

Introduction

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To what extent were polemics an integral component of ancient philosophy? If this question had been posed to intellectuals writing in the first centuries of the Common Era, many would have answered that the tradition of Greek and Roman philosophy is no more than a succession of controversies between schools or individual philosophers. Indeed, many Christian thinkers from the second century onward, while well aware of their own indebtedness to the debates and currents of Greek philosophy, tended to present Greek philosophy as mere battle between sects of contentious intellectuals more interested in winning a contest than in disclosing the truth. Thus, in the fourteenth and fifteenth books of the *Preparation for the Gospel*, Eusebius of Caesarea presents the history of philosophy from its inception as that of its various battles:

... and all the philosophers on all sides struggling against their neighbors, and most bravely joining in battle and wrestling, so that even with hands and tongue, or rather with pen and ink, they raise strongholds of war against each other, striking, as it were, and being struck by the spears and various weapons of their wordy war. (*Praep. evang.* 14.2.3; trans. E. H. Gifford)

In contrast to Greek philosophy, whose practitioners are presented as “boxers eagerly exchanging blows as on a stage before the spectators,” the “true philosophy” of the Hebrews is presented as a unified and unchanged doctrine, kept “with one mind and one voice,” that has been passed down, intact, to its Christian heirs (*ibid.* 14.2.1–14.3.5). By adopting the terminology of war and athletic contest in his presentation of the various philosophical doctrines, Eusebius depicts Greek philosophy as an arena in which each master is overthrown by his own disciple. In Eusebius’s eyes the history of philosophy is that of dissensions, discords, and quarrels, fought through the weapons of *logomachia*. It is no surprise, therefore, that Eusebius concludes his exposition by quoting these lines from the third century BCE Skeptic philosopher and poet Timon of Phlius, who wrote concerning the tenets of the philosophers:

Strife, the ruin of men, goes about shouting in vain,
the sister and servant of man-destroying quarrel.

Unseen she rolls around everything, but then
she fixes onto the head of a mortal, and casts him into hope.¹

Eusebius was not the only Christian steeped in Greek culture who saw the tradition of Greek and Roman philosophy as a mere battlefield. Thus, a few years before Constantine's conversion to Christianity, the "Christian Cicero," Lactantius, writes in his *Divine Institutes*:

Philosophy has split into a multiplicity of sects, and they all think differently. Which one do we go to for truth? . . . Any one sect dismisses all others in order to confirm itself and its own ideas, and it admits wisdom in no other sect in case it concedes error of its own; but its process of dismissing other sects is the same process by which they dismiss it, for those who condemn a sect for its folly are philosophers none the less: praise any one sect and call it true, and philosophers condemn it as false. . . . This way they all perish together: like the Sparti of the poets, they kill each other in turn till none survive at all, and that happens because they have swords but no shields. If then individual sects are found guilty of folly on the verdict of the many, then they all turn out to be vain and futile. Thus philosophy works its own end and destruction itself. (3.4.3–10; trans. A. Bowen)

Lactantius's words indicate that for him controversies and polemics are the ultimate sign of the failure of Greek philosophy. The abundance of points of view, the divisions between schools and thinkers, and the many divergent doctrines among them testify, in his eyes, that philosophy has patently failed to reach the one, unique truth.²

In a similar vein Philo of Alexandria, the first century CE Jewish exegete, singles out the many divergent opinions concerning the genesis of the cosmos, the nature of elements, and the validity of sensible perception and claims that the rivalry prevalent among philosophers debating these topics serves as testimony to the fact that "the philosophical issues have become full of discord (*diaphōnia*)" and that truth has escaped the arena of philosophy (*Her.* 248). For Philo, as was the case for many Christian authors, it was time to end the

¹ *Praep. evang.* 15.62.15; Timon 795 SH = 21 D. Clayman, Dee L. trans., *Timon of Phlius: Pyrrhonism into Poetry*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009, 96.

² In the same vein, for Justin Martyr, the second century CE Christian apologist, the many contradictions on most important points among the Greek schools of philosophy serve as a sign that they do not to possess heavenly wisdom (*Apol.* 2.13).

disputes and to replace the many divergent doctrines with a higher and unique dogma disclosing the only truth.

Needless to say, this project was never realized. Philo had no discernable impact on Jewish thought in the subsequent centuries, and from its inception early Christianity became the privileged scene of many forms of controversies, external as well as internal. The engagement with Greek philosophy often served to fuel contemporaneous debates inside the Christian tradition itself: the accusation of being a “Stoic” or “Epicurean” was commonly used as a slander against contemporary authors considered as heretics,³ as it was widely believed that all later heresies sprung from the various Greek philosophical schools.⁴

Yet the consideration of “pagan philosophy” as essentially polemical was by no means confined only to early Christianity or to Alexandrine Judaism. Famously, the most eminent representative of the Second Sophistic, Lucian of Samosata, often lampoons the disorderly heteroclite and controversial aspects of philosophy. In the *Icaromenippus*, the central character voices his complete despair concerning the possibility of apprehending the truth by associating with philosophers, insofar as they uphold completely opposed doctrines and quarrel with one another to no apparent resolution (*Icar.* 5–10). Later on in the same work, it is Zeus himself who voices an even harsher version of this accusation against the “lazy, disputatious, vainglorious, quick-tempered, gluttonous (*Icar.* 29)” Stoics, Academics, Epicureans, and Peripatetics, who under the pretense of teaching virtue, in fact

accuse everyone else; they amass biting phrases and school themselves in novel terms of abuse, and then they censure and reproach their fellow-men; and whoever of them is the most noisy and impudent and reckless in calling names is held to be the champion. (*Icar.* 30–31; trans. A. M. Harmon)

It would be tempting to view the derogatory remarks about philosophy in these late authors as reflections of the particular social or religious milieu in which they were written. But to yield to this temptation would be to overlook the fact

3 See Bureau, Bruno and Colot, Blandine. “Le thème de la philosophie païenne dans la polémique chrétienne, de Lactance à Augustin.” In *La parole polémique*, edited by Gilles Declercq, Michel Murat, and Jacqueline Dangel, 57–102, esp. 83–84. Paris: H. Champion, 2003.

4 See, for example, the *proemium* of the first book of the *Refutation of All Heresies*, attributed to Hippolytus (and also *Ref.* 9.26; 5.1; 5.15; 6.17; 6.24; 6.50; 7.7; 7.17–19); Irenaeus *adv. Haer.* 2.14.2–7; Tertullian, *de praescr. haer.* 7. Origen figures as an exception: *C. Cels.* 3.12.

that the argumentative and contentious aspects of philosophy were already brought to the fore in classical times by both its detractors and its defendants. Thus, as early as the fifth century, we find Gorgias in the *Helen* describing philosophical discussion as a contest in which the winners are defined not by success in attaining truth but rather by quickness of mind:

That Persuasion, when added to speech, can also make any impression it wishes on the soul, can be shown, firstly, from the arguments of the meteorologists, who by removing one opinion and implanting another, cause what is incredible and invisible to appear before the eyes of the mind; secondly, from legal contests, in which a speech can sway and persuade a crowd by the skill of its composition, not by the truth of its statements; thirdly, from the philosophical debates, in which quickness of thought is shown easily altering opinion. (*Helen* 13, trans. Freeman)

No doubt Gorgias's description of philosophy in the *Helen* is motivated by the general purpose of the treatise, at least part of which is to argue that the notion of success in speech is, in principle, independent from the notion of truth. But one must remember that part of Gorgias's strategy for substantiating this general thesis is to cite specific examples of domains of speech in which it is commonly acknowledged that the criterion for success is not the attainment of truth, and then argue that this is in fact the general rule in all domains of speech. By placing philosophical activity alongside forensic oratory in the cluster of examples from which the rule about speech is induced, Gorgias must be relying on some popular conception of philosophy, one that does not clearly distinguish between it and judicial oratory.

Perhaps the most familiar and outstanding piece of evidence for the popular conception of philosophy in the Classical period which failed to distinguish between it and other contemporary forms of disputation is the accusation and trial of Socrates. In Plato's *Apology* we find Socrates claiming that his habitual examination of citizens laying claim to knowledge had earned him a reputation for, among other things, making the worse argument stronger (19b, 23d)—precisely the sort of practice associated in his day with the Sophists. Readers of Plato are naturally keen to accept Socrates's claim that this popular view contains a gross misrepresentation of his actual practice. But, for our purposes, setting aside the fact that the arguments Socrates showed to be worse were not really strong but only seemed so to their proponents, it is important to note that there does seem to be a basic structural similarity between his practice and that of the Sophists: Socrates explicitly takes his mission to reside in the cross-examination and refutation of the views of others (29d–30a).

This refutation consisted to a large extent in exposing internal inconsistencies in his interlocutor's system of beliefs, a system which—both parties to the argument seem to agree—must be coherent in order to prove sustainable. So while philosophical controversy as Gorgias describes it in the *Helen* might be taken to be a by-product of other, more essential features of philosophical practice,⁵ with the Socratic *elenchus* we find controversy and polemic coming to form the basic and self-professed *modus operandi* of the philosopher.

A strong indication of how central a role polemics came to play in the popular conception of philosophy in the fourth century is Plato's and Aristotle's persistent attempts to trace and define the difference between proper philosophical disputation and the merely verbal or sophistical kind (see Shields, in this volume). These attempts attest to the fact that it was all too easy for the general public to overlook any difference between the practice of philosophers and that of Sophists. The fact that philosophers insisted that their arguments were aimed at truth, whereas Sophists could generally be either far less committal about this or even flagrantly deny that truth is a relevant criterion for success in disputation would hardly count in the public eye as evidence for the superiority of philosophical practice; after all, it could just as well be perceived as a demonstration of the sincerity of Sophists as opposed to the false pretention of philosophers.

But philosophers' own attempts to distinguish philosophical argument from mere eristic testify to more than merely the uninformed public view of philosophical practice. Plato's and Aristotle's attempts to distinguish dialectic from mere eristic contention serve as testimony that they were following Socrates in taking polemics to be integral to philosophy. After all, had that not been the case, it would have been open to them to claim that the public's mistake lay in attributing to polemics a disproportionately large role in their conception of philosophy. The practice of philosophy, Plato and Aristotle could have argued, involves so much more than that! The fact that we find them instead concentrating their efforts on an attempt to distinguish proper from

5 There is no doubt as to the presence of polemical undercurrents in pre-Socratic philosophy, e.g., Xenophanes' invective against popular religion and against the Pythagorean belief in transmigration of the soul (DK 21B11, B15, B7), and Heraclitus' attacks on the poets and on Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecateus (DK 22B40, B129, B57). Nevertheless, the extent fragments do not leave the impression that polemic was integral to the method of investigation or even presentation of these thinkers. On this subject see, Brunschwig, Jacques. "Aspects de la polémique philosophique en Grèce ancienne." In *La parole polémique*, edited by Gilles Declercq, Michel Murat, and Jacqueline Dangel, 25–46, esp. 27–33. Paris: Champion, 2003.

false argumentative strategies shows that they too considered polemics to be inseparable from philosophy.

This centrality of polemic to philosophy becomes fully apparent when turning to the Hellenistic and imperial periods. In the Hellenistic era, Athens saw the blossoming of philosophical schools, fostered by the streaming of many students to Athens from all parts of the Hellenic world. They studied philosophy under the tutelage of different masters before becoming affiliated with one school and, at times, even founded their own sects. Allegiance to one's school and rivalry and debates with those of others thus became fundamental aspects of the practice of philosophy. The competitive atmosphere between the schools stirred up many polemical exchanges that, in most cases, continued up to the imperial period. This fact has direct impact on the philological and hermeneutical treatment of the surviving texts. Not only does the extraction of the fragments of the Stoics, Sceptics, Academics, or Epicureans of the Hellenistic period from later reports necessarily require accounting for the polemical agenda of these reports but one also cannot properly understand these texts without taking into account the polemical context in which the arguments embedded in them were originally shaped.

In the Hellenistic period, philosophers belonging to the Skeptical tradition made the collecting of disagreements (*diaphōnia*) a valid tool of philosophical investigation, and later Pyrrhonian skepticism even defines itself as an "an ability to produce opposites" (*dunamis antithetikē*; Sext. Emp. *Pyr.* 1.8). Polemical strategies of Hellenistic philosophy are also characterized by a growing use of invective: thus Timocrates's hostile portrait of Epicurus depicts him as engaging in outrageous slander against rival philosophers.⁶ The central place of philosophical debates not only impacted the modes of expression of the controversies but also had a tremendous effect on the crystallization of the doctrines involved. To take just one famous example, the polemic between the Stoics and Academics was so central to the consolidation of their respective epistemologies that Carneades is reported to have claimed that "if Chrysippus had not existed, neither would I."⁷ From the Hellenistic period

6 See Sedley, David. "Epicurus' Professional Rivals." In *Études sur l'épicurisme antique*, edited by Jean Bollack and André Laks, 121–59. Lille: Publications de l'Université de Lille III, 1976.

7 Diog. Laert. 4.62. On this topic see, for instance, Hankinson, R. J. "Stoic Epistemology." In *The Cambridge Companion to the Stoics*, edited by Brad Inwood, 59–84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010; Allen, James. "Academic Probabilism and Stoic Epistemology," *Classical Quarterly* 44 (1994): 85–103; and Frede, Michael. "Stoic Epistemology." In *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, edited by Keimpe Algra et al., 295–322. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

onward, then, polemic clearly plays a role in the dynamic process of negotiating and consolidating one school's identity vis à vis the others.

The process of the decentralization of philosophy in the early first century BCE—from Athens, its former center of gravity, to Rome—resulted, among other consequences, in the transformation of Hellenistic polemics. During this period the emergence of new forms of philosophical inquiry and new social and discursive conventions gave philosophical polemics new attire. Thus Cicero, in introducing Greek philosophy to his fellow Romans, remodels the genre of philosophical dialogue. Favoring extended speeches over short questions and answers, Cicero's dialogues present readers with extensive expositions of competing systems of thought. Philosophical inquiry becomes a Roman affair, whose protagonists—including Cicero himself—are members of the Roman aristocracy. Each interlocutor represents a distinct Hellenistic school of philosophy and defends it against attacks by protagonists of similar standing (see Lévy). And Lucretius engages in polemics by fashioning a triumphal portrait of Epicurus, silencing opponents by pointing out their internal inconsistencies (see Marković). Even Seneca's letters, which are aimed primarily at offering moral guidance and fostering spiritual progress, are not devoid of polemical slants directed against Epicurean hedonism or Aristotle's followers.

Late antiquity was marked by radical changes in the cultural, political, and religious settings of the Roman Empire. From the perspective of the history of philosophy, one of the most radical transformations was the gradual disappearance of the previous schools of philosophy. Doctrinal diversity, which had characterized Hellenistic and early Roman philosophy, was gradually replaced by the new dominant Neoplatonic movement. But despite this philosophical hegemony, polemics still constitute a noticeable part of Neoplatonic writing. The emergence and rapid growth of Christianity in effect engendered a new school to rival Neoplatonism. Plotinus ferociously attacks his contemporary Gnostics' designation of matter as evil in *Ennead*. II. 9 (33), and his student Porphyry devoted a fifteen-book treatise to fighting Christian dogma—the now lost *Against the Christians*. The ongoing dispute between the Neoplatonic philosophers and the various groups of early Christianity constitutes one of the most vibrant polemical encounters of late antiquity, which had far-reaching implications for the doctrinal developments of these movements. Polemics with the Christians compelled the Neoplatonic philosophers not only to develop new defensive strategies (see Lambertson) but also to adopt the role of the last representatives of a pagan culture in danger of extinction.

Despite the fact that polemic constituted an integral aspect of ancient philosophy, and was perceived so by its own practitioners, the forms and mechanisms of ancient philosophical polemics are not usually the subject of

concentrated, systematic scholarly attention; rather their treatments tend to be secondary and subordinate to that of philosophical doctrines. The studies presented in this volume approach ancient philosophy from the reverse perspective; they attempt not only to distill and clarify various strategies of polemics but to show how these contributed to the shaping of philosophical arguments and to the molding of philosophical positions. Our hope is that approaching the study of the history of ancient philosophy through the prism of polemics will offer an improved understanding of the dynamics, complexity, and mode of argumentation of ancient philosophical discourse.

Throughout this introduction we have been intentionally lax in our usage of the term polemic. This is motivated by the fact that our aim in this volume is to investigate a varied and heterogeneous field of phenomena, one that does not necessarily conform to a single definition or account. We believe that it is more profitable for the purpose of acquiring a comprehensive historical perspective to treat 'polemics' as a group of related phenomena, ones that do not necessarily share a single common characteristic across their entire range but rather bear a relation that can more properly be labeled a "family resemblance." This approach is reflected in the wide scope of issues treated in the various contributions to this collection. The authors in this volume deal not only with widely disparate historical periods but also with a wide spectrum of philosophical genres. Readers should therefore not look for a single paradigm that dictates the various treatments of this issue. Rather this collection's purpose is to trace the various manifestations and ramifications of a multifaceted phenomenon.

The opening essay of this volume, "The Continuation of Philosophy by Other Means?" by **André Laks**, can also be read as a general introduction to the study of polemics in ancient philosophy. Laks begins by asking whether philosophical polemic shares the main characteristics of polemical discourse in general (as identified by Stefan Straub), or whether it represents a distinct case. Are we justified in considering philosophical polemic as *philosophical*, insofar as philosophical arguments are expected to be devoid of the constitutive characteristics of polemical discourses, such as personalization, aggressiveness, or activation of value feelings? Laks's contention is that it is possible to identify some major characteristics of philosophical polemics, and for that purpose he proposes a broad spectrum of possible modes of verbal confrontation, extending from 'critique' to 'attack', along which philosophical polemics occupy many intermediary points. Laks notes that the components of the polemic vary according to the position it occupies on this spectrum. 'Polemic-as-critique' is characterized by targeting arguments rather than persons. The closer philosophical

polemic comes to critique, the more the role of the ‘polemical instance’—that is, the public in front of whom and in view of whom the confrontation takes place—decreases. Laks notes that there are many cases in which ‘polemic-as-critique’ can in fact take the form of a “personal” attack, which is nonetheless non-offensive. Such cases, labeled “depersonalized personal argument,” are found in arguments pointing at the discrepancy between words and deeds, in arguments that avoid naming the opponents and instead use generic placeholders, or again, in arguments *ad hominem* (such as the Socratic *elenchoi* or performative contradictions). Polemics in which something vital is at stake, such as ethical truth or ultimate convictions, are more prone to be directed against individuals than against the doctrines they represent, and in such cases value feelings come to the fore. Finally, Laks notes the close relationship between polemic and hermeneutics, which is explained not only in light of the reliance of polemics on a (noncharitable) interpretation of the opponent’s statements but also by the fact that the absorption of, and the conciliation with, the defeated enemy is part and parcel of the polemical dynamic.

In “The Young Dogs of Eristic: Dialectic and Eristic in the Early Academy,” the first chapter dealing with philosophy and polemics in the classical period, **Christopher Shields** reexamines Plato’s familiar contrast between genuine philosophical argumentation and that of the Sophists. In light of the fact that the Socratic *elenchus* seems to share so many features with eristic argumentation (and appeared to Socrates’s own contemporaries to be indistinguishable from it), is there in fact a substantive line demarcating the two practices that Plato seems so eager to keep separate? If we try to transcend the familiar psychological aspersions of the Sophists, those that distinguish between the contentious motivations driving their practices and those of philosophers, and instead attempt to find a more principled boundary, we seem to fall back on the distinction between the Sophists’ manipulation of “mere” appearances and the philosopher’s interest in the being of each thing. But, as Shields argues, the basic materials of Socrates’s arguments are his interlocutors’ beliefs, or how things “seem” to them. In that important respect his methods seem fully in line with the basic characterization of the practice and subject matter of eristic argumentation. To show that it is in fact possible to take into account the fact that in Plato’s dialogues philosophy, like sophistry, deals with appearances and yet draw a clear distinction between the two, Shields appeals to Aristotle’s *Sophistical Refutations* and to his distinction between the sort of appearances that figure in ‘dialectical’ syllogisms and the ones that serve as premises for those dubbed ‘sophistic’. After providing an interpretation of the nature of the difference between these two kinds of appearances, Shields returns to Plato

and shows that the same distinction is operative in the *Sophist*, in the very context of the definition of the sophist. Shields' chapter exposes the potentially unsettling fact that at the level of appearance, philosophy might turn out to be indistinguishable from eristic and sophistry. The difference between them will only be detectable to those who already have an insight into the difference between appearance and reality—in other words, to those who come from within the practice of philosophy.

In "A Hidden Argument in Plato's *Theaetetus*," Naly Thaler examines the question of moral relativism in the *Theaetetus*. As has been noticed by many scholars, while Socrates attacks and refutes Protagorean relativism from many angles, he fails to provide an explicit refutation of its moral manifestation. This has appeared strange, since moral relativism is explicitly presented by Socrates as a view that many people find appealing and that serves as one of the final strongholds of Protagorean relativism. In the past, several scholars have argued that Socrates's impassioned speech in the famous digression that compares the life of the philosopher with that of the litigious man should be viewed as an attack on and implicit refutation of moral relativism. In contrast Thaler argues that a straightforward argument against that view is found in the passages leading to and immediately following the digression. After putting together the two detached parts of Socrates's argument against moral relativism, Thaler asks what purpose Socrates could possibly have for not declaring openly that a refutation of moral relativism has in fact taken place. Thaler shows that the digression in fact contains the reasons motivating Socrates's strategy here: it indicates not only why philosophical refutation is useless against a genuine adherent of moral relativism but also why it is morally appropriate to leave such an adherent in his contented ignorance of the falsity of his view. The digression shows that some philosophical positions serve as testimony to their champion's intellectual and moral disposition and that the strategy one uses against that position must take these into consideration.

Polemic involving other schools or thinkers often acts as a decisive factor in the development or formation of philosophical views. Charlotte Murgier's chapter, "Polemical Arguments about Pleasure: The Controversy within and around the Academy," shows that the ongoing debates concerning pleasure had a profound impact on Plato's and Aristotle's elaboration of their philosophical standpoints on this issue. Dealing first with Plato's *Philebus*, she discloses the two distinct purposes for which Plato employs the arguments of the *dusphereis*—thinkers who take pleasure to be mere relief from pain. His first purpose is to use them as temporary allies against hedonistic claims, and second, to distinguish their extreme form of anti-hedonism from his own more conciliatory position regarding the possibility of true pleasures. Next

Murgier underlines the strategic role of Plato's resort to the arguments of the *kompsoi*—those for whom pleasures belong to the genus of *genesis*—to discredit not only the core hedonist assumption but also the kind of life supported by hedonism. Turning to the continuation of this controversy in the two discussions on pleasure in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, she claims that not only is Aristotle working within the framework of an existing and clearly defined controversy but that the specifics of this controversy informed his own account of pleasure. As part of this general claim, she argues that we should not detach Aristotle's arguments refuting the pleasure-as-*kinēsis* view in book 10 from the polemical context in which his views developed. Once we take into account the polemical context of Aristotle's discussion, Murgier suggests, we gain a new perspective on the relation between the arguments of book 7 and those of book 10: the latter book reflects a more developed stage in Aristotle's polemic, one in which he feels the need to buttress his account with a robust metaphysical distinction.

Polemical arguments often incorporate features that appear less properly philosophical and more overtly rhetorical, such as ironic remarks, rhetorical and sometimes snarky questions, and hyperbole. Jozef Müller's chapter, "The Politics of Aristotle's Criticism of Plato's *Republic*," focuses on one such instance. Aristotle's critique of Plato's *Republic* in the second book of his *Politics* seems to incorporate many rhetorical devices. First, the discussion seems too narrowly focused on the issue of the community of wives, children, and property. Second, Aristotle incorporates appeals to the readers' emotions by such means as invoking the shocking consequences that would ensue if Socrates's suggestions were to be put into effect. All this might lead one to regard Aristotle's critique of Plato's political views as merely polemical and lacking in philosophical substance. Müller argues that these features can be interpreted as forming a coherent strategy that reflects both Aristotle's main concerns in *Politics* 2 and his analysis of the psychological appeal of the *Republic's* novel or even outlandish legislative features. Regarding the excessive concentration on issues of community, Müller argues that rather than sidelining the real philosophical issues at hand, this actually reflects Aristotle's own interest in the ways in which unity enables both the existence and the preservation of the political community. Müller argues that Aristotle's resort to rhetorical means should be seen as an attempt to counter the apparent appeal of the Socratic polity were it, *per impossibile*, to be instantiated. Since this appeal is largely emotional in character, it requires emotional means to successfully counteract it.

Philosophical controversies can sometimes outlive their main protagonists. This can happen if, for example, they become embedded in a later polemic for which they are conceived to be of use. In her chapter, "Cyrenaics

and Epicureans on Pleasure and the Good Life: The Original Debate and Its Later Revivals,” **Voula Tsouna** shows this to be the case with the polemic involving the two main hedonistic schools of antiquity. The chapter begins by placing the original debate in context: Tsouna argues that the basic tenets of Epicurus’s hedonistic doctrine were formed in response to the hedonism of Aristippus the Younger and not, as is often supposed, that of Anniceris. The views of Anniceris, she claims, should in fact be considered as a defense of Aristippus’s view against the attacks of Epicurus. Tsouna then begins to trace the various ways in which the polemic between the two schools was kept alive even after the Cyrenaic school had ceased to exist. She begins by examining its revival in the writings of Plutarch and Cicero—two staunch enemies of hedonism. Tsouna argues that the two Academic philosophers take pains to show that the long-dead Aristippus offers a more cogent version of hedonism, and this in order to attack and discredit the living threat of Epicureanism. But the resurrection of the polemic can also be found in Epicurean authors: Tsouna discusses Philodemus’s attack on the presentism and subjectivism of Cyrenaic hedonism and argues that his main purpose for presenting the Cyrenaic life as one devoid of rationality in action is to accentuate and extol the rationality inherent in an Epicurean life. And she shows how Diogenes of Oinoanda, when attacking the Cyrenaic emphasis on the immediate and bodily aspects of pleasure, in fact has as a target the vulgar conception of pleasure held by “the many.”

It often happens that philosophers’ use of rhetorical devices while engaging in controversy blurs the line between philosophical and rhetorical engagement. **Daniel Marković’s** chapter, “Polemics in Translation: Lucretius,” points to the conceptual unity existing between Roman rhetorical theory and philosophical refutation—a unity that is reflected in Lucretius’s polemical arguments in his *De rerum natura*. Lucretius’s polemical patterns are characterized by great regularity, both in their place and function in the general structure of each individual book and in their internal arrangement. Lucretius rejects rival views by pointing out the contradictions of his opponents, either with the evidence from sense perceptions or with their own premises. A curious feature of Lucretius’s polemic is that although he employs amplifications *reductio ad absurdum* or parodies of arguments against his adversaries, he nevertheless avoids naming them—with the exception of those belonging to a distant past. According to Marković these features should be seen in the light of the general intention of the author. By removing the attention from his rivals’ names, Lucretius presents Epicurus as the triumphant general of the philosophical arena and fashions what can be considered Epicurus’s *res gestae*.

Polemical texts often reflect, or at least crystalize, a historical rivalry between thinkers, schools, or movements that is in turn nourished and amplified by those texts. In this sense philosophical polemic does not merely create philosophical momentum but also consolidates the identities it opposes. As such, polemic powerfully reflects the process of the formation of philosophical identity. In “The Perfidious Strategy: Or, the Platonists against Stoicism,” **Mauro Bonazzi** argues that it is through polemics that the Platonists of the early imperial period “fight their way” into the philosophical arena of the time. Alongside calumny and direct attacks, the Platonists used a more subtle strategy, especially in their confrontation with Stoicism: that of appropriation and subordination. Bonazzi shows how the Platonists anchored Stoic tenets into their own doctrine under the guise of improving them. The strategy of triumphing over your opponents by appropriating their ideas is what Bonazzi calls the “perfidious strategy.” It is this strategy that accounts for the presence of Stoic terms and doctrines in Platonic writings, and not, as is generally assumed, the existence of a philosophical *koinē*. Bonazzi’s analysis of the appropriation of the concept of *ennoia* by the Platonists of the early imperial period shows them appropriating the Stoic criterion of knowledge and applying it to the Platonic Ideas. They thereby reshaped Stoic doctrine in Platonic terms, providing it with what they thought to be an adequate metaphysical ground that the Stoic empiricist framework had failed to offer.

The question of the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy within polemics is especially pertinent in the Roman context. By focusing on the use and practice of *vehementia* in Rome, **Carlos Lévy**’s chapter, titled “*Vehementia*: A Rhetorical Basis of Polemics in Roman Philosophy,” throws some light on the nature of polemics in Roman contexts. Lévy’s analysis offers a nuanced picture of the complex relationships between rhetoric and philosophy, between social and discursive norms, and between attitudes toward past and contemporary figures. The main question Lévy addresses is how a Roman who is both an orator and a philosopher should use *vehementia*. Whereas rhetoric endorses *vehementia* as a means to strongly affect the listener and win his agreement, philosophy has a much more ambiguous attitude toward it. In Cicero’s philosophical writings *vehementia* is associated with Stoic passion and denotes the transgression of the appropriate bound of impulse. On the other hand, Cicero and especially Seneca recognize the positive facets of the use of *vehementia* in philosophical practice and in exhortation to virtue. The question of the appropriate use of *vehementia* has particular significance when turning to the issue of philosophical disputes: how to conciliate the irenic image of philosophy with the violence of philosophical controversies? Cicero’s solution to

this tension is found in the norms of Roman *urbanitas*: whereas it is improper to address an interlocutor of equal social status with unmediated *vehementia*, it can nevertheless be directed toward the philosophers defended by the interlocutor. In Seneca vehemence is carefully aimed against slanderers and against Peripatetic critique of the extreme rarity of the Stoic wise man.

Although in philosophical controversies one would expect to find extensive quotations from one's adversary, the practice of including the *ipsa verba* of the opponent was in fact not systematically used in philosophical polemics until the end of the first century CE. Sharon Weisser's chapter, "The Art of Quotation: Plutarch and Galen against Chrysippus," devoted to the analysis of Plutarch's and Galen's strategy in their attacks against the third century BCE Stoic philosopher Chrysippus, singles out the extensive use of accusations of inconsistency. Weisser holds that Plutarch's *On Stoic Self-Contradictions* and Galen's *On the Doctrines of Hippocrates and Plato* represent a new genre of polemic, one characterized by the extensive use of different types of accusations of self-contradiction (she lists six different types) as well as by the abundance of textual quotations of the rival view. She argues that this discursive war is first and foremost one against the authority of a long-dead philosopher who nevertheless occupied a prominent status in lively contemporary debates. This type of polemic should also be seen in the broader context of the textual turn that occurred in the philosophical landscape around the turn of the era. Polemics through quotations appears thus as one side of a philosophical practice that relies on authoritative texts.

The political and religious developments that marked the fourth century CE had a profound impact on the intellectual landscape of the empire. With the growth of Christianity, the status of pagan philosophy and the position of its defendants were modified and often challenged. In this context polemics had to find new ways of expression while keeping its function of asserting identity and assuring allegiance. In a new social climate, in which openly attacking a Christian adversary could pose a real threat to the pagan philosopher, the overt object of the critique can in fact hide the true one. Robert Lamberton's chapter, "The Invisible Adversary: Anti-Christian Polemic in Proclus's *Commentary on the Republic of Plato*," shows how Proclus used coded language in his *Commentary on the Republic of Plato* to attack his Christian adversaries. This polemical tool could be easily identified by a Neoplatonic readership but would go unnoticed by a Christian one. Proclus's explicit purpose in this treatise is to defend Homer against Socrates's accusations in Plato's *Republic*, which he achieves by means of a semiotic division of three levels of poetry. But while Socrates is the stated adversary, he is in fact a far less prominent rival

than the Christian ones (the elephant in the room). Lambertson's careful deciphering of Proclus's coded language shows that, in Proclus's eyes it is Christian adversaries who are guilty of misreading the myths. While they can be easily overlooked, they are nonetheless very present in the text. Lambertson argues that Proclus's cryptic language makes the nature of his attack clearly apparent to those who share his views and thus provides an important indication of his intended audience.