known personally, he claimed to have learned from their ascetic behaviour and teachings, and he could thus adduce to be part of that holy tradition of ascesis. Palladius recounted the direct encounters he had with the figures he described, and he even included his own ascetic profile at the end of the collection (*HL* 71). Theodoret could boast connections with many of the figures that he described, and he recounted that he himself was educated by the holy men Macedonius, Peter, and, possibly, Zeno. The self-fashioning that the four collective biographies reveal was not limited to the construction of a philosophical or an ascetic identity for their authors. The works ratified the very participation of their authors in the networks they described; and they thus placed the authors in a special position in front of the eyes of the readers.

The statement of a personal relation between Theodoret and the holy men in the region could also have a rather practical outcome, given that the connections with holy men could

[730] Respectively Watts 2005; Russell 1980, 118-19; Katos 2011, 98-124; for Theodoret, Tompkins 1993, 42-46, and Wood 2010, 38-66.

help Theodoret legitimate his standing as a church leader in Cyrrhestica. The holiness of the ascetics could be understood as a divine endorsement of their orthodoxy, and, in turn, their allegiance with Theodoret could be of some advantage in reinforcing the bishop of Cyrrhus' theological profile against accusations of heresy in the 440s.[731] The audience that Theodoret expected for the *Historia Religiosa*, then, must have included lay individuals and potential patrons (perhaps including individuals close to the imperial court), along the lines of the *Historia Lausiaca* that was dedicated to Lausus, *Praepositus sacri cubiculi* under Theodosius II.[732]

If Theodoret's ascetic self-fashioning emerging from the *HR* was constructed with a view to his own presentation to potential lay patrons, the work would not be the sole instance of such a strategy. In early 448, when he received a copy of the imperial edict stating that he was not allowed to leave Cyrrhus on account of suspicion of heresy, Theodoret sent two apologetic letters to influential figures at the imperial court, the *praefectus urbi* Eutrechius (less likely *praefectus praetorio*; *Ep.* 80.10-11) and the already *magister officiorum* Nomus (*Ep.* 81.7-9). On both occasions, Theodoret used the fact that he had spent the years preceding his election as bishop in a monastery as an apologetic argument in favour of his orthodox belief. Even the third and last passage in his surviving letters that referred to the affiliation to the monastery at Nikertai before his ordination was addressed to a lay individual, and, moreover, in similarly apologetic circumstances. Upon being condemned at Ephesus (449), Theodoret begged his lay protector Anatolius, already *magister utriusque militiae*, to plead with the Emperor for the organisation of a synod in the West to judge Theodoret again. If the Emperor would not agree to this request, Theodoret asked to be allowed to leave Cyrrhus and to return to his monastery at Nikertai outside Antioch (*Ep.* 119.17-21).

The bishop of Cyrrhus reported of his monastic upbringing to three lay (and influential)

[731] Urbainczyk 2002, 130-42.
[732] Urbainczyk 2002, 54, argued for the intellectual elite of Constantinople, or at least Antioch and Alexandria as the readership of *HR*; Hunt 1973, 459.

figures. There is the possibility that the uniform and uncontroversial ascetic colouring that he applied to holy men and, in turn, to his own *persona* in *HR* was part of an agenda trimmed for an audience of lay readers. In other words, the attention to such readers, perhaps not primarily interested in theology, may have played a role in the outcome of the *HR*, which tends to present a uniform and stereotypical picture of ascetic practice.

Theodoret strove to present a uniform image of asceticism in Northern Syria, and collected rather different ascetic experiences under a common monastic colouring. Greek-speaking and Syriac-speaking ascetics, solitaries and brotherhoods, individuals who had almost completely abandoned social life and individuals who went to town on a weekly basis to interact with the civic populace, notables who had left a secular career and individuals who did not undergo any form of literate education, members of the clergy and lay ascetics are all treated together in Theodoret's account.[733] Derek Krueger argued that one of the aims of Theodoret's pervasive use of Biblical typology in the depiction of holy men was to pair the credibility of the *HR* with that of Biblical figures.[734]

At the same time, however, the *HR* could fulfil a function at a local level. Relying on his analysis of Theodoret's letters, Adam Schor interpreted the bishop's description of asceticism and his construction of monastic identities as verbal cues to be employed in the exchanges among the members of the Antiochene network.[735] Philip Wood took a broader view, and argued that the carefully trimmed and monitored account of asceticism of the *HR* reveals Theodoret's aim of supplying orthodox examples for contemporary asceticism. In this respect, Theodoret's portrayal of orthodox asceticism was intended to be used by an audience of urban clerics in Antioch, Apamea, and Cyrrhus - an audience similar to that expected for the exegetical *quaestiones* on the Bible.[736]

[733] Urbainczyk 2002, 90-91; Whitby 1987, 316-17.
[734] Krueger 1997, 414-15.
[735] Schor 2011, 23, 75, and 116-19.
[736] Theodoret's efforts to provide a normative view of ascetic practice in the region find a parallel in the deeds of

Philip Wood emphasised the interest in the description of religious practice that *HR* reveals. In fact, an interest in religious practice and asceticism in particular associates Theodoret with the authors of the collective biographies composed in the previous decades, the *Vitae Sophistarum*, the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, and the *Historia Lausiaca*.[737] In this respect too, the works provide much ground for systematic comparative analysis, although at present only Patricia Cox Miller has compared the religious element in Eunapius' *Vitae Sophistarum* and with the Christian literature of the time, and with the *Historia Monachorum* in particular. Cox Miller argued that religious practice plays an important role in both accounts, and proposed to understand the *Vitae Sophistarum* as a response to Christian literature and Christian hagiography in particular.[738]

A comparative analysis of the *Vitae Sophistarum* and the *HR*, however, reveals another important point of contact between the two works, and ultimately between the two worlds that they describe. There is no proved genealogical connection between the two collections of biographies, but a close reading nonetheless reveals conspicuous similarities in the ways in which the two authors portrayed the world of higher literate education and the world of Christian asceticism. The link was first identified by Philip Rousseau, who related the succession of ascetic masters and disciples of the *HR* with the pattern of academic succession in philosophic schools. There is the possibility that the *HR* built on Theodoret's familiarity with a specific pedagogical dynamic that characterised the world of rhetorical and philosophical education.[739]

Ed Watts has shown that many of the anecdotes that make up Eunapius' *Vitae Sophistarum* have an oral origin. Such narratives and short stories appear to have been handed down to Eunapius orally through his own teachers, primarily Chrysanthius and Prohaeresius;

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another contemporary and neighbouring bishop, Rabbula of Edessa. Wood 2010, 38-66.
[737] Urbainczyk 2002, 94.
[738] Cox Miller 2000.
[739] Rousseau 1998, 235.

and they reflect the practice of oral transmission between teacher and pupils over the generations. Such oral traditions played a role in defining a student's own understanding of his intellectual community, and in ratifying his membership in the genealogical tradition of a particular school. The accounts of *thaumata* and the instances of morally commendable deeds by past teachers could contribute to the demonstration of the correctness of the teaching that an intellectual tradition or school followed. At the same time, such anecdotes could confer a sense of identity upon the students who retold them to fellow students.[740]

One suspects that the efforts by Palladius and Theodoret were not far removed from the pedagogical dynamic underlying Eunapius' design. Firstly, claims of an oral transmission of anecdotes and narratives, as well as the personal relation with the figures subject of the biographies are common features in the collective biographies mentioned above (*HR* 2.22, and *HR* 4.7 about Acacius' narrations to Theodoret).[741] Secondly, the four works share a common structural feature in that the biographies are mostly structured in an anecdotal format suitable for oral narration. The *Historia Monachorum*, and even more so the *Historia Lausiaca*, collect series of short anecdotes that frequently have elementary contents and often include maxims or edifying statements either added by the authors or pronounced by holy men. Such anecdotes, which are often close in form and contents to the *Apophthegmata Patrum*, could be easily handed down orally from an ascetic teacher to his pupils from generation to generation.

Thirdly, on a number of occasions the four collective biographies present their subjects involved in instructional relations. Ascetic instruction is a common theme in the *Historia Monachorum* and the *Historia Lausiaca*, and, as will be shown in more detail below, the *Historia Religiosa* often presents the holy men as involved in teaching and instructional activities. The holy men themselves narrate anecdotes and pronounce aphorisms, although the *Historia Religiosa* may differ slightly in this respect for, on some occasions, the narrations by

[740] Watts 2005.
[741] Urbainczyk 2002, 48, about *HM*.

holy men appear more sophisticated than the usually elementary anecdotes of *HM* and *HL* (*HR* 21.19-29; 28.4; 9.6). In short, the *Historia Religiosa* could be understood as revealing a cultural enterprise closer to the world of philosophical and rhetorical teaching behind Eunapius' *Vitae Sophistarum* than it is generally recognised.[742]

After the Cappadocian Fathers and John Chrysostom, Theodoret appears as yet another Christian author whose works present important points of contact with the cultural practices of professional rhetoric. The composition of the *HR* reveals Theodoret's familiarity with pedagogical strategies of the tradition of higher rhetorical and philosophical studies. At the same time, the *Historia Religiosa* offers a most important survey of instructional relations in North-Western Syria, among Greek-speaking and Syriac-speaking ascetics. The transmission of secular literature to Christian didactic settings could have occurred in the interaction between individuals who were familiar with didactic practices of the school tradition, like Chrysostom and Theodoret who could (at least) understand spoken Syriac,[743] and Syriac-speaking ascetics and teachers such as those described in the *HR*.

7.4 Solitary companies

Bearing in mind the aims that guided Theodoret in the composition of the *HR*, one can now approach the collective biography. Although the levelling lens of the work presents holy men as solitary figures, at a close reading their isolation did not always imply the absence of followers or pupils.[744] The *HR* reveals a variety of ascetic experiences in Northern Syria that included instructional activities within ascetic milieux, although the monastic colouring of the work should not make us accept a dualism between secular schools and monastic schools. A

[742] For a comparison with Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus* see Urbainczyk 2002, 41-42.
[743] Millar 2007, 117-21.
[744] Urbainczyk 2002, 35 and 80-86; Rousseau 1998, 231.

fresh look at the text discloses instructional enterprises with an ascetic component that cannot be classified under the label of rhetorical and philosophical schools.

In the *HR*, a considerable part of the information about ascetic instruction is concentrated around Theodoret's own education. Not unlike the letters that Theodoret sent to Eutrechius, Nomus, and Anatolius, the *HR* makes no mention of rhetorical or philosophical education.[745] In the *HR* Theodoret's instruction is characterised as ascetic from his earliest childhood. As a child (παιδίον *HR* 13.18), so in the late 390s or early 400s, Theodoret was instructed by Macedonius, an ascetic whom Theodoret reported that he visited on many occasions.[746] From around the 350s, Macedonius (c.330-c.420) had been leading an ascetic life outside Antioch, possibly on Mount Silpius. His isolation, however, was not strict, for crowds of visitors could find him in his ascetic dwelling (*HR* 13.2). Theodoret's mother was a regular visitor and supplied him with food (*HR* 13.3). At the same time, Macedonius made occasional visits to town, where he was accompanied by some acquaintances.

Macedonius had followers. Theodoret reported that in the early 380s the newly appointed bishop Flavian led the ascetic to town pretending that a charge had been made against him, but, in fact, Flavian was planning to consecrate him priest.[747] Upon discovering that he had been consecrated, Macedonius reacted violently, and could hardly be calmed by some of his acquaintances (τινὲς τῶν συνήθων *HR* 13.4). On another occasion, Flavian led Macedonius to town for the feast of the *Hypapante*, but he was able to convince him to leave his dwelling only thanks to Macedonius' acquaintances (οἱ συνήθεις *HR* 13.4).[748] Were these individuals Macedonius' disciples? Macedonius knew Syriac, and it seems likely that at least some of his acquaintances could have known it too. On occasion of the trial following the riot

[745] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 80, 81, and 119.
[746] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HE* 13.18: τῆς τούτου πολλάκις ἐγὼ εὐλογίας καὶ διδασκαλίας ἀπέλαυσα. *HE* 13.1: πολλὰ γάρ με παρ' αὐτὸν ἰέναι καὶ θαμίζειν προέτρεπε.
[747] Price 1985, 108 n. 8, explains that this was an honorary ordination aimed to place the holy man's charism under the aegis of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.
[748] A lay man too managed to lead Macedonius to Antioch and to have him heard by a judge within a trial, although outside the official setting of the courtroom (*HR* 15.11).

of the statues (387), as both Chrysostom and Theodoret reported, Macedonius was one of the ascetics who went into the city again and addressed the commissioners boldly, but, since Macedonius uttered his words in Syriac (τῇ σύρᾳ γλώττῃ), his pronouncements had to be translated into Greek.[749] Also, on account of the fact that his ascetic dwelling was a well, some used to call him γουββᾶ, which, as Theodoret explained, is the Syriac word for "well" (Syr. ܓܘܒܐ [*gūbō*] *HR* 13.2).[750]

The account of the life of Macedonius, as well as most lives collected in the *Historia Religiosa*, reveals that the solitary lifestyle of Theodoret's holy men did not imply extreme isolation, but rather allowed room for social interaction. Macedonius had συνήθεις "acquaintances," and he could enter the social space, although in possibly orchestrated or formalised circumstances. It may have been after Macedonius' *coups de théâtre* in town that Theodoret's mother took the decision to visit the ascetic and to ask his blessing in order to have a child, which promptly happened three years later (*HR* 12.17). Lay people like Theodoret's mother and Theodoret himself could visit Macedonius regularly. Macedonius engaged with the populace both in the city and in his ascetic dwelling; and he spent the last twenty-five years of his life in a hut and in cottages that belonged to others (τῇ καλύβῃ καὶ τοῖς οἰκιδίοις *HR* 13.2). Theodoret's account stands as a reminder that ascetic solitude did not necessarily imply absence of social interaction, and, at the same time, that the dividing line between solitary asceticism and coenobitism was not a neatly defined one. Although structured around isolated figures of ascetics, Theodoret's account is ultimately compatible with the depiction of a more coenobitic asceticism by John Chrysostom (6.4). Reports of the solitaries' social interaction can enhance our understanding of Theodoret's holy men, who, as in the case of Macedonius, could interact beyond the language boundary.[751]

[749] Chrysostom, *De stat.* 17.3; Theodoret, *HE* 5.19 and *HR* 13.7.
[750] For the vowel change *ā* > *ō* see Nöldeke 1904, § 44.
[751] Whitby 1987, 312-13, argued that social disengagement was not an essential feature of holy men.

Without the reluctance that John Chrysostom's mother had shown one or two generations earlier, Theodoret's mother entrusted his young son to the care of another ascetic, Peter the Galatian (c.304-c.403).[752] Peter, who was living with an ascetic companion, Daniel, had played a key role in the conversion of the woman to Christian life. Theodoret recounted that, in her youth, his mother had visited Peter in an elegant attire, but she was harshly reproached by the ascetic: "by supposing your body to require (the ornaments), you condemn the Creator for deficiency!" Peter followed up with the narration of a moralizing anecdote about a painter that impressed Theodoret's mother so much as eventually to prompt her conversion to Christianity (*HR* 9.6). Theodoret claimed to have reported the exact words of the ascetic without any change. The use of edifying anecdotes to condemn the use of cosmetics was not Peter's (nor Theodoret's) innovation, and is attested in Clement of Alexandria (*Paed.* 2.8 and 3.2) and in John Chrysostom (*Catecheses ad illuminandos* 1.34-38 and homilies); but one wonders whether the reference to painting may ultimately recall secular literature (possibly Xen. *Oec.* 10; and perhaps Plutarch?).

The account of the crucial meeting between the woman and Peter shows that Theodoret saw in the interaction between the holy man and a lay person the occasion for the reproduction of an anecdote with moral content. Such anecdotes could well derive from non-Christian traditions, if one follows the strategy used by John the Solitary in the *Four dialogues*. Instead of a miracle, the power of the life-changing encounter between Peter and the woman was enclosed, according to Theodoret, in the narration of an instructional and edifying anecdote. Edifying anecdotes could be easier alternatives to miracles (for instance, Aphrahat used to speak in parables: καὶ γὰρ εἰώθει τὸν δεσπότην μιμούμενος παραβολικῶς συλλογίζεσθαι *HR* 8.8), and, in turn, miracles soon became anecdotes, and one suspects that the early development of Christian asceticism went hand in hand with the use and diffusion of literature

[752] Chrysostom, *De sacerdotio* 1.2.30-99.

of this kind. If one follows Theodoret, it was such an encounter, and the edifying anecdote in particular, that inaugurated a closer interaction between Peter and Theodoret's mother, who subsequently entrusted the boy to the ascetic once a week. Whether Theodoret eventually received basic instruction from Peter is nonetheless hard to tell, for Theodoret only recalled that Peter used to take him on his knees and feed him with bread and raisins.[753]

While Macedonius and Peter may or may not have been in a position to play the role of elementary teachers, other holy men that Theodoret encountered were equipped with a more sophisticated cultural background. This was the case of Zeno (d. c.415-20), an ascetic based in the Antiochene hinterland. In c. 410, when he met the ascetic, Theodoret was in his twenties, and he had been just nominated reader in the church of Antioch. Long before, Zeno had had a secular career as an *agens in rebus* under Valens, and, although he confessed to Theodoret that he had been influenced by Basil of Caesarea in his choice to adopt the ascetic life, his decision nonetheless coincided with Valens' death, in 378.[754] Theodoret reported that Zeno left his job at the imperial court for a deserted tomb on the mountains near Antioch that thus became his ascetic dwelling, where he "purified his soul and constantly cleansed its eye;" and one is left with the suspicion that the contacts with the Arian court (or Arian clergy?) that Zeno may have accumulated, on which individuals like Meletius and Chrysostom would not have looked favourably, could have played some role in his decision to leave the city.[755]

The encounter with Zeno was different from the encounters Theodoret had had with Macedonius and Peter. When Theodoret visited Zeno in his ascetic dwelling, he "got *inside the door*, he saw a couch made of hay and another heap strewn on the stones so that *those* who sat on them would not derive any discomfort." [756] Here, Zeno and Theodoret had long

[753] Theodoret *HR* 9.4.
[754] Theodoret *HR* 12.1; *PLRE* 1.992; Urbainczyk 2002, 20 and 139-40. Price 1985, 99 n. 2, rejects the possibility of Basil's influence on the questionable ground that Basil "was emphatic on the preferability of the coenobitic to heremitical life." As it will be argued, Zeno's isolation was not radical.
[755] Theodoret *HR* 12.2: τὴν ψυχὴν ἐκκαθαίρων καὶ τὸ ταύτης ὀπτικὸν ἀεὶ ἀπορρύπτων.
[756] Theodoret *HR* 12.4 (trans. Price): Ὡς δὲ εἴσω τῆς θύρας ἐγενόμην, στιβάδα εἶδον ἀπὸ χόρτου συγκειμένην καὶ

conversations about philosophy, and, given the arrangement, this was not the first occasion in which Zeno conversed with other individuals about philosophy. One is reminded of the scenario depicted by John the Solitary in the dialogues, according to which young ascetics who had experienced secular instruction visited the solitary in order to be lectured on ascetic life described in a philosophical language. After the meeting, Zeno begged Theodoret to return to visit him soon and agreed to bless him only when the latter threatened not to come back. It is not possible to say whether the occasion was only the first of a series of instructional visits to Zeno.

Zeno is a representative of ascetics who belonged to the upper classes, and such individuals may have played a role in transmission of secular literature to ascetic instructional settings.[757] Figures like Zeno may, in fact, have had some philosophical or literary knowledge to share with Theodoret, given the literate education that their social origins usually implied. While in his ascetic dwelling, Zeno used to read books that he of course did not own but borrowed from others (*HR* 12.5). Also, Theodoret added that Zeno postponed the abandonment of his possessions for a while after adopting ascetic life, for his estate was held in common with his brothers. He then sold most of it, and, only as late as just before his death, he handed over his possessions to Alexander, bishop of Antioch (*HR* 12.7). Moreover, although based on the mountains outside Antioch (*HR* 12.2), Zeno was less isolated from the life of the city than other ascetics for, according to Theodoret, he used to go to church every Sunday, where he used to lend his ears to the teachers, possibly explaining the Scriptures.[758]

The ascetic community that the young Theodoret joined in his twenties, which has been identified at Nikertai outside Apamea, could claim a tradition initiated by another notable ascetic who had likewise made use of books in his ascetic dwelling, Marcianus (d. 380s; *HR*

ἕτερόν τινα φορυτὸν ἐπὶ τῶν λίθων κατεστρωμένον ὡς μηδεμίαν ἐκεῖθεν οἱ ἐπ᾽ ἐκείνων καθήμενοι ἀποφέροιντο βλάβην.

[757] Urbainczyk 2002, 70-71; McLynn 1998a, 467 n. 13; Rousseau 1998, 231; Brown 1971, 119 n. 82.

[758] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 12.5: εἰς τὴν θείαν ἐκκλησίαν μετὰ τῶν πολλῶν κατὰ κυριακὴν ἡμέραν ἐφοίτα καὶ τῶν θείων ἐπαίων λογίων καὶ τοῖς διδασκάλοις ὑποτιθεὶς τὰ ὦτα καὶ τῆς μυστικῆς μεταλαμβάνων τραπέζης.

3.6). Marcianus was of noble descent and, not unlike Zeno, had occupied an important position at the imperial court before adopting ascetic life (*HR* 3.2). Marcianus was a native of Cyrrhus, and he was born to a family of senatorial rank (λαμπρότητος *HR* 3.2).[759] After spending some years in solitude, he admitted two disciples to live with him, Eusebius and Agapetus, who adopted ascetic life following the rules that Marcianus himself had set (τοὺς νόμους *HR* 3.4); in fact, according to Theodoret, Marcianus acted as a *didaskalos* to them (*HR* 3.6). The attempt by Flavian and the Antiochene clergy to ordain Marcianus priest in the early 380s may be taken as indicative of the influence of the holy man, whose ascetic enterprise, which he himself endowed (*HR* 3.5), would be particularly enduring. Indeed, Agapetus, one of the two disciples of Marcianus, was ordained bishop of Apamea in c. 388, and he later founded two ascetic communities near Nikertai, outside Apamea. The fact that one community was under his own rule, and the other was assigned to the care of Symeon (to whom Chrysostom may have sent *Ep.* 55 in c. 405) might perhaps indicate that one was composed by Greek speakers, and the other by Syriac speakers. Such was the arrangement of the community founded about three decades earlier by Publius at Zeugma (see below).

The interaction between Syriac-speaking ascetics and Greek-speaking ascetics who had undergone a traditional *cursus* of secular education such as Theodoret (and possibly Zeno and Publius) provide a possible setting for the transmission of Greek secular literature into Syriac. Theodoret was at Nikertai in his twenties, and it is conceivable that, not unlike Chrysostom, the ascetic experience had happened after a *cursus* of education that made him familiar with Greek secular literature.[760] Those wealthy individuals who could establish an ascetic community were likely to come from privileged backgrounds and thus to have undergone Greek education.[761] Over the decades, however, ascetic communities are likely to have included individuals

[759] *PLRE* 1.555; Price 1985, 47 n. 2; Canivet 1977, 249 n. 1.
[760] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 119, 80 and 81; Azéma 1998, III 81 n. 3; Price 1985, xii, reported that at Nikertai Theodoret gained the reputation as a writer although without mentioning the source.
[761] Urbainczyk 2002, 76-77, remarks on the similarity with Egyptian monasticism in this respect (Bagnall 1993, 301-02).

without such a training and possibly of Syriac origin too. At Nikertai, Theodoret, who could understand spoken Syriac, may well have encountered Syriac-speaking ascetics, and, in turn, Syriac-speaking ascetics in Nikertai, or in other foundations in the region, may well have come in contact with Greek manuscripts. It is a remarkable coincidence that the tenth-century lexicon compiled by Bar Bahlūl described the monastery of Nikertai as the community of John the Solitary of Apamea, the already mentioned author of the *Four dialogues* in which an anecdote found in Epictetus' *Encheiridion* has been reproduced.[762]

By the time of the composition of *HR*, according to Theodoret the community at Nikertai had grown to four hundred ascetics (*HR* 3.4). Whether or not the estimate is accurate, the story of the community at Nikertai reveals that the step between solitary asceticism, which could involve an ascetic companion or disciples, and coenobitic life could be a short one. If one follows *HR*, ascetic retreats for individuals could develop into coenobitic ascetic communities within few decades.[763] Another example is provided by Publius, a man of curial rank who gave away his possessions to live as an ascetic in a hut that he built just outside his own city of Zeugma, on the Euphrates (*HR* 5.1-2). Soon his mode of life attracted followers, who, at first, built more huts, until Publius accepted to erect a building for the community (*HR* 5.4; c. 350).

Despite the fact that the community was initially composed by Greek-speaking individuals, afterwards Publius accepted Syriac-speaking ascetics too, whom he settled in a different building. The entire community, however, assembled together for the daily prayers (*HR* 5.5). Upon Publius' death the community appointed two leaders: one for the Greek-

[762] Bar Bahlūl, *s.v.* (ed. Duval 1901, 1275): ܢܝܩܪܛܝ ܒܫܡ ܣܦܪ ܦܪܕܝܣܐ ܫܡ ܟܦܪܐ ܗܘ ܐܦ ܢܝܩܪܛܝ ܥܠ ܓܒ ܟܦܪܐ ܕܝܘܚܢܢ ܣܘܪܝܝܐ ܘܒܗ ܟܬܒ ܣܦܪܘܗܝ. "Nikertai in the *Book of Paradise*: name of a village. Nikertai is also, on the side of the village, the monastery of the solitary Mar John the Syrian, and in it he composed his books;" the identification is in Brock 1987a, 78.

[763] Another example is Euthymius in Palestine, in Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* 8 (trans. Price 1991). Theodoret's mentions of other ascetic communities are in *HR* 2.3-5 (c. 320); 2.9 (c. 330); 10.3 (c. 360; a community busy in manual work outside Antioch); 22.2 (c. 390; near Cyrrhus); 26.8 (c. 400; outside Antioch); 28.1 (c. 365); 29.2 (420s-30s; a nunnery); the chronology follows Price 1985, xvii.

speakers and one for the Syriac-speakers. The head of the latter group, Aphthonius, is likely to have known (or learnt) some Greek for, after forty years of ascetic life, he was ordained bishop (*HR* 5.6-8).[764] The multilingual community at Zeugma constitutes another setting for the transmission into Syriac of Greek texts that could have been selected by their upper-class ascetic founders. Again, the scenario depicted in the *Four dialogues* by John the Solitary, where more learned monks interact (and instruct) brothers with an allegedly less sophisticated training, is compatible with Theodoret's account.

In addition to the already mentioned double communities at Nikertai and Zeugma, Theodoret wrote of another double community founded about twenty years later (c. 380) by Symeon the Elder on Mount Amanus outside Antioch. Whether the division was again motivated by the language or the geographical origins of the monks cannot be determined from Theodoret's account alone. For both communities Symeon acted as "a gymnastic teacher and trainer" (γυμναστὴς καὶ παιδοτρίβης *HR* 6.13), following a sportive language that is commonly used by Theodoret to describe the ascetics (*e.g.* παλαίστρα *HR* 22.2) and that Philip Rousseau has put in relation to the language used to describe literate education in the Greek tradition.[765] If the spoken language was indeed one of the differences between the two communities, Symeon the Elder is likely to have known both Greek and Syriac. Multilingual encounters certainly occurred around another ascetic who lived in the same years, Julian Saba, a holy man who had began his ascetic career in Osrhoene before he moved to the outskirts of Antioch. Julian received the honorary nickname "Saba" by the (Syriac-speaking) people, for, as Theodoret explained, "Saba" means "old man."[766]

Julian had disciples, whom he instructed in the Psalms and in hymn-singing (*HR* 2.5), and it was one of Julian's disciples, Acacius, who narrated the life of Julian to Theodoret (*HR*

[764] Was Aphthonius the addressee of Chrysostom, *Ep.* 70 and 93, in 406?
[765] Rousseau 1998, 235.
[766] Syr. ܣܒܐ [*sōbō*]; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 2.1: Ἰουλιανὸς, ὃν Σάβαν ἐπίκλην οἱ ἐπιχώριοι τιμῶντες ὠνόμαζον - τὸν δὲ πρεσβύτην τῇ ἑλλάδι φωνῇ σημαίνει τὸ ὄνομα.

2.22). As in the case of Macedonius, the networks that ascetics developed with their followers and pupils could have a practical outcome in the historical events of the time. Theodoret reported that, under Valens, Flavian, Diodore, and another ascetic, Aphraat, managed to lead Julian Saba to Antioch thanks to the help of two among Julian's disciples, Acacius and Asterius. Julian was thus persuaded to come to the city, where he made an open anti-Arian statement and addressed Valens boldly.[767] Acacius and Asterius had been pupils of Julian, and their familiarity with the ascetic put them in good position to deploy Julian Saba in the city. At least Acacius, now settled in Antioch, had attended Julian's "ascetic wrestling-school" (τὴν ἀσκητικὴν παλαίστραν) founded in the 330s in the region of Gindarus, a village subject to Antioch but thirty miles outside the city, not far from Qalaat Semaan, on the route to Mesopotamia. The ascetic community based at Gindarus was not extemporary, since Julian trained (παιδοτριβεῖν) here many ascetics, and he did return to it after his militancy in Antioch.[768] Theodoret provided no explicit indication of the contents or the language of the instruction provided at Gindarus, although it is conceivable that Asterius, presumably a Greek-speaker from Antioch, could have met Syriac-speaking visitors and ascetics while at Gindarus.

Theodoret wrote that Scripture-based instruction was among the activities of another ascetic community that was located at Teleda, a village outside Antioch (*HR* 4.6). Around the 350s, Ammianus founded a philosophical retreat at Teleda (φιλοσοφίας φροντιστήριον *HR* 4.2) that would soon become one of the biggest ascetic foundations of Northern Syria. Initially, Ammianus himself, certainly from a well-to-do background, used to provide instruction (διδασκαλία) to his disciples (θιασῶται); but he then begged and convinced another ascetic, Eusebius, who had been living in isolation, to join him as a trainer and teacher (παιδοτρίβην τε καὶ διδάσκαλον) in his ascetic wrestling-school. Theodoret reported that Ammianus instructed Eusebius on the Gospel (*HR* 4.6); similarly Theodoret recalled that, when he spent a week

[767] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 2.16-17; the same event is narrated in Theodoret, *HE* 4.24.
[768] And following a pilgrimage on Sinai; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 2.9; Sozomen *HE* 7.28.

living within the community at Teleda (in c. 410-15), he would sit together with others to be instructed by David, who was then head of the brotherhood, about philosophy and evangelic life.[769] By this time, c. 410-15, the members of the brotherhood had increased to one hundred and fifty.

As far as Theodoret could tell in the 440s, the provision of instruction was an important component in the life of the community at Teleda. Theodoret reported that Eusebius instructed many teachers there, whom he then sent to other "wrestling-schools."[770] Two of them were Eusebonas and Abibion. If one trusts their names, the two teachers are likely to have been Syriac-speakers who were instructed by Eusebius. Later, however, they founded another philosophical retreat at Teleda (a φιλοσοφίας φροντιστήριον, now identified as "Teleda ii") which Symeon Stylite the Elder joined in 403 (*HR* 26.4).[771] The two possibly Syriac-speaking ascetic teachers are viable candidates for the transmission of Greek instructional texts into Syriac. The two communities at Teleda brought together Syriac-speaking and Greek-speaking ascetics and provided a possible setting for the transmission of Greek instructional texts to Syriac-speaking ascetics.[772]

7.5 Ascetics and the Scriptures in a letter by Theodoret

What the contents of the ascetic instruction provided by Theodoret's holy men were is less clear. The privileged origins of ascetic founders such as Zeno, Publius, and Ammianus make the use of Greek secular or even literary texts a plausible possibility. The *Historia*

[769] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 4.10: καθῆστο παρ' ἡμᾶς ὁ θεῖος ἐκεῖνος ἀνὴρ τοὺς περὶ φιλοσοφίας λόγους ἀνακινῶν καὶ τῆς εὐαγγελικῆς πολιτείας τὸ ἄκρον ἐπιζητῶν.
[770] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *HR* 4.13: ἄλλους δὲ πλείστους ἀποφήνας τοιούτους ἑτέραις παλαίστραις διδασκάλους παρέπεμψεν.
[771] See also the *Syriac life of Symeon Stylite* 9-11 (trans. Doran 1992, 109-10).
[772] Schor 2011, 74-75, similarly suggests that multi-lingual communities provide a probable context for early translations from Greek into Syriac.

Religiosa, however, reports only that Peter narrated a secular anecdote to Theodoret's mother, that Ammianus commented on the Gospel to Eusebius, and that Zeno and David discussed philosophy and angelic life with Theodoret. Apart from references to instruction and to the use of books, *HR* does not provide enough information to reconstruct the contents of the teaching provided by Theodoret's ascetics. To infer a uniform picture of Christian ascetic education in the *HR* may even be misguided, for one of the leading principles of its author was to propose a uniform and uncontroversial image of ascetic experiences in the region. Another work by Theodoret, a letter addressed to a large groups of ascetic communities, however, may add to the evidence of the *Historia Religiosa* by presenting a trace of the study of the Scriptures in ascetic settings.

The document presents Theodoret as involved in the effort of winning over a broad support from the ascetic communities in the region. Theodoret, who had just returned to Cyrrhus after attending the Council of Ephesus, strove to win over the ascetics' support against Cyril of Alexandria and against the condemnation of Nestorius. The letter was composed during the winter of 431/32, and it was widely addressed to the monks of Euphratesia, Osrhoene, Syria, Phoenicia, and Cilicia. In order to persuade the ascetic addressees of the validity of his Christological formula, Theodoret added to the letter a short *florilegium* of Scriptural passages.

The Christological controversies in which Theodoret was involved had prompted, during these years, a greater use of *florilegia* of patristic texts for apologetic purposes. Theodoret himself played an important role in the composition of patristic *florilegia* and anthologies that could be read in church councils or added to support the argumentation of apologetic texts.[773] Yet, in order to persuade the ascetic addressees of his Christological formula, Theodoret resorted to *florilegia* of Biblical origin rather than of patristic origin. After

[773] Richard 1951.

reporting a first *florilegium* of Scriptural quotations, in the letter to the ascetics Theodoret wrote:

> I might have collected other consentient passages of Holy Scripture and inserted them in my letter had I not known that your piety turns life into the study of the divine oracles (βίον ἔχειν τὴν τῶν θείων λογίων μελέτην), as befits the man called blessed in the Psalms. I leave the collection (συλλογὴν) of evidence to your own diligence and proceed with my subject.[774]

Theodoret made the assumption that the activities of the ascetics included the study of the Scriptures, and he left the task of collecting further Scriptural evidence to the ascetics, if they wished. In the following argumentation, however, Theodoret reported additional *florilegia* from the Scriptures, and one wonders whether Theodoret may have wanted, in fact, to supply the ascetics with collections of Biblical sentences of Christological significance to be memorised or studied (should one intend συλλογὴν as the act of collecting by the ascetics or as the work done by Theodoret?).

It is a curious coincidence that the second *florilegium* with Christological significance that Theodoret reported in the letter contains a Scriptural quotation that is also found among the textual additions to the Syriac translations of our analysis (*Ps.* 107.6).[775] The sentence is meaningful in Theodoret's argument to illustrate Christ's divine nature, although one cannot decide whether the Syriac translator of *TA* was aware of its use in the theological context.[776] There is the possibility that the Syriac translator of Themistius' *De amicitia* was familiar with Biblical *florilegia* with theological significance, and he may have added the sentence to his translation, if not necessarily as a Christological cue, perhaps as an expression that came up to his mind reading the Themistian passage that describes the action of slander.

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[774] Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 151 (*PG* 83.1421-23 = iv 4.175-81 ed. Azéma 1998; trans. from Schaff 1890, II iii 327): Καὶ ἄλλας δ' ἂν ὁμοφώνους μαρτυρίας συλλέξας ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας Γραφῆς, ἐνέθηκα ἂν τῇ ἐπιστολῇ, εἰ μὴ τὴν ὑμετέραν θεοσέβειαν ἠπιστάμην βίον ἔχειν τὴν τῶν θείων λογίων μελέτην, κατὰ τὸν ἐν Ψαλμοῖς μακαριζόμενον ἄνθρωπον. Τῇ ὑμετέρᾳ τοίνυν φιλοπονίᾳ καταλιπὼν τὴν τῶν μαρτυριῶν συλλογὴν, ἐπὶ τὰ προκείμενα βαδιοῦμαι.
[775] Ch. 2.2.1; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *Ep.* 151 (= iv 4.288-89 ed. Azéma 1998); *TA* 68.8-11 : Syr 63.11-18.
[776] Further research may be able to assess the meaning and the use of the line *Psalm* 107.6 in Christological writing.

7.6 Conclusion

The chapter has shown that Theodoret was familiar with didactic strategies from the tradition of rhetorical and philosophical studies, and that he was willing to use and adapt such practices to new Christian settings. Theodoret appears as an interstitial figure between rhetorical education and Christian asceticism. The *Cure* and the *Historia Religiosa* contain at least indirect traces of unconventional instructional settings that Theodoret intended to address, while the *Ten Orations* may directly reveal an instance of such a setting.

After all, the pedagogical strategies implemented by Theodoret and by the Syriac translators might not have been too different. One is puzzled, for instance, at the similarity between Theodoret's quotation of a passage from the *Ad Demonicum* and the rendering of the same passage by the Syriac translator. Neither Theodoret nor the Syriac translator read the passage following traditional rhetorical practice, but rather distorted the original text by misreading into it Isocrates' criticism of the pagan myth. The passage argues that "(gods) have revealed very clearly in their treatment of their nearest kin how they are disposed to the good and base among men," and accordingly provided an *exemplum*:

> for Zeus, who –as the myths relate and all men believe– was the father of Heracles and Tantalus, made the one immortal because of his virtue, and inflicted on the other the severest punishment because of his evil character.[777]

The issue that both Theodoret and the Syriac translator confronted is how to understand the phrase ὡς οἱ μῦθοι λέγουσι καὶ πάντες πιστεύουσι "as the myths relate and all men believe".

In the Hermogenian rhetorical *corpus* (second to fourth centuries), in which the *Ad Demonicum* is often quoted, the sentence "as the myths relate and all men believe" is reported as a model to explain a particular rhetorical device. The device is identified as a "method of

[777] Ps.-Isocrates, *Ad Dem.* 50 (transl. Norlin).

forceful speaking within a narration" (μέθοδος δεινότητος περὶ διηγήσεως), which is constituted by the juxtaposition of an *anaphora* for reassurance ("as the myths relate") and a *bebaiōsis* for proof ("and all men believe").[778] The fact that this line was chosen as an example of the rhetorical device again attests the popularity of the *Ad Demonicum* as an instructional text, which figures like Theodoret are likely to have encountered within their rhetorical curriculum at school.

Perhaps surprisingly, however, Theodoret did not show awareness of the Hermogenian explanation, and he quoted the passage for a radically different purpose. In the *Cure* he stated that pagan heroes and gods are nothing more than men who became honoured as divine, and, accordingly, he argued that the pagans are not in a position to criticise the Christian cult of the martyrs. Theodoret then reported the phrase "as the myths relate and all men believe" to show that even Isocrates distanced himself from Zeus' alleged paternity of the two heroes, who, as Theodoret explained, were born from human parents.[779] Yet, the passage was not originally meant as proposing criticism of the myth, and such a reading is in contradiction with the pagan contents of the *Ad Demonicum*.

In Syriac translation, one finds the mythological *exemplum* faithfully translated, except for the very phrase under analysis. The sentence "as the myths relate and all men believe" was replaced, perhaps unexpectedly, with ܐܝܟ ܕܟܬܒ̈ܐ ܐܡܪ̈ܝ "as the books say." Like Theodoret, the Syriac translator transformed the rhetorical device into a statement of criticism of the myth.[780] Instead of accepting the technical and rhetorical explanation, both Theodoret and the

[778] Kennedy 2005, 250-251.
[779] Theodoret, *Cure* 8.14.1-3 (ed. Canivet): Καὶ Ἰσοκράτης δὲ ὁ ῥήτωρ ὧδέ φησιν· «Ζεὺς γὰρ Ἡρακλέα καὶ Τάνταλον γεννήσας, ὡς οἱ μῦθοι λέγουσι, καὶ πάντες πιστεύουσιν.» Οὕτως ἐγέλων οἱ ξυνορᾶν ἱκανοὶ τὰ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων μυθολογούμενα· ἀλλ' ὅμως ἀνθρώπῳ γε ὄντι καὶ Εὐρυσθεῖ δουλεύειν ἠναγκασμένῳ, καὶ νεὼς ἐδείμαντο καὶ βωμοὺς ἐδομήσαντο καὶ θυσίαις ἐτίμησαν καὶ ἑορτὰς ἀπεκλήρωσαν, οὐ Σπαρτιάται μόνοι καὶ Ἀθηναῖοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ξύμπασα ἡ Ἑλλὰς καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης τὰ πλεῖστα. "The rhetor Isocrates said: 'for Zeus, who –as the myths relate and all men believe– was the father of Heracles and Tantalus'! In this way those who were able to have an overall view laughed at the mythical tales invented by others. Nonetheless, to him who was a man and had to serve Eurystheus, not only Spartans and Athenians but all the Greece and most of Europe built temples and erected altars, they honoured (him) with sacrifices and assigned (him) festivals;" Canivet 1957, 153-54.
[780] *ID* 176.24.

Syriac translator focused on the contents of the text rather than on its rhetorical form, and they proposed a reading that could safeguard the morally edifying advice that the *Ad Demonicum* proposed.

8. Conclusion

The present work has established that there exists a *corpus* of Christian instructional texts that do not fit into the received scholarly dichotomy of schools and monasteries. The effectiveness of this paradigm in understanding the provision of literate education in the Syrian region between 350 and 450 AD has thus been questioned. The combination of features of secular literate education with an interest in Christian asceticism that is visible in the documentary evidence affects not only early Syriac instructional literature, *in primis* the translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, but also instructional works composed by well-known Christian authors, such as the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus.

The thesis has shown that, in late Roman Syria, literate education was not confined to traditionally conceived instructional settings such as school and monasteries. The brotherhood of Diodore in Antioch, the pulpit from which Chrysostom pronounced the *De Babyla*, and the instructional milieux that Theodoret's *Cure* and *Ten homilies* foreshadow, were not straightforward schools or monastic foundations. Since Pachomius, and also Basil of Caesarea, clearly prescribed that monks should study the Scriptures and did not mention the use of texts of non-Christian origin, it has been suggested that the Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius reveal didactic settings of another kind, possibly more closely related to the world of rhetorical and philosophical education than our understanding of early monasticism normally allows.[781]

The analysis of Christian instructional texts beyond the dichotomy "school or

[781] Caner 2002; Kotsifou 2007; Pachomius, *Praecepta* 139-40 prescribes literacy-level instruction for unlettered monks, to which the memorization of *Psalms* and the New Testament must follow; Pachomius, *Praecepta* 19-22 prescribe instruction three times a week provided by the housemasters or superior of the monasteries (trans. Veilleux 1981); Rousseau 1999, 80-81 and 85-86; for Basil of Caesarea see ch. 5.3.2.

monastery" has prompted at least two questions that could not be addressed within the scope of the present work. First, the combination of cultural technologies of literate education with a new interest in Christian asceticism is attested at different levels within late-Roman society in the Syrian region. The phenomenon is evident in instructional texts (ch. 2-4), in teacher-pupil relations (ch. 5), in historical didactic settings (ch. 6), and in social interaction beyond teacher-pupil relations (ch. 7). It is especially remarkable that the endurance of pedagogical strategies of the literate tradition went beyond the limited dimension of the classroom (ch. 6 and 7).

Theodoret of Cyrrhus could make an effective use of traditional didactic practices outside the classroom at a broader social level, as is revealed by his concern for self-fashioning as a *pepaideuomenos* that the *Cure* shows and by his composition of instructional literature not primarily directed to pupils such as the *HR*. The Christian leader's innovative implementation of pedagogical strategies outside the classroom reveals a degree of cultural transformation that affected late-Roman society. Traditional pedagogical strategies seem to have followed a trajectory that departed from literate education but reached well beyond the traditional classroom.[782]

Secondly, by moving beyond the dichotomy of schools and monasteries, one can glimpse the link between didactic practices employed by Christian leaders and the careers of professional sophists. Early Christian instructional literature indicates that the implementation of traditional pedagogical strategies within and beyond a teacher-pupil relation was a matter of interest among Christian authors such as the Cappadocian Fathers, John Chrysostom, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus. The Syriac translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius (as well as much other understudied Syriac material) remain a bewildering set of texts, but it has been argued that they are best understood as being indicative of an interactive space in which Christian *pepaideuomenoi* experienced Christian asceticism or encountered Christian ascetics.

[782] Johnson 2006a pinpointed didacticism as a funding feature of Greek literature in late Antiquity.

Whether the focus on teaching activity may help scholars better account for the Christian leaders' engagement and successes in the society of the time, not least by bringing them down from the holy pillars on which subsequent Christian literature has confined them, is too early to say.

An outwardly-oriented analysis of didactic practice in early Christian literature will provide much unexplored ground for further research. In the opening section of a verse homily, the fifth-century Syrian author Jacob of Sarug invited his audience to listen sincerely, for his speech [*mimrō*] "is full of every profit for the one who gives heed to it." He continued: "both the speaker and the listener are co-workers; the word of the one who speaks and of the one who gives heed is the same."[783] Jacob emphasised the fact that, not unlike the speaker, listeners too should adopt an active role during the performance of his homily. The recommendation that the pupils should listen attentively with a view to later imitation, either on occasion of a rhetorical performance or on occasion of the adoption of a morally sound behaviour, was something important within literate education in the Greek tradition. One section of the manual of rhetoric composed by Aelius Theon (c. first cent. AD) describes the sort of active listening that is expected from the pupils.[784]

In the same decades, a similar recommendation was pronounced in a lecture-room by Plutarch.[785] Plutarch dedicated an entire piece to the topic, the *De audiendis poetis*, in which he instructed young pupils on how they should listen to poetry, especially in relation to the representations of bad behaviour that poetry presented to them. But in the *De recta ratione audiendi*, which Plutarch first delivered as a lecture and then addressed in written form to the young Nicander, the author provided specific advice on the most profitable behaviour to be adopted by students in a philosophical lecture-room. One section of the work is dedicated to active listening, and here Plutarch argued that the listeners should play a role as active as that

[783] Jacob of Sarug, *Homily on the tower of Babel* 71-72 (trans. Butts 2009, 14).
[784] Aelius Theon, *Progymnasmata* 14.
[785] Plutarch, *De audiendis poetis* and *De recta ratione audiendi*; Webb 2001, 308-10.

of the speaker.

The words used by Jacob of Sarug are striking in their similarity with the passage by Plutarch. Plutarch wrote that "(the hearer) is a participant in the discourse and a fellow-worker with the speaker,"[786] and Jacob wrote that "both the speaker and the listener are co-workers; the word of the one who speaks and of the one who gives heed is the same."[787] In particular, ܫܘܬܦ ܒܥܕܗ [*šwē ba'bōdō*] appears as an appropriate Syriac rendering of συνεργὸς "co-worker", and ܕܓܘܢ [*dgawō*] is an excellent translation of κοινωνὸς "common." The similarity of terminology is noticeable, and this is not the only occasion in which Jacob appeared familiar with the imagery found in Greek literature to describe the learning process.[788] The coincidence does not prove dependence, of course, yet one suspects that didactic practice may help explain the link between Greek instructional literature and the verse homilies by Jacob of Sarug.

The present work has maintained that the endurance of pedagogical strategies could provide an effective tool to understand the apparent link between Christian and non-Christian instructional texts. It is an intriguing possibility that Jacob implemented in verse homiletics pedagogical strategies that also characterised literate education within the Greek tradition, for the passage from the verse homily foreshadows a performative instructional relation that linked the performer with the listeners. The present analysis of literate education in late-Roman society has suggested caution in understanding the recurrence of the same pedagogical strategy as an indicator that Jacob acted in a didactic setting necessarily similar to the philosophical

[786] Plutarch, *De recta ratione audiendi* 14 (45e; trans. Babbit). The text continues: "and he ought not rigorously to examine the speaker's little slips, applying his criticism to every word and action, while he himself, without being subject to any criticism, acts unhandsomely and commits many gross improprieties in the matter of listening."

[787] Respectively κοινωνὸς γάρ ἐστι τοῦ λόγου καὶ συνεργὸς τοῦ λέγοντος and ܫܘܬܦ ܒܥܕܗ ܗܘ ܡܢ ܫܡܥ ܘܡܢ ܕܡܫܬܡܥ ܗܘ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܬܐܡܪ ܘܡܢ ܕܡܫܬܡܥ ܗܘ ܡܠܬܐ ܕܡܬܐܡܪ ܘܓܒܝܐ ܕܓܘܢ

lecture-room in which Plutarch had delivered the *De recta ratione audiendi*.[789] At the same time, however, the present work has argued that the question about the apparent links between Christian and non-Christian instructional literature in late Roman Syria can now be asked.

[789] Or even similar to table-talk conversation to which the specific *exemplum* pertains.

9. Appendix: the Cappadocian Fathers in Syriac translation

The proximity between Cappadocia and Osrhoene sets the scene for the Syriac translations of the writings by the Cappadocian Fathers. A fascinating aspect of such a proximity is represented by the cultural exchanges that existed between the two regions. The similarities between the theology of Ephrem the Syrian and that of his contemporary Gregory of Nyssa may be the result of direct or indirect contacts between Ephrem and the writings of the Cappadocians.[790] Conversely, in the *De deitate adversus Evagrium* (probably 381), Gregory of Nyssa provided a sympathetic description of ascetics from Mesopotamia, possibly Syrians, although one cannot decide if Gregory's report is first-hand or was derived from literature.[791]

There survives a number of letters between Basil of Caesarea and representatives of the churches of Sarug, Harran, Edessa and their environs. Relations with (in all likelihood) Syriac-speaking individuals are represented by an invitation for a visit addressed to Jovinus, bishop of Perrha near Samosata, and by the reference to an encounter with Vitus, bishop of Charrae.[792] An important role among Basil's addressees was that played by Eusebius, bishop of Samosata (few miles from Edessa and homeland of Lucian).[793] Thanks to the mediation of Gregory of Nazianzus' father, Eusebius played an important part in Basil's ordination;[794] he received Basil in Samosata during the spring of 372;[795]and he remained a point of reference for Basil in the following years, as the surviving nineteen letters addressed to him show. In a letter addressed to Eusebius' nephew Antiochus, Basil added to conventional pieces of moral advice

[790] Brock 1992b, 145-54.
[791] Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate adversus Evagrium* elsewhere *In suam ordinationem* (*CPG* 3179; *PG* 46.550CD); Mateo-Seco 2010, *s.v.* Gregory of Nyssa, *Ep.* 17.15 has a short anecdote about the Edessenes.
[792] Respectively Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 118 and 255.
[793] Taylor 1997; Pouchet 1992, 270-73.
[794] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep.* 42 and 44.
[795] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep.* 105 and 145.

the invitation, for the two, to come for a visit. At the same time, Basil wrote to the presbyters of Samosata, to its senate, and to its entire clergy, whom he invited to put aside the controversy among them.[796] Letter 64 (as well as letters 65 and 66 appearing also within Gregory's *corpus*) aimed to show Eusebius support after he had been exiled to Thrace in 374. The connection between Basil and Eusebius may have provided a channel for the transmission of Basil's works eastwards.

In two passages, in the *Hexaemeron* and in the *De spiritu sancto*, Basil reported an encounter with "a Syrian ignorant of the knowledge of this world but learned in the knowledge of the truth," whom Sebastian Brock and Lucas Van Rompay suggested identifying with Eusebius of Emesa.[797] The two passages, however, may have been at the origin of a tradition that brings together Basil and Ephrem the Syrian. Sozomen's report that Basil was a great admirer of Ephrem the Syrian may have provided a precedent for the combination of the two figures that is attested in the anonymous Syriac *Life of Ephrem* (mid sixth cent.).[798] The Syrian hagiographer reported that Ephrem travelled to Caesarea to celebrate the Epiphany; and, although initially put off by the sumptuous vestments of Basil, he eventually recognised the bishop as the person he had previously seen in a divine vision (ch. 25). Basil ended up playing a key role in at least eight chapters of the *Life*, thus revealing the esteem that he enjoyed at the eyes of the Syrian hagiographer.[799]

The fact that Basil was the earliest of the Cappadocians to be translated into Syriac raises the suspicion that Basil's prestige and authority could be backdated to the time when he was in contact with Eusebius of Samosata and with church leaders guiding Syriac-speaking flocks. In fact, some of his works were already available in Syriac in the decades that immediately followed his death, such as the *Asketikon*, the *De spiritu sancto*, the *Hexaemeron*,

[796] Basil of Caesarea, *Ep*. 146, 182, 183 and 219 (Pouchet 1992, 365-66) respectively; Taylor 2007, 44.
[797] Respectively Basil of Caesarea, *Hexaemeron* 2.6 and *De spiritu sancto* 29.74.44; Brock 1992b, 145 n. 2; Van Rompay 1992.
[798] Sozomen, *HE* 3.16.
[799] Amar 2011a, vi; Rousseau 1957.

and a selection of nineteen homilies including the *Ad adulescentes* and the *In principium Proverbiorum* (the latter received also a translation into Latin by Rufinus in the same years).[800] The enterprise of translating Basil into Syriac was ambitious. The quotations from the Scriptures in the texts were not translated, but they were replaced by the corresponding passages from the Syriac version of the Bible recognised at the time of the translation. The translators selected and added further quotations from the Scriptures to illustrate Basil's argumentation; and, among the changes to the texts, within a list of heretical sects they replaced "Valentinians" with the locally more important "Daisanites" (*Hexaemeron* 2.4). The conspicuous number of surviving manuscripts, as well as the fact that revisions of the translations were carried out in the late sixth and seventh centuries, attest to a continuous interest by Syrians in Basil's works.[801]

Research on the Syriac translations of Gregory of Nyssa is at a preliminary stage. The number of the surviving manuscripts of the translations is remarkable, and much basic work is still needed before attempting an assessment of the enterprises of translation. An instance of early translations of Gregory is represented by the collection contained in a Vatican manuscript probably written in the sixth century. The selection includes the *Adversus Apollinaristas* (*CPG* 3143); the homilies *De oratione Dominica* (*CP*G 3160); the homilies *De beatitudinibus* (*CPG* 3161); the *De opificio hominis* (*CPG* 3154); and the homilies *In Canticum Canticorum* (*CPG* 3158). According to Ceslas van den Eynde, the translation of the homilies *In Canticum Canticorum* was composed between the end of the fifth and the early sixth centuries, which may be taken as a working chronology for the entire collection.[802]

The translation of the homilies *In Canticum Canticorum* is preceded by two anonymous letters that shed light on its origin. The first letter was written by the commissioner of the

[800] Fedwick 2004, 2.1.240-43 and 2.2.1119-20; Fedwick 1981, 450.
[801] Taylor 2007, 45-48. As far as evidence goes, the *Asketikon* and the *Hexaemeron* were not revised, possibly on account of their non-dogmatic nature.
[802] *Vat. Syr.* 106; Van den Eynde 1939, 5-6 and 61-66; Assemani 1756; Kessel 2011, 98-101, for bibliography.

translation, who used Scriptural quotations to cajole the translator into carrying out the task, explaining that "many who are zealous for the teaching of the Lord have persuaded me (to ask you the translation); and it is not right to deprive them from a possession like this." Here, the author seems to refer to a Syriac instructional setting, on which he plans to intervene by providing the translation of the homilies by Gregory. In his reply, after making show of his politeness and modesty, the translator added two considerations. First, the translator added into the manuscript the Syriac text of the *Songs of Songs* so as to overcome the divergence between the Syriac Bible and the sequence of Gregory's commentary: the choice indicates that the translation was intended to be used by Syrians as an exegetical tool to guide the reading of the *Songs of Songs*. Secondly, the translator recommended "not to give this book rashly and as it comes to men of all conditions," for the homilies will be comprehensible only to spiritual and mystic minds, and they will be incomprehensible to those who have a carnal soul. The enterprise of translation was addressed to a selected audience who had undergone some sort of instruction.[803]

Among other translations of Gregory of Nyssa's works, the translations of the *Ad Eustathium de Sancta Trinitate* (*CPG* 3137) and of the *Ad Ablabium quod non sint tres dei* (*CPG* 3139) await to be studied.[804] Among the works considered in the present analysis, the *De professione christiana* (*CPG* 3136) survives in Syriac fragments; and the *De virginitate* (*CPG* 3165) survives entirely in a translation that, following Michel Aubineau, could have been composed between the late fifth and early sixth centuries. Passages from Gregory of Nyssa are also found in Syriac *florilegia* and anthologies that await to be studied.[805]

Among the Syriac translations of the works by Gregory of Nazianzus, the *carmina* deserve special mention. A Vatican manuscript contains a major Syriac collection of poems

[803] Van den Eynde 1939, 17-22. *Ibid.* 70.20-22: ܗܠܝܢ ܕܒܪ ܡܢ ܕܐܡܪ ܠܝ ܕܒܥܘ ܠܝ ܡܢ ܕܓܢܝܐ ܕܡܠܦܢܘܬܐ ܕܡܪܢ ܕܚܠܦ ܕܐܬ ܠܝ ܠܡܫܐܠ ܠܟ ܗܢ ܕܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܡܫܒܩ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܢ ܚܕܐ ܕܟܬܝܫ ܗܟܢܐ ܕܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܡܫܒܩ ܠܗܘܢ ܡܢ ܚܕܐ ܕܟܬܝܫ ܗܟܢܐ . *Ibid.* 73.6-7: ܕܟܬܒ ܠܟ ܗܢ ܕܠܐ ܫܦܝܪ ܠܡܫܒܩ ܠܟܠ ܡܢ ܕܐܬܐ ܠܥܠܡ ܠܐ

and includes 130 *carmina* or excerpts of *carmina*. The translation was a product of the sixth or seventh century, and the selection of the *carmina* attests a considerable degree of originality in that the poems are occasionally rearranged, either by excerpting sections or by incorporating different excerpts. A study of the criteria of selection and excerption has the potential to shed light on the aims of the translators. It is curious to notice that the selection opens with two gnomic *carmina*: the *Definitiones minus exactae* (1.2.34) and *Tetrastichae sententiae* (1.2.33). Among the other poems, the collection contains *De virtute* (1.2.10), *In laudem virginitatis* (excerpt; 1.2.1), *De Padre* (1.1.1), *De Filio* (1.1.2), *Adversus carnem* (2.1.46), *Luctus* (2.1.49), *Ad animam suam* (2.1.81), *Contra diabolum in morbum* (excerpt; 2.1.50), *De seipso et de episcopis* (excerpt; 2.1.12), *De vita sua* (excerpt; 2.1.11), *Exhortatio ad virgines* (excerpt; 1.2.3), *De seipso* (excerpt; 2.1.30), and *De incarnatione adversus Apollinarium* (excerpt; 1.1.10).[806]

Gregory's *carmina* appear in other collections too. A damaged ninth-century manuscript from the British Library contains another selection of *carmina* that add to the above mentioned collection the *Dialogus adversus eos qui frequenter iurant* (excerpts; 1.2.24), *Adversus iram* (excerpt; 1.2.25) and the *De providentia* (excerpt; 1.1.6). One wonders how to interpret the colophon of the manuscript, where the scribe stated that the volume originally contained 219 poems and 166 letters by "Gregory the Theologian." Since the *carmina* of the Greek collection add up to 184, a fresh analysis of the manuscript is required.[807] Also, a text entitled *Letter on the alphabet of the Greeks* in a Kottayam manuscript has been identified with the translation of the gnomic *Monostichae sententiae iambicae et acrosticae* (1.2.30), which is here found together with the Clementine *Octateuch*, the *Didascalia apostolorum*, the *Life of the twelve apostles*, and excerpts from church canons.[808]

A translation of the *Hymnus vespertinus* (1.1.32) and the *Exhortatio ad virgines* (1.2.3)

[806] *Vat. Syr.* 105, ed. Bollig 1896; Simelidis 2009, 89-90; but see also Crimi 1997.
[807] According to the edition in *PG*; BL *Add.* 18821; Wright 1872, 774-77.
[808] Manuscript Seeri 33; Detienne 2000, 176 n. 4; Briquel-Chatonnet 1997, 428-29.

are found, instead, within a selection of Gregory's orations. Not unlike Basil's orations, Gregory's orations have been translated in different *corpora* over the time. The oldest selection, which is represented by manuscripts BM *Add.* 17146 (sixth or seventh cent.), BM *Add.* 18815 (ninth cent.), and leaves divided between different libraries, includes *Or.* 1, *Or.* 4 against Julian, *Or.* 20 and 21, the five theological orations (27-31), *Or.* 25 about Maximus the Cynic, *Or.* 33-34, and the sequence 38-45 including the *Oratio funebris in laudem Basilii Magni* (43), a selection of Ps.-Nonnus *Mythological Scholia* to oration four, and the *Exhortatio ad virgines* (1.2.3). André de Halleux has proposed Edessa in the second third of the fifth century as the milieu of this Syriac translation, while, on the base of the variance with the style of Basil's translation, David Taylor has argued for a later chronology.[809] Among the Syriac translations of Gregory, one should also mentions the letters, which were translated in *corpora*. The Syriac manuscript BL *Add.* 17209, which contains our translations of Plutarch, Lucian, and Themistius, closes with a selection of Gregory's letters. The thirty-two letters or excerpts occupy less than five folios, for they are often structured as short moral exhortations and maxims. As a result, the last part of the manuscript is not remarkably different from a collection of (Christian) sentences or pieces of moral advice. One wonders whether the selection of letters, which focused on edifying maxims, was originally intended for an instructional setting.[810]

The Syriac translations suggest a rather successful afterlife for selected works of the Cappadocian Fathers in the Syriac speaking world. The earliest translations began in the very last years of the fourth century, and went on during the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries with new translations and revisions. The prestige and authority of the Cappadocian Fathers among the Syrians guided the selection of the texts to translate; and the inclusion of instructional and

[809] Taylor 2007, 52; De Halleux 1984; the sixth century is proposed also by Brock 1971; Wright 1872, II 436-38. A later linguistic revision, which was carried out by Paul of Edessa in 623/24, included also the entirety of Pseudo-Nonnus' *Mythological scholia*.
[810] Ch. 3.2.5.

didactic pieces, such as Basil's *Asketikon*, Gregory of Nazianzus' gnomic *carmina* and, on a different level, Gregory of Nyssa's homilies on the *Song of Songs* suggests that the Syriac translators were expecting ascetic instructional milieux for their works. The letters that introduce the translations of Gregory of Nyssa's homilies on the *Song of Songs* may be indicative of such a scenario.[811]

[811] Taylor 2007, 54-55. The Cappadocians' legacy in both Greek and Syriac sources is also represented by pseudo-epigraphic literature.

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