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Lucian's Hermotimus.

Essays about Philosophy and Satire in Greek Literature of the Roman Empire

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LUCIAN'S *HERMOTIMUS*,
ESSAYS ABOUT PHILOSOPHY AND SATIRE IN
GREEK LITERATURE OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in Classics Research

By Claudio García Ehrenfeld

Supervisor Michael B. Trapp

Abstract

This dissertation considers the interaction between philosophy and satire in Greek literature of the Roman Empire through a detailed study of Lucian's *Hermotimus*. The argument is divided into three parts. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 show that recent studies of the dialogue value it according to two distinct ethic and aesthetic scholarly traditions (developmentalist and unitarian) which find themselves in opposition when defining the value of scepticism in Lucianic literature. Chapters 4 and 5 address the form of the *Hermotimus*, and argue that despite its aporetic tendencies its main character, Lycinus, gives a moral message. Chapters 6 and 7 examine the ways in which the *Hermotimus* is a parody of protreptic literature and invites its readers not to live in any particular way, but to think about the rhetoric of other protreptic and aporetic philosophical texts of the second century AD. In the dissertation's conclusion some guidelines to reading the *Hermotimus* as a destabilizing *aischrologic* text are presented.

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It is no secret that this thesis has been written amidst political turmoil taking place in Syria, Mexico and the United Kingdom. In Britain, there is uncertainty as to how rights to education will be ensured. In Syria, a war has killed hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and future teachers. Perhaps less known in the West are the crimes of paramilitaries in Mexico who have claimed the life of votán Galeano, and the crimes of the state who are responsible for the killing of at least 5 students from the Escuela Normal Rural Raúl Isidro Burgos, Guerrero. To date, we still do not know the whereabouts of

the other 43 students of Ayotzinapa who 2 years ago were forcefully disappeared. In Nochixtlán, whilst defending the right to public education and resisting unjust contractual reforms, which will hit indigenous and poor educators the hardest, several people also lost their lives.

This thesis is dedicated to the teachers and students of Britain, Syria and Mexico who have taught the world the fundamental and indescribable beauty of fighting for human dignity, social justice and the right to be educated.

26th September 2016

Introduction

Along with Tatian and Justin Martyr, Lucian is one of the few exponents of Syrian provincial literature written in Attic Greek during the ruling periods of the Antonine emperors.¹ Lucian was born in Σαμόσατα (today's Samsat),² then a region of Commagene, and wrote in Greek during the reign of the Roman Emperors Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. While Tatian and Justin Martyr used their expertise in Greek *paideia* to compose *Apologies* on behalf of their own understanding of Christianity, and to persuade others to become subscribers to their own doctrines at Rome, it is unclear as to how Lucian's unstable identities interacted with his Syrian origin and his affiliations with Greece and Rome.³ As much as Lucian showed an interest in Greek education as a medium between *Syrianess*, *hellenismos* and *latinitas*, it is also within the contradictory endpoints and forms of expertise in *paideia*, rhetoric and philosophy, that he can be seen to situate his intellectual identity.

Between the years 167 and 176 CE, Lucian wrote his longest dialogue, the *Hermotimus or About the Philosophical Sects*. The *Hermotimus* starts with a familiar Socratic-Platonic situation. Not in Athens, but in an unnamed Greek city, Hermotimus, a 60-year-old man who has been under the guidance of his Stoic teacher is on his way to class when he bumps into Lycinus who tells him that today's lecture has been cancelled. Hermotimus' teacher ate too much the night before, got drunk, started a fight with a rival Peripatetic philosopher, vomited on the way home, and is at present nursing a hangover. This unfortunate situation gives Lycinus some time to question Hermotimus about where he has gotten to in his studies, and what he hopes to achieve through the practice of Stoic philosophy. In the conversation that follows, Lycinus will try to persuade

¹ Nasrallah (2005).

² Swain (1996), 19, and Swain (2007), 18-44.

³ For more on the Syrian ethnic-identity in the Roman Empire and its relation to Greece and Greekness see Andrade (2013) part III p. 245-339.

Hermotimus to abandon his belief in Stoic philosophy and by the text's end Hermotimus has promised to abandon his philosophical life for an ordinary one, and to avoid philosophers as though they were mad dogs.

Throughout history, the *Hermotimus* has presented itself to readers and critics alike as a remarkably unstable text, for some it is 'rhetorical' and 'playful' and for others 'philosophical' and 'serious'. The purpose of this thesis is to find new possible avenues of interpretation of the *Hermotimus* in order to solve some of the contradictions that emerge from previous readings of this text, and in such a way as to help integrate Lucian's attitude to philosophy with his other unstable identities.

The scarce information about Lucian's life, which has come down to us from his contemporaries, seems to show that philosophers who belonged to a philosophical sect found his humour abusive. *The Cynic*,⁴ the only dialogue in all the Lucianic oeuvre in which Lycinus (also the main character of the *Hermotimus* and one of Lucian's favourite pseudonyms) loses the argumentative battle against his interlocutor, is a dialogue that might have been written as a defence of the Cynic school, as it takes the form of a controversy between a Cynic philosopher and Lycinus, who questions (φραυλίζεις) his opponent's life choices from the perspective of an unconverted man who sees wealth and reputation as the goal of life.⁵ Although contempt for non-philosophical goals is commonplace in Lucian, the way in which this criticism is directed at Lycinus leads to the suspicion that *The Cynic* was probably written by a member of the Cynic school, who attacked Lucian by turning one of his favourite *personae* against him, perhaps mirroring the literary technique that Lucian deploys when Cynic characters criticize their own school.

On the other hand, Lucian seems to have imitated philosophical discourses for the sake of protecting, not one philosophical doctrine over

⁴ For the authenticity of *The Cynic* see Dudley (1937), 144.

⁵ Pseudo-Luc. *Cyn.* 5.

another, but philosophy as part of *paideia*. As is well known by Lucianists, according to Galen, Lucian made a book containing imitations of Heraclitus' "dark sayings."⁶ The book was given to someone else who took it to a well-reputed philosopher who was in turn asked to do an exegesis. But the philosopher did not realize that he was being mocked, and offered sophisticated interpretations, thus embarrassing himself. Galen further informs us that Lucian also crafted some other meaningless phrases and sent them to some grammarians, who in the attempt of explaining them, ended up ridiculing themselves.⁷

Therefore, little can be drawn from the opinions of his contemporaries. Unsurprisingly, some Cynics seemed to have found Lucian's humour offensive, and Galen's account seems to confirm Lucian's self-portrait as a *μισαλάζων*,⁸ whose literature implies a reader sufficiently educated to be sceptical about the authenticity of classical texts, and capable of understanding a literary humour that plays with standard authorial conventions. But that is pretty much as far as we can go.

On the other hand, since Lucian's death, his works seem to have been available without interruption.⁹ Scholars have perceived his influence in non-Christian Greek literature, in the novels of Longus and Heliodorus, the *Letters* of Alciphron, and Julian's *Caesars*. But none of these authors seems to shed much light onto the problem of Lucian's local, moral, philosophical and religious stances or the aims of his humour.

Heinz-Günther Nesselrath has been one of the few scholars to take up

⁶ Escorialensis 804. Fol. 61v3-10; Parisinus R.C. 5749, Fol. 189v11-190r3 in Strohmaier (1976), 118.

⁷ Strohmaier (1976) translates the Arabic as *auf dem Wege der Anspielung*; there is a textual problem in the last word in the original in Arabic. For a discussion of this passage see Shlapbach (2010), Hall (1981), 1-4; Jones (1986), 19; Clay (1992), 3402. For Heraclitus see Luc. *Vit. Auct.* 14, and with Luc. *Mort. Dial.* 8 (26) see Marcovich (1979). For the Grammarians see Wilhelm (1938).

⁸ In a relevant article, MacLeod (1979) sympathized with the idea that the evidence that comes to us from the Arabic Galen matches Lucian's own picture of himself in *Piscator* 20. See also Luc. *Herm.* 51.

⁹ Tagliabue (2016).

the intellectual challenge of giving an interpretation of the Sceptical content of the *Hermotimus* in the light of Lucian's proclivity towards literary Cynicism. In his view, the *Hermotimus* is a 'Platonic' dialogue written under the influence of Scepticism, in which Lycinus -one of Lucian's masks but also a 'new-Socrates'-debunks Hermotimus' Stoicism and by extension any other form of dogmatic philosophy. For Nesselrath the *Hermotimus* shows not only that Lucian was not a superficial rhetorician and comedian, but that by putting in Lycinus' argument the five modes of Agrippa, he was manifesting a clear approval of Scepticism.¹⁰ The presence of the modes of Agrippa upon which the dialogue is structured means that by the time Lucian wrote the *Hermotimus* he had already acquired a deeper knowledge of Scepticism (*über das Niveau der Gemeinplätze*).¹¹ In conclusion, and contrary to the majority of classicists studying this dialogue before him, Nesselrath suspects that Lucian might have written the *Hermotimus* in his later years (*circa* 176) and after he had abandoned a Menippean period (i.e. satiric, ironic, cynic literature), thereby justifying the use of Lucian's pseudonym by supposing that he wanted his audiences to remember the great appreciation that he had for philosophy when he was in Athens.

Nevertheless, Nesselrath's assumptions about the time of the composition of the *Hermotimus* and his high opinion of it are based on finding an alleged *genuin ethischen Impetus* in Lycinus' recommended κοινὸς βίος and Hermotimus' conversion to it. According to Nesselrath, the call to live like everyone else is similar to Sextus' call for a βιωτικὴ τήρησις. As Nesselrath points out, even Peter von Möllendorff thinks there is some sort of ethical drive

¹⁰ In his (1998) and (2001) articles Nesselrath extended his conclusion, arguing that Lucian's only two possible sources for the modes were either Agrippa or Favorinus. Without getting involved in the issue of Lucian's opposing opinions about dogmatic philosophy and the Sceptical content of the *Hermotimus*, Bonazzi (2001) and Dechernaux (2010) have followed Nesselrath's approach. Karavas' (2009) opinion of Lucian's recommendation in the *Hermotimus* to 'stay sober and to distrust' suggests that Lucian's sceptic approach towards religion is substantial, and not just mere entertainment.

¹¹ Nesselrath (1992).

in the dialogue.¹² For Nesselrath, the presence of this impetus means that not only was Lucian an *unverbessertlich Komödiant* and an uncompromised rhetorician, but even though Lucian never seriously held any philosophical doctrine, this does not mean that Lucian's comedy is uncompromised regarding philosophy.

Nesselrath declares that his opinion about Lucian's relationship to philosophy with regards to Lucian's ethical impetus, is close to the opinions of the German right-wing scholar Rudolph Helm who was writing at the beginning of the 20th Century and of the Patriarch of Constantinople Photios, writing in the 9th Century:¹³ Lucian never seriously held any philosophical doctrine, even though at some point in his life he must have rejected all dogmatic philosophical schools, including the Cynic (although the attraction he had for it was moderate and not necessarily doctrinal), though that does not imply that he did not distinguish false philosophers from true, and that among the true philosophers he liked some schools more than others. These contradictory sympathies depend on the separate intentions of each text devoted to them. But from the *Hermotimus* (Lucian's longest and literarily and intellectually most challenging text)¹⁴ and the *Parasite*, one can gather that he had a positive opinion about the Sceptics. This allows Nesselrath to trace Lucian's spiritual development based on his knowledge of Scepticism. The greater degree of Sceptical arguments suggests that Lucian gained from Scepticism the spiritual freedom (*geistige Freiheit*) needed to acquire what he needed from the rest of the philosophical orientations for his own worldly un-speculative inclinations. As a parallel example, Nesselrath points to the case of Cicero, who in a similar way took the teachings of the academic Sceptic Philo of Larissa to justify his own philosophical eclecticism. But Nesselrath argues that

¹² Nesselrath (2001), 151 n. 33. citing Möllendorff (2000), 202 and S.E. P. I. 123.

¹³ Nesselrath (1998).

¹⁴ Nesselrath (2009) 131.

Lucian was never a radical Sceptic either and, even though in the *Hermotimus* he showed acceptance of Sceptic recommendations, he was, for most of his life, a temperate Cynic, like Demonax, who was not a fanatic of Cynicism, but somebody who advocated for the κοινὸς βίος, taking what was best from Socrates, Diogenes and Aristippus, and striving for a harmony between his deeds and words.¹⁵

This ethical drive present in Lucian's *Hermotimus* not only gives purpose to Lucian's anti-dogmatic comedy of philosophy, but also justifies the Hellenizing nature of his literature,¹⁶ since, according to Nesselrath, Lucian's Syrian identity was that of an Eastern Roman, rather than a Syrian in the Roman Empire, who thought that Athens had as many moral flaws as Rome, and used his texts to promote himself as a Syrian able to aid these cities.¹⁷

Nevertheless, in the most recent commentary of the *Hermotimus*, Peter von Möllendorff offers an interpretation, which, if found true, could dismantle all or most of Nesselrath's theory. Möllendorff acknowledges that there is some kind of ethical drive in the *Hermotimus*, but that Lucian does not give any constructive alternative plan (*konstruktiven Gegenentwurf*) for a reliable choice in lieu of that of a philosophic life. What looks like an alternative, the common life, is simply the exchange of the ascetic life for its exact opposite, a life of luxury,¹⁸ but hidden under the guise of a κοινὸς βίος. The reader, who is aware of the dangers of perishing as part of the crowd, should admit that although the main character, Lycinus, has better arguments, he must dismiss the invitation to join the common life. Möllendorff thinks that at the end of the dialogue, Hermotimus, like Euthydemus in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*,¹⁹ abandons the conversation unconvinced, knowing that he was unable to answer Socrates'

¹⁵ Nesselrath (2001), 135-152.

¹⁶ See Nesselrath (2009), 122-135 for a description of Lucian's career, and see his essay about Lucian's life in relation to the characteristics of his works and philosophy (2011), 11-28.

¹⁷ Nesselrath (2009).

¹⁸ Möllendorff (2000), 215.

¹⁹ Xen. *Mem.* 4. 2, 39-40.

questions. In this sense, Hermotimus' 'conversion' is for Möllendorff only a *Zeichen von Geistes* and an acceptance of the weakness of his character and arguments. The open ending of this dialogue is similar to Platonic aporetic dialogues. Lucian leaves the reader with no positive options, and invites his readers to analyse the situation from the outside, and to continue to philosophize about it after reading the text.

Möllendorff compares the effect that Hermotimus' 'conversion' has on the reader to the effect that the battle of the *logoi* has on the spectator in Aristophanes' *Clouds*,²⁰ and concludes that, by involving Lycinus in a self-ironic game, in which he gives arguments on both sides like a sophist, Lucian is detaching himself from his character and at the same time promoting himself to an even better position as a *pepaideumenos*.

It should be noted that there is an on-going very similar discussion to the one that exists between Möllendorff and Nesselrath about the *Hermotimus*, between the latter and Serena Zweimüller's interpretation of the *Teacher of Rhetoric*. For Zweimüller the narrator's voice of the *Teacher of Rhetoric* is modelled on a deceiving kind of Socrates,²¹ and not only does she find it appropriate to talk about this text as one which could hint at the *Nihilismus der Rhetorik* by using the metaphor of the road, but she also thinks that it ends in an *aporia*.²² This interpretation leads Zweimüller to make long, albeit interesting and useful, reflections about the parallels between the *Teacher of Rhetoric* and Aristophanes' *Clouds*, the pseudo-Platonic *Alcibiades I* and the *Tabula of Cebes*, and yet Nesselrath remains unconvinced that this is a text that talks about rhetoric in philosophical guise.²³

So, which of the two interpretations should we take? Möllendorff and Nesselrath agree in the need to read the *Hermotimus* as a Platonic/Socratic

²⁰ Aristoph. *Cl.* 880-1105.

²¹ Zweimüller (2007), 35.

²² Zweimüller (2007), 39 and 59-67.

²³ Nesselrath (2010).

dialogue, but they do so in different ways. Nesselrath interprets Hermotimus' conversion at the ending of the dialogue as the successful result of Lycinus' Socratic persuasion. For him the *Hermotimus* is a straightforward protreptic text, biographic even, because it seriously tries to convince the reader with Sceptical arguments that living the κοινὸς βίος is more ethical and reasonable than living a philosophical life based on dogma. In contrast, for Möllendorff the whole point of the *Hermotimus* is to leave to the reader the maieutic task of discovering better reasons to study Stoic and dogmatic philosophy and to beware the perils of Scepticism. Those readers who were convinced by Lycinus' Sceptical arguments have failed to recognize his Socratic-like irony and have wrongfully believed that Lucian was delivering his true and honest opinions in the voice of Lycinus. If so, the *Hermotimus*, Möllendorff believes, does not contain the Sceptical advice of living like everyone else, but is disturbingly cynic (*bestürzend zynisch*) and satiric, because the moral choices in it cancel each other out, and encourages the reader to think in general about the propositions given by the two characters.

Even though Möllendorff is not explicit about it, his interpretation of the ending of the *Hermotimus* could invite us to read the *Hermotimus* as though we were Academic Sceptics reading an aporetic Platonic text. Even if today not many interpreters believe that Plato did not give definitive proposals and opinions of his own in his dialogues,²⁴ this was the view of some Middle Platonists, for whom Plato was really a Sceptic, and 'whose message was that we should look for the truth without any expectation of finding anything better than the merely probable;' and whose 'chief or ultimate aim was to encourage us to do philosophy, and think things out for ourselves rather than supposing that we can get what we need from others, or from books.'²⁵ In this sense,

²⁴ MacCabe (2006), 40.

²⁵ Rowe (2006), 13. For the Middle Platonists in general and in the age of Lucian see Dillon (1977) 184-185. The Sceptical reading of Plato belongs to the second century BC. Even though in Lucian's time Platonism was revived as a dogmatic sect (Plutarch, Apuleius, Albinus) there

Möllendorff seems to suggest that the *Hermotimus* as a Platonic aporetic dialogue is designed to invite the reader to reason, to orientate and to persuade him about important subjects, even if it fails to produce absolute conclusions. If so, then the *Hermotimus* is a protreptic text, like one of Plato's aporetic dialogues, because it is an exhortation to keep on philosophizing about life choices. In the end, both Nesselrath and Möllendorff agree that the *Hermotimus* is a philosophically interesting text, but they do so for different reasons.

The purpose of Chapters 1-3 will be to trace the origins of our present paradigms and to make explicit the aesthetic and literary values implicit in these most recent opinions and value judgements about the humour of the *Hermotimus*. As I will try to show, their divergence, which clearly has to do with their assumptions as readers about the presence or the absence of an ethical stance in the text, is one that historically developed after Lucian's works fell into the hands of early Christians, and ultimately led to two different methods in our times of approaching Lucian's work. These I will label: developmentalist and unitarian, in comparison to the situation found in Platonic studies.²⁶

In order to solve some of the interpretative issues raised by this historically-constructed divergence, Chapters 4-5 will look at what the *Hermotimus* is about and at its internal logic in order to try and understand what the consequences of Hermotimus' conversion to the ordinary life and Lycinus' propositions really are. In these two chapters I hope to prove that the form of the *Hermotimus* is that of an aporetic text, but which nevertheless contains the clear message of keeping away from one's hopes and one's desires.

were, however, some exceptions, as is the case with Favorinus, who supported the old-school sceptic Academy, see Holford-Strevens (1988), 72-8. See also Trapp (2007), xi.

²⁶ In general terms, the developmentalist theory, which assumes that Plato changed his mind and his doctrine over time, was first established by K.F. Hermann (1839), and became the dominant view thereon after. For a typically developmentalist approach to Plato see Vlastos (1991). According to unitarians, Plato's works contain a unity of doctrine and more or less a single world-view, this trend is today represented by Shorey (1903) and Kahn (1996). Of course, the matter is much more complicated, see Long (2013), 131-2, Taylor (2002), Nails (1993), Thesleff (1982).

But it is not possible to read the *Hermotimus* simply as a narrative that stays within its own fictional world. Chapter 6 will show that the *Hermotimus* is a parody constructed upon classical Platonic themes and clichéd situations of protreptic and aporetic philosophical discourses, which have the clear aim of attacking the philosophical aspect of utopia. Chapter 7 will show that the *Hermotimus* is not just a parody of the *Tabula of Cebes*, but that it is also dialogue, which through the blending of genres, illustrates how the rhetoric of a problem can be part of the problem itself.

Lastly, the conclusions of this thesis offer general observations about the *aischrologic* potential of the *Hermotimus* and other concerns and horizons of expectation that potential readers of the *Hermotimus* might have, and have had, within the context of the Greek *paideia* of the second century AD.

Chapter 1

The Christianization of Lucian: From the First Readings of Lucian to Voltaire

1. Setting the Framework. From Early Christianity to Byzantium

The preoccupation with identifying Lucian's serious works seems to have emerged two centuries after his writing with the rise of Christendom. As we have seen, Lucian's contemporaries do not seem to have found Lucian's mischievous tricks philosophically challenging. Eunapius, writing in the fourth century, was Lucian's last non-Christian reader and, in his introduction to his *Lives of the Sophists*, he seems to have been the first to divide Lucian's works into the 'seriously' philosophical and the comic. While discussing the works of those who have written lives about philosophers, he compared Plutarch's way of describing his teacher Ammonius in various of his works with Lucian's who 'took seriously the task of producing laughter, wrote a life of his contemporary Demonax, and in that book and in a few others he was serious throughout.'¹ But, when the work of Lucian fell into the hands of the Christian fathers, that attention became focused on the serious content of Lucian's work and its relationship to the purposes of his humour.

Early Christian intellectuals, who were still worried about paganism and the increasing diversity of Christian sects along with the presence of the pagan philosophical sects, debated extensively on what to do with pagan 'classical' culture that permeated all the layers of education in the Roman Empire.² The need to believe in one true God encouraged the suspicion of believers not only of falsehoods, but also of nothingness. From this period onwards Lucian was identified either as a pagan attacking Christian values from a specific pagan philosophical doctrine, or as an opportunist mocking everything for his own

¹ *Vit.Soph.* II 1,9 (454).

² On this point see Zappala (1990), 12. See also Hagendahl (1958), and Daniélou, (1973).

personal benefit and without any concern for moral principles.

Isidore of Pelusium, writing in the 5th century, for instance, was allergic to the idea of paganism being useful in any way to Christianity.³ In a letter dedicated to a sophist named Harpocras, reasoning in a way that recalls the argument from dispute (*ek diaphonias*), one of the Sceptic modes of Agrippa found in the *Hermotimus* and in Sextus Empiricus, Isidore concedes that Lucian might have noticed that one cannot trust the diversity of doctrines of paganism. According to Isidore, heresy and ambition are born from diversity of opinions about the truth, but one cannot argue that ambition causes disagreement among Christians as it did among the Greeks, because in the Gospels there is only one orthodox consensus about God. If Lucian criticized the multiplicity of creeds, Isidore argued, he did so because he must have belonged to the Cynic school, or in other words, because he was himself a pagan whose attacks ought to be understood only as part of a wider context in which pagans, unlike Christians, could not agree with each other about religion.

The interpretations of Isidore and others like him, in which they argued that Lucian ridiculed or shamed his targets in the knowledge of there being something truly and seriously respectable towards which he was trying to turn his readers, can be called dogmatic. The process of forcing Lucian to fit in, in one way or another, to Christian morality that began with the last polytheist intellectuals and the early Christian readers from the 3th to the 5th Century and finished with the production of the earliest manuscripts that we possess in Byzantium in the 9th Century, can be described as the 'Christianization' of Lucian.

However, the bipolar framework encouraged by Christian authors, also allows for the possibility that even if Lucian was ignorant of the truth about the Christian God, he knew that everything coming from the upholders of the pagan religion had to be rejected, because it was false, and that he was an

³ Isid. Pel. *Ep.* IV.

author constantly working to reach Truth. We can call this kind of interpretation of Lucian's humour 'positive sceptic'.

This was the opinion of the erudite advisor of Constantine, Lactantius, who also happened to be the first Christian author to comment on Lucian, and the first to have associated his humour with one that laughs at all the false creeds of the pagans.⁴ Lactantius' point was that paganism is *per se* ridiculous and a marker of ignorance, not only from the perspective of those who know the Christian God, but also from the perspective of pagans themselves, as the Roman satirist Lucilius and Lucian, 'who spared neither gods nor men', demonstrate. In this way, Lactantius' was not only pointing at Lucian's parodic style and its criticism of the classical religious authorities, the Olympian gods and Greek philosophers;⁵ but he was also introducing the possibility of interpreting Lucian and other kinds of pagan literature as expressions of negative theology or positive scepticism.

Lactantius's interpretation can be called positive sceptic, since he seems to have thought that if Lucian never embraced Christianity, this is simply because he was ignorant of it and because in all likelihood he was self-conscious about his own ignorance. Yet he knew that what was presented to him as the greatest truth (i.e. non-Christian religions) was false, even if he did not know whether there was a truth or not, or whether anyone had ever found it, and had laughed at the Greek-pagan cognitive universe in its totality. Therefore, Lucian had no interest in expressing any kind of truth in his works, or even in showing his own satiric, artistic, philosophical or religious stance, and would have limited the use of humour and scepticism against what is certainly false and wrong. Unlike the 'dogmatic' interpretation of Lucian's humour, which is protreptic, the consequences of reading it as positive sceptic are only corrective or apotreptic.

⁴ Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.9.8.

⁵ See Marsh (1998), 6-7.

Both the 'dogmatic' and the 'positive sceptic' interpretations of Lucian's humour imply that the kind of laughter that it encourages is not only 'aischrologic' but also 'consequential'.⁶ In either case, Lucian's texts attack the opinions and behaviours that he would have thought are wrong. The only difference is that to explain Lucian's humour as being dogmatic, one has to assume that the function of causing laughter is to encourage the reader to believe in a truth made explicit, but if one explains Lucian's humour as being positive sceptic one has to assume that Lucian is causing offence but in the knowledge that truth is possible.

A text like the *Hermotimus*, which seems to contain a serious criticism of all dogmatic philosophy, can be read as expressing the ideas that Lucian had at a particular moment of his life in which he rejected dogmatic philosophy, and thereby, the consequences of humour can be not just corrective (proving that philosophy is wrong), but also moralizing and even 'protreptic' (that the common life is better).

Besides the 'dogmatic' and the 'positive sceptic' ways of interpreting Lucian's humour, Christian authors of the 9th Century began to argue that Lucian might

⁶ The term *aischrology* normally applies to deliberately shameful and offensive humour that is usually also obscene and that seeks to 'change' something (for example, the status of the reputation that an individual enjoys in a society). *Aischrology* is often associated with the scornful tones of iambus and of Old Comedy. Because *aischrology* is an operation of language performed with a deliberate social intention, which seeks for reprisals, we can say that it is 'consequential', as opposed to a more playful, non-hostile and amiable kind of humour, which can be experienced outside the sphere of political and social life, and which seeks mostly to entertain without causing offence to anyone. Therefore, offensiveness is in many ways what allows one to distinguish between consequential and non-consequential humour. Although Lucian's humour seeks to make (some) things look ugly and shameful, it does not characteristically use obscene humour in order to do so. Perhaps this is the reason why there is a tendency to consider Lucian's humour as non-consequential. For *aischrology* and the consequentiality of laughter, see the entries in Halliwell's (2008) book and its introduction 1-50; in particular, 33-41. For play as something different from the consequential business of political and social life see 115.

have been absolutely unconcerned with truth and falsehood, mocking that which is good and bad, and true and false, all the same. If so, Lucian's own opinions were not to be found in his own texts and, if they were, then they too were the object of laughter, therefore making his own opinions as true and as false as everything else in the text.

Lucian became an incredibly popular author in Byzantium for schooling purposes.⁷ In this period the earliest manuscripts of Lucian we possess were produced,⁸ his works were catalogued, and titles were added to his dialogues.⁹ His influence can be found in early Byzantium, for example, in the speeches of Chorikios of Gaza.¹⁰ But even if Lucian was perceived as a useful source from pagan antiquity, at least for linguistic and pedagogic purposes, and as paradigm of excellent Greek, he was also seen as some kind of atheist mocker, as glossators and intellectuals of the time attest.

This third way of interpreting Lucian's humour, which I call 'nihilistic', was established first by Photius of Constantinople, and the Arethas of Caesarea, who were the first to doubt that the content of Lucian's comedy and Lucian's message had any useful message of its own, either from the perspective of pagan philosophy and religion or from the perspective of Christianity.

Photius wrote various comments about Lucian in his *Library*, admired Lucian for his Attic language, and enjoyed finding out that the *True Histories* are a parody of Antonius Diogenes' *Wonders Beyond Tule* and Iambulus. Yet, when it came to the content of Lucian's work, he thought him to be a mocker of the pagans who lacked any ideas of his own:

⁷ Jenkins (1963), 44; Robinson (1979), 68-81; Zappala (1990) 23-25 and Baldwin in Macleod (1994), 1400-1404 for recent work on imitations of Lucian.

⁸ An account of the manuscripts of Lucian can be found in Nilén (1906), Wittek (1952), Bolgar (1954), 480-481; McLeod (1980) and (1994), 1398-1399, 1404-1419; Nesselrath (1984) and (1990); Itzkowitz (1986); Bompaire (1993).

⁹ See Ureña Bracero (1995), 23-37.

¹⁰ Fitzgerald Johnson (2006), 109.

Read Lucian's *Phalaris*, some *Dialogues of the Dead* and *Dialogues of the Courtesans* and other essays on various matters, in almost all of which he pours ridicule on Greek culture – their stupid and erroneous notions of the gods, their irresistible urge for immorality and license, the poet's monstrous ideas and fictions, the resulting political mistakes, the irregular course of their lives in general with many vicissitudes, the boastful character of their philosophers who are full of hypocrisy and empty notions – in short, as we said, his purpose is to write satire in Greek prose. He himself seems to be one of those people who take nothing seriously; while satirising and ridiculing the beliefs of others, he does not state his own creed, unless one is to say that his creed is to believe in nothing. [...] The inscription on the volume allows us to infer that Lucian was a person of no beliefs. It runs:

I Lucian, expert in ancient follies, wrote these works;
What men deem wise is foolish,
And there is no ideal among humanity;
For what you admire is laughable in others.¹¹

Even though today scholars agree that this epigram is spurious, for many centuries it was taken as authentic. It will become clear that Photius' opinion about Lucian is the exact opposite of Eunapius. For Photius, there is nothing serious in Lucian's laughter; everything 'serious' is humoristic material. Thus, Lucian's works are only valuable for their form, which offers rhetorical entertainment, and not for their content.

Arethas of Caesarea, who apparently was one of Photius' students, anticipated the arguments against the possibility of finding in Lucian's humour anything meaningful, even in his style. Indeed, Arethas is responsible for making the relationship between Lucian and the Christians much bitterer.¹² He criticized Lucian for being irreverent towards the image of Jesus and for ridiculing his followers, for denying divine providence and, most of all, for his theological and philosophical relativism.

¹¹ Phot. *Bibl.* 96a-b (trans Wilson).

¹² Russo (2001), 13-15.

Arethas made a substantial comment on the *Hermotimus*, stating that if truth, as the Sceptics want it, is unattainable then there is also no reason to prefer the Sceptics to other schools,¹³ and implicitly Christians to pagans. As Epictetus was only too aware,¹⁴ it might have been difficult for a Sceptic to defend his own position, when he ought to be sceptical about his own Scepticism. Defending the idea that one has to believe something to be true in order to live, Arethas tried to defend Hermotimus' attempt to show that it is possible to know which philosophy possesses truth, just as Pheidias could have guessed the whole from the part:

He here takes up the 'wrapped up argument', which is sophistical, and bends it to no useful purpose. Knowledge of the part, too, is credible in itself and true and has no need of the universal. For example, two and four are parts of number, then next the number ten that encloses them, just as a hundred encloses ten, and a thousand a hundred, and ten thousand a thousand; but there is nothing to prevent the layman who does not understand ten, let alone the true nature of number, understanding directly at least that one and one are two and twice two is four. So the man who misuses this sort of argument, to the effect that if someone doesn't know the universal, he doesn't know the particular either, is an utter scoundrel; because on the contrary the whole is inferred from the parts, and the assembling of the particulars is the basis for knowledge of the universal, since the so-called universal does not subsist as an entity in its own right. This is what your wise Aristotle means when he calls universals 'mere twittering' somewhere in his work. So there is nothing to prevent Phidias' knowledge of the lion's claw, the part, from suggesting to him by analogy the creature's size, even if not its shape. But if you are going to abolish analogy, what else will you be doing than condemning yourself to an irrational existence and a complete lack of awareness of everything that exists? I don't envy you this clever lunacy of yours, which will have you thrown to the

¹³ Perhaps adapting the argument found in Plat *Tht.* 161 C-E.

¹⁴ Epict. *Diss.* I. 20. 4-5

wolves – Lycinus by name, Lycinus by nature.¹⁵

In a similar vein Arethas criticized Lycinus for being a sophist and a Sceptic:

You seem to speak the nonsense of the Sceptics, Lycinus. They too maintain that comprehension is unattainable and so absurdly claim that the truth cannot be determined, insofar as all men – because of the equipollence of arguments as well – need somebody to decide the issue, and they say that this is impossible for a human being, in as much as no-one on earth is immune from being diverted from a true judgement. I will add this too on my own account: since you, who are spouting this nonsense, are a human being too, you too in your turn are undone by your own quibbling arguments, which sensible people have no time for, and are thus struck down with your own feathers.¹⁶

Arethas is therefore the first to properly align Lucian with ἀμφίβολοι arguments and with a negative conception of sophistry as a form of extreme scepticism.¹⁷ For Arethas, if one denies that ‘analogic’ reasoning is a criterion of reality then one denies all reality, and is prone to live a life in disarray. Accordingly, he shows no interest in Lucian’s adherence to Cynicism or to any other philosophical school. Arethas defended inductive reasoning, and therefore felt entitled to defend the logic behind arithmetical operations against Lycinus’ scepticism about axiomatic truths. But by arguing in this way, he was also recognizing some philosophical weight in the arguments of the *Hermotimus*, and in Lucian more generally, even more so when he identified Lycinus as he who ‘speaks the nonsense of the Sceptics.’

By introducing the possibility that Lucian completely lacks of any moral

¹⁵ *Schol. in Herm.* 54. I am extremely grateful to M. Trapp for the translation of this difficult passage.

¹⁶ *Schol in Herm.* 53 (trans. Trapp).

¹⁷ *Schol. in Herm.* 70.

standpoint whatsoever, Photius' and Arethas' interpretations of the content of Lucian's work completed the basis of the aesthetic and ethic framework started by Lactantius and Isidore, and it is from these that most of the judgements of value about the *Hermotimus* and other Lucianic works have been made ever since. Either for Lucian truth is impossible, or if it is possible he does not care for it. If it is the latter, then the only possible explanation for Lucian writing texts is that either his purpose was to entertain, or that because publishing was somehow beneficial for him. This other category for the interpretation, that which I have called nihilistic (as opposed to dogmatic), puts Lucian in closer relation to a radical scepticism (as opposed to positive scepticism) in which everything perceived and reasoned (including the own opinions of Lucianic main characters) is as true and as false as everything else, and to the sophists, who had the skill of arguing on both sides, regardless of what is true or false in reality. It is, therefore, in Byzantium when the two opposing images so familiar to us - Lucian the atheist, sceptic, selfish rhetorical entertainer and Lucian the satirist moralist philosopher - were fully formed.

2. Adapting the Framework to the Reformation

The three forms of interpreting Lucian's humour (dogmatic, positive sceptic, and nihilistic) became the aesthetic basis for judging the appropriateness of his texts once they became part of the canonic literature for learning Greek during the Italian, and at a later stage, the northern Renaissance. But bringing texts from Byzantium to Italy also meant rethinking what the role of pagan religion and philosophy was with the Christian world.

The tensions between pagan philosophy and Christianity in Western Europe, in the wake of the arrival of Lucianic texts, are best exemplified in the discussions between Coluccio Salutati, a humanist acquainted with Lucian,

though probably not with the *Hermotimus*,¹⁸ and Giovanni Dominici of the Dominican order.¹⁹ Unlike Giovanni Dominici and others who believed that the works of antiquity were of no use to Christianity, Salutati and other early Humanists were convinced of the contrary. Salutati used his power as the chancellor of Florence to invite in 1396 Manuel Chrysoloras from Byzantium to teach Greek. Chrysoloras brought with him the codex now called *Vaticanus Graecus* 87, which contains the *Hermotimus*, and in this way the dialogue found its place among the Italian humanists.

Even though it is hard to attest to the influence of the *Hermotimus* in early Italian Renaissance authors, some of whom would have been aware of its existence before the printed editions of Lucian's work, it is already possible to find a level of cautiousness towards his writings in the works of individuals such as Maffeo Vegio, who limited himself to imitating the form of Lucianic dialogues, but avoided Lucian's scepticism and love for paradoxes.²⁰

The first printed editions and translations of Lucian into Latin mark the end of the Christianization of the content of Lucian's work and the beginning of the interpretations of Lucian in the early modern academies. The new interest in Lucian's works prompted Giovanni Aurispa to buy, and take from Constantinople to Venice in 1493, another codex including Lucian's complete works. This manuscript was probably the one used for Lucian's *editio princeps* published in Florence in 1496 by Lorenzo Francesco de Alopa and edited by Janus Lascaris. The second printed edition of Lucian was made by Aldus Manutius in 1503,²¹ and later reprinted in 1522. Erasmus of Rotterdam (who certainly knew about Janus Lascaris) and Thomas More used either Lascaris' or Manutius' Greek editions for their Latin translations of Lucian published in

¹⁸ See Tomassi (2011), 103-104 and Mattioli (1980), 39 n. 2.

¹⁹ Matton (1996) 255-260.

²⁰ Marsh (1998), 67-71.

²¹ On the date see Thompson (1940).

1506 with the title *Luciani complura opuscula ab Erasmo et Thoma Moro interpretibus optimis in Latinorum linguam traducta*.

However, neither More nor Erasmus were the first to translate the *Hermotimus*. Conrad Wackers (Conradus Goclenius), the second professor of Latin at the *Collegium Trilingue* of the Catholic University of Louvain, founded in 1518, was inspired by the ideas of Erasmus and deserves the credit of being the first to render the *Hermotimus* into Latin. Erasmus had introduced Wackers to More in a letter sent on July 1521, praising his teaching and scholarship.²² In response, on October 29th 1522, Wackers sent Thomas More a letter,²³ which served as a prologue to his translation of the *Hermotimus*. In this letter, Wackers is clear about his reasons for translating the *Hermotimus*, which in turn are symptomatic of the way in which the positive sceptic interpretation of Lucian could be used in light of the political situation of the day.

For Wackers, the *Hermotimus* is more than a document on a delightful theme (*argumenti festiuitate*), it exposes those who pollute the name of philosophy by pretending to be philosophers, and is a way of stripping liars of their authority. False philosophers live just like the common crowd, and this is precisely the kind of lifestyle that Lucian disapproves of. Therefore, for Wackers, this text by Lucian was attempting to correct the wrong habits of those who under the guise of virtue were living a secret life in contradiction to their doctrines and their books. Lucian was acting like a Lysimachus, who according to Carystius in his *Historical Notes* had expelled all philosophers from his kingdom, just like the Athenians who expelled them from Attica, and the Romans, who banished all sophists from Rome.²⁴ Therefore, for Wackers, Lucian was a positive sceptic, who in the *Hermotimus* imitated Plato's style. But, unlike Lactantius, Wackers saw the Sceptical arguments of the *Hermotimus*, in

²² Erasmus. *Ep.* 1220 in Allen (1922).

²³ More's reply can be found in Rogers, S. R. and Rogers E.F. (1949).

²⁴ Ath. 13.92.

the context of the rise of Protestantism, as a weapon against the multiplicity of opinions about Christianity, and not just against the multiplicity of opinions about truth of paganism.

In much the same way as Wackers, but from the Lutheran point of view, Vinzenz Heidecker (Vincentius Opsoboeus), viewed Lucian through positive eyes. A translator of Martin Luther into German, Heidecker published in November 1527 another translation of the *Hermotimus* in an anthology, which included Lucian's *Amores* translated by Chiliano Mansueto, and Plutarch's *On the Education of Children* by Johannes Mezler. Heidecker was at the time immersed in the study of Greek in Nuremberg and preparing to become the new director of a gymnasium in Ansbach, which he did some months later, and stayed there until his death in 1539. The anthology was dedicated to Christoph Gugel, jurist at Nuremberg, and a key figure for the implementation of the new Lutheran legal reforms after the Peasants' War (1524-1525).

The tone of Heidecker's *praefatio* to the *Hermotimus* shows how this translation of the *Hermotimus*, like that of Wackers', intended to put Lucianic Sceptical arguments at the service of Lutheran Protestantism. Heidecker begins by reminding the reader that for Paul, empty philosophy had to be handled with care, otherwise men always detested philosophy because of its infinite number of sects obscuring and polluting truth with their contradictory theories. Just as a body has to be represented with harmony and proportion according to nature - as Horace wrote in the prologue of *The Art of Poetry* - in order for it not to be strange and to keep unity,²⁵ in the same way a professional discipline or a way of living is not correct if there are too many discordant sects claiming to be able to teach it, hence leading people astray.

For Heidecker ever since Homer, pagan philosophers have given contradictory and irreconcilable theories about everything. The *Hermotimus* (Lucian's advice against the counsel offered by philosophy) shows the

²⁵ Hor. A. P. 1-37.

remarkable folly of philosophers, and explains to everyone that it is impossible to find an exact philosophy owing to the multiplicity of sects and their very different ways (*vias diversissimas*). When followed, philosophy causes people to spend the most beautiful part of their youth in trifles, rendering futile the administration of civil affairs.

Lucian's attack against the *discordes disciplinas* of philosophical pagan sects reminded Heidecker of the ills currently besetting Christianity, torn apart by the discrepancy of religious sects and by the *diversis vivendi modis*, which defeated faith and extinguished true piety. One could have been carried away by the many contradictory pagan heresies, but there were also more *digniores magistri* to follow in antiquity, such as Plato Aristotle, Cratippus, Zeno, Epictetus, amongst many others. Heidecker believed that until the message of the Gospels was truly heard, and until our ignorance was taken away, the deceits of the Devil would keep on taking man by surprise. Heidecker bitterly complained that the Christian sects of his time are 'the filthiest dregs of the most stupid sophists and those most impure frogs' (*spurcissimam illam fecem indoctissimorum sophistarum et imundissimas ranas*).²⁶

Heidecker's translation of the *Hermotimus* is therefore a gift in gratitude to Christoph Gugel for having spoken against William of Ockham, Duns Scotus, and Thomas, and the plague born from them, Johann Eck, Jacob Lemp, people at Brussels and Oxford, Bartholomew Usingius, Petrus Tartaretus and John Versor, along with the *magistros stupidissimos*, modernists, realists and Thomists, who flooded Christianity with an ocean of wrong opinions.

Both Erasmus of Rotterdam and Marthin Luther valued differently Lucian's humour as being unconcerned with regards to Truth. Of the two, Erasmus

²⁶ Heidecker (1527), 8.

presents the most original interpretation, not only because he was one of the first in the early modern period to attempt to 'Christianize' Cynicism, by placing Socrates, Antisthenes, and Diogenes at almost the same level as Jesus and the apostles, but also because he made the attempt to align Lucianic scepticism with a true belief in God.

For Erasmus, as well as for Thomas More, Lucian was the ideal satirist, since his works suited the Horatian criteria of being enjoyable and useful at the same time.²⁷ He saw Lucian's comedy as somehow all-encompassing, for he believed the Syrian had been an elegant philosopher and sophist, and a satirist who attacked the unnecessary rationalism of philosophers 'more in play than in slander and sparing not a single one of them'.²⁸

Erasmus cleverly used Lucian's sceptical arsenal in the *Praise of Folly*, published in 1509, to show what not to believe, but without encouraging disbelief in God: Folly attacks the Stoics for their contradictions between deeds and words, and their unviable rationalism, and praises Academic scepticism for quenching the thirst for knowledge. Happiness, states Folly, lies in opinion and not in knowledge, for nothing can be known and usually it is something against the enjoyment of life.

Yet, it is only after his contact with Wackers that we seem to find in the works of Erasmus some influence of the *Hermotimus*.²⁹ This is perhaps most notorious in the controversy *De Libero Arbitrio Διατριβή* published in 1524, in which Erasmus tried to prove to Martin Luther that, since it was impossible to find a safe criterion suitable to learn the mysteries of the Scriptures, one would do better to suspend judgment of the different opinions of theologians on the true meaning of the Scriptures, and submit to the decrees of the Church. In this

²⁷ Hor. A. P. 343.

²⁸ In Marsh (1998), 10, citing Botfield (1861), 70 and Bussi (1978), 13.

²⁹ First printed in 1531, besides the *De Libero Arbitrio Διατριβή* a parody of the *Hermotimus* can also be found at the beginning of *The Seraphic Funeral*; see Thompson (1997), 996-999.

way, Erasmus cleverly used the Sceptic arguments of the *Hermotimus* to fit his own religious war-agenda.

In spite of Heidecker's effort to portray Lucian's comedy as useful positive scepticism in the service of Christianity and the Reformation, in 1529 Luther bitterly said to Erasmus: 'Christ will judge him as *atheos* and as a Lucianic Epicurus. He is a light-minded man, mocking all religions as his dear Lucian does, and serious about nothing but calumny and slander.'³⁰ Later he added, 'much worse than Lucian, mocking all things under the guise of holiness.'³¹ Luther's opinion of Lucian's humour deserves some attention.

As seen in the interpretations of Wackers and Heidecker, during the Reformation Lucian's scepticism was also interpreted as positive, but the Byzantine dichotomy Monotheistic Christian truth- polytheistic Pagan falsehood, was replaced by the dichotomy True Christianity- multiplicity of creeds (pagan or Christian). Luther reformulated under this ethical framework the old opinions of Arethas and Photius in a way which could counter the Lucianic humanism of Erasmus, hence Lucian's comedy was seen as *panaischrologic* entertainment or mere entertainment with no concern for morality.³²

This pre-nihilistic interpretation of Lucian also allowed people such as Luis Vives to argue that because Lucian was of Asiatic origin his language was too rhetorical to express any truth, although he did conceded at times to the beauty of Lucian's style,³³ which he remarked was, nevertheless, only a *jeux de sprit* and dangerous, vain rhetoric. Yet, Erasmus' use of the sceptic arguments of

³⁰ Luther, *EE Viri* in Smith (1911), 211.

³¹ Smith (1911), 212. Both references to Luther are cited in Duncan (1979), 79.

³² See Marsh (1998), 170, who points to Erasmus' remark that his critics might think that he is an imitator of Old Comedy and a certain Lucian. Relihan (1996), 279 notices the resemblance of the view from above of Folly in *Praise of the Folly* 48 with that of Menippus in the *Icaromenippus*, but then writes: 'Despite his intimate acquaintance with Lucian, Erasmus does not animate the person of Menippus in his other works, though one of the *Colloquies*, the *Peregrinatio Religionis Ergo*, has a Menedemus as one of his characters; Menedemus and Menippus are confused in Diogenes Laertius 6. 102.'

³³ Vives Coll (1959), 45-53. See Duncan (1979), 80 for Vives' contempt for rhetoric of wit.

the *Hermotimus* in the *De Libero Arbitro Διατριβή* might be closer to Luther's interpretation than they seem. Erasmus finds Lucian's scepticism and lack of ethical stance valuable as it serves the purpose of approaching God by stating all that is not God. For Luther too, Lucian's comedy lacks an ethical impetus, but for him this is a matter of contempt, as unlike, Erasmus, he believed that a Christian had to be certain about the truth of God.³⁴

3. Lucian's Religious Scepticism

As the translations of Lucian, Julian, Dio, Stobaeus, the Cynic Letters, Diogenes Laertius, Galen, and Plutarch refreshed the insecurities of early Christian authors towards ancient Cynicism, the new translations of Sextus Empiricus became the founding stone of Modern Pyrrhonism and Scepticism.³⁵ In the 17th Century, when Empirical scepticism about all religious faith began to be seen as positive, the hypothesis that Lucian had been a member of the Sceptics became more attractive.

Modern scepticism implied a change of perception about Lucian's doubt. We have seen how Lucian's sceptical humour could be perceived as targeting false religion and sectarianism, that is to say, falsehood. Even though Erasmus had already introduced the possibility of Lucian's humour targeting dogmatic religiosity, with the rise of modern Scepticism it became possible to see Lucian as a writer who raised doubts not just about falsehood, but about the possibility of anyone or any institution knowing what Truth was.

The *Hermotimus* was not very much read in England. During the Elizabethan period, after Thomas More was beheaded in 1535 and after the death of Erasmus the year after, Lucianism became synonymous with

³⁴ Popkin (1960) 6-7.

³⁵ See Floridi (2002); Popkin (1979).

disrespect, abuse and religious deviation, and a reminder of the Reformation.³⁶ In Stuart England the *Hermotimus* was not read because Johannes Benedictius omitted Heidecker's translation of it under the pretext of poor quality. In 1634, Thomas Hicckes published a *Life* of Lucian which serves as a prologue to the translations into English made by his father Francis. Here, the *Hermotimus* is mentioned in passing, but neither Francis Hicckes' nor Jasper Mayne's later edition published in 1663 and 1644 include the *Hermotimus*.³⁷ Again under the pretext of poor quality, the *Hermotimus* was also not included in the first real attempt, made in 1683 by Ferrand Spence, to translate all of Lucian into English, despite the fact that Spence considered Lucian to be not a renegade of true religion but a positive sceptic whose 'wit is not this or that, but everything'.³⁸ Only in 1696, after the poet John Dryden wrote a life of Lucian to accompany a new edition of all of Lucian's works translated by different hands and published in 1711, do we find again comments about the *Hermotimus* in England.

According to Dryden, Lucian in one half of his dialogues stands for Stoicism while in the other half he stands for Epicureanism, but he is 'never constant to himself in any scheme of divinity, unless it be in despising his Gentile Gods'. However, this does not mean that Lucian was close to Christianity, or to any form of dogmatic religion, nor that he was 'a steady atheist, or a Deist'. Dryden argues that Lucian was 'a doubter, a Sceptic, as he plainly declares himself to be in the Dialogue, when he puts himself under the name of Hermotimus the Stoic, call'd the dialogue of the sects'.³⁹ In the end, 'he might as well believe in none, as in many gods.'⁴⁰

³⁶ See Duncan (1979), 90.

³⁷ Dudley (1919), 21-22.

³⁸ All of Spence's passages can be found in Craig (1921), 144-147.

³⁹ Dryden (1711), 27.

⁴⁰ Dryden (1711), 23.

This ambiguity forces Dryden to conjecture about the intended effect on the reader of Lucian's works:

I mean that he either form'd a body of philosophy for his own use, out of the opinions and dogmas of several heathen philosophers, disagreeing amongst themselves; or that he doubted of everything, weigh'd all opinions and adher'd to none of them; only us'd them, as they served his occasion for the present dialogue; and perhaps rejected them in the next. And indeed this last opinion is the more probable of the two, if we consider the genius of the man whose image we may clearly see in the glass, which he holds before us of his writings, which reflects him to our sight.⁴¹

This, for Dryden meant that Lucian laughed like Horace, but hurt like Juvenal,⁴² for which reason his humour was closest to the Aristophanic *onomastiki komodein*, and was, in other words, offensive. His aim, however, was more 'to disnest Heaven of so many immoral and debauch'd Deities' and to expose false-philosophers, than it was to prescribe morality.⁴³

Unlike for Arethas, Photius, and Erasmus, who had already suggested that Lucian's humour was anti-dogmatic and that it laughed at 'everything' without him expressing or taking any stand in his own works about the most important matters, Dryden was aware of the role of scepticism in choosing the right religious path without having to be certain about where Truth lay. Dryden turns doubt into Doubt, a matter of the most philosophical and religious importance. He even goes as far as to declare that the real characteristic of every great mind and the characteristic of the greatest periods in History is Scepticism, which leaves one wondering whether this emphasis on Doubt is the consequence of Dryden's thoughts about his own conversion from the Church of England to the Church of Rome.

⁴¹ Dryden (1711), 25-26.

⁴² Dryden (1711) 34.

⁴³ Dryden (1711), 43, 45.

One century after Dryden's passing, we see a transformation in which Lucian's begins to become philosophically valuable not only because of his doubts within a religious context, but also because he was an Empiricist, and as such could be read as doubting all religious Truth. Evidence of this new way of understanding Lucian as a figure close to emerging modern forms of Sceptical philosophy can be found in an anonymous review to Thomas Franklin's translation, published in 1780, in which the reasons why the *Hermotimus* is a dialogue so different from the rest of Lucian's work are made very clear:

The dialogue is not only an excellent ridicule of systematic philosophy but abounds with close argumentation. Indeed it proves strongly against all philosophy but what is founded on experiment, and might be applied equally to most modern systems of metaphysics, to the pre-established harmony of Leibnitz, the modified Platonism of Malebranche, the sceptical enquiries of Descartes, the immaterial world of Berkeley and the materialism of Hume.

Besides the comparison between Lucian's comedy of the sects of philosophy with current trends in philosophy, the opinion of this anonymous critic is important as he introduced a new variable into the possibilities of Lucian's Scepticism, now not only in reference to religion but also to the state. How is it then that Lucian -the anonymous critic asks- was not 'afraid of the power of the civil magistrate, when he so severely stigmatized the religion of his ancestors, and of the country and times in which he lived'? The critic's answer is that at the time pagans after Christ no longer believed in their gods and that by applying his wit to 'the absurdities of pagan mythology' Lucian only helped to deliver the *coup de grace*.

Among the negative aspects mentioned by the reviewer of Franklin's translation about Lucian is that his style can be verbose and that Lucian like 'Voltaire among the moderns, could not resist the temptation of saying a good

thing when it came in his way, let what would be the consequence.’⁴⁴ The association of Voltaire with Lucian had an enormous impact on the valuation he subsequently received from his critics in the emergence of modern philology.

As a fluent reader of Latin, Voltaire was acquainted with Perrot d’Ablancourt’s translation of Lucian.⁴⁵ Usually his Lucianic pieces are seen as related to Lucian’s shorter dialogues,⁴⁶ but it is worth thinking about the ways in which Lucian’s scepticism and even the *Hermotimus* might have influenced his most famous and scandalous work *Candide ou l’Optimiste* and the anti-sectarian content of the *Galimatias dramatique*. In this way Voltaire’s wit and fiction agitated all who read him, and this was particularly true of the most conservative spirits inside the German academies who began to associate him with Lucian, to the point at which Lucian became known as the Voltaire of antiquity.

In the wake of the modern state and of modern philology as a discipline of the university, early German philologists thought of Voltaire as an opportunistic atheist, who followed no ideals and no morals regarding God and the State. Voltaire was a deist who rejected more radical views like that of Spinoza, and praised the moderate scepticism of Descartes, even though he preferred the empiricism of Locke and Newton as a more effective method to attaining truth. But Voltaire was also famous for his anti-clericalism, and for that reason radical believers thought of him as an atheist, while his deistic position left nonbelievers unsatisfied.

Philologists and classical scholars associated Christoph Martin Wieland with Voltaire, and Voltaire with Lucian. Wieland, who translated the *Hermotimus* and the rest of Lucian’s works from the first modern edition of his works into a Latin translation by Johan Friederick Reitz and Tiberius

⁴⁴ Anonymous (1781), 92.

⁴⁵ For an overview of this period see Bury (2007), 145-174.

⁴⁶ For example the *Dialogue entre Marc-Aurèle et un recollect* and *Conversation de Lucien Erasme et Rabelais dans les Champs Elysées*. See Robinson (1979), 156-167.

Hemsterhuis published in 1743, not only thought of him as a great writer and an example of literary elegance and erudition, but also as an ally of the Enlightenment, and a moralist fighting against superstition. The *Hermotimus* was Lucian at his best, a product of his maturity as a writer, and a dialogue of great utility to fight against religious sectarianism.⁴⁷ In contrast, Wieland believed that the *Nigrinus* was a panegyric on Athens against the excesses of Rome written by a young Lucian, after which he had begun to write Platonic dialogues.⁴⁸ Soon, the opinions of Wieland on the *Hermotimus* and the *Nigrinus* were followed by Schoell in his *History of Greek Literature*.⁴⁹ Wieland's opinion of the *Hermotimus* is of fundamental importance, because although he had a loose interest in looking at Lucian historically, his opinion was not very different from Gibbon's, who thought it unlikely for a true philosopher to accept pagan religion, and who saw Lucianic satire as a powerful weapon against it.⁵⁰

However, after Winckelmann, German scholarship worked with a theoretical framework that centred the 'classical' almost exclusively in imperial Athens. In this notion of 'the classical', Lucian's literature and all the production of the second sophistic is seen as a pale reflection of the ideal, imperialistic past of classical Athens.⁵¹ In addition, the association of Lucian with Voltaire was not forgotten,⁵² and the charge of Lucian as a frivolous writer with no ideals allowed, in the wake of and unfolding of the German Nation State, for the interpretation that he was not in fact a Sceptic, but a nihilist.

⁴⁷ Wieland (1830), I, 10.

⁴⁸ Wieland (1830) I. 8, 18.

⁴⁹ Schoell (1830) II. 476, 482

⁵⁰ Gibbon (1813), 49. Contrary to Winckelmann, for Gibbon the Second Century AD was the happiest period in history.

⁵¹ For a theory of the classical see Porter (2006) 1-65, and the different contributions in that same book.

⁵² See Deitz (2007), 175-190.

Chapter 2

Lucian in the Modern Academy

If everything can be anything, we are left with nothing at all.
H.-G. Nesselrath¹

So far, we have seen how early Christians set up an aesthetic framework in which Lucian's comedy was deemed more or less valuable depending on its distance from Christian values. Lucian could be seen as a potential friend if he was seen to be attacking false religion, which was represented first by non-Christian religions and later by heresies. Scholars of Byzantium warned that Lucian may have not stood for Christianity, for philosophy or religion, or indeed for anything at all, owing to the fact that he was not one taking sides, and that he sought to entertain with literature. Most people saw entertaining with literature as a vain activity that lacked of religiosity and moral indoctrination and was therefore not a very good one. It was also possible that a literature believing in nothing offended religion itself, or that, although Lucian was certain about the existence of Truth, he remained sceptical about those who claimed to possess it. This interpretation of Lucian began to be considered of religious importance for Christianity by people like John Dryden. But once Lucian was thought as the Voltaire of antiquity it became possible too that his literature was seen as an attack against religion from the perspective of an extreme sceptic, an atheist, and an empiricist,² of dubious morality. Just like Voltaire, Lucian could be seen as the epitome of the ancient immoral writer lacking in ideals and working only for his own interests, ready to challenge the very foundations of not only Christianity, but also of all religious and political

¹ Nesselrath (2010), 396.

² For example, Rabasté (1888) considered that Lucian was at the same level as Voltaire, Locke and Condillac.

organisation, including the state.³ Others, however, used Lucian to attack that which Voltaire represented,⁴ and therefore in the modern academy, this distancing of Lucian, as far away as possible from Voltaire, became the best strategy by which to defend Lucian.

In this chapter I hope to contribute to the study of Lucian by establishing two categories which refer to two distinctive tendencies in Lucianic studies that emerged as soon as philology became a profession in the modern academy. These two categories, which I have borrowed from Platonic studies, are the developmentalist and the unitarian account of Lucian.⁵ It should, however, be noted that while in the case of Platonic studies scholars take clear positions regarding the unity or the progress of Plato's works, I have created these two categories in order to encapsulate the opinions of scholars who in their studies of Lucian do not call themselves unitarians or developmentalists.

³ For a complete bibliography of Lucianic studies in Germany from 1700 to 1878 see Engelmann and Preuss (1880), 485-497. See also Betz (1961), Nesselrath (1992), Holzberg (1998) and Baumbach (2002), which provide by far the best account of Lucian in Germany, and also his article (2011).

⁴ Jacob (1832) argued that *Hermetimus*, *Demonax* and *Nigrinus* were sincere dialogues against false religion, in which he showed himself indifferent to the terrible sophistic "art", which the eighteenth century had called philosophy, and whose chief leader was Voltaire. Bernays (1879), 42 considered Lucian to be the Voltaire of antiquity, and he disliked both. For Croiset (1882) Lucian might be seen to be fighting against the excess of reason and credulity, but he was not like Voltaire, who contributed to Newtonian theory or empiricism.

The debate of whether to compare Lucian or not to Voltaire continued into the 20th century. For Bompaigne (1958), 499 contrary to Voltaire, who was always a fighter for freedom of speech on the subject of God, Lucian is capable of praising the piety of Panthea, lover of the Emperor, and in another to condemn light-heartedly the death sentence of atheists. Overall, Bompaigne, 491-499, does not find Lucian's anti-religious strife particularly interesting and deems it largely provocative.

Baldwin (1973), 103 reached the conclusion that the comparison between Lucian and Voltaire only stands up if one demotes the latter, since 'Lucian was not a deep thinker, and did not pretend to be one. It is a mystery why Arethas would have treated him like an anti-Christ. On his own evaluation, he was primarily an entertainer. That is merit enough in any age.'

For Branham (1989), 129, if one focuses on Lucian's parodic techniques and how his dialogues as literary inventions are 'wedged between ancient materials and a contemporary audience', rather than on what Lucian actually believed, this enables us to see Lucian as a very different kind of author to Voltaire or Swift.

⁵ See p. 15, n. 24.

1. Adapting the Aesthetic Framework to Romantic Aesthetics

It was in one of the first modern essays to discuss the role of play and satire in the development of history and of human morals, *On Naive and Sentimental Comedy*,⁶ that Friederich Schiller substituted a Christian aesthetic framework, which had at one extreme false religion, and true religion at the other, for an aesthetic framework that had nothingness at one extreme and the right ideal at the other.

In his essay, Schiller classified all poets according to their relationship with nature; in so far as he thought that once man saw 'nature as something other than himself he became free of nature as a universally determining source or model but at the same time lost his feelings for nature as home'.⁷ Like Winckelman, and Rousseau before him, Schiller believed that a happy primitive culture could be found in the past, but only decay could be found in the present. Besides natural objects, Schiller argued that the Greeks, the childhood of man, also inspired a certain nostalgia. But reason had forced a gradual separation of man from nature, transforming the latter into an object, an idea. The world had reached a perfect harmony between reason and nature in Ancient Greece and had become disharmonious in Revolutionary France.

According to Schiller, therefore, poets should be divided into two categories: the naive poet who continues nature, and the sentimental poet who only has nostalgia for the naïve in nature. The poet who is not part of nature, the poet who is not naïve, has only the sentiment of nature as an ideal, and can only express feelings about nature through art. Sentimental poets are further classified as satirical or elegiac. The poet is satirical if he aims to point towards the alienation (*Entfernung*) of man from nature, and speaks the truth about the

⁶ Schiller (1966). Schiller published this essay in three parts between 1795 and 1795 in a literary journal run by him called *Die Horen*. For Schiller and the origin of the comic as a literary quality see McFadden (1982), 10-21.

⁷ McFadden (1982), 12.

contradictions between nature and the ideas man has of it. Punishing or pathetic satire is a genre only suitable for *sublime* souls and is exerted in earnest and with passion according to will (*im Gebiete des Willens*). However, if poetry is done by a *beautiful* heart (*schönen Herzen*), one that entertains by enhancing understanding, then it is called *playful* satire (*scherzhafte Satire*).

In either case, Schiller believed, all poetry should always keep a balance between being punishing and entertaining, as it was otherwise likely to become frivolous or to lack playfulness, something that it should always have. In spite of their mischievous mockery of Socrates, a sincere and serious intellect (*eine ernste Vernunft*) on the side of truth and against the sophists and fighting for an ideal can be found in Aristophanes and Lucian, who vindicated this character against all doubt in his Diogenes and Demonax.

So it is that despite their decadent moment in history, Schiller thought that modern satiric authors could also find this balance between reason and play: Cervantes in *Don Quixote*, Fielding in *Tom Jones* and *Sophonisba*, Shakespeare in his Yorick in *Hamlet*, and most importantly Christoph Martin Wieland. Wieland and Lucian were for Schiller different from Voltaire, who even though he managed to incline readers to the naïve in his *Ingénu* and *Candide*, lacked idealism and passion in the rest of his works and was only an artificial writer. As is evident, here Schiller tried to detach Wieland – Lucian's translator into German - from Voltaire.

2. The Developmentalist Reading of Lucian.

The historicist-rationalist impulse of German philologists demanded higher standards of proof which extended beyond Lucian's work to his biography and his historical context.⁸ But to understand Lucian in his own historical context,

⁸⁸ Perhaps the best place to find all the issues connected to historicism, including racism, radical liberalism, eurocentrism and germanophilia is Meinecke (1943). Strong criticisms against

scholars based their investigations on earlier biographies, which had incorporated the question of Lucian's philosophical and religious journey in introductions to his works so that it might fit true Christianity. The Sambucus-Cousan Greek and Latin edition, which included a life of Lucian as told in the *Suda*, Cousin's *Luciani Elogium* as a prologue and Jakob Zwinger's *De Vita et Scriptis Narratio*, is a great example of the debate surrounding Lucian's historical context through narrative of his spiritual development.

Cousin, who in his youth had been a student and copyist of Erasmus, and was the first to write a biography of Lucian, defended him in his *Elogium* on similar grounds to those provided by his master. Lucian's dialogues, Cousin argued, were not only an example of *suavitas*, *elegantia* and *varietas*, but also useful entertainment as they laughed seriously at the pagan gods and wrong beliefs in general. Contrary to that what is stated in the *Suda*, Cousin thought that because of his commitment to truth, Lucian had been undeservedly labelled an atheist. Accordingly, in this biography, Lucian becomes progressively more sceptical about his pagan context, without ever becoming a Christian; starting off his career as a sophist, before becoming an imitator of Pyrrho, who as a Sceptic affirms nothing, but leaves everything unresolved by arguing on both sides. In Cousin's view, Lucian had written the *Hermotimus* at the age of 40 when he had already begun his philosophical studies. As a result, the work could be counted not only as the most useful example of ancient sceptical literature, but could be considered better than his previous works which had no ethical maturity.

Lucian, however, was much less appealing to the doctor and philosopher Jakob Zwinger, for whom the *Hermotimus* and the *Twice Indicted* are philosophical texts in which Lucian attacks the philosophical sects of his time. Lucian is a famous sophist and philosopher praised and imitated by many

historicism can be found in Popper (1957), and much more systematically in Foucault (1994) and (1982). For a general overview of historicism see Hamilton (1996).

theologians. But, in agreement with the *Suda*, when it comes to metaphysics he is the most impious, laughing at God, Christianity and men, and capable of abandoning the quest for truth in his transgressions of moderate censure.

Cousin's interpretation was continued in Jean Bourdelot's *Luciani Samosatensis Philosophi Opera Omnia*, which included Heidecker's translation of the *Hermotimus* together with the rest of the translations in the edition of Cognatus-Sambucus. For Bourdelot, Lucian was a negative theologian, who after abandoning sophistry and philosophy, remained in search of a true Theology that might allow him to live the most perfect or ideal life⁹

This way of debating the relationship between Lucian's texts and his life is, I suggest, that which among Lucianists is understood when they use the term developmentalist. The developmentalist reading of Lucian consists of situating Lucian's works in a progressive biography marked by philosophical, spiritual and religious development in order to measure just how close or how far he was from Christian truth.

However, the developmentalist theory could not be explained without the substitution of true ideals for Christian truth. In their *Entwicklungsgeschichte seiner geistigen Thätigkeit geschehen*, to use the terminology of the time,¹⁰ German philologists of the early 19th Century made this substitution, by conceding that Christianity might not have been the same as true religion for Lucian, and that perhaps it was more likely that he sought to find Truth in the schools of philosophy, which represented the different contradictory religious and philosophical ideals reached by Antiquity before Christianity. In this way, the reason for applying developmentalist theories to Lucian's time became a way to measure how evolved he was as not considered the limitations of his own era, in which clearly Christianity was the best outcome available to him or anyone else of that period in history.

⁹ Zappalla (1990), 134-136.

¹⁰ Hermann (1828).

Scholars, however, were not able to agree precisely what it was that Lucian stood for. Some proposed that Lucian was writing to defend Greek *paideia*,¹¹ others true philosophy.¹² Some others went further and argued that Lucian's aim surpassed the sphere of professionalism and that he must have been a defender of Virtue put into practice,¹³ an individual taken over by a *religionis puris desiderium*.¹⁴ Inspired by the Enlightenment, a few other scholars began to think of Lucian as a guardian of empirical truth and science against religious superstition.¹⁵ Lucian's true philosophical affiliation also became a matter of debate among scholars, for he was seen as an Epicurean,¹⁶ whilst for others he embodied an eclectic similar to Democritus, which was only partially acquainted with Epicureanism.¹⁷

The political dimension of Lucian's texts and his opinions of Greek and Roman societies was also unclear. Unlike the intellectuals of Byzantium and the Renaissance, for scholars who worked within the mind-set of the new nation it was possible to believe that Lucian was not sceptical about religion and faith but a state idealist trying to set straight the institutions of Rome.¹⁸ Of all of Lucian's texts, the *Nigrinus* was most suited to the simultaneous study of Lucian's philosophical and political affiliations, because if read as a non-satiric text it seemed to contain Lucian's conversion to Platonism and a criticism of the vices

¹¹ Ranke (1831).

¹² Jacob (1832).

¹³ Sommerbrodt (1888); Hirzel (1895), 271-331.

¹⁴ Frietzsche (1869), 2.2. 1-44.

¹⁵ Léon Dewaule, a professor of philosophy at the Lycée Impérial de Périgueux, published the essay *Etude sur Lucien ou un sceptique au 2ème siècle de notre ère, sa vie et son époque*, which I have not been able to consult. It seems that Dewaule might have seen Lucian's *Hermotimus* and scepticism in general as positive, since he was a supporter of Condillac and of the emerging empiricism of his times. Rabasté (1888) thought that Lucian was a defender of truth and freedom of speech, fighting against superstition, and therefore he welcomed the mixture of comic traditions in Lucian's work as a sign of encyclopaedic erudition. He also acknowledged the importance of Menippus in Lucian, but pointed to the borrowing of sources of Old Comedy.

¹⁶ Sommerbrodt (1888).

¹⁷ Dindorf (1858), VII; Zeller (1877), 3.1 851-854.

¹⁸ Jacob (1832).

of Rome and a praise of Athens.¹⁹ Therefore, it was even possible to speculate about Lucian's life based on an alleged conversion from barbarism to Hellenism, and more specifically to Atticism, as Hirzel himself did.²⁰ Lucian's political motivations to produce literature also became ambiguous: was he a social revolutionary opposing the Empire²¹ and defending the people?²² Or was he someone close to the '*vera razza romana*' and with those who had completed their *cursus honorum*?²³ It was to be many years before academics stopped searching for Lucian's ideals. Even in the 1960s, Vincenzo Longo still argued that Lucian had a "*credo*" *morale* which was not *atarassia*, but rather a *turbamento morale*, which though vague and repressed, was born from a spiritual tension that eventually surfaced in his work.²⁴

However, we should not dismiss developmentalist approaches as simply naïve and idealistic attempts to understand Lucian. Developmentalist theories discussed many questions that are basic to our understanding of the *Hermotimus* and of Lucian in general. When was the *Hermotimus* written? Before or after the *Fisherman*, where Parrhesiades ends up siding with pagan philosophy?²⁵ Should it be separated from the more Cynic-like works of Lucian?²⁶ Does this dialogue belong to a period in which Lucian began to be

¹⁹ Rohde (1876), 320 believed that *Nigrinus* was '*eines des wichtigsten Dokumente antirömischer Opposition der zweiten Sophistik betrachtet*', an opinion also shared by Boldermann (1893), who following Mees (1841), 47 believed that the *Nigrinus* was satiric, but added that in it Lucian was praising Athens and the citizens of the rest of Greek cities as if they were the Athenians who defended the country from the Persians. If this were the case, then *Nigrinus* was a completely fictional character, just as Mycillus or Adeimantus, and Brun's (1888) proposal was that this was a text that showed that Lucian's conversion to Platonism would be false. This text could therefore have been written as a hidden satire to prevent people from suddenly converting to philosophy, as argued by Chlebus (1838), 27.

²⁰ Hirzel (1895), 271, citing Luc. *Herm.* 13.

²¹ Peretti (1947).

²² Settembrini (1861), 14.

²³ Fumarola (1951). Gallavotti (1932), Venchi (1934), Quacquarelli (1956), and Longo (1964). Litt (1909) argued that Lucian was trying to persuade people to become statesmen rather than philosophers.

²⁴ Longo (1964), 21.

²⁵ Remacle (1854/1855).

²⁶ Fritzsche (1869), 2. 26; Croiset, (1882); Schmid (1891), 308.

interested in philosophy?²⁷ Was it written before or after his 'Menippean phase?'²⁸ Before he became a Cynic?²⁹ Or does the *Hermotimus* belong to a period later than the *Twice Indicted*?³⁰ Did Lucian write it when he was old?³¹ Should the modes of Agrippa, depending on whether he took them from Agrippa himself, from the Sceptic Aenesidemus,³² or from Menippus', tell us anything about the date of composition?³³

To the question: are his characters real or fiction? Dryden suggested that Hermotimus might have been Lucian, but it is easier to think that Lycinus is Lucian's spokesperson.³⁴ Does the *Hermotimus* contain a reference to Lucian's previous temporary conversion to philosophy or is that just part of its fiction?³⁵ The old man in *Hermotimus* 24 does seem to resemble Nigrinus,³⁶ the Platonic philosopher, or some other of Lucian's characters.³⁷ Clearly Lycinus is modelled on the Platonic Socrates, but this does not mean that this is an expression of an agnostic period in Lucian's life when he had adopted a form of practical Scepticism.³⁸ Is it possible to identify Lucian behind his masks?³⁹ After all, the *Hermotimus* could have been a fiction which did not contribute anything to the writing of a life of Lucian.⁴⁰ It might just have been a very long joke about philosophers that might not have offended anybody.⁴¹ And in any case, what

²⁷ Sommerbrodt (1888).

²⁸ Boldermann (1893).

²⁹ Litt (1909).

³⁰ Ranke (1831); Van Eyken (1859), 25. I only have the information of this text from Nesselrath (1992), 3454; Schwarz (1877).

³¹ Rohde (1876) 191 n.1.

³² Praechter (1898).

³³ Wassmandorff (1874), Frietzsche (1869) 2. 34-35.

³⁴ Remaely (1851).

³⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 24; Schmid (1891), 308, n. 11.

³⁶ Wetzlar (1834); Croiset, (1882); Rhode (1876) 191 n.1; Gallavotti (1932), 175-176 n. 2;

³⁷ For Bruns (1888), 92 the teacher in the *Hermotimus* is not Nigrinus, but the same man who is hidden in the character of the Thesmopolis in *On Salaried Posts*, and Timocles in the *Zeus Rants*.

³⁸ Schwarz, A. (1863), 7; Frietzsche (1869) II.2, 27; Litt (1909); Caster (1937), 62-63. See Tackaberry (1930), 51, for whom Lucian is a sceptic.

³⁹ Rohde (1869), 32.

⁴⁰ Schmid (1891), 308, n. 11; Hirzel (1895) 290-291.

⁴¹ Schmid (1891), 305.

is the merit of this dialogue? Should we praise it for not being the usual Lucianic comedy about philosophers, but a serious and sincere dialogue proving the ways in which philosophical leaders and religion can be morally misleading?⁴² But even if we were to read it this way, what should we think of the quality of its humour? It is unclear whether *Hermotimus* was a historical figure⁴³ or a fiction.⁴⁴ Considering what we take the model of the *Hermotimus* to be, whether Old Comedy,⁴⁵ whether Aristophanes and Horace,⁴⁶ or Middle Comedy,⁴⁷ or Cynicism,⁴⁸ would it have been seen to insult philosophers, philosophical dogmatism, and in particular Stoicism, or even religiosity itself?

All these are not merely obvious, fundamental questions about the *Hermotimus* and Lucian in general but they also lead to us the generation of objective historical propositions about Lucian's knowledge of Cynic philosophy, his disillusionment with all philosophy in the *Hermotimus*, and the beginning of his comic dialogues,⁴⁹ all of which extend our understanding of Lucian as a historical figure.

Let us return now to what was said in the *Introduction* about Heinz Gunther Nesselrath: that he is almost the only scholar of recent times to take up the intellectual challenge of giving an interpretation of the Sceptic content of the *Hermotimus* in the light of Lucian's proclivity towards literary Cynicism; and

⁴² The *Hermotimus* continued to be read by Croiset (1882) and Bompaire (1958), 305 as some kind of philosophical dialogue comparable to Plato's *Gorgias* or *Phaedo*.

⁴³ Schmid, W. (1891); Litt (1909), 48.

⁴⁴ Remacle (1854/1855).

⁴⁵ Ranke (1831).

⁴⁶ Jacob (1832).

⁴⁷ Kock (1888).

⁴⁸ Boldermann (1893).

⁴⁹ For instance, Bernays (1879) placed at the centre of his study Lucian's relationship with Cynicism. Hermann (1828) divided Lucian's works into a *Normalepoche*, in which Lucian wrote the best of his works, and a period after the *Hermotimus*, identifiable for his more scientific and serious works, and which was also the decisive point in his writing career, after which, becoming ealderly, his creativity ceased. Rohde (1869) later followed Bernays, but argued that although a Cynic for most of his life, Lucian was first a Platonist (*Nigrinus*), then a Sceptic (*Hermotimus*), and then an Epicurean (*Alexander, Historiae Verae*). Boldermann (1893), on the contrary, prioritized the role of comedy and satire in Lucian's autobiography over his alleged conversion to philosophy. See also Hirzel (1895), 291-294 and Caster (1935).

that he reads the *Hermotimus* as a work of maturity representing Lucian's greater knowledge of Scepticism, written with the ethical impetus of turning the readers towards the κοινὸς βίος. Clearly, by bringing back the literature of the 19th century without inquiring into problems of methodologies, Nesselrath has produced yet another developmentalist interpretation of the *Hermotimus* which tends to interpret the 'common life' as the aim towards which Lucian tries to turn us, and therefore claims its positive scepticism as evidence of it being one of Lucian's greatest dialogues.

3. The Unitarian Reading of Lucian

There is, however, a big challenge to the developmentalist approaches to Lucian's work. Schiller's idealist approach to Lucian in the early 19th century rapidly found itself strong opposition in the work of the theologian Heinrich Gottlieb Tzschirner, who believed Lucian was not only attacking the new religion (in this regard being close to Arethas and Isidore,) but all religious feeling, thereby creating a spiritual vacuum between Paganism and Christianity. For Tzschirner, the purpose of Lucian was not to restore, but to destroy, as was Wieland's and the Enlightenment's. He claimed that Lucian did not have any moral position of his own, but attacked all moral positions, including Christianity, for his own pecuniary and individual benefit.

This hunch, that Lucian never had in mind any other purpose other than to produce entertaining literature, co-existed throughout the 19th century with developmentalist theories about his life and work. Croiset, for instance, argued that the merit of Lucian's work was only literary, and not moral.⁵⁰ Sommerbrodt and Frietzsche argued that Lucian was not a reformist of religion and politics, but that his work was at most a mirror through which his society and, and by extension contemporary societies, could look at their own false beliefs. For

⁵⁰ Croiset, (1882).

Hirzel, the study of rhetoric might have 'hellenized the barbarian of the East',⁵¹ but Lucian's literary quest never transcended the search for the best literary form; if Lucian had anything to do with Cynic literature, he argued, this was only because he was using a Cynic text to criticize asceticism and because as a rhetorician he never stopped preaching a non-dogmatic philosophy of common sense in support of the common life.⁵²

Schillerean values forced a work of literature to be aesthetically original and committed to ideals, which made comic literature written for the sake of literary beauty liable to be read as superficial and rhetorical entertainment, owing to its lack of real philosophical deepness of thought and ideals. Jacob Bernays contributed with the influential opinion that Lucian was not a Cynic, or an idealist philosopher of any kind, but a sophist living in a mechanistic civilization, whose works reflected a nihilistic wasteland (*nihilistische Öde*).⁵³

Renowned philologists writing at the beginning of the 20th Century took Bernays opinion of Lucian to be true, but in a context of increasing racism and idealistic nationalism in Germany, Lucian ended up being expelling altogether from the canon of classical authors. Norden, who like Bernays was of Jewish decent, argued that Lucian's linguistic skills and lack of ideals of his own were due to the impurity of his race.⁵⁴ Hermann had already argued that it was possible that the lack of idealism was not only Lucian's problem, but the problem of all the Greeks of his time.⁵⁵ But it was Houston Stewart Chamberlain who went one step further in explaining Lucian's lack of idealism in racial terms. Born in Southsea, Wagner's son-in-law, and a forerunner of National Socialism, Chamberlain was a sophisticated propagandist. In 1899 he published

⁵¹ Hirzel (1895), 269.

⁵² See Hirzel (1895), 30 n.2 the best life is the life of the ἰδιώτης Luc. *Nec.* 21; *Symp.* 35; *Cat.* 24. For Hirzel, 325-326 supporting the common crowd is not in contradiction with Cynicism see his comments on Lucian's *Saturnalia*.

⁵³ Bernays (1879), 42.

⁵⁴ See Norden (1898) I. 394. See Holzberg (1988).

⁵⁵ Hermann (1849), 215.

the book *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, in which he sought to explain that the basis of European civilization consisted of Greek and Roman pasts, Christianity, the negative influence of the Jews, and the 'regenerative power' of the Germans.⁵⁶ For Chamberlain, the Syrian was nothing more than 'an example of the fact that even a highly gifted mind cannot create anything truly magnificent or lasting in a state of chaos void of all nationality or race,'⁵⁷ and 'even if all philologists of the world were to maintain that Lucian's comments on religion and philosophy were profound, that he was a courageous fighter against superstition, and so on, I would never believe them. Lucian was altogether incapable of knowing what religion is'.⁵⁸ Suspiciously, Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, perhaps the most famous philologist of the time, repeated many of Chamberlain's ideas, adding that, at most, Lucian's work was valuable as journalism, emphasising Bernays' opinion that Lucian's nihilism was a sign of the weakness of his thought.⁵⁹

Racism stripped Lucian, at this time, of the possibility of contributing any original ideas of his within his own literature. But even then, one could still argue that even if he lacked ideals and principles, he was a good and entertaining writer. The problem was that Lucian's originality was much closer to the mimicking of original classical authors than to creating a new literature, and literary-aesthetic values demanded that in order to be good a work of art had to be original. Ultimately, it was one of Wilamowitz-Möllendorff's star students, Rudolph Helm, who managed to end the eighteen centuries that Lucian had enjoyed as a classical author. By arguing that Lucian had been incapable of having serious ideas of his own, and had never been an original

⁵⁶ As described in the entry of the Oxford DNB.

⁵⁷ Trans Holzberg (1988), 207.

⁵⁸ Baumbach's translation (2007), 206.

⁵⁹ Wilamowitz (1905).

writer, Helm thus fulfilled the desires of the Inquisition, Luther, and a handful of other conservative readers to silence Lucian once and for all.⁶⁰

In his *Lukian und Menipp*, Helm argued that Lucian could not have been a good writer because he was an imitator of Menippus, whose works could even be reconstructed thanks to Lucian's brazen plagiarism. However, Helm's whole point rested on the idea that Lucian was a nihilist sophist whose original source also lacked morality and ideals, and that he was also a plagiarist. This line of argument meant that although it was impossible to talk about Lucian's spiritual development, one could still attempt to make a chronology of Lucian's works based on their indebtedness to Cynicism and in particular to Menippus. Helm's point can be best perceived in his discussion about Lucian's sources for the *Hermotimus*. Before Helm, scholars had proposed that Lucian had imitated Old Comedy⁶¹ and Middle Comedy.⁶² But this discussion was soon replaced by the fact that there must have been a common source between him and Sextus Empiricus for the Modes of Agrippa. Helm dismissed Praechter's insightful proposal that Lucian could have borrowed the modes of Agrippa from Agrippa himself or from the Sceptic Aenesidemus,⁶³ and followed Frietzsche, who argued that the *Hermotimus* was an imitation of Menippus' *On Sects*. Interestingly, when Helm found himself unable to prove that the *Hermotimus* was an imitation of Menippus, he then went on to argue that Lucian had also imitated Plato, in particular the *Euthydemus*.⁶⁴

Helm's preference for Menippus over other sources becomes clearer when we learn what he believed philosophy to be. Helm contrasted real philosophy, whose defining characteristic was to have an Ideal, with three

⁶⁰ The effects of Helm's study on Lucian's status as a classic author can be perceived in the opinions of Capelle (1914), who tried to argue that sixth formers should not be forced to read Lucian as there were enough Greek literary treasures and that there was neither time nor affection for 'the spiritual nihilist'.

⁶¹ Ranke (1831).

⁶² Kock (1888).

⁶³ Praechter (1898).

⁶⁴ Helm (1906) 131.

forms of nihilism, which match Lucian's sources: sceptical nihilism, rhetorical or sophistic nihilism and the nihilism deriving from Old Comedy and Menippean Cynicism. The Cynics and the Sceptics had in common the rejection of the investigation of nature and theological speculation, in a way that was similar to Christian apologetics and to Old Comedy. Unlike Christian apologetics, and lacking the political incisiveness of Old Comedy, the works of Menippus of Gadara were not only the product of plagiarism themselves,⁶⁵ but also meaningless entertainment without content.⁶⁶ The grinning and biting Menippus, as he is presented in Lucian,⁶⁷ meant that his comedy contained a κωμωδῶν καὶ γελοιοποιῶν type of humour, but that the reader could not escape the superficial even if he tried to playfully pretend that it had a deeper philosophical aim. This was the reason why Strabo thought Menippus to be a satirist as a buffoon simply cannot be counted as a philosopher.⁶⁸

According to Helm, Menippus' Cynicism was in stark contrast with the moralising philosophy of Crates and Diogenes, but he was unsure whether its lack of philosophical content was intentional or unintentional, as in Menippus Cynic nihilism had found a witty proponent, whose skill was reflected in taking the motives of comedy, and making parodies of epic, and tragedy, on the one hand, and using the thoughts of the older Cynics in special situations and scenes adapting Platonic dialogue to comedy on the other.⁶⁹ Following Reich, Helm conceded that one can find Socratic irony, traces of the burlesque and mime in Plato,⁷⁰ but it was the products of mime and fantastic scenes that gave Menippus the uniqueness of his literary form, imitated and praised by Lucian and later authors. Menippus was neither a philosopher nor a Cynic, but a

⁶⁵ On this point, Helm is certainly not alone. See D.L. 6. 100, 10-13.

⁶⁶ Helm (1927), 888-894.

⁶⁷ Luc. *Bis Acc.* 33, see page 5 above. In Dudley (1937) the material on Menippus is a translation of Helm's entry in the *RE* (1927), 891. Dudley seems to have misread the German and Helm's interpretation of *Bis Acc.* 33.

⁶⁸ Strab. *Geog.* 16.2.29. Helm (1927) 891.

⁶⁹ On this point Helm follows Hirzel (1895), 385.

⁷⁰ Reich *Mimus Berl* (1903), 388.

sophist, an opportunist plagiarist writer, trying desperately to win over his audience. Menippus had manipulated previous writings unknown to us, from which he acquired his inclination for satire, freedom of spirit as well as hatred for real philosophy.⁷¹

It is for this reason, therefore, that Menippus *On Sects* seemed to be a more probable source for Lucian, as it was thanks to another imitator that his works were destined to transcend. Lucian, like Menippus lacked any Ideal, and like any real sophist snatched any opportunity for success and fame, regardless of how he might achieve this goal.⁷² It was this same attitude of Lucian's towards literature that he had towards Rome.⁷³ The only explanation for this attitude is that Lucian was as much a self-motivated freethinker as he was devoted and pious, and therefore his relationship with the Romans was friendly or hostile depending on the specific circumstances of interaction.⁷⁴

Helm's study was well received in Germany, where in the midst of WWII, still influenced by Norden, Helm, Hirzel and Wilamowitz, Eberhard Neef continued to condemn Lucian's relationship with the philosophical schools as the mere result of *mimesis*. The success of Helm's argument in many ways lays in allowing a unitarian reading of Lucian as opposed to a developmentalist one. Contrary to the unitarian reading of Plato, in which the various dialogues are assumed to have been composed from a single philosophically elevated to a point of view, in the unitarian reading of Lucian all dialogues tend to be read as produced as part of the same literary aim: to entertain with words without pursuing anything more serious than

⁷¹ Helm (1906), 347.

⁷² Helm (1906), 7.

⁷³ According to Helm Lucian gradually became more acquainted with the Roman world and started to mix Menippean satire with Roman satire, as is visible in the *Saturnalia*, - where he speaks on behalf of the Roman clients to the poor (πένητες) - and thanks to which, he ended up with a job in the Roman province of Egypt: Helm (1906) 255.

⁷⁴ Helm (1927), 1772-1773.

entertainment and remaining disenfranchised from any real philosophical and moral discussions.

4. Lucian, a Writer of Entertaining Fiction.

In contrast with 19th century idealism, studies after Helm are characterised by their textualism.⁷⁵ But Helm's version of the unitarian reading of Lucian compromised the quality of his works within two aspects. The first was formal: imitative literature can be seen as less valuable than original literature. The second was moral: literature, which treats serious religious and philosophical material superficially merely to entertain, is not very good. After Helm, scholars came to the rescue of Lucian, but in a way that will strengthened the unitarian interpretation of his comedy. As we will see in the following section, in arguing against developmentalist theories, scholars reduced Lucian's philosophical content to an imitative kind of literary wit, whose value had nothing to do with sincerity or autobiography, and everything with a sophistic literary game about stereotypes of philosophy. The conclusion that followed from this trend of thought was that rather than disdaining Lucian as a sophist, we should think of him as being similar to a modern writer of fiction.⁷⁶

After Helm, Marcel Caster dealt a second blow against developmentalist theories, by arguing that these were based on the subjective values of scholars,⁷⁷ and that *Nigrinus* was a work of complex rhetorical irony, which could not be taken at face-value as Lucian's conversion to Platonism.⁷⁸ For Caster, Lucian was never a philosopher but only a creator of literary games made up of stereotypes of philosophical conversions in a way that was similar

⁷⁵ For this change in literary studies in general see Rorty (1982), 139-159.

⁷⁶ For example, Borges (1955) in his prologue to the Spanish edition of Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* suggests that science fiction begins with Lucian's *True Histories*. This is also argued in a similar way by Georgiadou and Larmour (1998).

⁷⁷ Caster (1935), in Caster (1937), 376-380.

⁷⁸ Caster (1937), 117.

to the games of the sophists.⁷⁹ But this did not necessarily mean that Lucian was an unworthy author, as it could be argued that Lucian's take on Cynicism and philosophy was a literary way of criticizing corruption and useless complications and advocating for a simpler life, which allowed for the practice of *vraie culture*; Lucian's real ideal.

After Caster, it became possible not only to deny Lucian's conversion to philosophy, but to argue that confessional passages in Lucian's work were simply an amusing re-elaboration of commonplaces employed to contrast the true philosopher and the false philosopher for the sake of entertainment. If anything, Lucian's confessions were merely self-praise of having discovered a new form of sophistic display.⁸⁰ As a sophist, Lucian borrows from Epicureanism, Cynicism and Scepticism alike without committing to any school.⁸¹ Lucian is no longer an imitator of Menippus⁸² and his references to the Cynic are simply ways of recognizing his debt to the school,⁸³ for which reasons it is also pointless to seek Menippeanism everywhere in Lucian's work.⁸⁴ But equally one cannot deduce from this that Lucian converted to Cynicism, or to any other sect. In the presence of philosophy Lucian adopts the attitude of an ἰδιώτης, whose only certainty lies in *paideia* and in using literary and philosophical traditions to talk about that which surrounds him and his world,

⁷⁹ Caster (1937), 101.

⁸⁰ Schwartz (1965), 145-148 argues that the *logos orthos* of Epicurus only allowed Lucian to conciliate his joy and fantasy and his well-founded pessimism about the nature of things. See also Hall (1981), 35-37. 'Cynicism was not a philosophy in the true sense; nor was Lucian a true philosopher.' Alexiou (1990), 127.

⁸¹ Tackaberry, B. Schwarz, Neef, Gallavotti. Only Bevan argued that Lucian was a Sceptic in the full sense.

⁸² Hall (1981), 64-74.

⁸³ Hall (1981), 73; Lucian might have taken from Menippus and Cynic literature the topic of the 'world's a stage', which had become a popular one by his time, Hall (1981), 81, citing Max Tyr 1.1; M. Aur. 3.8; D. Chrys 64. 17; Epict. *Ench.*17, and Boulanger (1923), 415-417. It might even be acknowledged that it is from Menippus that he derives his use of scenes from the voyage to the underworld to illustrate the transience of worldly blessings, and prove the irrevocable equality of death, Hall (1981), 129-130.

⁸⁴ Even before and after Helm, scholars had warned against the attempt to see Menippeanism everywhere in Lucian's work, Praechter (1898) Hense (1902) and later McCarthy (1934).

but without pretending to transmit the truth, or giving any conclusive message, or promising anything to his reader.⁸⁵ Sometimes the term "eclecticism" is used to describe this particular phenomenon.⁸⁶ It is also convenient to argue that Lucian might have been trained in sophistry,⁸⁷ but that he never converted to philosophy.⁸⁸ In any case, Cynicism, his favourite school, was not a philosophy in the true sense and therefore Lucian was not a true philosopher,⁸⁹ or a *generis humani paedagogus* worried with the '*recta vivendi ratio*', for 'he was first and foremost a sophist (with an interest in philosophy), and this is how we should understand him.'⁹⁰

Lucian continued to appear as an educated man who sided with the common man in the confrontation with philosophy.⁹¹ One did not need to be a member of any school to have some knowledge of philosophy,⁹² since the educated had to have some knowledge of all the philosophical systems, and yet one did not need to belong to a particular school in order to adopt the views of that school. Therefore, if Lucian never converted to philosophy, then his treatment of the schools of philosophy had more to do with rhetoric and literary re-creation. Although he might not have been a philosopher, he might have always been an *artista*,⁹³ an *écrivain* whose true faith lays in a *paideia* consisting of classicism and mimesis.⁹⁴ Now we can speak of Lucian as a *pepaideumenos* with a *certaine éthique humaniste*,⁹⁵ whose notion of literary knowledge as the criterion of the absolute value of man, his definition of philosophy as the

⁸⁵ Mestre (2009), 93-107.

⁸⁶ Alexiou (1990), 28, citing Dillon and Long (1988).

⁸⁷ Bompaire (1958), 121

⁸⁸ Bompaire (1958), 124 n.3 and 153-153.

⁸⁹ Alexiou (1990), 127.

⁹⁰ Alexiou (1990), 72, 131.

⁹¹ Mestre (2009).

⁹² Alexiou (1990), 25.

⁹³ Gallavotti (1932).

⁹⁴ Bompaire (1958), 124 n.3 and 153-153; Reardon (1971), 159; Anderson (1976), 1-4; Alexiou (1990), 60-62, 138, 140-141.

⁹⁵ Mestre (2009), 93-107.

knowledge and set of practical morals at the service of Athens, and the idea that to be Hellenic was not a matter of race but a quality of the spirit, echo the ideas of Isocrates.⁹⁶ If some sort of evolution can be traced in Lucian's work this must be literary and not spiritual.⁹⁷

The reconsideration of the literary value of mimesis and the Second Sophistic, as well as of sophistry in general, was a third major blow against the idealism implicit in developmentalist readings of Lucian. Augusta M. Campbell Davidson, who should be credited with the first attempt in the 20th Century to make the *Hermotimus* available to every reader in English,⁹⁸ and the north-American feminist, classicist and educator Emily James Putnam, who was the first to value Lucian's comedy owing to its closeness to rhetoric and to the Second Sophistic,⁹⁹ sparked this change in attitude.

Jacques Bompaigne went one step further. He broke with Schillerian aesthetics, thereby giving an entirely new role to imitation in literary art, and appealed to the virtues of literature of the Second Sophistic in such a way as to recover Lucian's position as a classic.¹⁰⁰ Contrary to Schiller, Bompaigne argued that the most faithful interpretation of the spirit of the ancients was the study of art and imitation. Bompaigne emphasised the fact that the Greeks and the Romans were also preoccupied with the aesthetic choice between nature and *techne*, and that the common opinion of the ancients was that the poet had to be

⁹⁶ Luc. *Somn.* 10.12 and Isoc. 4. 47-50; Isoc. 10. 2-3. Caster (1937), 120-121, 367-368; Isoc. 4. 50. Caster (1937), 370. See also Hall (1981)174-175. On this point, see Apul. *Apol.* 24 *non enim ubi prognatus, sed ut moratus quisque sit spectandum, nec qua regione, sed qua ratione uitam uiuere inierit, considerandum est.*

⁹⁷ Schwartz (1965), 143; Jones (1986), 13-14. See also Reardon for whom even though admittedly Lucian is a *Halbphilosoph*, his development is only part of a rhetorical practice. 'Lucian's history is more "true" than serious' argues Reardon (1971), 164; see also Hall (1981), 64-74, 73, 165-175. One of the strongest opponents to developmentalist theories is Alexiou (1990) 10, 18, 30, 70-74, 138, 140-141. According to Alexiou, in Lucian's time the difference between philosophers and rhetoricians was not clearly marked; Alexiou (1990), 133. For Alexiou too, Isocrates is the example of the philosopher who praises rhetoric, 142.

⁹⁸ Campbell Davidson (1902).

⁹⁹ Putnam (1909).

¹⁰⁰ Bompaigne (1958).

able to meticulously apply the rules of poetry, thereby privileging skill, education and theory over inspiration. Bompaire also noted that some of the ancients would even openly argue in favour of the superiority of art, and in particular of the superiority of imitation.¹⁰¹ But even if the ancients argued about the dilemma between nature and art, they also knew this to be a false one, and that the two opposing forces complemented one another.¹⁰² The preference for one over the other could come from a divided and incomplete nature, or from an art completely detached from nature. Bompaire argued that the trilogy φύσις, τέχνη (μάθησις, ἐπιστήμη, γνῶσις), ἄσκησις (μελέτη, ἐπιμέλεια, ἐμπειρία) - art that was formed by the latter two - was suggested first by Protagoras, before being established by Plato, Aristotle and Isocrates as the φιλόσοφος ῥητορικὴ.¹⁰³ Later, the rhetorical tradition added *mimesis* to the concept of art. It was for this the reason that in some cases the notion of art was reduced to imitation, its role being to find an appropriate style that lead to the harmony and balance of nature. Perfection in nature, on the other hand, can be taken as mere good luck. It is absurd for us to choose one over the other when even the ancients argued that 'nature' includes art. If such a binary issue still prevails, this is only because the moderns have failed to understand art, and the doctrine of *mimesis*, even when the 'sublime' lies in the imitation of the ancients.

Following Perry, it seemed to Bompaire's student, B.P. Reardon, that post-Hellenistic man had lost his identity as a πολίτης, and that therefore his era was characterized by a certain Romanticism, in which the individual had become 'a spiritual wanderer who seldom knew where to go or what to do, with the result that he went almost everywhere in mind and body and thought all kinds of thoughts.' Whenever the intellectual was not in search of the

¹⁰¹ D. H. *Comp.* 20; Quint. 10. 2. 1, 20; Hermog. *Id.* 1. 1.

¹⁰² Ps. Longin. 36, 4.

¹⁰³ In this following Stemplinger (1912) 82-88. Cf. D. H. *Orat.* 1.7.

unknown, he 'retreated into the ivory tower and lulled his soul to peace by devoting himself to learning, or to art for art's sake.'¹⁰⁴ 'Reading the bulk of second century literature, that is to say such writings as reflect general tendencies, one is not transported into a real world, but into a sham one, in a museum of fossils.'¹⁰⁵ From the point of view of *paideia*, literary expression in the strictest sense follows a doctrine of mimesis. Therefore, it is the product of a literary culture that is forever referential to its literary patrimony and in that there is some kind of elevated game; an art for the sake of art.

Bompaire's characterization of Lucian as *écrivain* meant that Lucian's comedy was now solely entertainment,¹⁰⁶ and it no longer made much sense to think too much about Lucian's ideals, to try and situate Lucian's *pensée philosophique*,¹⁰⁷ or to worry about the critical potential of its scepticism or consequentiality of its laughter. If anything, Lucian's apparently abusive humour could only be explained as the defence of *paideia* against sectarianism.¹⁰⁸ In their research, the developmentalist readings of Lucian had found that his literature could be read as being particularly critical of hierarchies, of gods and men, of rulers and the ruled. It was possible that Lucian's humour might have been shameful and abusive that gave to his work philosophical value. By contrast, the unitarian reading of Lucian allowed his work to be that of a sophist whose almost single life-interest was to produce escapist literature for a reading elite through the amusing recreations of classical themes. These may, at times, perhaps, have been written for his own economic benefit, but his work did not aim to forward any particular philosophical theory. Neither did it promote his personal views on morality, religion and politics or seek to offend anyone.

¹⁰⁴ Perry (1955), 295-298.

¹⁰⁵ Van Groningen (1965), 52; Reardon (1971), 5.

¹⁰⁶ Hall (1981) 192-193

¹⁰⁷ Reardon (1971), 175.

¹⁰⁸ Caster, Reardon, Hall, Swain (1996), 298-392; see also Swain (2007), 29, 42.

In my opinion, current disagreements between Nesselarh and Möllendorff can be best explained as two trends in Lucianic studies which developed from the moment in history in which Lucian's work fell into the hands of Christians. In many ways, the unitarian account of Lucian is the result of the secularization of classical studies. Unlike the developmentalist theory, one key characteristic of the unitarian account of Lucian is to divide his works not by a progression, but into larger sections (for instance; fiction and historical works),¹⁰⁹ or even to treat them as a fictional universe whose parts can be compared against each other, without any problem, for the purposes of interpretation. But this is only made possible as the unitarian account is not particularly interested in discovering what the author's personal beliefs about the world that surrounded him, and tends to read Lucian's texts as mere sophistic entertainment, which lacks offensiveness and does not attempt to make an impact in real life. Developmentalists, by contrast, tend to arrange Lucian's texts by a progression depending on the sect or belief that scholars imagine Lucian closest to. For this reason, their account is also more prone to reading Lucian's humour as one that tries to defend truth by attacking the reputation of his enemies. Therefore, we might say that the presence or absence of *aischrologic* humour is that which divides the developmentalist theory from the unitarian.

Literary historians realized that *aischrology* had to play a major role in the interpretation of Lucian's comedy, as practices of patronage were at the core of the economy and the politics of literature and philosophy. It was simply too problematic to reduce all literature of the Second Sophistic to mere entertainment.¹¹⁰ Lucian's writings were part of the 'institutional life' of the

¹⁰⁹ Anderson (1976), 177; (2009), 3.

¹¹⁰ Bowersock 1969, for Lucian p. 115

second century,¹¹¹ and of its aging rhetorical culture, engaged with the political and social controversies of his time only in the variations of formulae.¹¹² What was perceived looking at as entertaining literature was in many ways a central aspect of the lives of powerful individuals who were also sophists and philosophers, and members of an elite of created by the Antonines, who (re)-created the figure of the sophist, and formed a new kind of intellectual which would go on to fight against ψευδοπαιδεία.¹¹³ Furthermore, Lucian's use of themes and variations of the past do not invalidate the possibility of satire.¹¹⁴ Similarly, class and provincial identities are not only fundamental to our own comprehension of the ideologies of the higher class, but also to our understanding of philosophers and intellectuals who were close to the elite and who were not politically neutral.¹¹⁵ 'The prominence of philosophy in Lucian's work is due not only to his reading or to the demands of his audiences but also to the fact that society and the culture of the day swarmed with philosophers as much as with sophists'.¹¹⁶ Lucian was 'not an otherworldly "artist," still less a "journalist," but a man in touch with his time'.¹¹⁷ Ultimately, it is hard to believe that Lucian's literature could have been entirely uncompromised, and this suggests that his take on philosophy had to respond, at least partially, to the internal politics of the economy of *paideia*. In spite of this, literary historians writing after Bompaire concluded that although Lucian might have reflected on the gap between wealth and poverty, his literature did not support any agenda for social change. Siding with ordinary citizens against philosophy as it appeared in the *Hermotimus*, suggested that for Lucian the life

¹¹¹ Anderson (1994), 1425.

¹¹² Anderson (1993), 1444-1445.

¹¹³ Bompaire (1958), 118- 119; Norden (1898) 1. 374. For ψευδοπαιδεία see Boulanger (1923) 438.

¹¹⁴ Baldwin (1973), 74. Baldwin introduced Marxism to Lucianic studies. Marx had also read Lucian, and looked at his atheism as a positive form of progress, see Marx (1975), 184 with van Leeuwen (1972), 149. See also Marx, (1977), 134. Baldwin is openly negative about Bompaire's approach, which (needless to say), implies that art can be done for the sake of art, 106-107.

¹¹⁵ Baldwin (1973), 88.

¹¹⁶ Jones (1986) 32

¹¹⁷ Jones (1986), 23.

of the common man was the best, and it was for that reason he attacked asceticism as an extravagance of philosophical and religious minds, who appeared almost desperate for a holy or divine man to germinate.¹¹⁸ At least in this sense, Lucian's comedy had to have some critical consequences.¹¹⁹ But, even if Lucian 'displays sympathy for the lot of the common man,' 'he would have hated to have been thought one'.¹²⁰ In the end, Lucian's literature seems to have been for the most part non-offensive and largely entertaining.¹²¹

Even though the unitarian reading of Lucian rescued his popularity after WWII, seeing in Lucian only an entertaining writer of fiction did not favour a text like the *Hermotimus* which was no longer read as a philosophical dialogue and was now seen as boring and mechanical in the development of its ideas.¹²² As Nesselrath notes, this dialogue did not capture the attention of most scholars in the 20th century,¹²³ and this is why, apart from Möllendorff's commentary, there are very few other examples that mention it in passing.

¹¹⁸ Anderson (1994) 4-16.

¹¹⁹ Jones (1986) 39 referring to the Zeus Tragic.

¹²⁰ Baldwin (1973), 116-117.

¹²¹ Baldwin (1973), 103. For Alexiou too the intention of joking about serious matters of Lucianic comedy can count as the best kind of humour (Cic. *De. Or.* 2. 250.) of an entertaining sophist Alexiou (1990), 4.

¹²² Reardon (1971), 174; Robinson (1979), 31; Hall (1981), 155.

¹²³ Nesselrath (1992), 3451-3452.

Chapter 3

Rescuing the Philosophical Content of Lucian's Comedy

The unitarian reading of Lucian brought with it an aesthetic reevaluation of the imitative and parodic form of literature from the Second Sophistic. But it did so by defending the value of literature written for literature's sake and literature written for the sake of entertaining. Confining all possible critical consequences of its humour to the realm of the textual and the literary meant that Lucian's texts as diminished in their philosophical value, which had depended largely on their *aischrologia* and sceptical potential to go beyond the textual. In the following chapter I will show that in recent scholarship there has been a tendency to rescue the philosophical content of Lucian by replacing a framework that finds more interesting a nihilist absurd comedy that debunks all ideals with the Romantic aesthetic literary framework, which has idealism as its core value.

It seems that the idea that Lucian might have been a provincial author whose humour criticised concrete hierarchies (religious figures and institutions, or powerful politicians) is no longer philosophically appealing. Scholars are no longer so much interested in reading Lucian as an author who tells us what really happened in his life. Instead they prefer to see in his literature evidence of an undermining of authority, which holds the structure of any given text: the authority of the text's author. Seeing in Lucian a forerunner of nihilism appears to have been the last turn towards textualism in Lucianic studies.

Bracht Branham was the first to introduce this trend that is now the basis of a more recent aesthetic framework used to value Lucian's work. Branham sought to prove that Lucian's comedy ought to be considered as valuable owing to its lack of straightforward moral, political and philosophical stances, and, because of its all-encompassing kind of humour, which appeared

to him to have been the work of a forerunner of nihilism. By way of illustrating, Branham had to introduce another aesthetic framework, which I suspect was based on Nietzschean values of the comic, which were, willingly or not, introduced via the work of Mikhail Bakhtin.

I find the matter interesting enough to warrant an analysis of how this reversal of opinions about Lucian's nihilism could have happened in the first place.

1. Subverting Romantic Aesthetics: F. Nietzsche's Values of the Comic

We do not know the extent of Nietzsche's influence in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and in his theory of the novel,¹ but there seems to have existed a somewhat fraught relationship between the two.² Is it possible Bernays referred to Lucian's works as a *nihilistische Öde* with the purpose of attacking Friederich Nietzsche? Perhaps Nietzsche's use in the *Birth of Tragedy* of Bernays' groundbreaking interpretation of the Aristotelian concept of catharsis as a medical term particularly riled him?³ One can hardly overestimate the importance of the philosophy of Friederich Nietzsche in the most recent interpretations of Lucian's comedy, precisely because Nietzsche allows a literature that presents an all-encompassing laughter aimed at the absurdity of the world to be

¹See Clark and Holquist (1984), 26 and Curtis, J. (1986) 339-344 who highlight the importance of Nietzsche in Bakhtin. The relationship of influence between these two intellectuals has to be analysed more deeply through an analysis of Rohde's *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorläufer*, which was highly praised by Bakhtin who used it to theorize about the prehistory of novelistic discourse, see Bakhtin (1981), 4, 64, 372. For Nietzsche, Bakhtin and Plato's *Symposium* and the novel. See Corrigan and Glazov-Corrigan (2005), especially 32, 44.

² *Rabelais and His World* was first published in 1968. For a concise and clear introduction to Bakhtin see Schmitz (2007), 63-75. See also Dentith's (1995) excellent book. For Bakhtin, the classics, and Lucian see in particular the articles of Emerson, Edwards, Nagy in Branham (2002). See Branham (2005) for an analysis of the poetics of Menippean satire.

³ As it is well known Bernays' most important contribution was his (1867) *Grundzüge der verlorenen Abhandlung des Aristoteles über Wirkung der Tragödie*, which argued that the term catharsis in Aristotle was a borrowing from medicine. Prof. Vöhler at the Freie Universität Berlin is currently working on a project called *The Pathologizing of Catharsis in the 19th Century: Bernays, Freud, Nietzsche*.

philosophically interesting. Besides, Nietzsche's own writing is Lucianic in some ways, as I am about to show.

Nietzsche's references to Lucian are scarce,⁴ although it is quite likely that he remained a reader of Lucian throughout his life,⁵ and thereby, almost certainly, owes at least some stylistic elements to Lucian.⁶ For instance, it is not too bold to read *Thus spoke Zarathustra* as Nietzsche's most Lucianic piece. This is a work about a holy man, Zarathustra, who happens to be also an anti-idealist, nihilist and mistrustful sage, and who leads the way to the creation of the superman or *Übermensch*. This is a concept that is undoubtedly, although not solely, based on Lucian's term ὑπεράνθρωπος.⁷ Perhaps one can also see some similarities between *Hermotimus* and the *Wanderer and his Shadow*, which was published as part of the second volume of *Human, all too Human*. Many of Nietzsche's previous ideas about the relationship between laughter and truth and the aesthetics of comedy and satire were consolidated in this later work.

⁴ Babich perhaps is right in finding similarities between the beginning of *On Truth and Lie in an Extra Moral Sense*, published just one year after *The Birth of Tragedy*, and Lucian's *True Story*, Babich (2014), 247-248. Babich has also argued that in *Twilight of the Idols 2*, in the section called *What I owe to the Ancients*, Nietzsche praised Lucian: Babich (2013), 14 n. 2.

⁵ Although after 1878 and up to the publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche seems to have lost interest in the Dionysian, his interest in the role of laughter in philosophy, Menippus and the seriocomic can be found before and after his 'Dionysian period'. In his early years Nietzsche's incessant philological production was focused mostly on Greek literature. Soon after he went to teach at the Gymnasium in Basel, where he gave courses on Lucian and every other major author of antiquity, he exchanged bibliographic gossip about Erwin Rhode's upcoming *Lucian's Schrift: Loukios ê ónos* published in 1869 and was in competition with Knauth's *De Luciano libelli qui inscribitur Lucius sive asinus auctore* published in 1869 (KGWB 1. 2. 383). Out of 22 essays published before he turned 23 (See Latacz (2014), 11., it is) the one essay on Latin literature, *Über die Varronischen Satiren und den Cyniker Menippus* published on the 6th of November, 1868, which stands out. In a letter sent to Erwin Rhode three days later, Nietzsche tells of his excitement of delivering the first lecture of the semester on the same topic. Nietzsche had not obtained his doctorate, but was hoping to get a dispensation owing to the impressive number of essays he had published. Getting a dispensation would feel like 'being a bridegroom, joy and vexation mingled, humour, γένος σπουδογέλοιον, Menippus!' At the end of the letter, Nietzsche proposed that Rhode write a *Beiträge zur griechischen Litteratureschichte* in which he would include essays about the writings of Democritus, the *Certamen* of Homer and Hesiod, and Menippus (KGWB 1. 2. 599).

⁶ Burnham and Jesinghausen (2010), 32-33 fail to see the relevance of Lucian among the different traditions of satirists influencing Nietzsche.

⁷ Luc. *Cat.* 16.

Here, we find a short dialogue between an old man and Pyrrho,⁸ who is questioned about the possibility of educating men on how to mistrust and disbelieve everything. What is interesting about this piece is that it certainly resembles not only Fontenelle and Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead*, as the latter is Fontenelle's model,⁹ but also the *Hermotimus*. Without underestimating Nietzsche's unusual originality, the topic of the quest for education; the metaphor of the road and the gate; the hint at Hesiod's two roads; the somewhat honest old man admits that he should not be listened to as a carrier of truth but as a teacher of mistrust of truth (which paradoxically is the only way to truth) and finally the notion of laughter and staying silent (which is, of course, part of the Sceptics' aphasia) as constituting a better philosophy; inevitably make us think of the *Hermotimus*, and Lycinus' advice to stay sober and remember to distrust.

Besides his own possible Lucianism, the reason why Nietzsche is so relevant to the interpretation of Lucian is because his take on comedy allows a work of comic art to be deemed as better as it does not depend on the righteousness of his satiric stance, but on the extent of its potential to debunk all claims to truth by laughing at existence.¹⁰ A comedy that laughs at everything rejects faith with its idea that God is truth and that truth is divine,¹¹ and it

⁸ See Bett (2000), 67 for the problems and advantages of reading Pyrrho as a historical figure.

⁹ Sommer (2006), 260.

¹⁰ According to Nietzsche the essence of humanity and its most invincible instinct is to preserve the species, but we are still in an era of morality and religions. However, whatever one does, good or evil, and regardless of whether one is mocked or praised for it, it is done for the sake of human existence. In history there had been several 'teachers of the purpose of existence' who try to bring meaning to our lives, but they deceive us by inventing higher purposes or imagining a greater existence. These teachers do not know that it is the whole of existence that is laughable. Thus, all reason, purpose and trust in life are nothing more than the object of laughter. In spite of the corrective power of laughter, teachers of the purpose of existence keep on emerging. In order to stop this cycle, an individual will have to 'laugh at oneself as one would have to laugh in order to laugh from the whole truth'. If one were able to laugh at all existence and all truth and falsehood, laughter would acquire tragic undertones, Nietzsche (2002), 27-29, Fr 1.

¹¹ Nietzsche (2002), 200-201. Fr. 344.

rejects ascetic 'persons of faith' including philosophers,¹² scientist and scientists alike, precisely because the latter is also based on a 'faith of truth', which is based on perception.¹³

All this does not mean that Nietzsche denies the possibility of truth, but that one is left with a new infinity that consists of infinite interpretations.¹⁴ But it does mean that in the end, all serious talk is meaningless.¹⁵ The comedy of existence strikes us with the realization that the choice is not between reason and the senses, scepticism and belief, truth and falsehood, but between falsehood and despair, laughter and absurdity. Before we can even understand, we can only laugh, lament, and curse,¹⁶ but if gay science prevails laughter will be paired to wisdom.¹⁷

In this way, Nietzsche elevated the epistemological potential of laughter to wisdom, but only as long as it preserved a high degree of pessimism and scepticism. The seriocomic and laughing at the absurdity of life is for Nietzsche a matter of unveiling that which is serious, depending on the artificial hierarchies that have been constructed by truth. In this way, Nietzsche states that just as it is assumed that gods also philosophise, he has no 'doubt that they thereby also know how to laugh in a superhuman and new way – and at the expense of all serious things!'¹⁸ A true philosopher is measured according to the importance of his laughter.¹⁹ The more a philosopher is capable of laughing at all idealism and everything that gives meaning to existence, the better a philosopher he is.

Valuing a comedy of existence implied rephrasing Schiller's notion of nostalgia for nature and the naïve in art, but it also gave Lucianic satire a

¹² Nietzsche (2002), 210. Fr. 352; Nietzsche (2002), 217. Fr. 357.

¹³ Nietzsche (2002), 200. Fr. 344.

¹⁴ Nietzsche (2002), 239-240. Fr. 374.

¹⁵ Nietzsche (2002), 182-183. Fr. 327.

¹⁶ Nietzsche (2002), 185-186. Fr. 333.

¹⁷ Nietzsche (2002), 28. Fr. 1.

¹⁸ Nietzsche (2001), 152. Fr. 257.

¹⁹ Nietzsche (2001), 174-175. Fr. 294.

privileged place in the chronology of the life of myths and religion,²⁰ and in the history of the novel.²¹ Like Schiller, Nietzsche welcomed the abusiveness of laughter, although he differed from the Romantic writer in that which he saw as the value of Lucianic satire in the attacks against those who moralized in the need of a fading God.²² While for Schiller satire and scepticism have an aesthetic value because they are construed, in and are at the service of, an intrinsic or previously conceived set of moral values, for Nietzsche, on the contrary, Lucianic satire is valuable because it highlights the crisis of morality and rational and divine truths, and because in so far as it does this it also sides, through laughter, with the Dionysian.

Further differences between Schiller and Nietzsche are perceived in the opinions of the latter of Voltaire,²³ who is praised for his grace, for his faun-like free spirit, and whose virtues lie precisely in his lack of moralizing and his relativity about truth,²⁴ and of Wieland, whose translations of Cicero and

²⁰ Nietzsche (1999), 54

²¹ In *Birth of Tragedy out of The Spirit of Music* Nietzsche argues that Platonic dialogue, like tragedy before it, mixed all the available artistic styles, comic and tragic, and arrived half way 'between narrative, lyric, and drama, between prose and poetry, thus breaking the strict older law about the unity of linguistic form.' Plato's dialogues then became the model of the novel, 'which can be defined as an infinitely intensified Aesopian fable where poetry has the same rank in relation to dialectic philosophy as, for centuries, philosophy had in relation to theology, namely that of ancilla.' Only in this way could Plato manage to tame what was daemonic in Socrates, and later art became excessively philosophical and dependent on dialectics and logics. At a later period, the Cynic writers went further than Plato in terms of the form of the dialogue and mixed prose with metrical forms, arguing in favour of the irrational through the figure of 'the mad Socrates', and they performed their lives according the life-style of Diogenes. Nietzsche (1999), 69. However, after tragedy was co-opted by Socrates and the old religion of the Greeks had faded away, the beauty of their myths collapsed and 'soon the mocking Lucians of the ancient world chase after the discoloured, ravaged flowers scattered by all the winds that blow.' Nietzsche (1999), 54. Thus, in this early work of Nietzsche, Lucian's satire already has the potential of being a remedy to Platonic rationalism and to Cynicism as a development of Platonism.

²² McFadden (1982), 175-176.

²³ Nietzsche (1997), 46. See Schacht's introduction (1996) ix to *Human all Too Human*. While gradually Nietzsche departed from Romantic aesthetics, he never abandoned his appreciation for Voltaire, to whom he dedicated the first edition of his second book, *Human, all too Human*. For a direct and vivid account of Nietzsche's later relationship with romanticism see Nietzsche (2001), 234-236. Fr. 370. See also Nietzsche (1996), 26. Fr. 25.

²⁴ Nietzsche (2001), 35. Fr. 35. See also Nietzsche (2001), 101. Fr. 216.

Lucian are the best example of German prose,²⁵ but who in the end is condemned for his proclivity to moralize.²⁶

2. Bakhtinean Values of the Comic

Throughout his life Nietzsche reinterpreted Cynic values, and even, from *The Gay Science* onwards, began to portray himself as seriocomic philosopher with Cynic and Menippean traits.²⁷ Similarities between Nietzsche's absurdist, nihilist laughter and that which we know about Cynic laughter are not hard to find, perhaps as it is possible to find some sort of existential comedy in old Cynic humour.

Diogenes, who like Socrates claimed to be ignorant of most things,²⁸ rejected social conventions, common religious beliefs, and traditional forms of *paideia*, which he deemed to be distractions from virtue.²⁹ Accordingly, he fiercely defended his own creed and opinions by mocking important citizens, but also Homer, Plato and Isocrates,³⁰ and by making parodies of the syllogisms

²⁵ Nietzsche (1996), 333. Fr. 90.

²⁶ Nietzsche (1996), 336 Fr. 107

²⁷ In the latter book, Nietzsche brought Cynic *parrhesia* to talk about the physiological reactions to Wagner in much less positive tones than he had done so in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche (2002), 232-233. Fr. 368; As it is attested in one of his late notes of 1886 he even toyed with the idea of writing a *Dionysos philosophos: A Satura Menippea* (KGWB 8.1. 228.), a project that might have had resonated with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*; see Gillespie (1996), 229. KGWB 8. 3. 404. In one of his later notes written between September and October 1888, Nietzsche feels free to link Jacques Offenbach with Heinrich Heine and Petronius with Menippean Satire, See Nietzsche's positive remarks about Petronius (KGWB 6. 2. 43, 41-42). In *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche even made a parody of Horace's dictum *ridendo dicere verum quid vetat for ridendo dicere severum* (Hor. *Serm.* 1.24) and in his autobiographic *Ecce Homo* (written in 1888 but not published until 1908) he even claimed that the highest thing that could be attained on Earth was Cynicism.

²⁸ D.L. 6.24, 6.26, 6.58, 6.64

²⁹ D.L. 6. 63.

³⁰ D.L. 6.54.

of intellectuals,³¹ thereby pointing at the distraction represented by rationalism when virtue lies in those deeds that have a basis in theory.³²

In this sense, one aspect of Cynic humour is *aischrologia* and parodic and is therefore closer to our notion of satire. Diogenes' keenness for parody, and verbal puns that pointed at the tyranny of reason was later incorporated into Cynic satirical literature by his later epigones Hipparchia, Crates, Metrocles, Monimus, Menippus, Bion of Borysthenes, Teles and Cercidas. All these authors are credited with using the iambus and elegy and with parodying tragedy, hexameters, epistolary literature, dialogues and diatribes to convey their doctrinal message. Nevertheless, Diogenes and other Cynics also insisted on falling back on nature in order to live a good life, and accepted courageously every caprice of *Tychê*, who behaved as the theatre directress of human comedy.³³ Cynics practiced another kind of humour closer to our comedy of existence, because for them *tychê* exceeded the possibilities of *logos*, and all attempts to find absolute moral values, as long as they came from *nomos*, were meaningless. Their humour sought to provoke laughter by reviewing the incongruence and absurdity of all attempts to find meaning in human affairs that did not correspond to nature, such as conventions and reason.

What classicists should not forget is that Mikhail Bakhtin made the category 'Menippean Satire' a useful tool, which could be used to explain the origins of that which he called the polyphonic novel.³⁴ Bakhtin believed that totalizing seriocomic tones had been a response that came from the 'unofficial' world, which found the order of the 'official' world absurd and solipsistic. This

³¹ D.L. 6.37, 68 Branham 93-94.

³² The deeds of Diogenes are documented in the *chreia*. However, the idea that virtue lies mostly in deeds and not in words seems to have come from Antisthenes. D.L. 6.11, see Branham (1996), 83.

³³ Teles in Stob. *Fl.* 108.82.

³⁴ The mixture of prose and verse has worked for the definition of this genre, cf. Bakhtin (1984), 113. But see also Relihan, (1984), 228-229, proving that modern criticism has filled a gap in ancient literary nomenclature by naming a genre "Menippean satire". Fields (2008) for a full discussion of *parrhesia* in Roman Greece. See also Visa-Ondarçuhu (2006), Foucault (2004) and Martín García and Macías Villalobos (2008), 15-86 and 960-1027.

kind of all-encompassing humour can be perceived in 'Menippean satire' and in the rest of the several branches of European seriocomic traditions, which find their roots in the primeval poetics of ancient carnival festivals such as the Saturnalia, and that gave birth to the polyphonic novel.³⁵

According to Bakhtin the carnival was a performance, but one that made no distinction between audience and performers, and which through laughter created a 'misalliance,' or a dialogue between 'the sacred and the profane, the low and the high, the great with the insignificant, the wise with the stupid.'³⁶ During the carnival a king is crowned and then subsequently de-crowned, a symbol of death and rebirth, but once the festival was finished, the "popular-festive forms", "the folk," "the unofficial world," "popular-festive culture" was replaced again by the official monologic world, and life returned to normality. The purpose of these carnivals was not only to momentarily change the order of things in order to allow them to continue, but also to establish a link between the past, the present and the future and for the individual to dissolve into the social.

³⁵ Erasmus and More's translations of Lucian transformed the genre of the dialogue and of literature in general in the Renaissance, Gómez (2000) 90-102; Gallo Gruss (2003) 131-156. Lucian's texts, along with Erasmian literature, are sometimes today read as if they belonged to the literary genre Menippean Satire. However, the term in a generic form was not used until 1581 by Justus Lipsius, and only in reference to writers in Latin (Varro, Apuleius, Seneca and Petronius). Lucian's texts were labelled 'Menippean Satire' later than this in a pamphlet that defended the idea of a Catholic France independent of the Spanish Crown, entitled *Abbrégé et l'Ame des Etats convoquez an l'an 1593*. See *Satyre Ménippée de la vertu du catholicon d'Espagne et de la tenue des estatz de Paris* (1882). See the discussion in De Smet (1996) 44, and 43-45. In the justification of the new title for the second edition of this pamphlet which circled Europe widely, the author, who in all likelihood was the philologist Jean Passerat, argues that satire is not just malicious gossip reprehending public or individual vices, as carried out by satirists Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal and Persius, but all kinds of writings that mix prose and verse, and make use of many different arguments, see Marcilly (1882), 331. The adjective Menippean thus refers to prose containing bitter puns and mockeries like that of Menippus', which can cause laughter, and that challenges and corrects the vices of mankind. Menippus is the creator of this satire, and Varro, Lucian, Petronius and Apuleius were his later imitators. Therefore, unlike Bakhtin's theory of Menippean satire, in its origins the term seemed to refer to an all-encompassing kind of moral satire.

³⁶ Bakhtin (1984), 123.

'Carnivalized literature' resulted from the influence of the carnival in literature. It was born in an epoch in which national legends and ethical norms 'that constituted the ancient "seemliness" ("beauty", "nobility")' were in decay. Before the advent of Christianity, there was a competition between heterogeneous religious and philosophical schools and movements and "ultimate questions" of worldview were on everyone's lips. Prophets and wonder-makers were encountered in public spaces with even more frequency than monks of the Middle Ages during the flourishing of monastic sects.

Seriocomic genres were able to conceal all the serious monologic genres, and the contradictory ideas and opinions of the outside in an 'inner logic.'³⁷ By absorbing the serious genres and monologic discourses, Menippean satire not only established both an external and internal 'dialogicality' of approach to human life and thought between the serious genres.³⁸

One characteristic of Menippean satire is that it is in close relationship with Socratic dialogue, and is characterized by the syncretic juxtaposition of various points of view, which display the technique of provoking one's interlocutor to speak. Bakhtin calls this practice *anacrisis*, and identifies Socrates as its best practitioner. In Socratic dialogue, however, all the interlocutors are ideologists, which means that when an idea is being tested, the character embodying the idea is also under scrutiny, for which reason Bakhtin speaks of the 'image of an idea'.³⁹ Bakhtin's point is that by means of *syncrisis*, the utopias of the wise man collide with the world's evil, depravity, baseness, and vulgarity.⁴⁰

Menippus is the creator of the classical form of Menippean satire, but Bakhtin argued that the genre had arisen earlier, from Socratic dialogue, perhaps with Antisthenes. The fragments of Menippus, Heraclides Ponticus,

³⁷ Bakhtin (1984), 119.

³⁸ Bakhtin (1984), 120.

³⁹ Bakhtin (1984), 111-112.

⁴⁰ Bakhtin (1984), 115.

Bion of Borysthenes, and Varro (Bakhtin believed incorrectly that Varro used the term Menippean Satire to refer to a generic form⁴¹), the pseudo-Hippocratic *Letters*, and the *Apocolocyntosis*, are according to Bakhtin some of the few remaining examples of Menippean satire.

Lucian's dialogues have similarities with Menippean satire, his texts 'taken as a group, are an entire encyclopaedia of his time: they are full of overt and hidden polemics with various philosophical, religious, ideological and scientific schools, and' 'they challenge the 'masters of thought' in all spheres of societal and ideological life.'⁴²

However, as in the case in the works of Roman satirists Lucilius and Horace, Lucianic dialogues borrow elements of Menippean satire and are according to Bakhtin not Menippean satire proper, even if it is through such elements, in modern times, that Menippean satire has exerted its influence.⁴³ It is very important to mention that Bakhtin is explicit about the differences between Rabelais' carnivalized literature in the full sense of the word and Lucian's:

Lucian's laughter is always abstract, ironical, devoid of true gaiety. Scarcely anything remains of the ambivalence of the saturnalian symbols. The traditional images are bloodless and made to serve the abstract moral philosophies of Stoicism (moreover, degenerate and distorted by late Cynicism). His kings are slapped 'in the face, as the least of slaves.' But these are commonplace punishments of the regime of slavery, transferred to Hades. They are but a dim survival of the saturnalian ambivalent king-slave images. They are mere blows devoid of all generating force; they do not contribute to birth and renewal. Lucian's banquet presents the same

⁴¹ Relihan (1984) has proved that the term did not acquire a generic form until the late 16th century, and concluded that 'modern criticism has filled in a gap in ancient literary nomenclature by naming a genre Menippean Satire'. See his book (1993) on ancient Menippean Satire. See also De Smet (1996), 13-56 and Weinbrot (2005), 6-19.

⁴² Bakhtin (1984), 110.

⁴³ Bakhtin (1984), 137.

commonplace, superficial aspect; the inmates of Lucian's underworld also eat, but eating has nothing in common with Rabelaisian feasting. Former kings may not enjoy it, but neither can the former slaves and beggars. Everybody eats but nobody feasts, not even the philosophers, who only laugh ironically, mocking the uncrowned kings and the wealthy. This is what matters most. Lucian's material bodily principle merely serves to debase the higher images, to render them commonplace, with almost no ambivalence. It does not renew or regenerate.⁴⁴

Thus, the work of Rabelais, unlike Lucian, can be considered proper *carnivalized literature*, because the author's voice, opinions and intentions join the 'joyful relativity of everything.'⁴⁵ When Lucian gave a definitive form to Menippean Satire, and established its modern form, his authorial presence was final and conclusive, and controlled the hostility of carnivalesque laughter towards the official, and inclined the genre towards the centripetal, the unifying, the monologic, the moralizing, the archaizing, canonical and hierarchical.

All of these are necessary characteristics for any given literary genre to survive. Perhaps one could argue that Bakhtin was reluctant to classify Lucian's comedy as carnivalesque literature in the same way that he related the seriocomic to Menippus and not to Aristophanes and Old Comedy.⁴⁶ Lucian might exhibit some of the stylistic features of the grotesque,⁴⁷ but in spite of the Menippean presences in his work, as in the case of Aristophanes and Old Comedy, he deviates from the popular because he is suspected of being politically conservative and of trying to convey ideas that belong to the official world.

⁴⁴ Bakhtin (1984b), 387-388.

⁴⁵ Bakhtin (1984), 126.

⁴⁶ Edwards (2001) published in Branaham (2002), 27-55.

⁴⁷ The influence of Nietzsche on Bakhtin's Aesthetics of Grotesque Realism is studied by Mazour-Matusevich (2009). However, more attention is needed on the influence Nietzsche might have had on social class, and the relativity of bad taste and good taste in literature incorporating the aesthetic taste of what Nietzsche calls Southern humanity. Nietzsche (2001), 78. See also fr. 76 and Fr. 218.

3. Adapting the Framework to New Values of the Comic

Bracht Branham was the first to appreciate Lucianic nihilistic laughter through the Nietzschean-Bakhtinean values of the comic as positive,⁴⁸ and in doing so he replaced the Romantic aesthetic literary framework with a nihilist absurdist one. His appreciation of the 'anarchically comic' aspect of Lucian's literature, which not only attacks idealism, but is lacking in any ideal,⁴⁹ is an evident criticism of moralist valuations of satire which believe that the task of good satire is to rebuke vice.⁵⁰ Instead, Branham proposed that Lucian's seriocomic literature did not seek 'to persuade us of the truth of one of two opposed dogmas but to generate comically disorienting contrasts between traditional "truths," and thereby to reveal both the kind of validity that inhabits a tradition and why that validity is merely partial.'⁵¹ But careful attention must be paid to the role of *aischrology* in Branham's approach, because today the less offensive and the less of a moralist Lucian is found to be, the more he is perceived as a philosophical a thinker.

Branham concedes that Lucian would have appreciated humour that denounces false-seriousness and that stands for true-seriousness,⁵² but his purpose was to show the ambiguous seriousness of the self-contradictory truths given by an apparently congruent literary tradition that started with Homer,

⁴⁸ Branham only mentions Gilman's *Nietzschean Parody* and does not make any direct reference to Nietzsche, but the aesthetic values that he used to rescue the philosophical importance of Lucian clearly come from his reinterpretation of Bakhtin's notion of the seriocomic in Lucian's literature, see Branham (1989), 26-28.

⁴⁹ Branham (1989), 5-6, 13, and 225: 'the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual is in fact a central preoccupation in Lucian, but he often uses the contrast to call the ideal itself into question.'

⁵⁰ Van Rooy (1965), 90-92. While agreeing with Hendrickson (1927), 52,47, 49-51 on the importance of γέλως and κατάγελως in satirical authors, Van Rooy argued that the humour of Menippus and Lucian lacks the τὸ σπουδαῖον completely because it does not follow any ἀρχή. Their works are therefore pseudo-satire because of their sham seriousness, and because they wrote chiefly for entertainment, which is merely negative and completely nihilistic. Only one serious thing remains and that is –to raise a laugh. Van Rooy (1965), Chpt. 3.

⁵¹ Branham (1989), 102.

⁵² Branham (1989), 63.

thereby 'making foreign, fanciful, and subversive points of view accessible.'⁵³ Humour in Lucian only offers a 'source of insight' that allows us to think about an object from two or more perspectives at once.⁵⁴ Although Lucian might have sometimes led some attacks against his enemies, such as Alexander, he did so as a conservative.⁵⁵ But Lucian is at his best when he is truly a seriocomic author, and demands that his humour stays within the boundaries of the text and is used as a mere instrument for causing laughter at the incongruous.⁵⁶

Therefore, Branham concludes, Lucian's work is mostly parodic and not satiric.⁵⁷ It is a literature that is *utile et dulce* only in so far as it reveals through parody literary procedures, and the condition of mankind⁵⁸ through its characters,⁵⁹ who desire 'to get out in order to look in,"⁶⁰ and who share with the reader their privileged perspective in which it is impossible to distinguish between the boundaries of the serious and the comic. More often than not Lucian's criticisms fall into being mere expressions of "wit for its own sake,"⁶¹ as they appeal to his tendency to fulfil the role of a playful and entertaining intellectual. Lucian used his wit for 'critical purposes', which meant inserting serious material in ironic contexts and systematically provoking the reader to consider serious material from humorously divergent perspectives. This is a comic ambivalence, in which 'the reader is often made uncertain as to how seriously any given point of view is being advocated by the author.'⁶² Authorial distance is a necessary part of this kind of entertainment and is as important as the distance between audience and tradition, precisely because distance invites the reader to enter Lucianic literature as a kind of game, and to avoid its

⁵³ Branham (1989), 22, 82.

⁵⁴ Branham (1989), 91.

⁵⁵ Branham (1989), 264 n. 68.

⁵⁶ Branham (1989), 57; 133-134 and 240.

⁵⁷ Branham (1989), 130.

⁵⁸ Branham (1989), 23-24. Cf. *Luc. Men.* 16.

⁵⁹ Branham (1989), 62.

⁶⁰ Branham (1989), 61. Cf. Duncan (1979), 16.

⁶¹ Branham (1989), 88, 61.

⁶² Branham, (1984), 162-3.

illusion. Therefore, even if it is itself a game, this literature has its own kind of seriousness.⁶³

In Bakhtin, Menippean satire in the true sense of the word was, among other things, aesthetically relevant, because its taste for the grotesque and its all-encompassing humour implied criticizing and even offending 'the official'. But the path taken by recent scholars when thinking about 'Menippean Satire' emphasises it as a heuristically valid historical category and has led to an interpretation of Lucian whose interest is to challenge the authority of the author itself, but whose literature is not *aischrologic*.

Branham was not terribly interested in why Lucian's literature was not, according to Bakhtin, carnivalized literature proper,⁶⁴ and he considered that Menippean seriocomic humour 'works by revealing to the audience as problematic the appropriateness of laughter or seriousness in a given context.'⁶⁵

Along with

Petronius, Erasmus, Rabelais, Voltaire and others, Lucian is today considered to be an exponent of *parrhesia* and a cultivator of the genre of the *spoudaiogeloion*, both fundamental aspects of Menippean Satire and Cynic humour. But criticisms of the Bakhtinian definition of seriocomic literature as hostile literature of the carnivalesque have been made based on the fact that the context of a ritual promoted by the state itself, gave room to *aischrologic* or hostile speech and happened under a license that granted state-sponsored democratic

⁶³ Branham (1989), 20-21.

⁶⁴ For Branham, the purpose of Menippean Satire is to produce a dramatic change of perspective, but not to challenge the official. He contrast this with the humour of Aristophanes that creates laughter by reversing binary oppositions, for example, war for peace, Branham (1989), 17.

⁶⁵ Branham (1989), 56.

freedom of speech (*parrhesia*).⁶⁶ It has therefore been argued that what seems to be ‘popular’, ‘subversive’ and ‘offensive’ in seriocomic literature might have only challenged the ‘official’ in a very narrow sense, but never its basic structures.⁶⁷

On the other hand, the hunch that within the work of Lucian, along with that of Menippus and his near contemporary Oenomaus (all of whom were natives of the Anatolian peninsula), one could find some sort of nihilistic Cynic humour already existed.⁶⁸ Today, scholars seem to have reached an agreement that Lucian was closer to literary Cynicism than he was to doctrinal Cynicism, or Scepticism and Epicureanism.⁶⁹ Even though Lucian’s work might have been supported by a fairly consistent set of principles related to contemporary polemics, it is believed that his comedy remains only loosely connected to real philosophical disputes. This means that Lucian’s preferred literary forms are chosen to entertain only and mostly without causing offence. This would have allowed Lucian to criticise uneducated and vociferous Cynics like Peregrinus while at the same time praising Socratic figures like Demonax and Demetrius,⁷⁰ but without offending philosophers or other Cynic readers and always remaining distant from preaching like a sectarian philosopher while at the same

⁶⁶ See Halliwell’s (2008), vii-viii. 333 n. 3, 462 n. 53 lucid reflections on Bakhtin.

⁶⁷ Goldhill (1991), 176-88.

⁶⁸ Dudley (1937), 170.

⁶⁹ Jones (1986), 90-92; Goulet-Cazé’s and Branham (1996), 389-413 do not consider Lucian a formal Cynic, but acknowledge the influence of the school in his work. On the contrary, Desmond (2008), 60-67, counts Lucian among the Second Century Cynics. Niehues-Pröbsting (1988) 239-261, Nesselrath (1998) and Bosman 2012, all believe that Lucian was not an ascetic philosopher, but that he was somehow a literary Cynic. Halliwell analyzes a narration that contains a close relationship with ‘real events’ like the *Peregrinus*, and talks about a ‘matching pair of narrator- audience relationships’, Halliwell (2008), 465. Cynic *loidoria* is directed back against Peregrinus, but the narrator also disapproves of the Cynic idea of ‘escaping from the absurdity of life.’ Halliwell (2008), 467. According to Halliwell, the combination of these two aspects allows the reader to know that the narrator is not a member of the Cynic movement, and that he is not correcting Cynicism or creating a panegyric worshipping of the Cynic affiliations of Peregrinus.

⁷⁰ Demetrius the Cynic or Demetrius of Sunium, cf. Luc. *Tox.* 27, and Branham (1996), 393. See also Alexiou (1990), 125-126.

appearing as an admirer of philosophy.⁷¹

A final distancing of Lucian's comedy from *aischrology* has been made by Stephen Halliwell, who is not interested in reading Lucian as Menippean satire,⁷² and proposed that in Lucian's sophisticated, hybrid and ultimately elusive comedy he is much closer to the existentialist comedy of the 'absurd' (one in which abusively laughing at one truth is (not) as abusive as laughing at some other truth) than he is to Old Comedy.⁷³

In his own analysis of the freedom of Aristophanic comedy to point out grotesque shamelessness and to translate this shame into theatrical artifice, Stephen Halliwell concludes that *aischrology* kept some sort of ambiguity at the level of socio-political function. After all, *aischrology* 'may always have an inbuilt tendency in virtue of its shame-breaking/causing excesses, to outrun the possibility of stable communal action or institutionalized judgment.'⁷⁴ According to Halliwell, this means that Aristophanes cannot count as a fully absurdist comedian, precisely because he is *aischrologic*, and because we can read to some extent the stance from which he launches his criticisms.⁷⁵ But unlike Aristophanic comedy, Lucian's self-subversive and self-delusive strategies have an aim: they qualify the hostility of the criticism by exposing and including the author of the criticism in his own critique. If Cynicism or any other philosophical endeavour is taken to break through the limits of human existence, they become ridiculous, but if they serve as a useful standpoint from which to show the follies of mankind, then they are praised.⁷⁶ Therefore, the narrator and his audience are complicit in revealing falsehood and delusion and laugh at those who have the project of transcending.

⁷¹ Alexiou (1990), 67, 87. See also 98-99 for her criticism to Anderson.

⁷² Halliwell (2008) points at the different kinds of non Menippean seriocomic tones in Homer, 80-85; at symposiums, 139-144; of Socrates, 140-141 and 148-151; in religious contexts, 212-213; in Menander, 390, and in Lucian, 432-436.

⁷³ Halliwell (2008), 435 and 461-462.

⁷⁴ Halliwell (2008), 262.

⁷⁵ Halliwell (2008), Ch. 7 and 341.

⁷⁶ Halliwell (2008), 468-469.

After Branham, who was explicitly against the reducing of Lucian to a figure of mere historicist interest,⁷⁷ Lucian's literature progressively began to be read as playful literature of philosophical relevance,⁷⁸ as he seemed to be similar to a critical philosopher who was interested in proposing ethical, religious, literary and philosophical problems but without ever moralizing them.

4. Lucian, the Critical Philosopher

Bearing in mind Bakhtin's theory of Menippean satire and Genette's distinction between hypertext (parodying text) and hypotext (parodied text),⁷⁹ as well as the meta-textual relationship that exists between the two, Alberto Camerotto has proposed that Lucian would have had two publics in mind; the extended readership or the *ιδιώται*, which would include anyone who knew Greek and could read, and the *pepaideumenoι*, or the privileged reader. In both cases, according to Camerotto, Lucianic parody requires a process of *mathesis* about *paideia*. Lucianic texts offer guides to the reader so that it might be possible to understand the parody, and in this way the reader acquires an independent and autonomous view about the hypotext with intellectual pleasure.⁸⁰

The satirical hero is the embodiment of a satiric virtue, which consists of, among other things, Socratic and Cynic values, such as the knowledge of not-knowing, *parrhesia* about the *polis'* ignorance, and a Socratic *elenchos* in search of truth. But Camerotto argues that these values are presented in a way in which otherwise they would appear as non-virtuous, and this provocative quality is

⁷⁷ Branham (1989), 2. This is a very important feature of Branham's study that should not be taken lightly. In some ways, this consciously non-historical approach is similar to the one proposed by Heidegger to Greek philosophy. On this point see Most's (2002) fantastic article.

⁷⁸ Alexiou (1990), 156-157.

⁷⁹ Camerotto (1998), 15. For the different uses of intratextuality in Greek and Roman literature see the collection of essays in Sharrock and Morales (2001).

⁸⁰ Camerotto (1998), 261-302.

what approximates Lucianic literature to social satire.⁸¹ However, the satiric-Lucianic hero is not a dogmatic philosopher. He is partly superior to philosophers, although also an outcast when viewed in comparison to the rest of the members of the *polis*. This distance allows the satiric hero to invert roles and to criticize philosophical arrogance from the point of view of the crowd.⁸² On the other hand, he is a man of the crowd who has to also distance himself from it, as though he was a creature of the carnival who needs to be crowned and reaccepted into society before the carnival-time has passed. This distance gives the Lucianic hero appropriate space to point out and laugh at all of society's contradictions. Laughter is the distinctive mark of the satirical hero, and at the same time a philosophical and ethical instrument by which he can laugh at the world.⁸³

Contrary to what happens in a Platonic dialogue, according to Camerotto in Menippean satire the ideology that the satiric hero stands for remains unchanged during the process in which all social roles are inverted. The contrast of role reversal, therefore, becomes more evident, but so that at the same time both worlds, that of the carnival and that of ordinary life, are laughed at. Above all, the satiric hero is happy to laugh at himself, as long as the laughter that this creates is useful to everyone and is directed sympathetically at all who make up the public. In this way, for Camerotto as for Branham, the consequences of Lucianic laughter may have the intellectual provocation of a literary critic, but it is neither moralizing nor subversive.

Later scholars have gone farther than Camerotto in appreciating Lucian's literature for its disconcerting instability. Unlike Camerotto and Möllendorff who think that Lucian assumed an 'educated reader' who would understand his sophisticated comedy, Tim Whitmarsh is clearly interested in Lucian's texts

⁸¹ Camerotto (2014), 112.

⁸² Camerotto (2014), 50.

⁸³ Camerotto (2014), 290.

as always questioning the reader's own comfort in considering himself as educated, and in questioning what being educated means.⁸⁴ For Whitmarsh, Lucian is 'the most irrepressibly brilliant of writers,'⁸⁵ precisely because in his works we not only find a bewildering number of ambiguous personae, but also because any search for authoritative, 'true' utterances' ends in failure: 'this is a comedy of nihilism: as Lucian famously (and Socratically) put it at the beginning of the *True Stories*, the only truth is that all is lies.'⁸⁶ Lucian's own authorial voice, along with all other 'sophic' authorities, is a matter of appearance rather than substance.⁸⁷ Scholars think that Lucian had a genuine interest in philosophy, perhaps that of analyzing the philosopher as a creator of *logoi*, and more specifically on the impact that the talk of philosophers can have on others.⁸⁸ His 'artistic and playful re-casting of Platonic works' is 'more than just erudite fun,'⁸⁹ precisely because reading Lucian can not only teach us other ways to read Plato, but can also show us ways in which some readers of antiquity might have done the same.⁹⁰ Causing absurdity in the reader is one of Lucian's aims as well as Plato's,⁹¹ and this absurdity is created by making a 'fiction of himself',⁹² which explores his cultural identity in relation to the Roman Empire.⁹³ But in the case of Lucian this exploration is a part of a

⁸⁴ Whitmarsh (2003).

⁸⁵ Whitmarsh (2001), 248.

⁸⁶ Whitmarsh, (2001), 252.

⁸⁷ Whitmarsh (2001), 265. Simon Goldhill too claims that Lucian's literature challenges the authority of the author itself by introducing to the reader a form of self-presentation that is also self-subversive, for which reason all autobiographic moments in Lucian's oeuvre are self-parodic and a fiction of the author's intentions, to the point of undermining any form of straightforward confession, Goldhill (2002), 63-67.

⁸⁸ Shlapbach (2010), 250-277.

⁸⁹ Ní Mheallaigh (2005), 96.

⁹⁰ Ní Mheallaigh (2005), 101.

⁹¹ Ní Mheallaigh (2005), 95 compares Plato's metaleptic strategy in Plat- *Phaed.* 59b, which causes 'unsettling absurdity' in the reader, with Lucian's own identity games. For metalepsis see Genette (1980), 236.

⁹² On this point see Dubel (1994).

⁹³ Goldhill (2002), 66.

'comedy of nihilism' with no true, certain or stable affirmations.⁹⁴ In Lucian's works the reader finds a contractual significance both to real events and to truth, since in reading Lucian and what seems to be a 'serious' dialogue, 'the reader assumes that the text relates truthfully to an extra-textual referent (the <<real>> world), and that the author guarantees the veracity of his information'.⁹⁵ But, through the playful exchange of names, Lucian complicates this 'autobiographical contract' established between the narrator, author and reader,⁹⁶ and 'challenges us to think about physical, psychological and epistemological dimensions of our own reading experience, about why we read fiction, and about the strange journey we make from one world to another every time we pick up a book.'⁹⁷

This direction that the latest studies of Lucian have taken seems to me to implicitly support what I call the unitarian reading of Lucian. We saw how scholars in the later half of the 20th century agreed that there was no need to discuss Lucian's spiritual development, because as a sophist and a creative writer, his works were made mainly for the purpose of entertainment. But the introduction of Nietzschean values of the comic and the reaction to Bakhtin's interpretation of Menippean satire allows a reading of Lucian as an author capable of criticising and undermining all voices of authority to the extent that we can consider him to have been close to nihilism, and more similar to a critical philosopher than to a moralizing satirist or a writer of fiction.

⁹⁴ Whitmarsh (2001), 256.

⁹⁵ Ní Mheallaigh (2006), 123.

⁹⁶ Genette (1997), 37-34. In her most recent book she argues that if 'onymity can affect particularly readerly expectations, then the citation of another author's name – a feature that I will call metonymity – can be used to elicit different types of responses from the reader as well.' Ní Mheallaigh (2014), 171.

⁹⁷ Ní Mheallaigh (2014), 97.

4. Conclusions to Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

My reader will now remember Möllendorff's interpretation of the *Hermotimus* in which he argued that the κοινὸς βίος does not represent any reliable alternative to a philosophic life, but instead is simply the exchange of the ascetic life for its exact opposite, a life of luxury, hidden under the guise of a 'common life'. Möllendorff seems to be trying to rescue the philosophical content of the *Hermotimus* by pointing at the key elements of a good Lucianic work according to that which I have called the unitarian reading of Lucian: it is a satiric dialogue, because it has nuanced self-subversive elements, but it is not aischrologic, because it is inconclusive and morally unsettling.

The reason why I have decided to analyze with such detail and at such length the background of the discussion between Nesselrath and Möllendorff in the last three chapters, is because I think that both interpretations (the first more developmentalist, the latter more unitarian) are the result of a much longer process which led readers in one direction as soon as Christians began to interpret Lucian with their own aesthetic and ethic framework. But, in spite of their common origin, today each of these two tendencies to read Lucian has their own aesthetic framework with which to value Lucian's works.

Of the two, the developmentalist approach to Lucian is keener to commit itself to discover the author's personal beliefs about the world that surrounded him. It is a tendency much more inclined to historicize Lucian's texts in the form of biographies, with the aim of discovering the truth behind them. Lucian's texts are arranged in a progression which depends on that which Lucian is found to be standing for or on whichever doctrine he is closer to, doubting mostly about what he thought was wrong and false and laughing *aischrologically* at it to the point in which the defence of his own views could have offended others, as a positive sceptic or even as a dogmatist. We can consider Nesselrath's proposal that the *Hermotimus* is an attack against

philosophy and a proptreptic dialogue encouraging us to live like everyone else as developmentalist.

The unitarian reading of Lucian has little concern for the 'real' historical content of Lucian's works and diminishes the importance of distinguishing between truth and falsehood, or indeed fact and fiction. Instead it focuses on Lucian's ability to make us doubt what truth is and doubt how we might discover who holds it. It is a tendency that is characterized by its textualism and argues that the aim of Lucian's works is to make his readers laugh at everything and at everyone, including himself, and which can go as far as to subvert the authority that the author has over his own texts. Therefore, a text must not be too offensive, as it would mean that it acts in accordance with the author's moral convictions and seeks to persuade in one direction or another. But in the unitarian reading of Lucian, the more a text de-centralizes and subverts the 'author' the better it is philosophically speaking. We can consider Möllendorff's proposal that both the common life and the philosophical life are fraudulent proposals and that the dialogue ends in *aporia* as a unitarian reading of the *Hermotimus*.

In order to consider the pertinence of these two proposal, Chapter 4 will consider the *Hermotimus* as a closed diegetic world, with the aim of proving that Hermotimus' conversion is ironic and that structurally the dialogue has the form of an aporetic dialogue. Chapter 5 offers a continuation of this formal analysis and aims to prove that Lucian had in mind the delivery of a very clear moral message.

Chapter 6 and 7 will be dedicated to proving that the *Hermotimus* is evidently a parodic text attacking the utopian potential and the asceticism of dogmatic philosophy. Finally, in the conclusions I will try to explore the possibility of Lucian's *Hermotimus* as a text deemed to be offensive by his contemporaries. To do so I will look at a quarrel, which took place between

Favorinus of Arles and Epictetus, and imagine a Stoic and a Sceptic reader of the *Hermotimus*.

Chapter 4

The Aporetic Form of the *Hermotimus*

Towards the end of the dialogue *Hermotimus*, once Lycinus has proved to his interlocutor that pursuing *eudaimonia* through Stoic philosophy is impossible,¹ and after he has roundly exposed the true nature of philosophers,² Hermotimus is on the verge of tears as he contemplates the possibility that he may have wasted a lifetime. To console him Lycinus tells him one of Aesop's fables, in which a fox encounters a man who is made angry because he cannot count the waves: 'Why, noble sir, do you get angry because of those gone by, you'll do better if you don't care for them and you start counting again from where you left off.'³ Lycinus then advises Hermotimus to behave like that man:

The same for you, because you consider it so, in the future you will do better if you decided to live the life that is common to all of us (βίον τε κοινὸν ἅπασιν βιοῦν ἀξιῶν) and if you become a fellow-citizen with the majority, and if you do not have hopes for anything bizarre and conceited, and you will not be ashamed, if you are sensible, to learn new things even if you are an old man and to change of direction for the better.

As a parting shot Lycinus confesses that during the dialogue he aimed specifically at the Stoics as they were Hermotimus' preferred school, but that he could have used any philosophical sect to make his argument. The concluding section of Lucian's longest dialogue seems to show that Hermotimus is determined to follow Lycinus' advice:

Well said! Yes, I'll be off with just that purpose in mind, to change even my very appearance. At least you will see me

¹ Luc. *Herm.* 13-70.

² Luc. *Herm.* 71-85.

³ Perry, 492. The attempt to count waves is often seen as futile in Greek literature (Anacreont. 13.3; Ael. *V.H.* 13, 15; Theoc. 16, 60; Dio Chrys. 20.12; Luc. *Amor.* 2). For more references on the meaning of the moral of this fable see Gow (1950), 317.

without this long beard that is now woolly and thick and without this self-punishing lifestyle, but completely relaxed and free. I will immediately change my clothing to the purple robe, to show everyone that I no longer have anything to do with imbeciles. How I wish I could vomit everything that I heard from them, and it would also be good, and I would not even hesitate to do it, to drink hellebore for the opposite reason than Chrysippus, not to remember a single thing of what they said. I have to thank you, Lycinus, because you stood over me and hauled me up when I was being carried along by a rough and turbid torrent and had given myself up and was floating downstream with the current; like in a tragedy, you appeared like a god from the machine. I think that I could also not irrationally shave my head, like those that are free after being saved from shipwreck, as a thank-offering for salvation, so much mist has been shaken off from my eyes. And if I ever by any chance while I am walking happen to encounter a philosopher, I will turn aside and avoid him as one does to a dog with rabies.⁴

Much of the weight of the interpretation of this dialogue lies in the way in which this epilogue is interpreted. This passage prompts the reader to consider the sincerity of both characters. Does Lycinus really think that the lives of laymen (ιδιώται) are an alternative to the philosophical life, or is he just playing with Hermotimus' own idea of philosophy? Is Hermotimus really intending to abandon 20 years of philosophical education and to shun all philosophers in the future or is he being sarcastic?

A first clue to interpreting Lycinus proposal to live like everyone else lies in the moral of Aesop's fable, which seen from different perspectives shows the intonation with which Hermotimus ends the conversation. On the one hand, the moral stresses the importance of persistence regardless of that which has occurred and now cannot be changed. But on the other hand, if the reader focuses his attention on the role of the fox, the fable also shows that, even

⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 85-86. For the *Deus ex Machina* see Plat. *Clitophon* 407a.

though she attempts to make the man feel better, at the same time she is wrong to encourage him to continue with such a futile task. Lycinus seems to be telling Hermotimus to abandon the useless study of philosophy, but the degree to which the alternative choice, found in the life of laymen, is sound, remains ambiguous. Just as in the case of the fable, the interpretation of this last exchange of words in the *Hermotimus* partially depends on the perspective that the reader chooses to adopt.

In this chapter I want to prove through an analysis of its structure, that the *Hermotimus* has the appearance of an 'aporetic' dialogue, owing to the fact that Lycinus' proposed κοινὸς βίος is ironic and does not represent any alternative to the philosophical life.⁵ His proposition is instead a demonstration of his mastery at turning the rhetoric and arguments of philosophers against themselves. To do so, I will first look at Hermotimus' hopes in Stoicism and at Lycinus' argument in detail.

1. Hermotimus' Hopes in Stoic Philosophy

When we first meet Hermotimus he has been attending lectures on Stoicism for 20 years in the belief that 'one can either be wretched, going to perdition among the rabble of ordinary people or achieve happiness through the practice of philosophy'.⁶ Hermotimus has the religious belief that philosophy as if through a kind of fire, is supposed to be able to reveal those things that others wrongly admire for what they really are.⁷ He believes that philosophy provides the criterion by which to distinguish the true happy life from the false.

⁵ There exist three analyses of the form of the *Hermotimus*, those of Schwarz (1877), Nesselrath (1992) and Von Möllendorff (2000). In spite of their differences, these analyses have in common the way in which they organize the form of the *Hermotimus* and all three put at their centre the main argument against the attainability of philosophical happiness.

⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 1.

⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 7.

Philosophers are said to possess the right theory (λόγος) which is the necessary tool for living a happy life without making unhappy mistakes. The Stoics considered philosophy a τέχνη directed towards the cultivation of an ideal disposition of the soul (διάθεσις τῆς ψυχῆς). Based on what truth is,⁸ as an expert in philosophy, Hermotimus' teacher ought to be a wise man capable of transmitting the practice (ἄσκησις) of the art of living (τέχνη περὶ τὸν βίον) and, whose end (τέλος) is that of a virtuous life (τὸν ἐν τῇ ἀρετῇ βίος).⁹ Hermotimus and the other students learn, from books and lectures, the rhetoric of philosophy about Virtue, but in the end, according to Lycinus, all this philosophical rhetoric is a distraction from that which is more important: practice.¹⁰

The reward that *Hermotimus* wishes to gain from Stoic practice is not only excellence (ἀρετή) and happiness (εὐδαιμονία), but also wisdom (σοφία). Therefore in order to become virtuous the Stoic has to have coherence in his way of living (βίος), and this implies that his rational principles and theory (λόγοι) guide his actions (ἔργα). The perfect philosopher must never ruin his ascetic routine as a result of having been dragged down by human passions:

He must be completely happy (συνόλως εὐδαίμονος) and that must be the canon and measure of the life spent according to virtue (τὸν κανόνα εἶναι καὶ γνώμονα τοῦ κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν βίου), for he who lacks the slightest thing is imperfect, even if he has more of everything and if it is not like that, he is not yet happy (οὐδέπω εὐδαίμων).¹¹

As a result of this congruency, which is said to bring a life of calm and total happiness (γαληνόν τινα καὶ πανευδαίμονα βίον βιοῦσιν), the philosopher who has perfected human virtue is no longer subject to human passions and

⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 17; Luc. *Herm.* 51.

⁹ Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 7.

¹⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 1, 79, 82.

¹¹ Luc. *Herm.* 76.

despises the common standards of honour, high-birth, riches and glory.¹² He is ‘the only king, the only rich man, the only wise man, and the only one of everything’ and will look down on the rest of people as if they were slaves.¹³

For the Stoics, philosophy was able to purify the soul from the body by separating that which was manly from that which was feminine, and that which was mortal from that which was immortal. As much as it was a bodily and mundane exercise, the philosophical ἀσκήσις was also a spiritual preparation for the afterlife (ἐς ἄλλον βίον προγυμνάξεις ἑαυτὸν).¹⁴ Some Stoics like Chrysippus claimed never to have seen a perfectly virtuous man. In this sense, Hermotimus believes that there are two kinds of virtue, the mundane virtue or the virtue “practiced”, and the divine Virtue or the virtue “perfected”.¹⁵ However, like any Stoic he also believes that there is some remote possibility of living the ideal and virtuous life and just a moment of philosophical happiness would be worth the sacrifice he is making by living an ascetic life.¹⁶ Indeed, he believes that those who manage to become virtuous live a truly happy and wonderful life thereafter (εὐδαιμονοῦσιν θαυμάσιόν τινα βίον τὸν λοιπὸν βιοῦντες).¹⁷

But in Stoicism the best philosophy, the true philosophy,¹⁸ is also the more virtuous because the Stoics’ ideal of transcending from the condition of the lover of wisdom, or the φιλόσοφος to the sage, or σοφός was deemed impossible. The Stoics would have thought that virtue, following the example of Socrates as it appears in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*,¹⁹ lays more in deeds than in

¹² πανευδαίμονος, Luc. *Herm.* 2 and perfected virtue Luc. *Herm.* 8; πάθος Luc. *Herm.* 9, 76.

¹³ Luc. *Herm.* 16, 81. These are familiar and well-known Stoics *paradoxes*, see Cic. *Lucullus*. 136. For another satire of them see Hor. *Sat.* 1. 3. 96-98.

¹⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 76.

¹⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 2,4, 22.

¹⁶ It is worth noting that in the *Letter to Menoeceus* 122, Epicurus also claims that it was never too late to do philosophy.

¹⁷ Cf. *Herm* 5.

¹⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 16.

¹⁹ See the discussions around this topic in Xen. *Mem.* 1. 2.59; 1. 3. 15; 1. 5. 6; 2. 3.8; 2. 6.14; 2. 10. 6 and more importantly 3. 11. 10.

words. Therefore, if perhaps not a wise man, the philosopher in contrast to the ἰδιώται is someone who has taken up the training (ἀσκήσις) required to progress (προκοπή) towards the happiness enjoyed by the sage.²⁰

From the perspective of the Stoics, anybody who was not a sage was a φαῦλος a worthless man, or an ἄφρων, and to be saved the Stoic teacher offered an ἀσκήσις that had two aspects; the words of the teacher, his classes and the philosophical discussions in symposia,²¹ and the imitated actions of his students.²² The sage was not allowed to make any mistakes,²³ and the pupil similarly had to put all his efforts into not making any. The practice of Hermotimus' teacher aims at the perfection of the soul in its earthly prison, the body.²⁴ This implies that the student must work hard (πόνος), and make a serious effort (σπουδή), which consists of restless intellectual study and the self-restraint of bodily passions.²⁵

Hermotimus is one of those progressing (οἱ προκόπτοντες) in virtue, a ἡμίσοφον²⁶ on the way to meet his teacher who he believes embodies the ideal sage, and the συρφετός, or the common men like Lycinus. He has trusted his teacher of Stoic philosophy (τῷ διδασκάλῳ πιστεύω λεγόντι),²⁷ who like other

²⁰ See Sellars (2003) 54-85. The best analysis of Lucian's concept and criticism of philosophy as τέχνη is that of Nesselrath (1985), 141, but see p. 56-58 for discussions on happiness and and p. 12, 124, 126, 153-155, 168, etc. for the relationship between Stoics and rhetoric. For Stoic imagery in the *Hermotimus* see Edwards (1993) and Tackaberry (1930), 15-20.

²¹ Luc. *Herm.* 1, 2, 11, 79, 81.

²² Luc. *Herm.* 80-83.

²³ Cf. D.L. 7. 87, Cic. *Fin.* 3, 31; 4, 14-15; 3, 15.

²⁴ In the *Icaromenippus*, tired of philosophical discussion Menippus uses one wing of an eagle and another of a vulture to go to the moon and from there to the palace of the gods. Once there, the Moon asks Zeus to punish philosophers for their great ignorance and their pretentiousness. His flight is indeed the flight of the soul and this dialogue is extremely likened to demonology just as in Plutarch's *On the other side of the moon*. The comparison is an interesting one, since there is the possibility that the *Icaromenippus*, like the *Hermotimus*, has an open ending, as we do not know whether Menippus in actuality makes the trip, or whether he is just a madman who talks nonsense like a stranger and should therefore not be trusted.

²⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 8. That this effort is intellectual is obvious from the start of the dialogue, cf. the expression τῆ τοῦ βαδίσματος σπουδῆ in *Herm* 1.

²⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 15

²⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 7.

philosophers appears to be quite trustworthy (μάλα τις ἀξιόπιστος).²⁸ Hermotimus' hope (ἐλπίς) is like that of all those who practice philosophy will know what happiness is,²⁹ and become πανευδαίμων, an individual who has perfected virtue.

2. Lycinus' λόγος

The driving force which allows this friendly exchange to take place and which gives the dialogue a vertical narration is the argument that Lycinus holds against the attainability of philosophy. This logical and philosophical level of Lycinus' *logos* could be called argumentative.

In view of the contradiction between the actions and words of Hermotimus' teacher,³⁰ adopting the role of a layman who claims to know nothing about philosophy, Lycinus throws an argument (λόγος) at Hermotimus, which, in order to keep his reputation, he will be forced to withstand.³¹ The challenge is to prove whether there is such a thing as philosophical happiness, and why it is that he is so sure of studying Stoicism under the guidance of his teacher, especially when there are so many other teachers of Stoicism and schools of philosophy to choose from.³²

The basic tenets of Lycinus' argument are based on the fact that Hermotimus believes: 1) life is short, and that the art of philosophy requires a great deal of time.³³ As Hesiod puts it, the road to virtue is steep, slippery, and long, and requires a great deal of sweat and effort;³⁴ 2) only one philosophy can

²⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 26.

²⁹ ἅπαντες μὲν οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες τὴν εὐδαιμονίαν ζητοῦσιν ὁποῖόν τι ἔστι Luc. *Herm.* 66. The word ἐλπίς occurs first in *Herm.* 4. But, the feeling is also expressed in the use of the optative in 5 and 6.

³⁰ Luc *Herm.* 9-13.

³¹ Luc. *Herm.* 52; 66.

³² Luc. *Herm.* 7, 15.

³³Following Hippocr. *Aph.* 1.1 Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 1, 4, 6, 46, 75, 77.

³⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 1, Hes. *WD.* 289.

be in possession of the truth, which means that it would be absurd and ridiculous (γελοιότατον) to trust all philosophical *hairesis*, or indeed to disbelieve them.³⁵ Surely, most people would give up.³⁶

One part of the discussion is centred on the possibility of being certain that the Stoics are the correct philosophy judging from the senses and through the use of perception.³⁷ But from a Stoic point of view the ‘impression’ (φαντασία) of respectability, which has impinged upon Hermotimus and his reputation, may be the wrong one. Regardless, Hermotimus is not yet prepared to accept this truth and so it is that Lycinus, taking for granted that if one wants to make the life-choice of becoming a sage, one must choose carefully a philosophical guide, leaves the matter behind and proceeds to prove *logically* that it is impossible to know which of the schools might truly be the right one.³⁸

As it has been well documented chiefly by A. Schwarz, Praechter, B. Schwarz, Tackaberry, and Nesselrath, one main characteristic of the argument of the *Hermotimus* is the presence of the five modes of Agrippa. The modes of Agrippa are types of arguments and are also preserved in Diogenes Laertius’ *Life of Pyrrho* and in Sextus Empiricus. They can be defined as abstract argument patterns by whose application a Sceptic can render dubious any positive statement.³⁹ Sextus tells us that the more recent Sceptics offer the following five modes of suspension of judgement: 1) the mode deriving from dispute; 2) the mode throwing one back ad infinitum; 3) the mode deriving from relativity; 4) the hypothetical mode; 5) the reciprocal mode.⁴⁰ These modes are a supplement

³⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 25-49. See also 14, 64-70.

³⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 5.

³⁷ For the different kinds of impressions according to the Stoics see DL. 7. 49-51. For logic understood by the Stoics as a criterion of truth see DL. 41-4. For the Stoics, the wise man has to be an expert in dialectics and logic. DL. 7.83. For Stoic logic in general see Long and Sedley (1987), 188-190.

³⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 49.

³⁹ Annas and Barnes (1985), 22.

⁴⁰ S. E. P. 164.

to a general objection against the dogmatic ethicists and are specifically directed against the Stoic belief in the art of living (ἡ περὶ τὸν βίον τέχνη) and its goal.

Lucian uses these modes in the *Hermotimus* in the following ways:

- **The first mode or mode of dispute** demonstrates that due to the vast diversity of contradictory philosophical sects, one cannot choose the right philosopher unless one finds the right criterion.⁴¹ Hermotimus assents to the proposition (P1) that the Stoics are the only one and true philosophy thereby leading to true virtue and happiness. But he also admits that (P2) besides the Stoics there are other schools of philosophy in existence, each one of them prescribing different dogmas and definitions of virtue and happiness, and all of which are mutually incompatible. There has been an undecided quarrel (ἀνεπίκριτος στάσις) between the philosophical schools about what true happiness is, and therefore one cannot choose or reject any of them unless one finds a criterion by which to make a judgement over their relative excellences. Therefore, until a criterion is found Hermotimus and Lycinus should fall back on suspension of judgement (εἰς ἐποχήν).⁴²
- After deeming Hermotimus' sensory impressions to be wrong, Lycinus will proceed to dash his hopes, by showing him that his rational impression (λογικὴ φαντασία) is also wrong. In order to do this Lycinus implements the **Second Mode of Regress to Infinity**. Because philosophical happiness is desirable, the only thing Hermotimus and Lycinus can do is to find a criterion that allows them to distinguish the true philosopher from the false.⁴³ In the case of philosophical happiness,

⁴¹ Luc. *Herm.* 14.

⁴² See Sextus *P.* 1. 165.

⁴³ Luc. *Herm.* 51-53.

one cannot infer which philosophy has found truth by testing just one part of it, as desired by Hermotimus, precisely because one has to make sure that every part of each philosophy is correct. Furthermore the goal of each sect is different.⁴⁴ Thus, apart from testing all the schools, the only thing left to do is to remain highly critical.⁴⁵ Yet, regardless of how critical one is, it is also possible that none of the schools has ever found true philosophical happiness.⁴⁶ Therefore the only thing Hermotimus and Lycinus can do is to find an expert who might teach them the criterion by which to distinguish truth from falsehood.⁴⁷ But how might they know for sure whether this teacher is speaking truthfully? To know they would need another criterion and somebody capable of teaching it, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁴⁸ Thus, it is not possible to rationally know who is an expert in philosophy or which happiness offered by the different schools is the correct one.

- **The third mode or Mode of Relativity, or of Comparison with Other Things** is according to Sextus ‘that whereby the object has such or such an appearance in relation to the subject judging and to the concomitant precepts, but as to its real nature we suspend judgement’.⁴⁹ As a Stoic, Hermotimus is supposed to be able to distinguish between cataleptic and non-cataleptic impressions. These two forms of impression differ from one another; cataleptic impressions accurately correspond to an object, and therefore they are a criterion by which one can discern truth from falsehood. Lycinus uses the mode of relativity against the emphasis placed by the Stoics on conceptions, or notions (ἡ ἔννοια), which like

⁴⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 54-62.

⁴⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 63-65.

⁴⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 66-68.

⁴⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 69.

⁴⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 70.

⁴⁹ S.E. *P.* 1. 167.

any other kind of impression are a 'printing on the soul', and 'stored thoughts, and memories'.⁵⁰ Hermotimus could not have proved that that majority had taken the Stoic path, as he did not make a census, therefore the observation that many people have joined the Stoics is not a convincing criterion. Hermotimus could not have chosen the Stoics based on what those ignorant of philosophy said about them, nor could he have trusted the Stoics themselves who would have praised Stoicism, or indeed members of other schools who would have inveighed against it. Choosing the Stoics according to their appearance (ἀπὸ τῶν σχημάτων) is not a criterion either, because as Lycinus has already mentioned, although unaware of it, Hermotimus' teacher behaves in a manner that is contrary to that which he preaches.⁵¹ Furthermore, using the example of Momus, who reproached the gods for not leaving a hole in the chests of man through which to read their minds, Lycinus argues that the only way to know a person's real hidden attributes (γνώρισμα) is through long conversations and relationships.⁵² Thus, Lycinus concludes that external attributes do not reveal what people really think, and that in relation to the appearance of philosophers, one must suspend judgment.⁵³

- **The fourth mode or Hypothetical Mode** debunks Hermotimus' belief in axiomatic truth. Hermotimus believes that it is as logically easy to know that Stoicism is the true philosophy as it is to know that two 2+2=4.⁵⁴ Lycinus argues that theories, which are structured ἐπὶ σαθοῖς τοῖς θεμελίοις/ 'upon rotten foundations', reach nonsensical conclusions.

⁵⁰ Cf. Plut. *On Common Conceptions* 7.242-256 (SVF 2.65); cf. See Aug. *Civ Dei* 8.7 (SVF 2.106).

⁵¹ Just at the moment in which Lycinus is about to expose his teacher, Hermotimus admits to never having seen a Stoic who is completely virtuous cf. Luc. *Herm.* 9-12, 76 and 80-83.

⁵² λόγοις καὶ συνουσίαις ἀναδεικνύμενα καὶ ἔργοις τοῖς ὁμοίοις ὅψὲ μόλις, Luc. *Herm.* 20-21.

⁵³ Cf. *Herm.* 16-20.

⁵⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 35.

Sextus Empiricus uses the same proverbial expression in reference to geometry, which is based upon basic tenets or propositions, which are posited as evident and the means by which other things can be established.⁵⁵ For example, an over-daring poet creates a Geryon-like monster,⁵⁶ who appears to be like a human multiplied by three. Thus, the monster has six eyes, six ears, three voices which escape from three mouths, etc... If one supposes that the monster will go to war then he will need three shields, an axe, a spear and a sword, all details which are consistent with the same outline. However, such a monster cannot exist, we can only imagine it by thinking that there is a human being multiplied by three. In the same way, Lycinus argues, geometry follows axioms, which if changed one can easily say that $5 + 5$ is 7, or that $(5 + 5) \times 2 = 14$. Surely something can be consistent and at the same time false (οὐκ ἐννοοῦντες εἴ τι γένοιτο ἂν ἀκόλουθόν τι αὐτῶ καὶ ψεῦδος ὄν).⁵⁷

- **The fifth mode or The Reciprocal Mode or of Circular reasoning**, is ‘the form used when the proof itself which ought to establish the matter of inquiry requires confirmation derived from the matter’.⁵⁸ This mode takes place every time Lycinus insists on the fallacy that there must be a true philosophy, because even though there appears to be a criterion by which to choose a school of philosophy, circular proof is in fact no proof at all.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Compare S.E. M. III. 10, 185 with Luc. *Herm.* 74.

⁵⁶ Famously Eurystheus ordered Heracles to bring him the cattle of the monster Geryon, a three-headed shepherd with six hands (Luc. *Tox.* 62 and Luc. *Herac.* 2). A similar argument to the one of the *Hermotimus* is found in Plat. *Leg.* 795c: ‘if someboody were born a Geryon or a Briareus, then with a hundred hands he should also able to throw a hundred darts.’

⁵⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 74.

⁵⁸ S.E. P. I. 169.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Herm.* 64, 68, 69.

The conclusion of Lycinus' argument is that the philosophical goal is both impossible and unattainable.⁶⁰ Hermotimus' idea of philosophy is nothing but a lie and an empty happiness (τὴν κενὴν μακαρίαν). Therefore, Hermotimus should, on principle, discover whether it is empirically possible to inspect all philosophical theories and investigate carefully (ἐπισκέψασθαι ἀκριβῶς) what each one says before making a decision. Meanwhile he will remain sober and distrustful⁶¹ and will never be lured by consistency in argumentation.⁶² The only thing he can do is to have 'a critical and investigating preparation, a sharp mind and an intelligence precise and incontestable' [...] that will allow him to 'judge in such matters'.⁶³

The consequence of being deceived by philosophers is that both students and philosophers miss the practice of virtue, and never act according to that which they preach.⁶⁴ Virtue lies mainly in deeds, in being 'just, wise and brave', and not in the composition of 'wretched speeches, syllogisms and unsolvable problems' (ποιεῖν ῥημάτια δύστηνα μελετᾶτε καὶ συλλογισμούς καὶ ἀπορίας), which only throw people to an impasse (ἐς ἀπορίαν) because they know how 'to question and quibble and cheat and snare them in insoluble conundrums'.⁶⁵ People trust philosophers irrationally, following their desire for an impossible happiness, as well as their passions. Paradoxically, only those few brave men, who turn away from philosophy should be called philosophers:

You'll come across very few who due to their bravery admit that they were deceived, and that dissuade (ἀποτρέπειν) others from making a similar attempt. If you do meet one, you can call him a lover of truth (φιλαλήθη) and honest and just, and, if you like, a philosopher. For to him alone I wouldn't

⁶⁰ ἀδύνατον εἶναι φιλοσοφῆσαι καὶ ἀνέφικτον ἀνθρώπων γε ὄντι, Luc. Herm. 67.

⁶¹ Luc. Herm. 47.

⁶² Luc. Herm. 74.

⁶³ Luc. Herm. 64.

⁶⁴ Luc. Herm. 9-12, 80-83.

⁶⁵ Luc. Herm. 79.

grudge the name. The rest of them either know nothing of the truth, though they think they do, or they know it but conceal it through cowardice and shame and the desire to be highly honoured.⁶⁶

This passage is very close to being a declaration of self-praise on the part of Lycinus, because as it dismisses the accusation of hating philosophers; a criticism aimed at him by Hermotimus. Like Socrates, he does not know what truth is, and argues that philosophers are better suited to answer that question. Nevertheless, it is harder to listen to truth, due to its *parrhesiastic* nature, than to falsehood, which is always more enjoyable.⁶⁷ Lycinus' recommendation is that Hermotimus' life will be better in the future if he decides to live like the rest of the ἰδιώται and accepts a 'life that is common to all of us, as a fellow-citizen with the majority'.

More importantly Hermotimus will lose his 'hopes for anything bizarre and conceited, and will not be ashamed to learn new things', and 'change of direction for the best'.⁶⁸ Although Hermotimus' philosophical happiness may be impossible to achieve, another life seems to be available to him in which he might live 'completely relaxed and free' (ἄνετα πάντα καὶ ἐλεύθερα).

3. Lycinus' Proposed Κοινὸς βίος

It is crucial at this point to reconsider both the role of Lycinus in his conversation with Hermotimus, as well as the outcome of his argument in which he puts forward the recommendation to live like everyone else. As aforementioned, much of the weight of the interpretation of this dialogue lies in the way in which the epilogue is read.

⁶⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

⁶⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 51.

⁶⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 84.

If one accepts that Lycinus is being completely sincere, owing to the fact that he appears to be seriously persuading Hermotimus to live like everyone else, that his arguments are very similar to the five Modes of Agrippa, and that often in Sextus Empiricus' Scepticism we see the Sceptics joining forces with laymen against the dogmatic philosophers, we might therefore conclude that in this dialogue Lucian rejects philosophy, and that he either advises us to live an ordinary life, or is perhaps even trying to convert us to a form of Scepticism. This reading would support Nesselrath's interpretation

But, is Hermotimus really willing to abandon 20 years of Stoic philosophy after just one conversation? Is Lycinus seriously proposing to Hermotimus that he should live like everyone else? Is this the opinion of the character or is it that of Lucian? As it will be demonstrated, the binary situation of the *Hermotimus* does not allow for such an interpretation. Lycinus' argument is subsumed by the alternatives offered Hermotimus, which are 'either to be wretched, going to perdition among the rabble of ordinary people or to achieve happiness through the practice of philosophy'.⁶⁹ At the end of the dialogue this situation is reversed, and Hermotimus believes that practicing philosophy is a wretched activity, whilst living like everyone else gives him both relief and comfort. However, it is not possible to take Lycinus' proposal to live like everyone else seriously and a look at what Lycinus means by 'living a life that is common to all of us', and to be one of the *idiôtai*, will prove that such a proposal is ironic.⁷⁰

Within the context of the epilogue in §86, which contains Hermotimus' conversion as well as throughout the whole of the *Hermotimus*, those who do not have membership to the exclusive club of philosophers are known as ἰδιώται.⁷¹ As expected, the word is always used in reference to somebody

⁶⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 1

⁷⁰ See Schwarz, A. (1886) p. 11 *So tritt uns Lykinos von Anfang bis zu Ende als Satiriker und feiner Spötter entgegen, der jedoch im Stande ist, einen ernsten Ton anzuschlagen.*

⁷¹ Luc. *Herm.* 1, 17, 52, 67, 83.

outside of the professional group of philosophers, or outside of the circle of those active in public life. Therefore, even if we think that the common life is that of laymen, there is still a challenge in knowing to whom this term refers.

Like the *idiôtês*, the *life that is common to all of us* is also defined in contrast to the city of virtue that is imagined by Lycinus in sections 22-4. This city is the destination to which philosophers (in their own view of things) exhort everyone to hasten. Here people dwell calmly and live a life of total happiness (*πανευδαίμονα βίον βιοῦσιν*) with excellent laws, equality, freedom, and every other good. From the perspective of philosophers, all that occurs in the non-philosophical cities, in the remaining cities (*ἐν ταῖς ἄλλαις πόλεσιν*), among ‘us’ (*οἷα δὲ πολλὰ γίγνεται παρ’ ἡμῖν*), is robbery, violence, cheating, and other base activities. Therefore, even if we believe that Lycinus is promoting the ordinary life we must think that, from what we are told, that the cities in which we all live are not ideal places of habitation especially when compared to the utopian city of philosophy. Besides that, laymen are also subject to other forces that are just as harmful as philosophy. As already mentioned, Hermotimus hopes for philosophy are no different from the hopes and empty happiness of unreflective and ordinary people. The entire point of the *Hermotimus* is that philosophers behave like everyone else.

Perhaps one could argue that Lycinus is referring to a life lived in any city without succumbing to the vices of ordinary people. In support of this, one could point to Lycinus’ definition of *virtue* that *lies in behaving justly, wisely and bravely, and in deeds but not in words*.⁷² Lycinus is indeed urging Hermotimus to wake up from his dream and to do useful things for the common life, and yet he is never told what these “useful” things might be. Moral values are formulated in the course of the dialogue, and even encouraged, but always in the context of an attack on the failings of philosophers rather than as positive targets in their own right.

⁷² Luc. *Herm.* 79.

The alleged values of justice, wisdom and bravery are exactly the opposite of what Stoic philosophers preach and do. That this is the case becomes clear in Lycinus' own description of the philosopher, in §75, as cited above.

Throughout the conversation it emerges that Lycinus has only been playing with Hermotimus' own understanding of philosophy in which there are only two paths; perdition or philosophical salvation. But the binary opposites found in the *Hermotimus* also create a game of mirrors in which every clichéd moral precept given by Lycinus, such as the terms 'laymen', 'the life that is common to all of us' and 'to become a fellow-citizen with the majority', are defined only in contrast to philosophical values and therefore Lycinus' κοινὸς βίος is not an alternative to philosophical salvation after all.

4. The *Hermotimus*' Ἀπορία

More plausible than Nesselrath's interpretation is Möllendorff's argument that the dialogue is open-ended, because learning how to know the right criterion to safely choose and trust a philosopher will prove impossible. By looking at the vocabulary of trust (πίστις), it is easy to see that the *Hermotimus* is an aporetic dialogue, since this is what takes the whole issue of αἴρεσις to ἀπορία.

The form of the *Hermotimus* is constructed upon Hermotimus' own idea that philosophy is 'beyond reach, even after a long time', unless one remains intently fixed upon attaining her.⁷³ In the first part of the dialogue, Hermotimus has deposited his trust in his teacher⁷⁴ although neither it is easy to trust in

⁷³ Luc. *Herm.* 1.

⁷⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 18. Note also that Hermotimus' concept of virtue is based on τὸ πάντα ἐπίστασθαι βεβαίως πεπεισμένον ἢ ἕκαστα ἔχει. Luc. *Herm.* 7.

Hermotimus' reasons for choosing the Stoics.⁷⁵ Hermotimus claims that he joined the Stoics from trust in himself and the outer appearance of respectability that he saw in others.⁷⁶ But one can only know a person's real hidden attributes (γνώρισμα) after many conversations and a great deal of interaction.⁷⁷ Sometimes not even then.⁷⁸ Therefore, not being able to know how to trust is

where the whole puzzle is (ἡ πᾶσα ἀπορία ἐστίν). At the beginning of whichever path I go to, there is a man standing at the entrance, quite trustworthy (μάλα τις ἀξιόπιστος) [...]. The number of these roads and their dissimilarity causes me extreme confusion and leaves me perplexed (οὐ μετρίως ταράττει με καὶ ἀπορεῖν ποιεῖ), and so above all do the guides over-exerting themselves and each praising their own paths, because I don't know which road to turn off along or which of them it is better to follow so that I can reach the city.⁷⁹

Failing to understand the problem at stake, Hermotimus tries to release Lycinus from his aporetic perplexity,⁸⁰ but fails to show how to know which is the one true road to Virtue.⁸¹ Perhaps Hermotimus might have argued that all roads lead to Rome, or that there is more than one road to Corinth, and yet the argument of the *Hermotimus* is based on the assumption that schools of philosophy are exclusive and that there has to be one true philosopher and one

⁷⁵ οὐ γὰρ δὴ ἐκείνοις ἂν αὐτοῖς ἐπίστευσας ἐπαινοῦσι τὰ αὐτῶν; καὶ κατὰ τὰ ὑπ' ἐκείνων λεγόμενα ἐποιεῖτο τὴν αἴρεσιν τῶν κρειπτόνων ἀξιῶν: οὐ γὰρ ἂν πιστεύσαιμι σοι τοιαῦτα λέγοντι, Luc. *Herm.* 17.

⁷⁶ ἀλλ' οἴσθα, ὦ Λυκῖνε, οὐχὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις μόνον ἐπίστευον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐμαυτῷ, Luc. *Herm.* 18.
⁷⁷, Luc. *Herm.* 20-21.

⁷⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 9-12. In the end, just before Lycinus exposes his teacher, Hermotimus admits to never having seen a Stoic who is completely virtuous. Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 76 and 80-83.

⁷⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 26, see also 38 where Lycinus talks of the great impasse (Καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸ τὸ τὴν πολλὴν ἀπορίαν παρεχόμενον τοῦτο ἐστίν) that it is to find out which of philosophers has the truth if they are compared to temple robbers, because when they are stripped off their clothes each of them is carrying a different object, *one a cup, another a bowl, another a garland, and they may be of copper, gold, or silver*. This is the equivalent of Agrippa's first mode deriving from dispute.

⁸⁰ ἀλλ' ἐγὼ σε ἀπολύσω τῆς ἀπορίας: τοῖς γὰρ προωδοιορηκόσιν, ὦ Λυκῖνε, πιστεύσας οὐκ ἂν σφαλείης, Luc. *Herm.* 27.

⁸¹ οὐ τοῖνυν ἀπέλυσάς με τῆς ἀπορίας ἀλλ' ἔτι ὁμοίως ἀγνοῶ τῷ μᾶλλον χρῆ πιστεύσαι τῶν ὁδοιπόρων ... ὁ δὲ δὴ μάλιστα εἰς ἀπορίαν με καθίστησιν Luc. *Herm.* 27.

true sect.⁸² This means that to make the right choice (αἰρεσις ἀκριβής),⁸³ one would need to experience every philosophical persuasion to ensure that what they all have said (πειραθῆναι ὧν φασι) was reasonable (εὐλογον). But this is impossible in a lifetime,⁸⁴ and so ‘as long as it is not clear which school is saying the truth in philosophy, choose none.’⁸⁵

Once this assumption is solidly posed, it is now Hermotimus who finds himself thrown to perplexity.⁸⁶ Not even philosophers can trust the members of their own sects completely.⁸⁷ But, Lycinus claims that it is in their joint effort as friends that the argument has reached its aporetic conclusion.⁸⁸ Even he himself has been carried by the *logos*,⁸⁹ and it is this that Hermotimus must blame as the reason for his upset.⁹⁰ In the hope of becoming happy, Hermotimus believed he could trust the words of philosophers who claimed to be able to haul us all to the pinnacle of virtue, their *logoi* being just like Zeus’ golden rope.⁹¹ But Lycinus’ *logos* proves it is impossible to become happy through the study of philosophy, and therefore it ends in a logical impasse.⁹²

The difference between Hermotimus’ own bewitching speech and Lycinus’ *logos* is that he tries to ‘sting’ people awake from their dreams of philosophy.⁹³ Lycinus’ *logos* is instead a dissuasion from philosophical

⁸² Luc. *Herm.* 77

⁸³ Luc. *Herm.* 53.

⁸⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 54, see 52-54 and cf. 67.

⁸⁵ ἐνί τε λόγῳ ξυνελών φημι, ἄχρι ἂν ἄδηλον ἦ τίς ἀληθῆς ἐστι προαίρεσις ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ, μηδεμίαν αἰρεῖσθαι Luc. *Herm.* 34.

⁸⁶ ὅς με πλησίον ἤδη τῆς ἐλπίδος ὄντα εἰς ἀπορίας φέρων ἐμβέβληκας ἀδύνατον ἀποφαίνων τῆς ἀληθείας τὴν εὐρεσιν ἐτῶν γε τοσούτων δεομένην, Luc. *Herm.* 50.

⁸⁷ The members of different schools attack their own opponents when they say that there are some who know their own doctrines, while some others don’t, even if they are still completely trustworthy in others matters (εἶναι φασκόντων τοὺς μὲν εἰδέναι τοὺς λόγους ἐκάστους, τοὺς δὲ μή, καίτοι τά γε ἄλλα πάνυ ἀξιοπίστους ὄντας) Luc. *Herm.* 68.

⁸⁸ ἐγὼ δὲ μετὰ σοῦ σκεπτόμενος εὖρον τὸ ἐκ τοῦ λόγου ἀποβάν, Luc. *Herm.* 50.

⁸⁹ See Lycinus’ insistence on asking not him, but the *logos*, Luc. *Herm.* 63, and 64, 65, 71.

⁹⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 66.

⁹¹ Luc. *Herm.* 3.

⁹² Luc. *Herm.* 69, 70.

⁹³ Luc. *Herm.* 19; πολλὰ καὶ θαυμαστὰ ὄνειροπολοῦντα νύξας ὁ λόγος ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕπνου ἐκθορεῖν ἐποίησεν, 71. This is, of course, a reference to Plato’s *Apology* 30d-e.

eudaimonia, which is dreadful and hopeless,⁹⁴ precisely because it forces people to create fictions of unattainable desires and hopes which they fail to satisfy.⁹⁵ Trust in the *logoi* of philosophers leads to *aporía* and absurdity. But, contrary to philosophers' *logoi*, Lycinus' *aporetic* *logos* is not philosophically perplexing, because he only uses the arguments of philosophers to prove the unattainability of philosophy and to curtail completely Hermotimus' trust in his teacher, in Stoic philosophy and all other dogmatic sects.

However, what is important to understand is that the *logos*, which emerged from the conversation between Hermotimus and Lycinus and that left them at an impasse, is thrown inevitably back to Lycinus, thereby leaving Hermotimus in a position in which if he lays his trust in him it will be just as absurd as trusting a philosopher. This is because Lycinus has said that falsehood is generated because philosophers' pupils take for granted basic tenets and believe that which follows from them, because they think that consistency is a sign of truth, but do not notice that the first assumptions that they granted were false.⁹⁶

The majority of people believe (*πιστεύουσιν αὐτοῖς*) in such things because they are strange and bizarre (*διὰ τὸ ξένα καὶ ἀλλόκοτα εἶναι*) and because of the false beliefs made up by the free imagination (*ἐλεύθεροι ὄντες ἀναπλάττουσιν*) of philosophers, dreams, poets and painters and everyone that creates things that could have never existed.⁹⁷ Students trust their teachers, without investigating if the things they say are feasible; they quite simply believed in them (*μὴ ἐξετλασας εἰ δυνατόν, ἀλλὰ πιστεύσας*). Once they have trusted it is impossible to disbelieve what philosophers say, because everything has been consistent from the start (*τίς ἔτι ἂν ἀπιστήσειε ταῦτα λέγοντι αὐτῶ; ἀκόλουθα γὰρ τῇ ἀρχῇ*). Students now cannot stop trusting teachers, because

⁹⁴ ἀλλόκοτα καὶ ἀνέλπιστα ἐλπίζοντα, Luc. *Herm.* 51.

⁹⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 71-85

⁹⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

⁹⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 72.

'once one accepts the first thing, the rest comes flooding and it no longer stops'.⁹⁸

The problem emerges when we realize that Lycinus has with *disbelief* exactly the same relationship that acolytes of philosophers have with *belief*. The definition of philosopher as those that have acknowledged that they have been deceived and that quit the journey and dissuade (*ἀποτρέπειν*) others from making a similar attempt, could be best applied to himself, and this is a highly ironic conclusion. The reason why Hermotimus admires his teacher is virtually the same reason he admires Lycinus at the moment of his conversion. As Lycinus notes: 'the reason why you admire that old man, is because he casts his acolytes into perplexity and knows how to question and seem wise and cheat and snare them in impossible conundrums'.⁹⁹ This is precisely what Lycinus has done to Hermotimus: he has seized him with a long philosophical argument from which they were not able to escape, he then reduced them to perplexity, dissuaded Hermotimus from his previous life, and instead persuaded him to live a *βίος*, which is simply the reverse of that which seemed at first to be the best choice. Perhaps Hermotimus should have remembered to remain sober and distrusted Lycinus and thereby he would have chosen no position and suspended his judgement, going back instead to the basic tenets of the conversation in order to see whether they are reasonable. Lycinus has been ironic all along, and as a result so is his proposal to live like everyone else.

5. Hermotimus' Conversion

This first analysis of the form of the *Hermotimus* led us to the conclusion that at the end of the dialogue Hermotimus leaves the conversation with Lycinus' unconvinced. However, throughout the conversation Hermotimus fails to grasp

⁹⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 74.

⁹⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 79.

Lycinus' ironic undertones. From the very start of the dialogue the reader is able to grasp Hermotimus' callowness.

First, Hermotimus does not realize the cunning expertise of Lycinus and thinks of him as a friend who wants to join him in his philosophical quest;¹⁰⁰ accordingly, he too behaves in the manner of a friend. After suggesting that it might be impossible to become happy through philosophy, Lycinus encourages Hermotimus to continue to study it.¹⁰¹ Hermotimus perceives Lycinus' remark, that he might die before completing his task, as a bad omen,¹⁰² but tries to escape its implications by arguing that he is already late for class. Lycinus, who tells him that the class has been cancelled due to his teacher's hangover, thereby hooks him and pulls into a long debate. Thus, although Hermotimus believes that he is the expert and that Lycinus is a friend that must be guided in his quest to become a Stoic, the reader and Lycinus know that Hermotimus' expertise is from the very start of the prologue a laughing matter. Through this realisation, the reader learns to maintain a distance between that which Lycinus really thinks and that which he says.

The more Lycinus reveals Hermotimus' inability to compete with him, the more he needs to present himself as an inexperienced layman or as a stereotypical fool.¹⁰³ In turn, Hermotimus' lack of awareness increases the reader's expectations on whether he will ever realize that Lycinus is playing with him. One key example of this playful exchange is found in Hermotimus' inability to give a sufficiently rational criterion of choice for his preferred school of philosophy, and he ends up admitting that he followed the Stoic school by taking the gods' advice. Here at last he seems to suspect that Lycinus argument may not be all that it seems.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 1-20.

¹⁰¹ Luc. *Herm.* 4.

¹⁰² Luc. *Herm.* 6.

¹⁰³ Luc. *Herm.* 17.

¹⁰⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 21.

The irony of the situation is made clearer after Lycinus tells the story of the old man, who offered him his services as a philosophical guide to the city of virtue. Lycinus could not trust him as he knew the pursuit to be in vain and yet despite this he pretends to share Hermotimus' desire to become happy through philosophy.¹⁰⁵ Lycinus continues to undermine Hermotimus' hope for the rest of the conversation until Hermotimus is forced to admit that it is impossible to know whether the Stoic school is the one true philosophy.¹⁰⁶

Most ironic for the reader is Hermotimus' desperate remark: 'you alone have seen the truth, while the rest of the students of philosophy are mindless.'¹⁰⁷ Indeed Lycinus has seen the truth within the argument and not in the way that Hermotimus thinks. Lycinus does not lie when he claims to be an ally of truth, not because he knows what truth is in the philosophical sense, (he, like everybody else is ignorant of it), but because he reveals that which is false. From the perspective of the reader, the angrier and more desperate Hermotimus becomes, the more risible he becomes too. Hermotimus' realizes that his adversary has a better understanding of philosophy that he himself does and by the time Lycinus has won the argument the roles of follower and followed are reversed completely.¹⁰⁸

In the end, Hermotimus promises to change his appearance and his attitude and to do only the precise opposite of that which he used to as a philosopher. He will change his philosophical cloak (τὸ ἱμάτιον) for a purple robe (πορφυρίδα),¹⁰⁹ he will also trim his long and shaggy beard and even considers shaving his head like one who has been delivered from the sea. The difference in Herotimus' attitude is one of complete reversal and is greatly marked from the beginning of the dialogue in which Hermotimus agreed that

¹⁰⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 25.

¹⁰⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 50.

¹⁰⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 53.

¹⁰⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 70.

¹⁰⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 23, 85.

not even during sleep would he rest.¹¹⁰ He now hastens to change his chastened lifestyle (δίαιταν κεκολασμένην) for a more relaxed and free attitude (ἄνετα πάντα καὶ ἐλεύθερα) and it is important that this change is evident externally. It must be made explicit to others that he is no longer a philosopher. Lastly Hermotimus wishes to cleanse himself on the inside and declares himself willing to take a large amount of hellebore, for the opposite purpose of that of Chrysippus, so as to forget everything that he has learned. But the most telling aspect of his change of attitude is that which he holds towards philosophers; he swears that if ever he encounters a philosopher again he will avoid him as one does a dog with rabies.

So it is that the conversion to which Hermotimus is sworn is simply the stereotypical opposite to the philosophical life. At the end of the text, Lycinus tricks and finally triumphs over Hermotimus by relieving him of his sadness and thereby transforms his previous anger into admiration. It is however, through this relieving and trustful state that Hermotimus' also meets his doom. The fable introduced at the end of the dialogue summarises some of the ironic procedures of the *Hermotimus*. The moral stresses the importance of persisting, regardless of that which has past and that cannot be changed. But at the same time, like the fox, Lycinus tells Hermotimus to abandon the futile and useless study of philosophy, in favour of another unsuitable, and arguably worse, form of happiness. It is in this way that on downward slope to the city of the layman Hermotimus is tricked twice. The reader will accordingly laugh twice at him, but will also crucially doubly praise Lycinus.

The fact that everything that seems to be an alternative to philosophy is presented for the sake of exposing philosophers, and not for furthering or promoting moral values, allows the reader to know that the *Hermotimus* is a text

¹¹⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 1-2.

of binary oppositions in which it is impossible to know whether Lycinus is trying to persuade Hermotimus of anything other than the opposite of what he has been doing. Lycinus is persuading Hermotimus to abandon the philosophical life, and to live a life that is not philosophical, but it is not possible to know what this life is. Hermotimus' 'conversion' is a reassurance of a line of argumentation that opposes philosophers with laymen. In this sense the dialogue may leave the reader worried on Hermotimus' behalf; indeed he does not seem aware of himself but instead seems to think that he has been definitively rescued, and that the advice to 'live like anybody else' is an unproblematic formula for a happy life. We, the readers, however, can reflect (helped by that which Lycinus has said earlier about human foolishness and the incidence of bad behaviour in ordinary communities) that there are all kinds of potential pitfalls in 'living like anybody else'. As outside observers to the conversation, the 'readers', acutely aware of the dangers of perishing as part of the crowd, should admit that the better arguments are those that belong to Lycinus.

The effect is one of admiration for Lycinus' superior knowledge of philosophy as a non-philosopher, and derision for Hermotimus owing to his own lack of philosophical argumentation despite having studied for more than 20 years. Indeed, it is amusing that after 20 years of hard study, Hermotimus is yet to become a philosopher, and indeed it appears he has at least another 20 years of hard work still to come. It is also comic that after dedicating himself to his study and to his teacher for two decades that Hermotimus chooses to drop out of the school so readily. It was after all, just one conversation in the street. Perhaps the reader should ask himself at the end of this text whether Lycinus is really rescuing Hermotimus at all or whether the conclusion of the *Hermotimus* is instead unsettlingly ironic, inconclusive and *aporetic* regarding the life options with which he is left.

Chapter 5

The Moral Message of the *Hermotimus*

*La utopía está en el horizonte. Camino dos pasos, ella se aleja dos pasos
y el horizonte se corre diez pasos más allá.
¿Entonces para que sirve la utopía? Para eso, sirve para caminar.*
F. Birri and E. Galeano¹

This reflection, introduced by Eduardo Galeano synthesizes the practical reasons in which utopia can provide a useful methodology for individual, social and political transformation, and not simply goals to be achieved.² Utopia is a method to discover ways of overcoming perilous stagnation and to create through dreams new possible worlds that differ from the one in which we live. In the following section I want to show that the *Hermotimus*, in spite of being an aporetic dialogue, contains a moralizing and anti-utopian message so explicit that it is hard to believe that Lucian's own readers would have missed it.

The sheer number of allegories and paradigms in the *Hermotimus* complicates the binary situation of philosophers and laymen which characterises the end of the dialogue. However, many commentators have failed to appreciate the use of metaphors and the manipulation of commonplaces and as a result tend to have regarded the *Hermotimus* as dull, mechanistic and arid. And yet, paradoxically, it is only by paying attention to the use of metaphors in the text that we learn that the real moral message of the *Hermotimus* is to warn us against walking towards the impossible worlds offered by masters of truth. As Robert Joly has argued, the refutation and the discussion of the pertinence of metaphors in an argument reveals one of Lucian's most serious literary aspects.³

¹ Phrase attributed to the Argentinean filmmaker. F. Birri by E. Galeano in an 2011 interview.

² For an excellent and very complete study on utopia the concept of utopia and utopia as method see Levitas (2010) and (2013).

³ Joly (1981).

1. *Eikonomachia*

In this dialogue, Hermotimus not only fails to give appropriate answers to a reasoned line of questioning, but is also incapable of finding the right metaphors. Lycinus, on the contrary, proves himself to be an expert in comparison and in the manipulation of literary and philosophical commonplaces.

The *eikonomachia* between Hermotimus and Lycinus is easy to perceive. Lycinus compares Hermotimus' chances of conquering philosophy to that of conquering mount Aornos,⁴ but Hermotimus deems this comparison inappropriate. Although the goal of philosophy is expressed as the ideal city of virtue, Hermotimus found himself before a multiplicity of roads and guides none of which he was able to trust.⁵ There is an elaborate example of a dialogue within a dialogue in the episode of the resurrection of the old philosophers,⁶ and of the Ethiopian who, without having ever been abroad, proposes to his elders a hypothesis that white or yellow-skinned people might exist.⁷ Hermotimus tries to argue that knowing that the Stoics are the carriers of truth is like adding 1+1 or like trying to find a culprit between two temple robbers.⁸ But this previous metaphor is reformulated and improved by Lycinus, who states that there are many robbers and that they steal different things. He then gives a superior example in which he refers to the method that judges use at the Olympics when choosing wrestlers.⁹ Just as one should know all the schools before judging them, one must also see all the men and have in place a criterion

⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 1-8.

⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 25-26.

⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 29-30. The resurrection of philosophers is the main theme of Lucian's *Fisherman*; for the structure of *Fisherman* see Anderson (1976), 135-139.

⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 31-32.

⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 37-39. Temple robbers are a recurrent topic in Lucian (Luc. *Tim.* 4, 9; *Phal. B.* 2; *Icar.* 24). See how Epicharmus is used in Plat. *Gorg.* 505e and *Thaet* 152e.

⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 39-44.

by which to decide which of is the most handsome.¹⁰ Lycinus is an expert in drawing examples from mythology: Epicharmus' dictum is a useful criterion that presents itself as a way in which Lycinus and Hermotimus might be lead out of the problem of knowing which sect has the truth, just as the thread of Ariadne helped Theseus to escape from the labyrinth.¹¹ Lycinus makes use of classical paradigms and suggests that to make the right choice one must behave like the elders at the court of the Areopagus, who listen to trials at night so as not to see the speaker, and listen only to his words.¹² Lycinus also uses metaphors from everyday life to explain the impasse that has been reached by the dialogue, as he describes the way in which he and Hermotimus act like fishermen convinced that they have captured something big, but that when they pull in their line discover nothing on the end nothing but a jar.¹³ What they need, he argues, is a method by which to find the possessor of truth,¹⁴ which he describes as being similar to finding a missing bean in 20 hands filled with beans. He says they must behave like assayers of silver in distinguishing truth from falsehood and he continues by giving several comparisons of what might happen to one who does not possess that skill.¹⁵ Lycinus' *logos* has the effect of awakening Hermotimus who is compared to a master woken from a wonderful dream by his slave, and who subsequently becomes preoccupied by everyday practicalities.¹⁶

Hermotimus too takes examples from classical Athens to show that it is possible to know that the Stoics possess truth, just as Pheidias knew the size of a lion after he had seen its claw.¹⁷ He also uses examples of everyday life, comparing the search of true philosophy with a jar of wine and philosophers to

¹⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 45.

¹¹ Luc. *Herm.* 47.

¹² Luc. *Herm.* 64.

¹³ Luc. *Herm.* 65.

¹⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 66.

¹⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 68.

¹⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 71.

¹⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 54-55.

wine-sellers;¹⁸ but Lycinus proves the comparison to be lacking and corrects it by likening the search for true philosophy to a mixture of seeds, philosophers to wine-sellers and philosophy to poison.¹⁹ In the end, it is not just that Lycinus has a better argument than Hermotimus, but that he is much better than him at making comparisons which allow him to prove that, in spite of the ἐλπίς that people have in it, philosophy is nothing but a wonderful promise (ὑποσχέσεις θαυμαστάς), a dream (ὄναρ), and a product of the imagination (αὐτὸς ἀναπλάσας). The goddess Εὐχή, 'who is rich in gifts and refuses nothing', falsely fulfils these desires by allowing men to think they can have anything they ask for, even if it is impossible. The philosophical goal is imagined as the impossible desires of laymen who may dream of flying, becoming instantly rich, or possessing superhuman power and strength. This is τὴν κενὴν μακαρίαν. Hermotimus' enthusiasm is the same as that of someone who believes a storyteller (μυθοποιός), an over daring poet (λέγοντος γὰρ τινοῦ τῶν μεγαλοτόλμων τούτων ποιητῶν), or a mathematician.²⁰

As becomes clear when Hermotimus threatens to drink hellebore so that he can forget everything that he has learnt from the Stoics,²¹ or when he says that the mist has been lifted and that now he can see,²² that both in terms of argumentation and in terms of the use of metaphors, Hermotimus is left with no option other than to accept that Lycinus has triumphed over him in his use of philosophical and metaphoric language.

Attempts to argue that the *Hermotimus* is more philosophic than metaphoric are neither straightforward nor easy to achieve, since the logical argument presented by Lycinus depends almost entirely on the comparison of philosophy with the metaphor of the road, which is the focus of the following

¹⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 58-60.

¹⁹ Luc *Herm.* 61, 62.

²⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 73-74.

²¹ See *Nav.* 45 for a similar image of the taking of hellebore.

²² See. *Herm.* 19, 20, 53 and 64.

analysis. As much as it might be said that Lucian shows a greater commitment to philosophy, it may also be said that he displays a commitment to the study of the rhetoric of philosophy.

2. The Philosophical Quest: a Road, a Maze and a Stormy sea

Chapter 6 will look at how the *Hermotimus* is a parody of protreptic discourses and metaphors, including that of the road and the destination of philosophy. Certainly, the first metaphoric feature that catches the eye of any reader and which imbues the whole of the dialogue's vocabulary is the comparison between the philosophical quest and the road. The *Hermotimus* starts off with a comparison of happiness being the prize on reaching the top of a mountain at the end of the path of philosophical virtue. Hermotimus humbly admits that after 20 years of study he still finds himself at the very start of the road, in the foothills of the mountain, on top of which, as Hesiod (*WD* 289) says, lie virtue and happiness. In this section, however, I will attempt to show that the allegory of the road is the basis for the whole dialogue and that it is in its manipulation that the *Hermotimus* is given its sense of fragmentation and of immobility. It is, therefore, not hard to see how the whole argument leads the conversation literally and metaphorically to an *a-poria*, a dead end. To cite Eduardo Galeano again, we could say that it leaves us 'here sitting down, watching how they kill our dreams'.²³

From the perspective of philosophy, the world is thus divided into philosophers, who arrive at the glorious pinnacle of philosophy, and laymen (*ιδιώται*) or the rabble which move at ground level. The task of reaching the top where virtue lies is presented as more difficult to achieve than Alexander's conquest of Mount Aornos. Similarly, walking the length of the philosophical road takes so long that one could travel in the same time from the Pillars of

²³ Galeano (1989), 124.

Heracles in Spain to India three times and back. It is perhaps, therefore, not unreasonable that philosophers like Hermetimus' teacher, who have reached the top of the mountain of virtue, look down from their vantage point at the rest of mankind and consider them to be no more than ants or Pygmies. To those looking up from the foot of the mountain, philosophers might seem to be among the gods and to be living with them above the clouds.²⁴

Philosophy is compared with the journey to the city of virtue. The multiple philosophical schools are presented as being in disagreement with one other, and are compared to doors that once were open to Hermetimus, in his early days of studying philosophy.²⁵ Anyone is allowed to try to take the road to this city, regardless of whether they are 'inferior or superior, noble or ignoble, enslaved or free,'²⁶ and at each entrance the traveller finds a gatekeeper, who is also a philosopher, who claims that his road is the only one that leads to truth.²⁷ If the seeker after of true happiness enters through the wrong door (θυσίς) he will be lost and arrive at the wrong destination. As there is only one road that leads to the true city, if he makes a mistake he might end up in Babylon or Bactra, or head towards the Hyperboreans or to India.²⁸ It is unwise 'to go where our feet take us, the proverb says',²⁹ and for this reason travellers must find the appropriate guide who might lead them to true happiness. But just as only one road can be true, there can also only be one true entrance to this road and it is wishful thinking to believe that a prophet will reveal the shortcut to a happy life, thereby helping the traveller avoid delays and complications.³⁰ There are as many philosophical roads as paths in a

²⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 1-6.

²⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 13-19.

²⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 24.

²⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 25.

²⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 27.

²⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 28; Theoc. 13. 70; Hor. *Od.* 3.11.49.

³⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 57.

labyrinth and once somebody starts on the road it is not easy to go back.³¹ Like Theseus, a seeker of truth is in need of Ariadne's thread, here manifest in a criterion by which to choose it and an appropriate guide whether in the form of a sect or a philosopher.

However, even after so much toil Hermotimus and Lycinus are still just where they started.³² As it is proved that it is not possible to find a suitable criterion Hermotimus and Lycinus are described as two individuals who have been 'running in circles and have returned to their starting point'.³³ Before starting off along a road, one must verify whether somebody has the truth and false and true philosophers are as dangerous as ignorant guides who might forcefully take one along a straight path.³⁴ If a philosopher-guide were to confess that it is impossible to know whether there is such a thing as philosophical virtue, he would fall from the top of the mountain.³⁵ 'The man standing just outside the door is as much outside the threshold and in the open as the man far off', the only difference, according to Lycinus, is that the former is more distressed because he has a better view of that which he cannot possess.³⁶

As aforementioned, Lycinus' definition of those that can be called philosophers, refers, paradoxically, only to those that acknowledge that they have been deceived and that quit the journey and dissuade (ἀποτρέπειν) others from making a similar attempt. The rest do not know the truth, and even if they do know that it is impossible to know the truth, they conceal that knowledge for the sake of their honour and pride.³⁷ Hermotimus' vocabulary at the moment of his conversion makes use of the allegory of the road and the

³¹ Luc. *Herm.* 47.

³² Luc. *Herm.* 69.

³³ Luc. *Herm.* 70.

³⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 73.

³⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 74-75.

³⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 77.

³⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

allegory of navigation. Lycinus is described as having saved Hermotimus when he was being carried along by a torrent and indeed he promises that he will shave his head like that of a shipwrecked sailor, as an offering of thanks following his deliverance from the sea. Furthermore, if Hermotimus does choose to join the common life he will start learning again and will not be ashamed of the change (μεταχωρήσεις) in his direction. He sees in Lycinus a 'god from the machine', who has spared him from continuing to pursue a useless task. Hermotimus is convinced that if he ever encounters a philosopher on his travels again, he will turn the other way to avoid him as one would a dog with rabies.³⁸

In addition to the metaphor of the road, the *Hermotimus*' philosophical quest is also compared to the experience of navigation. Lucian's dexterity in running two or more metaphors in parallel can be best appreciated in §28:

I don't think that in matters as important as these we should take a perilous risk or confine our hopes narrowly, wanting to cross the Aegean or the Ionian Sea on a mat, as the proverb goes,³⁹ seeing that we couldn't fairly blame Fortune either, [...] I think that one can imagine that the danger is not small, if instead of the straight road because we are ignorant we fall upon one of the ones that go astray, hoping that fortune will make a better decision on our behalf. [...] Once someone has already entrusted himself to the wind, having cast off the cables mooring him to the land, it is necessary to be carried along on the open sea, suffering from seasickness for most of the time, and afraid, and suffering from a headache because of the swell, when what one should have done at the outset, before setting sail, was to climb to some vantage-point to see whether the wind was blowing in the right direction and was

³⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 86.

³⁹ Eurip. Fr. 397 N; Ar. *Pax.* 699.

favourable for those that wish to sail all the way to Corinth, and, by Zeus, to choose one great captain and a ship that is well-built enough to stand up against such big waves.

When Lycinus reveals that not even the most critical attitude is enough to know which of the schools leads to happiness, he compares Hermotimus' and his own present situation to that of fishermen who haul up jars instead of fishes on the end of their lines. Hermotimus confesses that he is trapped by Lycinus' fishing-net like argument, but Lycinus raises his spirits by telling him that with god's help he should be as able to swim as well as everyone else.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, Hermotimus does not know how to swim, and ultimately, as he is whisked along by a rough and turbid torrent, he abandons himself to the stream and Lycinus has to come to his rescue. It is at this point that Hermotimus considers shaving his head like one rescued from a shipwreck, as an offering of thanks for his deliverance from the sea.⁴¹

3. Lycinus' Attack against Hope

That the argumentative and metaphoric levels of discourse lead Hermotimus to *aporia* does not mean that Lycinus does not give a conclusive moral message. On the one hand, distrusting and remaining both sober and critical forms only part of the message of the *Hermotimus*. On the other hand, what complements this picture and reveals to the reader that which could be considered the dialogue's moral message, is the criticism it presents of hope and of ambition.

The dialogue presents Hermotimus as one who hopes to become happy, but does not knowing exactly when this is likely to be achieved.⁴² Lycinus' warns him that failure and necessity (τὸ χρεῶν) may drag him 'by one foot

⁴⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 65.

⁴¹ Luc. *Herm.* 86.

⁴² Luc. *Herm.* 4. Hermotimus' hope is also expressed through the use of the optative in 5 and 6.

from a hope uncompleted'.⁴³ Lacking a suitable criterion with which to determine the true philosophical school threatens Hermotimus' hope of becoming happy through philosophy,⁴⁴ and yet finding one also provides a secure hope.⁴⁵ The only certain hope that exists for Hermotimus (μόνη σοι αὐτῆ πιστὴ καὶ βέβαιος ἐλπίς ἐπὶ τὴν ἀλήθειάν τε καὶ εὐρεσιν αὐτῆς) is an ability to separate truth from falsehood, without which his hope is hopeless (ἀνέλπιστα ἐλπίζοντα).⁴⁶ If Hermotimus had the power and skill to examine every philosophical school, the job would be easy, but the argument proves that finding somebody to teach that skill is impossible, precisely because philosophical hope is as unattainable (τινας ἐλπίδας ἀνεφίκτους ἐλπίζοντα) as the monstrous product of dreams and the imagination of poets and painters.⁴⁷

All those who have trusted hope perish trying to obtain it.⁴⁸ Certainly when Hermotimus first began learning philosophy his hopes were more than just appearing to be more respectable than everyone else.⁴⁹ Thus, Lycinus' recommendation to Hermotimus is that not only would he do better if he 'decided to live the life that is common to all of us and to become a fellow-citizen with the majority', but also if he abandoned his 'hopes for anything bizarre and conceited'.⁵⁰

The moral message of the *Hermotimus* resides ultimately in the acceptance that both the hopes of philosophers and laymen alike lead them to equally laughable *aporias*. Unless reasoning works against hope, the trust of any *logos* is unsound. Hope in the *Hermotimus* is therefore imagined as twofold.

⁴³ Luc. *Herm.* 6.

⁴⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 50.

⁴⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 50. See also 65, where the inability to find an appropriate criterion is compared to the activities of fishermen hauling up something heavy with the expectation of a big catch, but losing their hopes when they find themselves pulling up a stone or a jar filled with sand.

⁴⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 51.

⁴⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 72. That ἀνεφίκτος is used in reference to philosophy see 1 and 63.

⁴⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

⁴⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 83.

⁵⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 84.

Hermotimus and the teachers' younger students are presented as all having personal desires to become 'the only king', and yet equally, as Lycinus' exemplifies with the city of virtue, hope takes on an important political dimension. Lycinus is also in love (ἐρῶ) with the utopias of philosophers, and prays (εὐξάμην) that this kind of happiness might be possible; although one cannot prove that a city of virtue can exist.

More importantly, Lycinus presents a direct attack against philosophical utopias by proving that they are as impossible to attain as the hopes of those laymen who suffer from *philotimía*.⁵¹ Philosophers believe that, due to their moral superiority, the common crowd looks to them as though they were 'above the clouds'⁵² and reveres them as though they were gods. But in the end, as previously mentioned, it is impossible to know whether the kind of happiness offered by philosophers is achievable. Furthermore, philosophers trick people in order to pursue those earthly things that they are supposed to despise, and they do this by inspiring within their students the desire for impossible utopias. The result of this craving for glory and wisdom is love, as people fall in love with the possibility of fulfilling their own wishes. Similarly, Hermotimus first fell in love with the idea of being as virtuous as his teacher.⁵³ Like other students of philosophy, and people in general it is due to a lack of criticism of their own 'erotic desire and alacrity'⁵⁴ that they long for inexistent, but luring and consistent lies.⁵⁵ Unlike philosophers and all other people, Lycinus is critical from the start about the possibility of the existence and

⁵¹ Lucian only highlights the negative aspects of *philotimia*. For a complete study of ambition in Lucian and in the second century see the contributions of Nesselrath and Mossman in Roskman et al (2012).

⁵² Luc. *Herm.* 5.

⁵³ Luc. *Herm.* 20.

⁵⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

⁵⁵ Besides the monstrous products of poets, and storytellers (72-74), ordinary people can also fall in love with the beauty of their own wishes, as with the artificial appearance of a statue. Luc. *Herm.* 51.

ultimate attainability of the individual and social utopias offered by philosophers, and sees nothing in them but another form of ambition.

Both philosophers and laymen are under the dominion of *Eὐχῆ*, which refuses nothing of what one wants (*θέλη*) regardless of how impossible this might be. Those who wish to become happy through the study of philosophy lack criticism of their own hope, which is a problem as all (unsafe) hope is deceiving, and all (unsafe) desires and wants misleading. The need to be critical towards one's own desires in order to discover whether they are feasible or not makes Lycinus' recommendation for the need to act according to virtue clearer.⁵⁶ Lycinus makes it seem that the moral values he proposes are the exact opposite of Hermotimus' philosophical values, but the reader can recall that what Lycinus means is that because there is no other city but this 'real city' and that one should avoid all impossible self-utopias and social utopias. Everyday life and necessity are far more pressing than ambitious hopes for a better future. Lycinus' advice is to work with temperance against one's own utopian horizons.

As a reinforcement of this anti-utopian moral message, the *Hermotimus* also contains an attack against *τύχη*. The possibility of coming by chance upon the correct path to true happiness is hinted at, but according to Lycinus 'it is not a good idea to trust to chance and go where our feet take us', even if in the past someone might have stumbled across the truth in this way. Lycinus also warns the reader that 'in matters as important as these we ought not to take a perilous risk, or confine our hopes narrowly, wanting to cross the Aegean or the Ionian Sea on a mat, as the proverb goes, seeing that if we do so we couldn't fairly blame Chance either'. For Lycinus:

The danger is not slight, if instead of the straight road because we are ignorant we fall upon one of the ones that go astray, in

⁵⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 79.

the hope that fortune will make a better decision on our behalf
(ἐλπίζοντες ἄμεινον αἰρήσεσθαι τὴν τύχην ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν).⁵⁷

When chance presents itself as an alternative to logos in finding oneself facing in the right direction, the metaphor of the road and the guide is soon replaced by the metaphor of the sea and ship-captain. However, trusting Chance to become *eudaimon* and failing in this choice is also compared to ‘shooting with an arrow or hurling a javelin and not hitting the only true target among a thousand false ones’, a challenge that not even for Teucer, -‘who when he should have hit the dove, cut the rope’, was possible.⁵⁸ Neither through philosophy, nor with the help of the gods (κατὰ θεὸν εἰλόμην),⁵⁹ is one able to choose the right philosopher and to become happy.

Therefore, via all means philosophical happiness is impossible to achieve and any hope of fulfilling one’s wishes in the *Hermotimus* is negative and deceiving. In any case, the individual is to be blamed for trusting in his own hopes, which are themselves the result of individual desires. One cannot curse Chance for not giving him what he wants, because that which he desire does not even exist. Certainly, there are other external forces which ensure that individuals like Hermotimus become the victims of impossible hopes and this is best exemplified with the figure of Hermotimus’ teacher and other philosophers who are responsible for selling to their students the illusion of impossible and wonderful promises.⁶⁰ Philosophers are undoubtedly the creators of false hopes; nevertheless, it is individuals themselves who are responsible for thinking that they can fulfil such hopes without considering first whether they might even be achievable. It is the lack of a criterion on the part of the individual which leads

⁵⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 28.

⁵⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 28.

⁵⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 28. Hermotimus believes that as a Stoic one can become virtuous in this life, even if the perfect Stoic sage has never existed. Therefore, philosophy as a preparation to happy in the afterlife is also dismissed; see Luc. *Herm.* 78: ἐς ἄλλον βίον προγυμνάζεις ἑαυτὸν.

⁶⁰ Luc. *Herm* 6 καθυπέσχετο, 25 ὑπισχνεῖσθαι, 26 ὑπισχνεῖται, 76 ὑποσχέσεις θαυμαστάς.

them to trust external forces and their own imagination and dreams over reason.

The aim of Lycinus' argumentative and metaphoric battle is literally to sober Hermotimus from his lofty thoughts and high hopes and to bring him back to Earth. This message should not strike us as anomalous. The *Hermotimus* is not the only place in Lucian's work in which the reader is given advised to beware of hope. This is best perceived in the *Charon or The Observers*, a dialogue in which the ferryman of the dead is guided by Hermes to the world of mortals driven by his desire to understand why those who cross the boundaries of death shed at least one tear, and to see everything in life (τὰ ἐν τῷ βίῳ ἅπαντα).⁶¹ In the *Charon* humanity is depicted in a pyramidal structure in which at the bottom lie the masses (τὴν πληθύν), and above them a crowd of forms (ὁ περιπετόμενος ὄχλος) commanded by φόβος and ἐλπίδες.⁶² Charon's *logos* is that to have hopes of becoming richer or more powerful without knowing the cost of such an effort, which is ultimately in vain, because death comes to all men, is the folly (ἄνοια) and ignorance of humanity.⁶³ Indeed, the greatest power of Alexander of Abonouteichos is his capacity to put fear and hope, the two tyrants of mankind, at his own service.⁶⁴ According to Demonax, the characteristic of the truly happy man, by contrast, is that he neither hopes for nor fears anything.⁶⁵

4. The Descent from the Utopian to the Real City

What is precisely meant by bringing Hermotimus down to Earth is perceived in one of the most interesting sections of the *Hermotimus* in the utopian city of

⁶¹ Luc. *Char.* 1.

⁶² Luc. *Char.* 15

⁶³ Luc. *Char.* 24.

⁶⁴ Luc. *Alex.* 8

⁶⁵ Luc. *Dem.* 20

Virtue as described by Lycinus is used to exemplify what philosophical happiness might look like:

L: [...] Virtue, in my opinion, can be represented as a sort of city, whose citizens are happy (as your teacher would say if he could come back from where he is), wise to the limit, all manly, just, and almost god-like. Plundering, violence, greed and things alike, all that happens among us no one dares to do in this city, people say, but its citizens live in a peaceful and equal society, as is natural. I imagine that it is because they got rid of all the things which in other cities give rise to quarrels and competitiveness and all the things over which people plot against each other. They are not after gold, or pleasure, or fame, so as to argue over them, but have long since expelled those things from their city in the belief that they are not needed for civic life together. Therefore, they live calmly and happily with excellent laws, equality, freedom, and every other good.

H: What then, Lycinus? Shouldn't everyone wish to be a citizen of such a city, neither taking account of the toil expended on the journey nor giving up in view of the length of time it takes, if when they arrive they will be enrolled and will be part of the city-life?

L: Yes, by Zeus, Hermotimus, one must make all efforts to make this possible and neglect everything else. One should not pay much attention to one's homeland here if it takes hold of one, nor be moved by children or parents, if one has them, holding one back and whimpering, but ideally one should exhort them too to follow the same road, and if they are unwilling or unable, one should shake them off and head directly for this totally happy city, even throwing off one's cloak if they were to seize hold of this and hold one back - because there is no reason to fear that anyone will shut you out from this place even if you arrive naked. A long time ago I heard an old man relating how things were there and he impelled me to follow him to the city. He said he would guide me and once I got there he would give me citizenship, make me a fellow tribesman and give me a role in his own phratry, so that I could be happy along with all of them. 'But I wouldn't

be convinced' because almost 15 years ago I was imprudent and puerile. If I had done so, I would be by now at the outskirts and at the gates. He mentioned many other things about the city, as far as I can remember, especially that not only is everyone there a stranger and a foreigner, and that no one is native, but that also that there are many barbarians that hold civil rights and slaves, cripples and dwarfs and paupers and that, to sum it up, anyone who wants to can be a citizen. For it is their custom not to give the citizenship because of property or dress, size, beauty, origin or the length of one's beard; no, these things are not esteemed by them, but instead intelligence, the desire for the good, toil, perseverance, if he does not give up and does not weaken when he faces all the hardships in the way, are enough for a man to become a citizen, so that whoever can manifest these qualities and continue his journey all the way to the city, as soon as he arrives at the city will become a citizen, equal to everyone else; being lesser or greater or noble or common or slave or free are things that do not even exist and are not even spoken of in this city.⁶⁶

Here, the ideal philosophical life is not just for the individual, but can also be applied to the construction of a utopian πόλις, and it is hard to imagine that Lucian's readers, who would have been used to seeing the injustices of slavery, debt and money, would not have seen that here Lycinus is attacking specifically the utopian potential of philosophy to unsettle conventional hierarchies.

The *Hermotimus* presents the non-philosophical society as divided into binary oppositions: inferior or superior, noble or ignoble, enslaved or free, foreigner and native, disabled or 'normal.' Lucian shows through the activities of citizens the wider spectrum of characters from 'slum-naturalism' which include: temple robbers, wine-sellers, fishermen, teachers and students, husbands, wives, uncles, kings, Ethiopians, assayers of silver, landlords and debtors, athletes, archers, mathematicians, poets, judges, Olympic judges, spectators, prophets, prophetesses at Delphi, nurses, young boys, adolescents and mature men, handsome men and women, cripples and midgets, gods,

⁶⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 22-24.

resurrected philosophers, etc. All dwellers in the real city judge wrongly that which is admirable, yearn for riches, glory, sensual pleasures and are enslaved by fear, anger, desire, and grief and all other passions that philosophers are supposed to despise.⁶⁷

This caricature of the common city serves to show that philosophers like the student of Hermotimus' teacher,⁶⁸ or the man who is awoken by a slave,⁶⁹ take loans and have debts which they cannot pay, are anxious about how they will provide for their families, have drinking problems, and are gluttonous.⁷⁰ In short, they are just like the worse kind of common people; they are low-life and constantly fail to achieve their own targets as they too are subject to human passions and behaviours.⁷¹ This is exacerbated by their pretensions to appear better than everyone else and their inability to take criticism easily.⁷² But the true reason why philosophers continue their vain pretensions is that, like anybody else, they cannot pay their debts, and get angry when students do not pay their fees on time.⁷³ Quarrelsome students of philosophy can even seem to be the worse kind of thugs, studying philosophy just to distinguish themselves from laymen, but in reality they are rapists, they smuggle alcohol into the homes of their parents and they even hit their own mothers.⁷⁴ They are therefore, just like everyone else. Indeed, Hermotimus has yet to see a Stoic who is not enslaved by fear, anger, desire and grief, and all other passions, which philosophers are supposed to despise.⁷⁵ Converting to philosophy should mean more than just wearing a philosophical robe and following a chastened lifestyle, which distinguishes the philosopher from the common crowd or

⁶⁷ *Luc. Herm.* 5-7.

⁶⁸ *Luc. Herm.* 10.

⁶⁹ *Luc. Herm.* 72.

⁷⁰ *Luc. Herm.* 3, 8, 9, 10.

⁷¹ *Luc. Herm.* 16.

⁷² *Luc. Herm.* 12.

⁷³ *Luc. Herm.* 10, 39, cf. *Luc. Herm.* 72.

⁷⁴ *Luc. Herm.* 80-83.

⁷⁵ *Luc. Herm.* 76.

ἰδιώται, who are in the eyes of the perfect philosopher no more than a rabble.⁷⁶ But philosophers, like the inhabitants of any city, crave all the wrong things, and are in fact worse than everyone else, since instead of admitting to their uncontrollable lust and desires for riches and glory, they pretend to be morally superior and in need of nothing.

In this way, laughter in the *Hermotimus* is not only restricted to the zealous, transcendent and divine philosopher. Its comic trick consists in equating the behaviour of philosophers to that of everyone else,⁷⁷ and in doing so it also equates the ambition of philosophical happiness with that of laymen everywhere. The general moralizing message of the *Hermotimus* is to stop dreaming about another better world and fictitious hopes as proposed by philosophy, because *this* is the only real world, and one can only act according to how things are and have always been within it.

5. The Moral Message of the *Hermotimus*

In the last two chapters I have been arguing that in its form the *Hermotimus* appears to present itself as an aporetic dialogue, precisely because it leaves readers at an impasse over what to do with Lycinus' ironic proposal to live like everyone else as opposed to an ascetic philosophical lifestyle. However, this reading does not mean that the *Hermotimus* does not have a moral message. In Chapter 5 we saw how after winning an argumentative and metaphoric battle, Lycinus brought Hermotimus back to his senses by pushing him away from his hopes and desires and by showing to him that philosophers are no better than laymen. But because Lycinus' proposal to live like everyone else is ironic, we cannot say that the *Hermotimus* is a *protreptic* text, as it does not positively offer the reader a βίος.

⁷⁶ συρφετός, cf. Luc. *Herm.* 1, 21, 61.

⁷⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 76.

Instead, the *Hermotimus* presents an ἀποτρεπτικός λόγος, a guideline, which tells the reader how to avoid false and ambitious hopes that might cause distress if unfulfilled. Getting rid of one's hopes allows the individual to live a relaxed life, to be content with what he has, and to desire nothing more. Distrusting one's own desires leads to the emancipating realization that what once was hoped for is in reality impossible. The reader is offered a better, more real view of the world and is invited to laugh at those who due to their greed, waste their life striving to reach their dreams. Behaving justly, wisely and bravely and being virtuous is to be distrustful of the hope of getting anything more than what one already has. The *Hermotimus* recommends that Hermotimus and the reader alike seize the day and to forget about imagining a new future which is after all always uncertain.⁷⁸ The reader should continue to do what he is already doing, and to distrust all impossible hopes of getting all that he desires. He should avoid at all costs people such as ascetic philosophers, poets and storytellers whose *logos* suggests suggests that transforming oneself and one's society is possible when in reality it is not.

While Hermotimus' conversion is sincere, we have seen that living like everyone else as proposed by Lycinus', is not an alternative in its own right. When Lycinus exposes the philosophical *logoi* he becomes caught in a self-exposing situation in which he acts like those philosophers he so despises. This self-exposure has in addition, the look of self-praise, since Lycinus' definition of a philosopher could also be applied to himself. Lycinus, like other characters in Lucian's writings, can be seen as a satirical hero. In Camerotto's terms, the satirical hero is one made appropriate for the satirical genre, which has criticism as its final goal.⁷⁹ On the one hand, Lycinus is partly superior, and yet he is also an outcast when compared to the rest of his society, as he needs to adopt a position of appropriate distance in order to point out all of society's

⁷⁸ Cf. Luc. *Herm* 6, 78.

⁷⁹ Camerotto (2014), in particular 112 and 290.

contradictions. On the other hand, he is a man of the crowd, for as part of the carnivalesque in which roles are inverted, he needs to be crowned and reaccepted by society once carnival-time has passed and common order is restored. While there are reasons to think that Lycinus is in some ways Lucian's spokesperson, we should not think that the story between the old man in *Hermotimus* 24 and Lycinus is autobiographic. This is simply the example of what Hermotimus should have done before trusting in the Stoics, and furthermore there is no evidence suggesting that the old man is Nigrinus. It is therefore impossible to prove that this dialogue is autobiographic in any way and, in this sense, we should discard the possibility of the *Hermotimus* contributing to any developmentalist approach to Lucian.

Contrary to that which occurs in a Platonic dialogue, in Menippean satire the character's point of view does not change when he is faced with a situation of estrangement. His ideology too remains unchanged during the process so that the contrast of role switching becomes more evident. As such Lycinus is a fictional character who has little to do with Lucian the author and yet at the same time he is a satirical hero and an unchangeable and eternal literary-character, who expresses something of his creator, namely, that one should distrust one's own hopes of becoming happy individually or socially through philosophy, and become happy instead through the pursuit of wealth and power. The attack against the ideal philosophical life in the *Hermotimus*, which, owing to its construction of a utopian πόλις reaches political dimensions, is a conservative message that should make us think carefully about Lucian's readers and the aim of his works. Insofar as much as this is a text against philosophical dogmatism and the excluding and exclusive life offered by philosophical schools, it is also a text that prevents the reader from imagining a different social and individual life. It is also a text that uses the rhetoric and arguments of philosophy specifically to undermine utopian possibilities of philosophy, which are based on asceticism.

The truth awakened in the reader is that both the wise man and the fool are figures to be laughed at. But philosophers are more risible since they pretend not to be fools and claim to be able to create better worlds. At the end of the dialogue, Lycinus, an authoritative voice and a Lucianic hero, has shared with the reader a more convincing perspective of the world, and it is through this perspective that the reader can in turn laugh at Hermotimus and his attempts to become happy through Stoicism as well as his sudden conversion. The reader can laugh too at all other mediocre philosophers, and laymen who try and fail to transcend the human condition. Perhaps it is this that should make us wonder to what degree the technique of estrangement of the order of things through the presentation of a philosophical utopia is a way of reinforcing the reader's real social position as a member of the privileged elite. In this sense, the vantage-point reached by the satiric hero of Menippean satire could represent a caricature of the lower classes made by the riche and more powerful as opposed to an aspect of the popular and the carnivalesque.

The result is that Lycinus' ἀποτροπτικός λόγος is serious, and conveys the author's moral message that one should not trust one's own hopes in becoming happy through philosophy as much as one should avoid becoming over-ambitious. The ironic procedures in the text are explicit and the reader is able to detach Lycinus' intentions from Lycinus' protreptic logos. The ending of the *Hermotimus* is aporetic, only in the sense that at the end of the dialogue the reader is left with no alternative but to choose between the philosophical life and that of the laymen. In this sense, the *Hermotimus* disappoints those scholars inclined to read Lucian in a unitarian fashion in which the author is decentralized and all of his authorial and authoritative opinions made relative.

The purpose of this formal analysis has been not to uncover the (un)-intended meanings in the text, but simply to explain how it might be interpreted through its structure. In the next two chapters I will explore the ways in which the *Hermotimus* is a parody of protreptic literature and aporetic

literature, the two most distinctive philosophical genres *par excellence*. In this way the reader will be able to analyse the ways in which this dialogue emerges from and engages with *paideia*.

Chapter 6

The *Hermotimus* as a Parody of Platonic Themes

Detailed textual analysis has shown that the ending of the *Hermotimus* presents an *aporia*, in which one is unable to choose between the life-style of the layman as proposed by Lycinus, and the philosophical life, as Lycinus' proposal of living a life like everyone else is evidently ironic. In this sense, we should not think of the *Hermotimus* as a protreptic dialogue that encourages us to live like everyone else, yet neither is it an *aporetic* dialogue because it conveys the clear message of avoiding the perils of hoping to become happy by living a life that is out-of-the-ordinary, whether seeking luxury and power or religious asceticism.

To understand how Lucianic texts might have interacted with a diverse paideutic context, in which 'classical' texts, serious philosophical texts and traditional scholarly texts circulated, this chapter will show that the *Hermotimus* uses Platonic texts and other clichéd philosophical rhetoric to target not just philosophical asceticism, but also the utopias that philosophical texts might encourage us to pursue. The *Hermotimus*, I argue, invites critically thinking about the rhetoric of Platonic philosophical discourses. The use of Platonic models, however, addresses the issue of what is 'classical' about philosophers, and in this sense it also has the effect of engaging with a much wider philosophical culture.

1. Lycinus as a Parody of Socrates

The *Hermotimus* is a parody of the Socratic-Platonic question on whether virtue can be taught and who it is able to teach it. As such, the *Hermotimus* is a caricature that borrows elements from Platonic texts to create stereotypes about philosophers and philosophy as to parody the Socratic search for virtue and *eudaimonia* as well as other classical Platonic themes of protreptic literature.

Much of the joy of reading the *Hermotimus* lies in the realization that Lycinus can be interpreted as a second Socrates who uses all of his powers of anti-philosophical persuasion to convince the clichéd philosopher, Hermotimus, to abandon philosophy.¹ The dialogue starts in the convention of a familiar Platonic situation; a philosopher encounters an individual on the street, the two strike-up a serious conversation, and the result is that the philosopher is encouraged to think philosophically about conventional ideas.² However in the *Hermotimus*, immediately after the standard scene is set, what follows is in fact a reverse situation in which the dialogue serves as to dissuade Hermotimus entirely from his philosophical pursuit. In this encounter Lycinus discovers the painfully slow pace at which Hermotimus is learning philosophy from his teacher. This can be seen as a parody of Socrates' encounter with the sophists Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, a couple of *πάσσοφοι ἀτεχνῶς*,³ who claim to be the fastest teachers of virtue. Their boastful statement is initially disbelieved and then later proved wrong by Socrates, who jokes that if they are the great teachers that they claim to be then they must be far richer than the proverbial king of Persia.⁴ The sophists in the *Euthydemus*, who are credited with the practice known as *ἀντιλογία*, ultimately fail to elaborate fully in an epideictic discourse on why it is that one must philosophize and pay attention to virtue (*χρὴ φιλοσοφεῖν καὶ ἀρετῆς ἐπιμελεῖσθαι*).⁵ In the *Hermotimus*, an anti-Socrates proves to a *ἡμίσοφον* in just one conversation not only that it is impossible to know who can teach virtue, but also that philosophers who claim to do so are driven by the same vulgar ambitions as everyone else. Instead of arguing on both sides, Lycinus' argument concludes that neither the philosophical life nor the ordinary life are an option.

¹ This was first proposed by Schwarz, A. (1863).

² Hunter (2012), 1-4.

³ Plat. *Euthd.* 271c.

⁴ Plat. *Euthd.* 273d-274a.

⁵ Plat. *Euthd.* 275a.

Thus, Lycinus is nothing but the inversion of the Athenian gadfly.⁶ At the beginning of his inquiry into how it is that Hermotimus chose to become a follower of the Stoics, Lycinus ironically asks Hermotimus if he chose his teacher by asking the Oracle. Hermotimus' response is first that of denial and then grudging acquiescence, once he realises that he lacks a rational answer for choosing to follow the Stoics.⁷ Later, Hermotimus blames Lycinus for hating philosophy and accuses him of thinking himself to be the only person who has seen the truth.⁸ Lycinus answers Socratically, in fact he is as ignorant of truth as everyone else, but at least he is able to reveal that which is false. This is, of course, a parody of the role of Socrates in the *Apology*, in which the anti-philosopher describes how it was that a particular type of wisdom gave him a bad reputation. The Oracle of Delphi told Chaerophon that Socrates was the wisest man alive, but that in trying to figure out what this meant, and since Socrates claims to know nothing at all, Chaerophon discovered that some of the people who think themselves wise are in fact not at all. In exposing falsehood, Socrates became hateful.⁹ The effect of sophistry is similar to that of the initiation of Corybantic rites on neophytes.¹⁰ Lycinus similarly suggests that if Hermotimus is really determined to continue his search for the criterion of truth he can dismiss Lycinus' foolish chat (ἔα ληροεῖν) as he would a Corybant dancing. Lycinus, like Socrates, needs his interlocutor.¹¹ However, just like the Platonic Socrates, Lucian portrays the impact of Lycinus' irony either as simple mockery,¹² or later as constantly offensive (ὕβριστης ἀεὶ).¹³ When Hermotimus says that Lycinus is βίαιος, just like Socrates, Lycinus says that he himself has been dragged too by the argument as it is much more forceful than he is (τάδε

⁶ Plat. *Apol.* 30e.

⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 15.

⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 53.

⁹ Plat. *Apol.* 20c-21e.

¹⁰ Plat. *Euthd.* 277d.

¹¹ See Plat. *Gorg.* 487e 495ab, 500b, and *Men.* 83d, *Lach.* 193c.

¹² Luc. *Herm.* 21; 58. See Plat. *Gorg.* 481b; *Resp.* 1. 337a4.

¹³ In Plat. *Symp.* 215b, 219c Alcibiades makes this same remark of Socrates.

πολλῶ βιαίτερα φαίη ἄν σοι ὁ λόγος).¹⁴ Finally, Lycinus' praise of the ordinary life looks very much like an inversion of Socrates' last speech in the *Gorgias*. Lycinus too falls to defending temperance by unveiling the philosopher's lack of restraint. However, his praise of the ordinary life, and the claim that philosophy is a distraction from important and real things, are much closer to Calicles' position. Furthermore, Lycinus' insistence on the fact that justice is to be found in deeds opposes Socrates' claim that justice will be dispensed in the afterlife. Lycinus is conscious that he can be irreverent and even sacrilegious against philosophy when he makes ironic comparisons between it and hemlock and this too reminds the reader of Socrates' death in the *Phaedo*.¹⁵ As Socrates' lover and friend, Alcibiades compared him to a statue of Silenus. In the *Hermotimus*, Lycinus claims to save his friend from philosophy, by telling him that he is wrong and it is as if he had fallen in love with a statue.¹⁶

2. Hermotimus as Opsimath

Foucault wanted the *Hermotimus* to be a proof that in antiquity there were no limits of age to education.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Hermotimus with his advanced years has not yet become an expert philosopher and this is comic precisely as it departs from the stereotypical narration of the conversion to philosophy, a discipline to which often the youth of society were encouraged.¹⁸ Hermotimus seems to be an opsimath.¹⁹ The most striking similarity between the *Hermotimus* and the *Gorgias* is indeed in Calicles suggestion that 'it is fine to have a share in

¹⁴ Tackaberry (1931) 68 noticed that Lycinus, like Socrates, urges not to give up the search. See Plat. *Gorg.* 461b.

¹⁵ καὶ μὴ με νομίσης βλασφημεῖν περὶ αὐτῆς, Luc. *Herm.* 62.

¹⁶ Plat. *Smp.* 215a-b.

¹⁷ Foucault (1986) 49-50. For old age in antiquity see the articles in Falkner and Luce (1989).

¹⁸ Trapp (1997), XX n. 20 and XX-XXII.

¹⁹ For this figure see Diggle (2004), 477-486.

philosophy far enough for education, and it is not shameful for someone to philosophize when he is a boy. But whenever a man who's older still philosophizes, the thing becomes ridiculous.'²⁰ For Callicles, a young man who philosophizes is a free man, whereas 'a non-philosophizer is not free', but is 'someone who will never expect anything fine or noble from himself.' On the other hand, an older man who is still philosophizing on the other hand is a disgrace and needs a good beating, because such activity is a sign of his unmanliness:

even if he has an altogether good nature; for he shuns the city centre and the public squares where the poet says men win good reputations. He is sunk away out of sight for the rest of his life, and lives whispering with three or four boys in a corner, and never gives voice to anything fit for a free man, great and powerful.²¹

Thus, Hermotimus can be seen as a playful recreation of the Platonic philosophical late-learner as he appears in the *Gorgias*, a dialogue in which Plato also introduces virulent attacks against those who challenge the utility of the theoretical life.²² Contrary to Callicles, for Socrates it is never too late to learn and Plato seems to have been aware of the opinion that Socrates himself was a late learner, and hence was also aware of the problems facing other Athenians who tried to commit themselves to a life of learning and contemplation. The beginning of the *Protagoras* resembles scenes like that of Strepsiades and the students in the *Clouds*,²³ and Socrates is mocked for coming late to his learning of harp as the student of Connus in the *Euthydemus*.²⁴ A similar situation occurs in Plato's *Menexenus*.²⁵ It could even be said that if

²⁰ Plat *Gorg.* 484c.

²¹ Plat. *Gorg.* 485b-d

²² A similar attack can also be found in Plat. *Soph.* 251-52.

²³ Plat. *Prot.* 235c-e.

²⁴ Plat. *Euthd.* 272.

²⁵ Plat. *Menex.* 235e.

Lycinus behaves like an inverted Socrates, then Hermotimus and his teacher appear to the reader to behave like the unwise and perverted Cephalus. Perhaps however the most illustrative account of the problems of living a theoretical life and how others misunderstand it comes from Plato's *Theatetus*,²⁶ which tells the popular story on how it was that Thales of Miletus fell into a well while being distracted by his heavenly contemplation and hence becomes the object of laughter not only of a Thracian servant-girl but of an entire crowd.

The topic of the *opsimath* was not unique to Plato. It was in fact present in philosophical texts and old comedy alike, and was often used in reference to the quarrel held between philosophers and sophists about the utility of the theoretical life.²⁷ When Timaeus described Aristotle as a σοφιστῆς ὀψιμαθῆς, Polybius and Plutarch had to return the insult to him.²⁸ In the Aristotelean tradition, represented by Theophrastus, the *opsimath* comically forgets the verses he has tried to remember for the occasion of a symposium, even though he is 60 years old.²⁹

The *opsimath* is a character of comedy too. Aristophanes' *Clouds* contains quite a serious, and yet nonetheless hilarious criticism of the utility of the philosophical and contemplative life and its impact on the practical life. Just as, on the one hand, Aristophanes presents the issues caused by the sophistic power of making the worst argument seem the best for the sake of self-privilege and gives Socrates as an example of this rhetorical abuse,³⁰ on the other, Strepsiades in the *Clouds* is much like Hermotimus, a late-learner.³¹ Like Pheidippides and his father, the pupils of Hermotimus' teacher are keen to learn from philosophy how best to get away with debt and crime.

²⁶ Plat. *Theaet.* 174b.

²⁷ For the relationship between Socrates, the comic poets and Plato, see Mitscherling (2003).

²⁸ Plb. 12.8.4; Timae. FGrH 566 F156; Plb 12.4c.1=566 T 19.

²⁹ Theophrast. 27

³⁰ Ar. *Nub.* 880-1105.

³¹ διδάξομαι αὐτὸς βαδίζων εἰς τὸ φροντιστήριον. Ar. *Nub.* 127-128. The chorus leader also points at Strepsiades' old age Ar. *Nub.* 358.

Finally, we find a short story in Philostratus that strikingly resembles a summary of the *Hermotimus*:

Here is another admirable saying of Lucius. The Emperor Marcus was greatly interested in Sextus the Boeotian philosopher, attending his classes and going to his very door. Lucius had just arrived in Rome, and asked the Emperor, who he met going out, where he was going and for what purpose. Marcus answered: "It is quite a good thing even for one that is growing old to acquire knowledge. I am going to Sextus the philosopher to learn what I do not yet know." At this Lucius raised his hand to heaven and exclaimed: "Oh Zeus! The Emperor of the Romans is already growing old, but he hangs a tablet around his neck and goes to school, while my Emperor Alexander died at thirty-two!" What I have quoted is enough to show the kind of philosophy cultivated by Lucius, for these speeches suffice to reveal the man as a sip reveals a bouquet of wine.³²

Parallels between the *Hermotimus* and this story are found not only in the vocabulary of both texts but also in their themes. Lycinus recognizes that Hermotimus is going to his class because of τῆ τοῦ βαδίσματος σπουδῆ and his book. Lycinus also invites Hermotimus to compare philosophy with Alexander the Great's invasion of Mount Aornos, but Hermotimus deems the comparison wrong, since virtue cannot be won, 'even if innumerable Alexanders attack it'.³³ Marcus might not be in his 60's, but he is likely in his middle-age and like him Hermotimus also thinks that even in an old age one must continue trying to perfect philosophical *paideia*.³⁴ Like Sextus of Chaeronea's joke, Lycinus' argument of the unattainability of philosophy relies greatly on the statement that life is too short,³⁵ a topic that is common to both satire and philosophy. And yet there is a great difference between Lycinus' intentions and those of

³² Phil. Vit. Soph. 2, 557 (trans. Wright, 1921).

³³ Luc. Herm. 4.

³⁴ Luc. Herm. 13.

³⁵ See Luc. Herm. 1, 4, 6, 46, 75, 77.

Sextus, since the latter's advice points to the distracting effect that philosophy can have on the imperial achievements of Rome. By contrast, Lycinus' dissuasion of the pursuit of philosophy points at abandoning philosophical virtue on behalf of a relaxed and free lifestyle. Indeed, the greatest value of a comparison between the *Hermotimus* and the short story in Philostratus lies in comparing not just the characters, but the stories in their entirety, because, as the passage from Philostratus' shows, there is a kind of θαυμάσιον humour,³⁶ which might be deemed as a way of cultivating philosophy.³⁷

3. The Philosophers of the *Hermotimus* as Platonic Sophists

The *Hermotimus* appears to contain that which seems to be a loose definition of the virtuous and good life. For Hermotimus, as for Socrates, everyone desires success and εὐδαιμονία.³⁸ Hermotimus assumes that his teacher, much like the guardians of Kallipolis, is completely happy,³⁹ as he is virtuous. The first definition of virtue given by Hermotimus is theoretical and singular and consists of σοφία, ἀνδρεία, τὸ καλὸν αὐτό, τὸ δίκαιον and τὸ πάντα ἐπίστασθαι βεβαίως πεπεισμένον ἢ ἕκαστα ἔχει.⁴⁰ Philosophers' actions, however, are portrayed by Lycinus as the antithesis of self-control or σωφροσύνη. Theirs is, in the end, a false definition of virtue precisely because it is grounded in theory. The true definition of virtue is plural, consists of ἐν τῶ δίκαια πράττειν καὶ σοφὰ καὶ ἀνδρεῖα,⁴¹ and lies in deeds and not in words. Being virtuous, in the second part of the *Hermotimus*, is to stay away from the

³⁶ Even though Philostratus does not refer to Sextus' sayings as perplexing, they do seem to present a kind of puzzle. It is attractive to think that the θαυμάσιον that he experiences is related to the wonder which arouses philosophy in Arist. *Met.* 1.2 982 b12-13. See. Matthews (1999), 11-12.

³⁷ See for example Seneca's Stoic treatise *De Brev. Vit.* 1.1 in which he quotes the same aphorism of Hippocrates as in Luc. *Herm.* 1.

³⁸ Plat. *Euthd.* 278e-281a.

³⁹ Plat. *Resp.* 419a-420a, 465d-466c.

⁴⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 7.

⁴¹ Luc. *Herm.* 79.

false and over-ambitious dreams of laymen, in which they imagine themselves as becoming rich instantly, ruling the world, or becoming the wisest man. In practice, Lycinus' conceptualization of virtue implies the negation of philosophic εὐδαιμονία; and yet, the letting go of philosophy also implies not only emancipation from the disturbance caused by philosophy, but living the more relaxed life of everyone else, without feeling the need to chase impossible ambitions.⁴² Clearly, in the *Hermotimus* the definition of virtue and the good life is both Socratic and Platonic. It is a parody and a simplification of the problem of the individual components of virtue and their ultimate unity, and of the necessary relationship between virtue, knowledge and εὐδαιμονία.⁴³

The morally correct life of the *Hermotimus* is exemplified by the model of all philosophers, Socrates, whose teachings show that honour based on the common concept of virtue and consisting of high-birth, wealth, authority, health and even good-luck is vanity.⁴⁴ Socrates walks barefoot, and always wears a shabby cloak,⁴⁵ but although he is so ugly that he is hard to look upon,⁴⁶ he can see more than everyone else.⁴⁷ Similarly, owing to the fact that he can always distinguish good from bad he is able to keep control of his appetites and passions. Indeed, Socrates' choice is to live a life of πενία.⁴⁸

The dog-like guardians of the ideal city, and the philosophers running the state, complete the picture of the model of the ideal philosopher. These almost divine human beings would live in perpetual contemplation if they could,⁴⁹ however they content themselves with a life free from possessions in a

⁴² Luc. *Herm.* 86.

⁴³ That the unity of virtue leads to happiness is something stated in Plato's *Protagoras*. For Socrates' arguments about the unity of virtue, common beliefs and happiness, self-control of desires, and the good, justice and the Socratic enquiry see especially Irwin (1995), 31-51.

⁴⁴ See, especially *Euthd.* 279a-282e, and book I of *Resp.* challenges these conventional values.

⁴⁵ Xen. *Mem.* I. 6. 2.

⁴⁶ Xen, *Smp.* 2. 18.

⁴⁷ Plat. *Phaed.* 86d.

⁴⁸ Plat. *Apol.* 23c, D.L. 2.27.

⁴⁹ For philosophical dogs see Plat. *Resp.* 375e-376c. For the divine nature of philosophers see Plat. 492e, 497c, 400c-d. For the ideal of the contemplative life see 519c-d, 611c-612a.

special kind of communism.⁵⁰ Philosophers love and pursue wisdom;⁵¹ they also love the sight of truth,⁵² and are the only ones that recognize it from behind the multiplicity of appearances and derive pleasure from it.⁵³ The reason why philosophers are able to run the city better than everyone else is because they possess the immutable knowledge of what virtue is, and for that reason too they hate ever-changing falsehood.⁵⁴ Philosophers, according to Socrates, are capable of grasping the idea or the Form of the good, and to acting in correspondingly to it.⁵⁵ Because failure in skill does not allow for mistakes, philosophers never miss the target when aiming at the good. For that reason, the pleasures of philosophers are greater than ordinary pleasures.⁵⁶ Similarly, they are always self-controlled⁵⁷ and courageous.⁵⁸ As their lives are dedicated to morality and justice, philosophers are in addition the best guardians of political εὐδαιμονία, and reside safe in the knowledge that the virtuous life is also the happiest life and the most pleasant.⁵⁹

The method used to measure the appropriateness of philosophers is the ability to create coherence between their deeds and their words in the way in which they conduct their lives. In the *Gorgias*, Socrates often defends his way of life in order to prove that he is more than just mere talk.⁶⁰ However, a discussion on this topic is better found in Plato's *Laches*.⁶¹ Even though this is an

⁵⁰ Plat. *Resp.* 416e-417a, 457d-465d, 466b—c, 543b.

⁵¹ Plat. *Resp.* 475b-c.

⁵² Plat. *Resp.* 475e.

⁵³ Plat. *Resp.* 476a-b.

⁵⁴ Philosophers love and prefer what does not change to that which becomes Plat. *Resp.* 485a-b, 485c.

⁵⁵ Plat. *Resp.* 351e, 369a, 432b, 434d, 441c, 472c-e, etc...

⁵⁶ Cf. Plat. *Resp.* 583b-587b.

⁵⁷ Plat. *Resp.* 485d-e.

⁵⁸ Plat. *Resp.* 486a-b.

⁵⁹ Plat. *Resp.* 35d-354a, 580b-c, 585c-e, 591a-592b, 618c-619a.

⁶⁰ Plat. *Gorg.* 472ab 473a-467a, 480b, 486ab, 512d-513a, 521e-522c.

⁶¹ See O'Brien (1967), 110-117. The Socrates of Plato's *Laches* 194a-199d puts himself and his interlocutors in a vicious discussion about the unity of virtue, based on the assumption that courage is only a part of virtue rather than the sum of virtue. See Matthews (1999), 21-26

aporetic dialogue about the discussion of ἀνδρεία, and its relation to virtue and wisdom, there is the suggestion that a virtuous person should possess a harmony - otherwise known as Dorian-, between his words and his actions (ἔργα καὶ λόγοι).⁶² Socrates, in the end, is the embodiment of this harmonious man; he is brave for not running away from philosophical inquiries and, like Solon, for trying to learn for as long as he lives.⁶³ The *Hermotimus* need not have been a direct parody of Plato's *Laches*, *Republic*, or *Gorgias*. The insistence on the coherence between deeds and words was a common topic for practical philosophy in the imperial period, and in particular, Stoicism had borrowed the idea that a philosopher's life has to be coherent with his thoughts from different authors of classical Athens,⁶⁴ as well as Cynicism.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the discussion in Plato's *Laches* about the bravery that one needs in order to continue studying philosophy, and the potential foolishness of this decision seem to be appropriate themes for parody since Lucian has managed to write a dialogue that starts from the assertion that virtue lies more in words than in deeds, only to then reverse it. Most ironically, as an inverted *Laches*, Lycinus, a man of words and arguments, defends the proposition that true virtue lies not in words but in deeds.

Those who practice philosophy can be at odds with those who guide their lives according to conventional moral values. The example of Calicles is particularly useful here as for him virtue and εὐδαιμονία are a luxury, and intemperance and freedom worth nothing (φλυαρία καὶ οὐδενὸς ἄξια).⁶⁶ In the *Hermotimus*, philosophers are a mismatch of the ideal Platonic-Socratic

discussion on this, and his reasons for thinking that Socrates is being sincere when he says at the end of the dialogue (200e) that 'we are all in equal perplexity'.

⁶² Plat. *Lach.* 188d.

⁶³ Plat. *Lach.* 188b; *Resp* 536d Solon Fr.18 Bergk.

⁶⁴ Thuc. 2.40. 2-3. Democr. Fr.55, Fr. 82 DK, 145 DK. On Stoicism, deeds and words see Max. Tyr. 25.2 and Sellars (2003), 20-21.

⁶⁵ Pseud. Diog. *Ep.* 15; Jul. *O.* 7.214 and Christ. *Matt* 23.3 *Rom.* 2: 1 21-23 *John* 3.18 1. *Clem.* 30.3 *Ign Eph.* 15.1.

⁶⁶ Plat. *Gorg.* 492c.

philosopher and the equally ideal anti-philosopher, or sophist. According to Socrates, rhetoricians and sophists are incapable of teaching, and are therefore substantially different from philosophers.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the only thing that students of philosophy seem to learn is how to follow Calliclean precepts against self-control which argue that which is good and just according to nature (φύσις), as opposed to custom (νόμος), allows appetites to grow without restraint (κολάζειν). Once these appetites have reached their peak, the follower of Calicles must use his bravery and wisdom to acquire the power to serve them, and to fill them with whatever appetite he may have at any given time.⁶⁸ The definition of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* (πειθοῦς δημιουργός ἐστὶν ἡ ῥητορική), and Calicles accusation that Socrates is a mob-orator and a sophist who forcefully uses dialogue for philosophical vulgarities, fit well with the description of philosophers as creators of false *logoi*.⁶⁹ Indeed, for Calicles, Socrates' wisdom (τὸ σοφόν) lies in his arguments (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις). In the *Hermotimus* we see that Hermotimus' teacher perverts the young. This is, of course, a pun on the accusation against Socrates for corrupting the youth in the *Apology* as if he were no different from the rest of the sophists. The behaviour of philosophers in the *Hermotimus* resembles that of the *doxosophoi* or *philodoxoi*,⁷⁰ and the impostors in the *Republic*,⁷¹ who disbelieve that which is truly good and are *philotheamones*.⁷² Philosophers in the *Hermotimus* suffer like Thrasymachus from pleonexia, and are never able to be truly satiated.⁷³ They are likewise carried away by their love for discussions. Much like a mob of Alcibiadeses,

⁶⁷ See Socrates definition: Ἡ ῥητορική δημιουργός ἐστὶν πιστευτικῆς οὐ διδασκαλικῆς. The rhetorician cannot be a διδάσκαλος of jurors and the masses about the just or the unjust. Plat. *Gorg.* 455a. Cf. *Euthd.* 277e-278a. *Thaet.* 199a.

⁶⁸ Plat. *Gorg.* 492a.

⁶⁹ Plat. *Gorg.* 447a-454b; 481b Luc. *Herm.* 75

⁷⁰ Plat. *Apol.* 21d3-7.

⁷¹ Plat. *Resp.* 494e-496a, 535c.

⁷² Plat. *Resp.* 493e.

⁷³ Plat. *Resp.* 343a-344c.

philosophers ruin symposia and, unlike Socrates, are greatly affected by alcohol.⁷⁴

The desire of philosophers to become powerful,⁷⁵ and Hermotimus' accusation that Lycinus is jealous (ὕπὸ φθόνου δηλαδὴ) because he has been reluctant to study philosophy all these years,⁷⁶ evokes an issue posed by Polus of whether Socrates envies tyrants and dynasts, or whether he simply pities them. The ambition that ordinary people have of becoming rich and famous seems to be borrowed from Socrates' argument that political power is not the supreme goal.⁷⁷ Tyrants are unhappy because the happy (εὐδαίμων) have no evil, or are in the process of getting rid of evil. According to Socrates, he who is evil, but does not rid himself of it, lives the worst life. People equip themselves with money, friends, and rhetoric to avoid paying justice, but the greatest evil is to do injustice and not to be punished. Thus, tyrants live the worst life, because they are powerless and because they are unhappy.⁷⁸

The same might be said of philosophers in the *Hermotimus* and indeed, it is a text that plays on the notion that the peak of immorality and injustice is to give the impression of morality.⁷⁹ As a result, ironically, it is philosophers who are as immoral as tyrants and sophists.

4. The Parody of the Socratic Investigation of Virtue

The most distinctive feature of the *Hermotimus* is that it parodies the philosophical investigation of virtue. Both Lucian's Lycinus and Plato's Socrates use *elenchus* to expose the contradictions of their interlocutor's opinions, which are based on common conceptions of philosophy and rhetoric, and yet Lycinus

⁷⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 8-12. Plat. *Smp.* 212c.

⁷⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 16, 81.

⁷⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 63. in Plat. *Gorg.* 468e 6-9.

⁷⁷ Plat. *Euthd.* 290e-292e.

⁷⁸ Plat. *Gorg.* 472d-479e.

⁷⁹ Plat. *Resp* 361a.

uses this most philosophical weapon for non-Socratic purposes. According to Socrates, cross-examination is the method by which one can know what the good life is and therefore come to enjoy it. As is well known, in the course of cross-examination, Socrates often uses irony to extract the truth from conversations.⁸⁰ Socratic investigation often deals with the problem *Τί ἐστὶ*; (what is the good-life? What is virtue? What is justice? What is knowledge? What is bravery?). In Platonic fashion, the *Hermotimus* touches upon the issue of defining philosophy (according to Hermotimus); however, unlike Socrates who is interested in finding out which branch of knowledge can bring individual happiness,⁸¹ Lycinus uses his *elenchos* to show that philosophical *eudaimonia* is impossible, and that philosophers can never be virtuous, as their conception of virtue is non-philosophical and can even come across as tyrannical.

The real question behind the *Hermotimus* is who is a philosopher in the city. In this sense, Lycinus' enquiry is similar to that of Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias*, when he uses the *elenchos* to investigate who is (*ὅστις ἔστιν*) Gorgias as a rhetorician, and what he promises and teaches. In the attempt to establish who Gorgias is as a rhetorician, Socrates warns Polus not to display his rhetorical *μακρολογία*, and to stick to brief speeches and *ἐλέγχε καὶ ἐλέγχου*.⁸² In the *Hermotimus* Lycinus, in the guise of an inverted Socrates, asks Hermotimus whether students of philosophy are allowed to argue when they think something is not expressed correctly. However, he is allowed to ask questions and argue at the same time as Hermotimus tries to deliver an exhortation to philosophy.⁸³ But this exhortation backfires as Hermotimus is always running short of arguments, and Lycinus delivers very long and ironic protreptic discourses.

⁸⁰ For a definition of Socratic irony see Vlastos (1991) 21-44

⁸¹ Plat. *Euthd.* 288b-292e. The *Republic* is, of course, dedicated entirely to this project by trying to define what is justice.

⁸² Plat *Gorg.* 461b-462b.

⁸³ Luc. *Herm.* 13.

Lycinus uses the Socratic method against philosophy. Philosophers are on the one hand no different from Plato's sophists, however, on the other hand, this portrait of philosophers might also be used in reference to virtuous rhetoricians. Thus, Lycinus is a character who ambiguously positions himself in the zone between both philosophy and sophistry. Hence, whilst in Plato the *elenchus* is a method used to discover truth, even if this leads to the impasse that it cannot be reached, it seems that in Lucian the *elenchus* indulges a mere rhetorical joy in using the weapons of philosophers against those philosophers who are, in Platonic terms, sophists. In this sense, the question behind the *Hermotimus* and *who* is a philosopher, can be answered simply as 'the philosopher is a sophist', and this conclusion reinforces the suspicion that Hermotimus' conversion is ironic as neither the philosopher, nor the sophist, nor the laymen are in a position to lead one to the good-life.

Perhaps of all of the Platonic dialogues, it is Plato's *Meno* that Lycinus' method of investigation resembles most clearly, as it focuses upon finding out who is virtuous and who is capable of teaching. Socrates, who claims to have been educated by Prodicus in the matter, admits to Gorgias' student,⁸⁴ Meno, that he does not know what virtue is,⁸⁵ and yet despite this fact, he offers to help Meno in discovering it for himself. Meno then poses an objection known commonly as Meno's paradox: how can one search without knowing what one is searching for? For, if one knows what one is looking for, then inquiry is unnecessary. If one does not know what one is looking for, then the search is impossible. Therefore, inquiry is either unnecessary or impossible. Indeed, this conclusion resembles in many ways that of the *Hermotimus* in which the philosophical quest is presented ultimately as both unattainable and pointless. To solve Meno's paradox, Socrates brings a slave to whom he presents a geometric problem. The slave, though uneducated, solves the geometric

⁸⁴ Plat. *Men.* 96d. On Socrates being the pupil of Prodicus see Plat. *Crat.* 384b.

⁸⁵ Plat *Men.* 71b-79e.

problem and Socrates arrives at the conclusion that all learning is recollection and that everyone can participate in philosophical virtue.⁸⁶ This perspective is vividly depicted and parodied in the *Hermotimus*.⁸⁷ However, the search for virtue in this dialogue is closer to the second half of the *Meno*, in which Socrates explores the possibility of virtue being teachable if one begins the search with the hypothesis that virtue is knowledge, especially knowledge to administer homes and cities according to what is good.⁸⁸ But if virtue can be taught then surely teachers of virtue should exist. Some sophists claim to teach virtue in general, but Athenians like Anytus and Socrates do not believe this possible. Anytus argues that noble Athenians can teach virtue, but Socrates says that if this were true the sons of the best of the Athenians would be virtuous too, and both Anytus and Socrates agree this is not the case, since in practice the sons of the Athenians do not surpass their fathers,⁸⁹ with the result that very few good men seem to be in existence.⁹⁰

The use of the metaphor of the road in the *Hermotimus* can furthermore be read as a parody of the conclusion of the *Meno*, in which Socrates argues that he who knows which road leads to Larisa is as good a guide, as somebody who had been there before and already knows the way.⁹¹ Lycinus questions this reasoning into question; without a good guide, he says, one might end up reaching a completely different city, without even knowing that one has done so.⁹²

Recognizing the Platonic guise of the *Hermotimus* is important for a modern reader, just as it would have been for a reader of the second century, as it reveals the parodic procedures of this text. Through the subversion and

⁸⁶Plat *Men.* 79e-86c.

⁸⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 24. Compare the mixture of races in Plat. *Resp.* 546-547.

⁸⁸ Plat *Men.* 86c-89c.

⁸⁹ Plat *Men.* 86c-96c.

⁹⁰ Plat *Men.* 96d.

⁹¹ Plat *Men.* 96d-97b.

⁹² Plat *Men.* 98c-100b.

inversion of Platonic themes, such as the search for the good and virtuous life and philosophical excellence, Lucian creates a spectacle of transvestism in which ‘philosophers’ hide their sophistic nature under their Socratic garb. Although for the attentive reader discovering specific parodies of Platonic texts in the *Hermotimus* is enjoyable, readers already familiar with clichéd images of philosophers can also find the general inversion of themes entertaining. The use of Platonic models serves the purpose of playing with what is ‘classical’ about philosophers, and by extension engages with a much wider philosophical culture.

5. Parody of the Metaphor of the Road and of the Destination of Philosophy

In the *Hermotimus* Lucian not only employs the metaphor of the road and the ‘choice of the better life’, he also parodies it. The parody of the metaphor of the road embraces an aspect of the aesthetics of protreptic literature that goes back to Homer and Hesiod.⁹³ However, it is through Lucian’s choice to use the metaphor of *Works and Days* 40 and 287-289 that the interest of the reader is really piqued.⁹⁴ Indeed Lucian might have placed more emphasis on Homer, or Parmenides, Empedocles, and Heraclitus.⁹⁵ Pindar too re-creates the metaphor of the road, comparing poetry to a path,⁹⁶ and in reference to the path differentiates between vulgar and high-style poetry.⁹⁷ It is worth noting that

⁹³ Hom. *Il.* 9.410; *Od.* 5. 191-229. See Worman (2015), 73.

⁹⁴ In *Somn.* 1, 3 Lucian uses the same Hesiodic hypotexts in reference to the variation of the theme of the choosing of one’s profession as if in a trial (cf. *Somn.* 2). He also uses typical vocabulary of protreptics (Eg. ἀγαλμάτια μικρά τινα κατασκευάζων ἑμαυτῷ τε καὶ κείνοις οἷς προηρούμην; καὶ τό γε πρῶτον ἐκεῖνο καὶ σὺνηθες τοῖς ἀρχομένοις ἐγίγνετο; οὐδὲ προτρεπτικῶς μου κατήρξατο), but in the context of the passing from childhood to early adulthood. Certainly Paideia’s promise is both philosophical and sophistic (cf. *Somn.* 13-10, 15). The conversion story and the exemplary main character (*Somn.* 17-18) have some kind of paideutic usefulness, despite their ironic undertones.

⁹⁵ Parm. Fr. 1.2,B1; Emp. (DK 3.3-5, 35.1-3), Herac. Fr. 45, 59, 60.

⁹⁶ Pind. *P.* 2 and 4.246-248; 85-86; *N.* 7.51; *Pai.* Fr.- 52h.18-20; *O.* 9; *I.* 2; Worman (2015), 73-78 and 320-332.

⁹⁷ Harriot 1969: 63, who also cites Bacch. 5.176-78, 10.51-52, 19.1-8.

Justin Martyr uses in the *Dialogue with Trypho* in rhetorical contexts that are particularly interesting for the interpretation of the *Hermotimus*,⁹⁸ although his inspiration seems to have come from the Jewish texts, rather than Hesiod.⁹⁹

However, I believe it pertinent to speculate on the reasons why Lucian chooses to parody *Works and Days* and I propose that he did so as he wanted to parody the way in which the ‘road of the hill to virtue’ represents the ‘classic’ Socratic passage in order to discuss how Hermotimus chooses which philosophical path to follow. It seems too that this was one of Prodicus’ favourite themes, as it is preserved in Xenophon’s famous myth of the Choice of Heracles,¹⁰⁰ later passed on to the Cynics.¹⁰¹ The bond of the metaphor of the road to an exclusively philosophical context became more robust after Plato’s *Republic*, in which it was used to prescribe the correct age for pursuing the philosophic good life. In his investigation into justice, Socrates argues that he must learn from people such as Cephalus, because ‘they’ve gone on ahead of us, as it were, on a road on which we too will probably have to travel, and we ought to find out from them what the road is like, whether it is rough and hard or easy and smooth.’¹⁰² Socrates, in particular, is especially pleased with Cephalus’ opinion about old age, because he is, as Homer describes it, ἐπὶ

⁹⁸ See *Dial. Tryph.* 8.2 ἱκανοὶ δυσωπήσαι τοὺς ἐκτρεπομένους τῆς ὀρθῆς ὁδοῦ; 39.2 ὡς τεμόντας ὑμᾶς ἀπὸ τῶν ψυχῶν ὑμῶν τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην σπουδάσαι δεῖ ἐπιγνῶναι, δι’ ἧς ὁδοῦ ἄφεσις ὑμῖν τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν γενήσεται; ἀπολείποντας τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς πλάνης; 44.4 ἐπιγνόντες διὰ ταύτης τῆς ὁδοῦ δίδοσθαι παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ εὐδαιμονεῖν, πάντως καὶ αὐτοὶ ἡμῖν ὅμοια ποιήσητε, τὸ ἡμῶν εἶναι τὸν Χριστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ.

⁹⁹ *Dial. Tryph.* 13.5; 24.4; 32.6; 35.3; 38.1. 40.8,10, etc...

¹⁰⁰ Prodicus’ myth in *Xen. Mem.* 2.1.21-34. See Waites (1912) for an analysis of allegorical debates in Greek literature and the metaphor of the road. Basset (1925) gives an analysis tracing the sources of Quintus Smyrnaeus (*Posthomerica*, V, 6-101), in which he talks about the Hill of Arete.

¹⁰¹ The connection between Prodicus myth and the metaphor of the road was well established in Cynic circles. See *Ps. Diog. Ep.* 30 and 37. See also Emeljanow (1965). But these derived from the Socratic discussion of Prodicus and Hesiod, see Wolsdorf (2008). Also Sextus Empiricus (*P.* 1. 69) laughs at Chrysippus’ dog argument, in which a dog comes to a crossroad and having traced two different roads along which a wild animal did not go, takes a third road and yet fails to track him down. The example of the dog argument appears elsewhere; *Ael. Nat Anim.* 6. 59; *Plut. De Sollert. Anim.* 968f-969b; *Philo De Animal.* 45-46. According to Sextus Empiricus, Aenesidemus considers Scepticism to be a *path* towards the philosophy of Heraclitus (*P.* 1. 120), for Sextus’ interpretation of Heraclitus, see Polito (2004).

¹⁰² *Plat. Resp.* 328e.

γήραος οὐδῶ.¹⁰³ Plato later extends the metaphor, when he writes that ordinary people and poets all agree in:

how self-discipline and morality may be commendable, but are also difficult and troublesome (χαλεπὸν μέντοι καὶ ἐπίπονον,), whereas self-indulgence and immorality are enjoyable and easily gained, and it's only in people's minds and in convention that they are contemptible.¹⁰⁴

Socrates even talks about the ἄλλη γὰρ μακροτέρα καὶ πλείων ὁδός that philosophers must embrace if they want to discover whether the individual possesses in his soul the three parts from which can be formed the ideal city.¹⁰⁵ The guardians too must take a different and longer route in order to reach the best possible vantage point, one which will turn out to be longer than previously thought.¹⁰⁶ It does not escape Lucian's notice that Plato might even make the road of philosophers go as far as to the skies and flight of the soul is parodied when Lycinus suggests that he will pray to Hermotimus along with the gods, now that he is above the clouds and that has ascended to that place that he has long been striving for.¹⁰⁷ As this scene shows it is largely the mortal aspect of the improvement in virtue that it is parodied in the *Hermotimus*.

It must be noted that Aristophanes also makes good use of this metaphor in the *Clouds*.¹⁰⁸ The Roman satirist Persius also uses the metaphor of the road in relation to philosophers.¹⁰⁹ The depiction of the real city is also a satire of the

¹⁰³ Hom. *Il.* 22.60; *Od.* 15, 246.

¹⁰⁴ Plat. *Resp.* 364 d.

¹⁰⁵ Plat. *Resp.* 435d.

¹⁰⁶ Plat. *Resp.* 504a-d.

¹⁰⁷ The word ὑπερνεφέλος (see also *Icar.* 2) is a pun on Plato's *Phdr.* 247c, who uses this word to describe the final destination of the flight of the soul and a place that holds true knowledge and which is visible only to the mind. In *Bis Acc.* 33 Dialogue narrates his fall to earth from the sky as an inversion of the flight of the soul as it is exposed in the *Phaedrus*.

¹⁰⁸ Arist. *Nub.* 68-77.

¹⁰⁹ Pers. *Sat.* 3. 56. Juvenal in his *Sat.* 3, 56-57 makes a parody of the Pythagorean 'Y'. For Lucian and Roman Satire see Jones (1989), 81 and the bibliography found therein.

city as Lucian and as some other Greek and Roman authors often portray it.¹¹⁰ However, in spite of its 'classical' context and its similarity with the impressions of other satirists, the imagery of the road in the *Hermotimus* is well suited to express criticism of the idea of progress. The metaphor of the road also serves to challenge the *contemptus mundi* of the Stoics, as it is indeed preserved in Seneca:

Today I have some free time, thanks not so much to myself as to the games, which have attracted all the bores to the boxing-match. No one will interrupt me or disturb the train of my thoughts, which go ahead more boldly as the result of my very confidence. My door has not been continually creaking on its hinges nor will my curtain be pulled aside; my thoughts may march safely on, – and that is all the more necessary for one who goes independently and follows out his own path (*quod magis necessarium est per se eunti et suam sequenti viam*). Do I then follow no predecessors? Yes, but I allow myself to discover something new, to alter, to reject. I am not a slave to them, although I give them my approval.¹¹¹

It is not very difficult to see how the *Hermotimus* might be read against this passage. In conclusion, in much the same way as the Cynics claimed to be able to guide their followers via a short cut to virtue, the *Hermotimus* too can be seen to challenge the very notion of philosophy as a teachable τέχνη.¹¹²

However, it is not only the philosophical quest but also the destination of philosophy that is parodied in the *Hermotimus*. The city of virtue, to which Hermotimus wishes to climb finds its echo in Hesiod's road of justice (ὁδός ἐς τὰ δίκαια) that leads to paradise. Likewise, the ordinary city can be understood as the place for those who choose ὕβρις over justice,¹¹³ and who travel the easy

¹¹⁰ Juv. *Sat.* 3 and Hor. *Sat.* 1. 4. 1-7.

¹¹¹ Sen. *Epist.* 80. 1. (trans Gummere).

¹¹² The best analysis of Lucian's concept and criticism of philosophy as τέχνη is that of Nesselrath (1985), 141, but see 56-58 in relation to happiness and, 12, 124, 126, 153-155, 168, etc. for its relationship with rhetoric. For Stoic imagery in the *Hermotimus* see Edwards (1993) and Tackaberry (1930), 15-20.

¹¹³ Hesd. *Op.* 216-285.

and smooth road only to quickly find themselves in a place of misery.¹¹⁴ However, the city of virtue as depicted in the *Hermotimus* is clearly a parody of philosophical utopias. Antisthenes' *On the State*, Xenophon in the *Constitution of the Spartans*, *Hiero*, and the *Education of Cyrus*, and more importantly in the case of Lucian, Plato in his *Republic* constitute, in a manner of speaking, constitute the canon of classical texts on communal utopias. Added to this is the knowledge that Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno in all likelihood also wrote their own versions of the *Republic*.

It is possible that Lucian might have taken inspiration for his depiction of the unjust city of laymen from Thrasymachus' description of tyranny.¹¹⁵ However, it seems that Lycinus' parody of the city of virtue is targeted at Hermotimus' Stoic belief that virtue is equally accessible to all, slaves, women and foreigners alike. For this reason, Lucian's model seems more likely to have been that of Plato's or Zeno's *Republic*. This idea found its roots in Platonic communism.¹¹⁶ Plato introduced the idea of women as participating in virtue and the possibility of them becoming guardians of the ideal city,¹¹⁷ as well as the idea that virtue might be learnt and taught to slaves.¹¹⁸

In Plato's and Zeno's utopias, friendship and concord played a crucial role,¹¹⁹ and in both the practice of a certain form of asceticism and the voluntary detachment from the common pursuit of civil honour seems to have been important. However, in the *Republic*, Socrates clearly states that there has to be a natural predisposition towards virtue in the guardians to be, and education is that which serves as the filter by which to choose those suitable to rule.¹²⁰ Regarding Zeno's *Republic*, almost everything that we know comes from a

¹¹⁴ Hesd. *Op.* 286-288.

¹¹⁵ Plat. *Resp.* 344a-e.

¹¹⁶ Plat. *Resp.* 415d-417b; 423e6-424a2; 451c and *Leg.* 739c-740b.

¹¹⁷ Plat. *Resp.* 451c-457b.

¹¹⁸ Plat. *Men.* 82e.

¹¹⁹ See Schofield (1999) on the subject of the Stoic city, in particular regarding Platonism and Stoicism, 128-129.

¹²⁰ Plat *Resp.* 370b1-2.

passage in Diogenes Lartius which cites that Cassius the Sceptic, the rhetorician Isidorus of Pergamum, and others who attacked Zeno for dismissing common education (ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία), and for calling all those who are not virtuous (μὴ σπουδαίος) an enemy, a slave, and thus making parents foreign to children, brothers to brothers and friends to friends. Some notions of the Cynic ideal city, such as the fact that because its citizens live according to virtue they have no need for weapons and do not fight for glory, are also clearly evident in the *Hermotimus*.¹²¹

However, it seems much more likely that Lucian blended Platonic, Cynic and Stoic concepts of the virtuous city. Like Plato, Zeno proposed that women should be held in common, although men and women should be dressed equally with their genitals visible to everyone. Furthermore, he added that no temples should be built in the city, and that coinage should be used for exchange or for travelling abroad, an interesting suggestion that suggests it should not be accumulated.¹²² Zeno also seems to have written his *Republic* in opposition to Plato's and later Stoics were not proud of his vision that embraced the idea of the universe as the cosmic city. Seneca, Musonius Rufus, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Philo Judaeus and Dio Chrysostom also seem to have conceived of the true city as the cosmic city.¹²³ Thus, we might consider that Lucian was referencing a tradition in Stoicism with which the Stoics of his time were not in agreement.

It should be noted that the *Hermotimus* is not the only anti-utopian text of Lucian. The attack on imagined and impossible better places is also carried out in the *True History*, a book that takes to the extreme ideas from a range of other texts and traditions of antiquity.¹²⁴ Lucian, the narrator and character of this text, not only criticizes alleged historians like Ctesias of Cnidus and Iambulus,

¹²¹ D.L. 6. 85.

¹²² D.L. 7. 32-4.

¹²³ Schofield (1999), 93.

¹²⁴ See Nesselrath (1993), who makes an excellent argument for the *VA* as parody.

along with other authors, who invent stories of faraway and unknown places, but also assumes that the reader will recognize his sources.¹²⁵ It is this very recognition which reveals that, contrary to those historians who write lies that seem like truth, the only truth contained in the two books of the *True Stories* is that everything in them is a lie.¹²⁶

Lucian, in the fashion of the Homeric Odysseus embarks with his companions on a voyage which will take him to the renowned yet never visited, Isles of the Blessed. One of the most well known and religious utopian sites of the ancient world, here Lucian delivers a letter from Odysseus to Calypso, and meets with well-known authors from antiquity including Homer. After a short period of time Lucian is forced to abandon the place, but the king of the island, Rhadamanthys, reveals to him a ritual that provides him with good hopes of returning to the island.¹²⁷ This last remark, on how one might attain a happy and immortal life through ritual, appears to be sarcastic in tone, and thus can be seen to form part of the Lucianic criticism of religion. What the reader is supposed to think is, of course, is the exact opposite; that rituals cannot give hopes of getting any closer to the Isles of the Blessed. In the next unnamed island visited by fictional Lucian, we find a different kind of criticism of utopian places, which resembles Hermetimus' steep road to the perfect city. On this unnamed island, Lucian guided by Nauplius, climbs up a steep and stony path, crosses earth covered with swords, passes through a river of blood, one of fire, and one of mud, until he reaches a road where he meets Timon of Athens. After this encounter Lucian witnesses the punishment of many kings and learns the reason for their punishment. And yet, it is not kings but false

¹²⁵ Luc. *VH* 1, 3.

¹²⁶ Luc. *VH* 1, 4. In particular Ferguson (1975), 174-175 has an accurate view about Lucian, the *True Histories* and utopianism: 'the important point is that he has shrewdly hit the real weakness of Iambulus' picture, the element of fantasy therein. Political theory which ignores the hard facts of material existence is in the last resort sterile, and wishful thinking is no substitute for the working out of a sound economic structure.' On the point of Lucian's lies to unveil the falsehood of historians see also Ní-Mhellaigh (2009).

¹²⁷ Luc. *VH* 28.

historians like Ctesias of Cnidus and Herodotus, who receive the most severe punishment, and all because of the many lies that they have told through their writing. As Lucian has never told any lies, he is confident for his future.¹²⁸ In this way, the *Hermotimus* might be read in the same way as the *True Stories*, that is as a text that attacks political fiction by creating fiction and utopia by parodying utopia.¹²⁹

Perhaps the most telling case in point of Lucian's parody of the metaphor of the road and his fiction against the utopian potential of philosophy is the *Ship or the Wishes*, a dialogue in which philosophers are to blame for wishing for non-philosophical happiness. One of the principal narrative tricks of this dialogue consists in letting the reader know explicitly, and in the very last sentence, that Lycinus' friends are philosophers. In this dialogue, Lycinus, Samipus and Adeimantus travel from Athens to the Piraeus to see the monstrous corn-ship, The Isis, clearly a symbol of mercantile wealth, which has just arrived from Egypt.¹³⁰ Once there, a Platonic philosopher, with the Platonic name of Adeimantus, gets lost amid a crowd of spectators.¹³¹ Meanwhile, Lycinus and Samipus encounter Timolaus, an insatiable sightseer (φιλοθεάμων) who just like them has come from Corinth to marvel at the vessel. In this first part of the dialogue we see a typically Lucianic philosophical quarrel as Samipus attacks Adeimantus claiming that he must have gotten lost as a result of following a young Egyptian boy. But it is Lycinus who fuels the discussion when he says that such a fact is unlikely since Adimantus is particularly popular among young and good looking Athenian boys, and not brown skinned Egyptians.¹³² Such physical features would deem the Egyptian boy unappealing, until Timolaus then explainns to Lycinus he is a noble

¹²⁸ Luc. *VH* 32.

¹²⁹ Bowersock (1994), 2-7.

¹³⁰ Houston, 1986 thinks that it is not upon literary material that Lucian describes the monstrous size of the Isis, but on the realistic features of ships.

¹³¹ Plat. *Rep.* 327 c The son of Murrinos Pl *Symp.* 176d.

¹³² Luc. *Nav.* 1-5

Egyptian, and therefore such physical attraction is justified in terms of power. The philosophers then begin a discussion of the τέχνη of the ship's captain Heron, whom they deem not only to be wiser than Proteus in matters of the sea,¹³³ but also useful and somebody with whom it is worth being associated¹³⁴ in nautical emergencies.¹³⁵ Lycinus, however, remains unimpressed by the deeds of the captain and his skill, and uses his own paideutic skills to relativise the image of the wise old man who is an expert in some skill: Heron must be a wonderful captain, equal in age and a 'comrade' of Nereus, if he so completely lost his way.¹³⁶ In a similar way to the *Hermotimus*, here Lycinus adopts the role of an awakener of dreams and a dissipater of impossible wishes as embodied in his character as the pirate or murderer at sea (καταποντιστῆς).¹³⁷

The next section of the dialogue begins when Lycinus finds Adeimantus, distracted as he ruminates on a matter of concern in his mind.¹³⁸ On being asked by Lycinus what he is thinking, Adeimantus first says that it is not something of importance (οὐδέν χαλεπόν) and nothing but just an empty thought (τις κένη ἔννοια). However, the charm of such a thought is powerful enough to make him deaf to Lycinus' call as he concentrates so intently upon it.¹³⁹ Embarrassed of his non-philosophical manner Adeimantus does not want to tell his friends the cause of this distraction,¹⁴⁰ but after being pushed by Lycinus who suggests that he must have been consumed by an erotic thought,¹⁴¹ he confesses that he is in fact imagining a non-philosophical kind of happiness. He is, he claims, dreaming of wealth, and that which the majority calls an 'empty bliss', and indeed he has been caught at the peak of this vision of abundance and

¹³³ Θαυμάσιος τὴν τέχνην Luc. Nav. 7.

¹³⁴ Luc. Nav. 8.

¹³⁵ Luc. Nav. 9-10.

¹³⁶ Luc. Nav. 6-10.

¹³⁷ Luc. Nav. 14

¹³⁸ Luc. Nav. 11

¹³⁹ ἐποίησεν ἀτενὲς πρὸς αὐτὴν ἅπαντι τῷ λογισμῷ ἀποβλέποντα. Luc. Nav. 11

¹⁴⁰ αἰσχύνομαι ἔγωγε εἰπεῖν πρὸς ὑμᾶς, Luc. Nav. 11

¹⁴¹ μῶν ἐρωτικόν ἐστιν; Luc. Nav. 11

luxuriousness.¹⁴² The trigger of his thought about the happy life he might have derives from him having heard that the income of the ship is of at least twelve Attic talents a year.¹⁴³ If only a god could give him such a ship then he would become the envy of passengers and the terror of the crew, who would consider him to be almost a king.¹⁴⁴ But now Lycinus has woken him from his dream and he thinks of his sunken wealth rather differently: his dream only just started when his ship was blown by the fair wind of his desire.¹⁴⁵ It is in this way that the *Ship or the Wishes* leads to follow a competition of wishes between Adeimantus, Timolaus and Samipus, in which each participant is allowed to ask the gods for whatever they want (infinite riches, infinite imperial power and divinity).¹⁴⁶ But philosophers will only be able to create their utopia by enacting one of the physical aspects that characterize philosophers best, in this case: walking from Piraeus to Athens, engaged in a conversation that distracts them from the effort of the journey and at the same time is enjoyable in itself.

Because there are four interlocutors in this particular dialogue, Timolaus proposes that they imagine their journey as if it consisted of four roads.¹⁴⁷ In the same way as those philosophers who wonder about the perfect society and the perfect life, the enjoyment of the exercise consists in being ensnared by a pleasant dream of their own choosing.¹⁴⁸ They are encouraged to desire things even if they are physically impossible to acquire¹⁴⁹ and throughout the dialogue Lycinus goes on to tear down each one of their empty wishes, with the warning

¹⁴² τινα πλοῦτον ἑμαυτῷ ἀνεπλαττόμην, ἣν κενὴν μακαρίαν οἱ πολλοὶ καλοῦσιν, καί μοι ἐν ἀκμῇ τῆς περιουσίας καὶ τρυφῆς ἐπέστητε, Luc. *Nav.* 11

¹⁴³ ὡς εὐδαίμονα βίον ἐπεβίωσα, Luc. *Nav.* 13

¹⁴⁴ Luc. *Nav.* 13.

¹⁴⁵ Luc. *Nav.* 13

¹⁴⁶ In particular Hermes, the god of profit, Luc. *Nav.* 17; gods that can do anything, even that which seems to be extraordinary, τὰ μέγιστα εἶναι δοκοῦντα 28; cf Luc. *Nav.* 42.

¹⁴⁷ τετραχῆ τὴν ὁδὸν Luc. *Nav.* 16. Adeimantus, Samipus (17-27), Timolaus (37-45)

¹⁴⁸ οὕτω γὰρ ἂν ἡμᾶς ὁ τε κάματος λάθοι καὶ ἅμα εὐφρανόμεθα ὥσπερ ἡδίστῳ ὀνειράτι ἐκουσίῳ περιπεσόντες, ἐφ' ὅσον βουλόμεθα, εὖ ποιήσονται ἡμᾶς· παρ' αὐτῷ γὰρ ἐκάστῳ ἔστω τὸ μέτρον τῆς εὐχῆς, Luc. *Nav.* 16

¹⁴⁹ τῇ φύσει ἀπίθανα ἔσται Luc. *Nav.* 16

that he will not be envious of common riches,¹⁵⁰ and that he will sober them up from their dreams.¹⁵¹ When Lycinus is asked to make his own wish he answers straight away that he does not need one, they have reached the Dipylon, and now that the philosophers have been woken from the sweetest of dreams, they too must, like actors that play the part of kings on a stage, starve, be upset and be sad. Just like Icarus, the higher the philosophers are carried away, the harder they will hit the ground. And yet, for Lycinus, it was enough to laugh at all the things they had wished for, 'even more because you praise (this) philosophy'.¹⁵²

This last speech of Lycinus in the *Ship* gives the dialogue a closed ending, which enables it to be interpreted more easily than the ending of the *Hermotimus* and aims towards a parody of the metaphor of the road. Whilst in the *Ship* Lycinus uses metaphors and allegories to defeat the false pretensions of philosophers, who behave like the majority of the people, in the *Hermotimus* we see Lycinus behaving better and according to a philosophical code of behaviour that has, at its core, the Socratic' elenchus and irony, but not Socratic lifestyle. Lycinus' search for truth appears to expose the impossibility of all wishes to become *eudaimon* in any way other than that which follows 'common sense' and is in accordance with 'things as they are'.

¹⁵⁰ Luc *Nav.* 17.

¹⁵¹ ἐγὼ δὲ νήφειν ᾧμην καὶ σοὶ ὕπαρ ἀποφανείσθαι τὴν γνώμην, Luc. *Nav.* 35. There exist other readings of this section. I follow here MacLeod's edition. The manuscripts say καὶ οὐ παρὰ τὸ φανείσθαι. This is Bekker's emmendation. Jacobitz reads οὐ παραποφανείσθαι τὴν γνώμην.

¹⁵² Luc. *Nav.* 46.

Chapter 7

Perplexity as Lucian's aesthetic Aim

This study of the parody of Platonic motives has attempted to demonstrate that the *Hermotimus* is an invitation to think critically about the rhetoric of philosophy, and in particular about the rhetoric of the model of all philosophers, represented by the figure of Socrates. In this sense, as much as the dialogue can be considered philosophical, it can also be read as an attempt at ῥητορικὴ φιλοσοφοῦσα.¹ By focusing on the parodic procedures of the *Hermotimus* it is possible to demonstrate that Lucian is able to blur the artificial differences between rhetoric and philosophy. Importantly, it is a text that also shows that Lucian's interest lies in using irony as a means to make his readers think about the ways in which classical philosophical texts can be read, and to emphasise the different ways in which these texts are 'classically' used in exhortations to philosophy. Indeed, it is not just the parody of Platonic themes that is entertaining in the *Hermotimus*, the text also offers itself as an invitation to the reader to question fundamentally the ways in which classical and contemporary protreptic and apotreptic arguments function, and the ways in which an aporetic dialogue can be used to deliver a clear moral message. However, in order to understand better how the *Hermotimus* can be read as a parody of protreptic literature, let us look at the ways in which this dialogue can be read as a parody of protreptic arguments through the specific example of the *Tabula of Cebes*. Illustrated here will be the ways in which the *Hermotimus* parodies not only protreptic literature but aporetic dialogues too in order to convey the conclusive message which warns against trust in hope and the pull of ambition.

¹ Phil. Vit. Soph. Praef. 1.

1. The Parody of Protreptic Discourse

In the course of rejecting rhetorical display (ἐπίδειξις) as a way of persuading the crowds to join philosophy, Epictetus, a Stoic philosopher and contemporary of Lucian, mentions three different philosophical styles. The first implies exhortation (προτροπτικός), the second refutation (ἐλεγκτικός) and the third implies instruction (διδασκαλικός). These three styles are related to Diogenes the Cynic, Socrates, and Zeno of Citium.² Epictetus considers rhetorical display to be ill-suited to him and his students as it appears to be frivolous and indulgent. The other three styles have the potential to make the reader uncomfortable by showing him that his consideration of that which is truly worth pursuing is wrong. As is well known, the Socratic method of inquiry or *elenchos* often takes the conversation to an *aporia*.

The aim of protreptic literature is to orientate the reader towards the philosophical life,³ in order to convert him to philosophy.⁴ However, the different schools of philosophy disagreed about the nature of virtue and, therefore, each philosophical persuasion prescribed different dogmas on how to live a virtuous life that would lead to absolute human fulfilment. How to make oneself virtuous and therefore *eudaimon* was the main preoccupation of the philosophical schools of Lucian's time.

The surviving philosophical protreptic literature of the second century is the result of the proselitizing activities of philosophers and intellectuals. Perhaps Parmenides' poem is the first example we have of a philosophical protreptic discourse. Although each school of philosophy possessed a canon of philosophical works appropriate for its own proselitizing purposes, all the

² Epict. *Diss.* 2.13.14; 3.23.32; 3.24.38; 3.26.23 with Long (2002), 74-89 and 57.

³ For a definition of *protreptic* literature see Slings (1994), 59-60.

⁴ For the topic of conversion to philosophy see Nock (1933), 164-186; (1939). His opinions about Lucian and about Apuleius should at times be read and interpreted with care. See also Winkler (1985) and Schäublin (1985).

schools were able to borrow from the protreptic material available in the writings about Socrates. These were chiefly found in Plato's *Apology*, and some sections of the *Euthydemus*, though perhaps the most influential protreptic text in Lucian's time was the Platonic *Alcibiades I*. Aristotle also wrote a *Protrepticus*, which in all probability was one of the classics of protreptic literature. Furthermore, some protreptic undertones are found in Epicurus' letters,⁵ and the proem in Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things* is in many ways an exhortation to join Epicurean philosophy. Marcus Aurelius mentions a fragment of Menander which claims that all is vanity (τῦφον εἶναι πᾶν ἔφη) in reference to the opinions of Monimus of Syracuse who was a pupil of Diogenes the Cynic and a follower of Crates, who also wrote a *Protrepticus*.⁶ Diogenes Laertius corrects Menander's mockery of the philosopher by saying that he was very grave (ἐμβριθέστατος), always despised opinion and only cared for truth. However, Diogenes Laertius also says that Monimus' *Protrepticus*, and his other text *On Impulses* (Περὶ ὁρμῶν) were entertainment (παίγνια) and were mixed with hidden seriousness (σπουδῇ λεληθυία μεμιγμένα).⁷ Monimus is also credited with some of the *Letters of Pseudo-Diogenes*, in which the method to reach *eudaimonia* is compared to a road.⁸ It is hard to tell whether Monimus' *Protrepticus* was an exhortation to live the Cynic life, or a parody of philosophical discourses and perhaps even of all education. However, the information that we do have about Monimus should push us to consider that readers in the second century may have been prepared to read parodies of protreptic discourses owing to the existence of other texts, such as the Pseudo-Platonic *Clitophon*, which were a parody of protreptic literature.

Although Epictetus considered that the protreptic style was a genre almost exclusive to philosophy, the famous doctor Galen wrote a *Protrepticus*,

⁵ D.L. 10. 122.

⁶ Men. 249 Kock; Marc. Aur. *Med.* II. 15.

⁷ D. L. 6. 82-83.

⁸ *Epist.* 38, 39.

and in the *Affections and Errors of the Soul* tells us that he studied all philosophies before becoming a doctor.⁹ Other good examples of protreptic literature of the period are Clement of Alexandria's *Exhortation to the Greeks*, in which he tries to persuade the Greeks to abandon paganism and to adopt Christianity, and the *Tabula of Cebes*. The *Tabula* is a dialogue that promises to rescue whoever pays attention to its message, by offering him the possibility of becoming wise and happy by taking him to 'true education'. Finally, the *Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion* can be taken as a further example of protreptic literature in Syriac.¹⁰

In spite of Epictetus' effort to distinguish between rhetorical epideictic literature and protreptic literature as a form of exhortation to philosophy, protreptic discourses were close to epideictic counselling and advice (*parainesis, sumboulê*), and vituperation (*psogos*). Attacking other philosophical sects was also part of praising one's own philosophical standpoint and Plutarch is one of the best examples of this two-fold practice. In praising Platonism and defending it from other philosophical sects, he produced many works that showed contempt for Epicurean philosophy (*Against Colotes, Is the Saying "Live in Obscurity" Right?*) and others which were directed against the Stoics (*On Stoic Self-Contradictions, Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions*). However, in many of his dialogues Plutarch also sought to persuade his readers of particular philosophical aspects, and in particular to study philosophy (*On Listening to Lectures*).

As noted by Bompaire, Schwartz and Jones, the *Hermotimus* appears to be a parody of the metaphor of the road and the ascent to true Paideia as it appears in the *Tabula of Cebes*.¹¹ Not only does Lucian make an explicit parody

⁹ Gal. *Aff. Dig.* 1.8 (= Kühn 5.41-42).

¹⁰ The text can be found in Cureton (1855), 70-76. Merz and Tieleman (2007).

¹¹ Jones (1985), 79, 24-25, 153; See Nesselrath (2005), 45-47. For the *Tabula of Cebes* in general see the commentary by Hirsch-Luipold et al (2005), and Trapp (1997). All the following translations of the *Tabula of Cebes* come from Fitzgerald and White (1983). For a summary of the content and structure of the text see Squire and Grethlein (2014) Fitzgerald and White's commentary (1983),

of the *Tabula* in *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses* but the metaphor of the road is also prominent in the *Rhetorum Praeceptor*. One might furthermore find resonances of the text in the *Heracles* and the *Charon or the Observers*.¹² This evidence, in my opinion, deems it probable that in spite of all the other references to the metaphor of the road, Lucian must have had the *Tabula* in mind when he wrote the *Hermotimus*. To date, however, a study of what the implications of this might be has yet to be carried out in great detail.

2. The Comparison of the *Tabula of Cebes* and the *Hermotimus*

To read the *Tabula* alongside the *Hermotimus* is to strengthen the hypothesis that Lucian had the former in mind whilst writing the later. Direct comparison between these two texts reveals how the *Hermotimus* presents a critical response to protreptic discourses and teaches different ways of reading and exploiting the common themes and variations of the topics of dogmatic thinkers.

The *Tabula of Cebes* begins (1-3) with a group of visitors (περιπατοῦντες) who arrive at the temple of Cronus and find, among other offerings set up in the precinct, a tablet that depicts in an unusual visual form peculiar fables (ἦν γραφὴ ξένη τις καὶ μύθους ἔχουσα ἰδίους). The visitors discuss with one other for a long time the possible meaning of the fable (Ἀπορούτων οὖν ἡμῶν περὶ τῆς μυθολογίας πρὸς ἀλλήλους πολὺν χρόνον) until an old man who is standing nearby tells them that it is common to be perplexed (ἀποροῦντες) by the painting, and that indeed not even the local inhabitants are able to

9-11, and Trapp (1997), 5-6, which contains an updated bibliography. In some respects my reading of the *Tabula* is similar to Elsner's (1995), 17-20.

¹² Charon compares himself with Protesilaos, the first Achaean to die in Troy, who was later resuscitated for three hours or one day. He goes to the over-world in order to understand why it is that everyone who crosses the boundaries of death sheds at least one tear, and to see everything in life although Hermes will show only the most important things. This appears as a transgression to Zeus' and Hades' rule, but it is nevertheless permitted, because Charon had asked for the permission of Hades, and because Charon and Hermes are not attacking heaven when piling up the mountains to reach a 'point of epiphany'. See also Hom. *Od.* 11. 305-320.

understand it. The old man then offers his services to interpret its meaning. As he explains to the visitors, he is able to explain the plaque because as a young man, he met and marvelled (καὶ ἐθαύμασά γε) at its creator, a venerable old man, who at the time spoke of serious things (σπουδαῖα διελέγετο), and was of 'exceptional wisdom, who was emulating in word and deed a Pythagorean and Parmenidean way of life'. This last comment is important, as even if there exists disagreement between scholars about the affiliation of the author of the *Tabula of Cebes*, it is clear that the content of the painting of which the old man speaks is philosophical, and that he is able to interpret it as a philosopher. In this way, the critiques of literature are done from the perspective of philosophy.

The visitors are keen to hear the insights of the old man but then he warns them that:

The explanation of the painting carries an element of danger [...] if you pay attention and understand what is said, you will be wise and happy. If, on the other hand, you do not, you will fare badly in life [...] for the explanation is similar to the riddle that the Sphinx used to pose to men: if someone understood it he was spared, but if he did not understand he was destroyed by the Sphinx. It is just the same in the case of this explanation. You see, for mankind, Foolishness is the Sphinx. Foolishness speaks in riddles of these things: of what is good, what is bad, and what is neither good nor bad in life. Thus if anyone does not understand these things he is destroyed by her, not all at once, as a person devoured by the Sphinx died. Rather he is destroyed little by little, throughout his entire life, just like those who are handed over by retribution. But if one does understand, Foolishness is in turn destroyed, and he himself is saved and is blessed and happy in his whole life.¹³

The old man's words charge the visitors with a great enthusiasm (εἰς μεγάλην τῖνα ἐπυθυμίαν ἐμβέβληκας ἡμᾶς), and they beg him to be quick in his

¹³ *Tab.* 3.

explanation which they in turn will pay attention to.¹⁴ The allegoric narration depicts an entire journey through the good and bad choices of human life and the different paths that these choices lead to. For the purpose of this chapter it is not necessary to summarize the entire journey but only to draw attention to the role of literature (Γράμματα) in the *Tabula of Cebes* in relation to Education and Happiness.¹⁵

Literature is an activity of the lovers of False Education, who 'have been deceived into thinking that they are consorting with true Paideia'. Its members are 'poets, orators, dialecticians, musicians, mathematicians, geometricians, literary critics, hedonists, peripatetics and all others like them'.¹⁶ The Daimon, scroll in hand, points to those who are about to be inducted into Life (οἱ μελλόντες εἰσπορεύεσθαι εἰς τὸν βίον) and the path they must follow if they are to be saved.¹⁷ But the role of literature is not crucial to achieve True Education.¹⁸ In fact 'Literature and those other studies which even Plato said have for youth the force of a bridle, so that they are not diverted to different pursuits' are useful to advance more quickly along the journey to True Education,¹⁹ but it is possible to advance without them. What we have in our hands, of course, is not a tablet, but a book with Socratic and Platonic borrowings, a literary piece, and hence it is a self-referencing as it explains both the usefulness and the limits of interpreting the *Tabula of Cebes*. That this is a self-referencing becomes even clearer when the old man refers to the role of

¹⁴ See also the exhortation at *Tab. Ceb.* 4 Οὐκ ἂν φθάνοις τοίνυν διηγούμενος ὡς ἡμῶν προσεξόντων οὐ παρέργως, ἐπέιπερ καὶ τὸ ἐπιτίμιον τοιοῦτόν ἐστιν and the passage already quoted in which Hermotimus first gives his life options in *Herm.* 1 and Lycinus' excitement to join him in *Luc Herm.* 13 'I might also start my journey from here and join yours later'. See also in this chapter the concession to ask questions of the Hermotimus and in the *Tab.* 33.

¹⁵ *Tab.* 12-29.

¹⁶ *Tab.* 13. These activities represent the seven liberal arts comprising of the ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία or ἐγκύκλιος μαθήματα, cf. Marrou (1956) 243-255, p. 527-530, quoted in Fitzgerald and White (1983) 146, where is also explained the preference for the term κριτικοί instead of γραμματικοί; see also Marrou (1937), 216 n. 3.

¹⁷ *Tab.* 4.

¹⁸ *Tab.* 33.

¹⁹ *Idem.*

interpreters: 'just as we sometimes gather what is said from an interpreter, nevertheless it is useful to know the language ourselves to understand more accurately. In the same way then, nothing prevents one from becoming better even without these lessons'.²⁰ The learned (μαθηματικοί) have no advantage over the rest of mankind, because one can know literature and the rest of the disciplines (οὐδὲν γὰρ κωλύει εἰδέναι μὲν γράμματα καὶ κατέχειν τὰ μαθήματα πάντα) and at the same not know the true nature of good and evil. The visitors agree that one might come across many people like that.²¹

The limits of the exegetic role of the old man, the instructions on how to use the book, and the limits of the benefits of reading it are conclusively underlined in the concluding chapter. Even if the story has come to an end, the visitor is still lacking:

That habit by which you might adopt this very disposition of soul. Therefore, throughout your course of life strive to put into practice these things which I have briefly set before you, so that my words may be etched on your minds and become a habit in you. However, if you are still perplexed about anything, return to me that I may give you an explanation that will dispel your doubts.²²

This ending of the *Tabula of Cebes* establishes a new relationship with the reader as he adopts the role of the visitor and the text becomes the guide. The reader must trust its content, for which reason he is invited to come back to the *The Tabula of Cebes*. To this extent it offers an exegesis of a μυθολογία, nevertheless, it is only in this way that the visitor-reader is released from perplexity, since in order to be completely saved from False Education he will need time to practice the teachings. In the *Tabula* the reader, like the visitor, trusts the old man's exegesis of the tablet, and hence trusts the book.

²⁰ *idem*.

²¹ *Tab.* 34.

²² *Tab.* 42.

Early in the *Hermotimus* the relationship between guide and guided, expert and inexperienced, is inverted.²³ Lycinus defeats Hermotimus by subverting his understanding of philosophy on his own terms. However, because Lycinus plays the role of a philosopher, his counterargument is also self-deceiving and the reader therefore is highly aware of the sarcastic tone at the end of the dialogue. Hermotimus has not been rescued, but drowned in his own life alternatives. Those readers who think Lycinus serious, and do not realise the sarcasm find themselves at the end of the text reduced to perplexity. In the *Tabula of Cebes*, Deceit leads man astray and makes people drink from error and ignorance before entering life.²⁴ On reaching life only those who arrive first at Repentance,²⁵ go from there to Education and, 'are purified and have cast all the evils they possess such as opinion, ignorance and the rest [and] will be saved. But those remaining here with False Education will never be freed, nor will any evil leave them as a result of these lessons'.²⁶ The reader of the *Hermotimus*, on the other hand, has to prove himself a true *pepaideumenos* or an educated member of the elite so that he might know to laugh and therefore be released from perplexity. We should be wary to think that this means that the *Hermotimus* is nothing more than banal entertainment as not only does the *logos* of the *Hermotimus* have the exact opposite effect to the exegesis of the *μυθολογία*, but also the reader of the *Hermotimus* is challenged to perform the right exegesis of the *logos*. The seriousness and wit of Lucian's dialogue invite the reader to consider the positive values which are proposed in the course of a work whose philosophical imagery, language and topic of choice and moral progress are crucial both to the members of other schools of philosophy and to others writing protreptic literature, and which are rooted in earlier

²³ Luc. *Herm.* 13, 21.

²⁴ *Tab.* 6.

²⁵ *Tab.* 11.

²⁶ *Tab.* 14.

philosophical thought. There is a philosophical side to the comedy of the *Hermotimus* that is not prescriptive but literary.

Lastly, as in the *Hermotimus*, distrust is an essential critical skill for the ascent to True Education. The recommendations of the Daimon for the ascent to True Education are to have confidence,²⁷ and to be indifferent to the gifts of Fortune and ‘not to place any trust in that woman, neither to regard whatsoever one might receive from her as safe or secure, nor to consider it private property.’²⁸ While this book inspires confidence, trust, and even distrust in Fortune, in the *Hermotimus* Lycinus’ unclear and unsettling intentions prompt the reader to extend distrust towards the text itself.

We can compare this hunt for false philosophers with the literary strategies of the *Hermotimus*. Lucian has inverted the relationship between the exegesis of a μυθολογία, the trust in the old exegete, the distrust for Fortune and ultimately the salvation of the reader as it appears in the *Tabula of Cebes*. In the *Hermotimus* the old teacher and all other philosophers are untrustworthy, since it is impossible that even they know whether they have arrived at the summit of Virtue. On the other hand, Lycinus presents himself as an inverted Socrates, who has in his hands the power of the elenchus and Sceptic modes of argument. However, unlike the old exegete of the *Tabula of Cebes*, Lycinus gives to his reader every indication not to trust his own persuasion and it is therefore at this point that the reader must come back to the *Hermotimus* in order to review the basic tenets of the language of philosophy.

²⁷ Θαρρεῖν, ἔφη. διὸ καὶ ὑμεῖς θαρρεῖτε, *Tab.* 31; cf. *Luc. Herm.* 4: ἀλλὰ θαρρεῖν χρῆ καὶ θυμὸν ἔχειν ἀγαθὸν ἐς τὸ τέλος τῆς ὁδοῦ ὁρῶντα καὶ τὴν ἄνω εὐδαιμονίαν.

²⁸ μὴ πιστεύειν καὶ βέβαιον μηδὲν νομίζειν μηδὲ ἀσφαλὲς εἶναι, ὅτι ἂν παρ’ αὐτῆς τις λάβῃ μηδὲ ὡς ἴδια ἠγγεῖσθαι. In this same chapter the recommendation of the Daimon is not to be surprised at whatever she does (διὰ τοῦτο οὖν τὸ Δαιμόνιον κελεύει μὴ θαυμάζειν), *Tab.* 31.

3. Lucian's Pun on Academics, Pyrrhonists and Stoics Ending in Aporia.

In this chapter, we have seen how the *Hermotimus* is modelled upon classical Platonic themes and situations such as the Socratic pursuit of virtue, the denunciation of sophists and tyrants, and even the Socratic method itself. The main characters of Lycinus and Hermotimus are parodies of Socrates and the opsimath and the *Hermotimus* is therefore a caricature made out of Platonic themes. However, this Platonic dialogue is designed to invite the reader to philosophize, even if it fails to produce absolute conclusions. In this sense, the Platonic aporetic dialogues are also protreptic. And yet, unlike Socrates who often commits himself to providing positive ideas, the Lucianic character is an outsider to philosophical problems, and does not commit to the advancement of theories or to proposing solutions. The design of the form of the *Hermotimus* does not enhance knowledge but what Lucian does do is highlighting its philosophical potential thereby encouraging his readers to rethink the possible ways in which classical philosophical texts can be used as rhetoric. In this sense, the *Hermotimus* helps its attentive reader to think critically about philosophic literature and its rhetoric. The Lucianic dialogues are not, however, protreptic, and the Lucianic heroes do not experience *aporia*. For this reason, before moving into the next section it is important to stop and reconsider the function of *aporía* in relation to Lucianic comedy.

In the *Hermotimus* Lucian combines two philosophical genres (aporetic literature and protreptic literature), which on the surface appear incompatible, and thereby creates a mixture whose end is not only to entertain, but also, as has shown, to provide the tools to think about how these two genres function. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 it was argued that due to the different comic procedures in the *Hermotimus* any reader is capable of distinguishing between Lycinus' *apotreptic logos* and the irony of the proposal to live like everyone else. Therefore, to understand how the *Hermotimus* invites readers to think critically

about *aporetic* texts it is necessary to understand how *aporía* is, for Lucian, an aesthetic end in its own right.

Primarily, Lycinus not getting anywhere with his argument and Hermotimus' descent to the life of laymen seem to match Lucian's satirizing of the Pyrrhonists and Academics and their inability to reach happiness. In the introduction to Lucian's other long work, the *True Story*, we are told that only laymen would believe the content of the book, just in the same way that they would believe Odysseus' stories.²⁹ But the narrator adds that the only truth contained in the two books is that everything in them is a lie.³⁰ One of these stories tells of the time in which Lucian and his companions arrived at the Isles of the Blessed. Here they were told that none of the Stoics had arrived yet as they were still trying to get there; and that none of the Academics had arrived either, as even though they had wanted to come, they were still investigating and suspending their judgment (ἐπέχειν δὲ ἔτι καὶ διασκέπτεσθαι), and could not agree on whether such an island existed or not.³¹ The narrator's opinion, however, is that:

Academics feared Rhadamanthys' judgment, because they themselves had abolished standards of judgment. Though it was said that many of them had set out to follow those who were coming, but through slowness they couldn't keep up, and so fell behind and turned back halfway.³²

²⁹ Luc *VH* 1. 3 The following translations are by Costa (2005), 203-233.

³⁰ Luc. *VH*. 1. 4. For a recent commentary of this work see Gergiadou and Larmour (1998). The entries to this topic, however, can go into much more depth. Strategies that debunk the credibility of the authority of the main voice also occur in Lucian's introductory speeches. Unlike in dialogues, in a speech the reader is much more tempted to believe that because the narration is in the first person singular, then it must be the author's –in this case Lucian's– voice who speaks, and therefore that the words contained in its discourse are sincere. See Höslé (2006), 136-152 who suggests that to find an authorial intention in an author who writes dialogues, one must compare them with prose in the first person singular. Yet as in the case of the introduction of *A True History*, Lucian does enjoy creating neither wholly reliable nor wholly unreliable voice in the first person singular. The *About the Dipsades* is yet another good example of this strategy.

³¹ Luc. *VH* 2. 18.

³² Luc. *VH* 2. 19.

The lies contained in the novel are not only there for the sake of entertainment. Just like for athletes relaxation is the most important part of their training, so it is for intellectuals:

It would be suitable recreation for them to occupy themselves with the kind of reading which not only affords simple diversion derived from elegance and wit, but also supplies some intellectual food for thought –just the qualities I think they will find in these works of mine.³³

What we might draw from the comparison with *A True Story* is that in the characterisation of the Hermotimus, the Stoic, and Lycinus the Sceptic-like philosopher, we find a variation of the joke about Stoics, Academics and Pyrrhonists. Furthermore, this tells us a great deal about the special type of entertainment, of which Lucian's literature was a part, which includes a kind of θεωρίαν οὐκ ἄμουσον, even if it is not oriented towards truth. The reader will be attracted by the exotic subject matter, the seductiveness of the purpose of the text, and its various lies which are persuasively and plausibly realised (ὅτι ψεύσματα ποικίλα πιθανῶς τε καὶ ἐναλήθως ἐξενηνόχαμεν), and which contain allusions to various poets, philosophers and historians.

Academics and Pyrrhonists unable to make up their minds, appear elsewhere in Lucian. The Academic or Pyrrhonist in the *Symposium* stares at the dispute between an Epicurean and a Stoic and involuntarily ridicules himself by cooling down the quarrel.³⁴ In the *Sale of Lives*, the Pyrrhonist doubts his own existence, causing perplexity (ὦ τῆς ἀπορίας) in his buyer who later thinks that the philosophical life is βραδύς and νωθής. The buyer also asks him what is the

³³ Luc *VH* 1.2.

³⁴ See Luc. *Symp.* 39, 43.

aim of his philosophical knowledge (ἀλλὰ τί σοι τὸ τέλος τῆς ἐπιστάσεως;) to which he answers: ἡ ἀμαθία καὶ τὸ μήτε ἀκούειν μήτε ὀρᾶν.³⁵ In *Icaromenippus*

two men offered conflicting prayers and promised equal sacrifices, so he [Zeus] didn't know (ἀποροῦντα) which one to favour, and found himself in the predicament of the Academics: he couldn't come to a decision, so, like Pyrrho, he put it off while he pondered the matter'.³⁶

As in *A True Story*, the *Icaromenippus* also shows us how Lucian can make his main character and his apparent *porte-parole* suspicious, even when he is trying to solve an ἀπορία. In this dialogue, an anonymous friend meets Menippus, who tells him that he has just arrived from an extraordinary voyage. In trying to establish the dimensions and the composition of the cosmos Menippus sought the help of philosophers³⁷ who, however, only chattered about it, and threw in his direction their unsolvable puzzles, which left him in an even greater perplexity (εἰς μείζους ἀπορίας) than before.³⁸ The only solution and release available to him was to find out for himself,³⁹ and after grabbing a pair of wings, one of an eagle and one of a vulture, he flies from one mountaintop in Greece to another, and even ventures a long-distance flight to the moon, which is the first stop between Earth and the house of the gods.

Once on the moon, it is only from the Colossus of Rhodes and the lighthouse at Alexandria that Menippus is able to recognize Earth as the tiny spot that he sees far off in the distance. Immediately afterwards he claims to see the lives of all men and of 'everything that the earth, the giver of grain, nourishes.'⁴⁰ The anonymous friend notices the contradiction in Menippus'

³⁵ Luc. *Vit. Auct.* 27.

³⁶ Luc. *Icar.* 25.

³⁷ καί μοι ἐνταῦθα πολλήν τινα παρεῖχε τὴν ἀπορίαν πρῶτον μὲν αὐτὸς οὗτος ὁ ὑπὸ τῶν σοφῶν καλούμενος κόσμος· Luc. *Icar.* 4.

³⁸ Luc. *Icar.* 5.

³⁹ μίαν δὲ τῆς συμπάσης ἀπορίας ἀπαλλαγὴν ὥμην ἔσεσθαι, Luc. *Icar.* 10.

⁴⁰ ὅποσα τρέφει ζεῖδωρος ἄρουρα, Luc. *Icar.* 12. Cf. Hom. *Il* 2, 548, *Od* 3, 3; 4, 229.

narrative. How could he first struggle to recognize the Earth and all of a sudden describe it in such detail? To escape the objection, Menippus says that he forgot to say the most important thing as whilst unable to see the details of the Earth he was greatly perplexed,⁴¹ and then, all of a sudden, a lunar daemon, Empedocles, came to his aid and told him that all he needed to do was flutter his eagle's wing and he would instantly be able to inspect all life on Earth and humanities' follies.⁴² Following this explanation, the anonymous friend is subsequently near-silent for the rest of the text following this explanation, and only occasionally does he encourage Menippus to continue narrating his journey to the house of the gods.⁴³ Menippus' closing tale, which is the climax of the dialogue, is ultimately framed by the utter silence of his anonymous friend.

Left with Menippus' narration as the last word, the reader is invited to share the silence of the anonymous friend. From the start of the dialogue the friend, and hence, the reader have been amazed by the narration, but have also remained suspicious of its veracity.⁴⁴ They can both sympathize with Menippus' criticism of ridiculous philosophical speculation and pseudo-science as well as the follies of humanity. They may even support his proposal of going to the moon to test the theories about the cosmos. But at the same time how can one trust the opinions of a *hypernephelos* madman, who thinks that he has just arrived from the house of the gods, via the cosmos; a claim that is an obvious and extraordinary lie as nobody has ever been there before. The open ending of the *Icaromenippus* invites the reader to share the silence of the anonymous friend, and to balance and rethink his trust in Menippus' as well as other

⁴¹ καὶ πολλὴν παρεῖχε τὴν ἀπορίαν, Luc. *Icar.* 13.

⁴² Luc. *Icar.* 12-13.

⁴³ Luc. *Icar.* 15, 16, 19.

⁴⁴ See Luc *Icar.* 1: Μὴ θαυμάσης, ὦ ἑταῖρε, εἰ μετέωρα καὶ διαέρια δοκῶ σοι λαλεῖν; and the invitation to disbelieve in 2: Καὶ μὴν ἐγὼ σοι παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐκείνου τοῦ πάνυ Διὸς ἦκω τήμερον θαυμάσια καὶ ἀκούσας καὶ ἰδὼν· εἰ δὲ ἀπιστεῖς, καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο ὑπερευφραίνομαι τὸ πέρα πίστεως εὐτυχεῖν.

philosophers' opinions about the cosmos, regardless of how extraordinary they may appear.

As a matter of fact, it is reasonable to read the epilogue of the *Hermotimus* not only as the aporetic result of the discussions between philosophers, but even as a literary challenge to the procedures in one of Plato's most celebrated moments of 'conversion'. It is much harder to prove that Lucian had this text in mind when he wrote the *Hermotimus* than as in the case of the *Tabula*, but *Alcibiades I* was in Lucian's time one of Plato's most widely read texts. Indeed, in his *Prologus*, Albinus placed it alongside a list of Platonic dialogues that the student of philosophy should read.⁴⁵ Being a Platonic enthusiast, it is not inconceivable that Lucian was aware of the fame of *Alcibiades I* and therefore by extension it is possible to read Hermotimus' conversion as a parody of that of Alcibiades. Whilst in *Alcibiades I* the reader is left with a 'conversion', the *Hermotimus* presents a parody of a real 'conversion.' In *Alcibiades I*, Socrates, a mature man, waits for the right occasion to talk to Alcibiades, a noble, rich, beautiful and courageous young man.⁴⁶ Alcibiades wants to be a ruler, but Socrates argues that political leadership is a matter of justice and that Alcibiades has neither learnt it from teachers nor has he taught it to himself. Socrates then promises that in return for his approval, he will teach Alcibiades all that he needs in order to know to become a useful politician. Socrates' recommendation is that Alcibiades takes care of himself so that he might rule over the Athenians, and excite the envy of Persians and Spartans.⁴⁷ Taking care of oneself is what is needed for good political leadership, but this also requires knowledge of what the self is. Alcibiades acknowledges that he needs Socrates' help for this task, at which point Socrates concedes that he is able to teach self-

⁴⁵ See R. Tarrant's book (2015), 140-141 and in particular 108-140 for the impact of *Alcibiades I* on the academy and Platonists. A good example which proves the fame of *Alcibiades I* in Lucian's time is Apuleius' citation of it in *Apol.* 25.

⁴⁶ Plat. *Alc.* 103a-106a.

⁴⁷ Plat. *Alc.* 119a-124a

knowledge.⁴⁸ At the end of Plato's *Alcibiades I* the hope is that Alcibiades will return to Socrates, although it is more probable that he will not keep his promise. In contrast to Alcibiades, Hermotimus leaves the conversation convinced that Lycinus has liberated him from the burden of Stoic philosophy; he will convert to the life of a layman. However, the reader is also aware of Lycinus' Socratic-Ironic strategies and suspects that this 'conversion' will not take place, since the proposal to live like everyone else is not an alternative in its own right.

On the other hand, the *Hermotimus* and the *Icaromenippus* might not be the only dialogues ending in *aporía*. In *On Pantomime Dancing*,⁴⁹ Lycinus discusses the philosophical, literary and cultural value of pantomime with the Cynic Craton, for whom pantomime is only an effeminate activity and unworthy of the attention of a serious and educated philosopher. His discussion is not as logical in this dialogue, but reads as a summoning of authorities. Lycinus then makes a long encomium of the art of pantomime, which combines entertainment with intellectual challenges, and gives examples of mythology, history, literature, and authorities of old.⁵⁰ It excels in tragedy and comedy,⁵¹ and involves the rest of the liberal arts.⁵² The dancer must be knowledgeable not only of Greek, but of universal culture;⁵³ he must express with the body what the orator does with words;⁵⁴ have ethical knowledge;⁵⁵ and prepare himself both mentally and physically.⁵⁶ He must also be careful not to be considered by others as a false pantomime.⁵⁷ But, after this magnificent

⁴⁸ Plat. *Alc.* 124b-129b.

⁴⁹ See Lada Richards (2008), 298-304 for a different approach to the ending of the text. Also see the discussion of Petrides (2013), 445-46.

⁵⁰ Luc. *Salt.* 8-25.

⁵¹ Luc. *Salt.* 26-32.

⁵² Luc. *Salt.* 35-36.

⁵³ Luc. *Salt.* 37-61.

⁵⁴ Luc. *Salt.* 62-64.

⁵⁵ Luc. *Salt.* 68-70.

⁵⁶ Luc. *Salt.* 74-78.

⁵⁷ Luc. *Salt.* 80-4.

speech, Craton promises to go to a performance and experiences a conversion almost with complaints.⁵⁸ This leaves open the question of whether Lycinus is sincerely trying to persuade his interlocutor, or whether he uses his superior culture to mock Craton, who will do whatever is necessary, even betraying the Cynics, to assert himself as an educated philosopher.

In this way, one might conclude that the *Hermotimus* is a longer variation of a joke on the Stoics, the Academics and the Pyrrhonists not getting anywhere, and furthermore that it is not uncommon for Lucian to end a dialogue at an impasse.

4. Perplexity as an aesthetic Aim in Lucian's Fiction

There is an aesthetic aspect of Lucian's work that is most important. We have seen that the reason that Hermotimus admires his teacher is the same reason why he admires Lycinus at the moment of his conversion. However, this conclusion is also highly self-ironic for the reader. Just like a philosopher, an over-daring poet, a storyteller or mathematician, Lycinus has captured Hermotimus with a long philosophical argument that leads to an *aporia* from which he is not able to escape. Hermotimus' belief that he has been safely rescued by Lycinus' *logos* is false, and as such it is comparable to belief in mythical beasts such as Hippocentaurs, Chimeras and Gorgons. This comparison between false beliefs and monsters should not be taken lightly, for as a matter of fact, it shows Lucian's own aesthetic interest in creating *aporetic* literary situations.

Hippocentaurs are a perplexing presence in all three of Lucian's works in which they appear (*Twice Indicted*, *Zeuxis* and *To one who said you're a Prometheus in Words*). Their effect is always in relation to Lucian's great achievement of mixing comedy and dialogue. In *Twice Indicted*, Dialogue prosecutes the Syrian

⁵⁸ Luc. *Salt*. 85.

for forcing him to climb down from his lofty Platonic pretensions and for putting him at the same level as the majority (ἰσοδίαιτον τοῖς πολλοῖς ἐποίησεν). He also accuses him of changing his tragic mask into a comic, satiric and ridiculous one, and complains that

He kept me locked up with Jest, Lampoon, Cynicism, Eupolis and Aristophanes, men terribly skilled at mocking what is holy and scorning what is right. And at last he even unearthed Menippus, one of the Cynics of old, who looks like a real biter with sharp teeth; he brought against me that really dreadful dog with his furtive bite, who grins as he bites. Haven't I been terribly offended, when I no longer play my own proper part, but I'm a comedian and a buffoon and act out bizarre roles for him? What is most extraordinary of all, I have been turned into a baffling mixture and I neither walk prosaically on foot nor ride proudly on metre, but seem to be something made up in the manner of a Hippocentaur, and a strange mirage to my listeners.⁵⁹

In the case of *Twice Indicted* Lucian uses the image of Hippocentaurs to talk about the effect that the prose and verse in the dialogue have on the listeners, but this effect, I believe, should not be separated from the aesthetics of his literary composition, which even if novel, also possess a formal control and sense of tradition.⁶⁰

In the dialogue entitled *Zeuxis or Antiochus* we find a similar situation in which Lucian complains about the students that praise him, when they say in relation to him such things as 'Oh what novelty, by Heracles, what a use of paradox. How creative! The sprightliness of his thought finds no comparison!'⁶¹ For Lucian such high praise represents a distraction from the real appeal that his texts should have:

⁵⁹ Luc. *Bis Acc.* 33.

⁶⁰ See Camerotto, (2009). See Halliwell's (2008), 432-436 excellent discussion of this chapter of the *Twice Indicted* in relation to Lucian's comedy.

⁶¹ Luc. *Zeux.* 1.

So for them the only charm of my works lies in the fact that they are unfamiliar and that they keep off the beaten track, but when it comes to fine phrasing in them and its composition in accordance with the ancient canon or intellectual sharpness or an element of subtlety, or Attic grace, or harmony, or overall craftsmanship, my work is perhaps far from all these.⁶²

Lucian knows that, just as Homer says, 'it is the new song that delights an audience' (τὴν νέαν ᾠδὴν κεχαρισμένην ὑπάρχειν τοῖς ἀκούουσιν), although for him it is other qualities of his work and not its novelty that his readers should really admire:

As a result I was being excessively puffed up and I took the risk of believing them when they said that I was the only one of my kind in Greece and other flatteries of this kind. As the proverb goes, my treasure turned to ashes, and the praise I got from them was not much different from the one that they give to an illusionist.⁶³

Lucian's readers risk putting his works in a place where they are appreciated for the wrong reasons. As is the case of Zeuxis' painting, his readers do not notice that beyond the novelty of his works there is also a sense of tradition. In what follows in chapters 3-8, Lucian compares the fate of his texts to the painting of Zeuxis, described as 'a female hippocentaur with her hippocentaur family as background'. Zeuxis' audience praised the strangeness of the painting's idea (τῆς ἐπινοίας τὸ ξένον), but its novelty distracted them from that which they should have praised instead, namely its technique and accuracy of detail. Lucian hopes that the audience of this speech, unlike Zeuxis' viewers, will be capable of

⁶² Luc. *Zeux.* 2.

⁶³ Luc. *Zeux.* 2.

appreciating his art, because as he says, ‘they are painters and can examine each detail with expertise’.⁶⁴

Finally, in *To one who said you’re a Prometheus in Words* Lucian makes a fictitious defence against the accusation of being called a Prometheus. Just like the Syrian in the *Bis Accusatus*, Lucian claims to have forced dialogue and comedy to come together, but that the marriage must also be harmonious and symmetrical. This is because:

The result of putting two beautiful things together can be weird; the most obvious example is the Hippocentaur. You wouldn’t say that this is a pleasing creature, but that it is quite loathsome, to judge from painters who evoke their drunkenness and feasts. What then? Isn’t it possible that on the contrary something composed of the two best things is well formed, just as the mixture of wine and honey is the most delightful drink? I’d certainly say so. I couldn’t however maintain that mine are of that kind, but instead I’m afraid that the mixture completely ruined the beauty in each of them.⁶⁵

Dialogue was forced to accept Comedy’s critiques, even when previously they were, figuratively speaking, playing two octaves apart. Nevertheless, adds Lucian, ‘I dared to make them get along with each other and to agree, even if they are not compliant and even if they don’t tolerate so comfortably their cohabitation.’⁶⁶ In this dialogue, the comparison of hippocentaur to a combination of two foreign and apparently incompatible genres should be taken as an expression of false modesty. In other words, Lucian says that he took the best of Comedy and Dialogue in order to create something better and that therefore, it is not a contradiction when in the *Zeuxis* hippocentaur serves as a positive image that praises the foreignness, novelty, innovation and use of

⁶⁴ τὰ δὲ ἄλλα μᾶτην ἄρα τῷ Ζεύξειδι πεποιήται; ἀλλ’ οὐ μᾶτην—γραφικοὶ γὰρ ὑμεῖς καὶ μετὰ τέχνης ἕκαστα ὀρᾶτε. εἴη μόνον ἄξια τοῦ θεάτρου δεικνύειν, Luc. *Zeux.* 12.

⁶⁵ Luc. *Prom. Es.* 5. About the Hippocentaur being the most outrageous of beasts and how Lucian thinks of his works as an affront to literary tradition see Whitmarsh (2001), 77.

⁶⁶ Luc. *Prom. Es.* 6.

paradox in Lucian's lessons, and of the text itself. In making his literature seem a misunderstood innovation, Lucian praises his own innovation, and it is this that provokes both admiration and surprise in the reader.

Our investigation has led us to two different proposals about the kind of comedy of the *Hermotimus*, which have been so far treated separately. On the one hand, we have recognized the *apotreptic* elements of the *Hermotimus* as Lycinus' argument aims at changing Hermotimus' mind about his own opinion of philosophy and through the use of his own terms. While at the start of the dialogue Hermotimus believes that the philosophical life offers an alternative to the ordinary life, by the end, Lycinus' argument proves that philosophical happiness is unattainable and in this sense the *Hermotimus* is only *apotreptic*, as it shows that the philosophical quest and its goal, when taken seriously and on its own terms, is an unattainable ambition that one should retract from. On the other hand, however, we have also seen how, Hermotimus, persuaded by Lycinus' argument, decides not only to abandon his philosophical studies, but also to join the life he previously shunned, by living like everyone else in ordinary cities. And yet, this last invitation - to live like everyone else - has only the appearance of being a protreptic invitation. It's seriousness can be challenged in three distinct ways:

1. Regarding dogmatic philosophy, Lycinus' proposal does not represent an alternative in its own right, but only the exact opposite of Hermotimus' own idea of the philosophical life.
2. The comic trick of the *Hermotimus* consists in arguing that the ambitions of philosophers are not only impossible, but that they are also the same as the ambitions of laymen. The only difference between laymen and philosophers is that the latter hide their intentions behind the respectability of their garb. The talk that they use to achieve their

ambitions is directed towards material success, which according to their own official moral theories is worthless. Therefore, when at the ending of the *Hermotimus* we are left with the scene of Hermotimus blindly trusting Lycinus without reviewing the basic tenets of the conversation, especially bearing in mind Lycinus' comments on the incidence of bad behaviour in ordinary cities,⁶⁷ we find all kinds of potential pitfalls in living an ordinary life in an ordinary city.

3. By ironically inviting Hermotimus (and by extension the reader) to live like everyone else, whilst at the same time portraying himself as an inverted Socrates, Lycinus exposes himself to the attentive reader as a fraudulent and ironic individual. These perplexing and deceiving techniques allow the reader to put himself at a distance from the usual protreptic philosophical discourse, and to instead become amused at Lycinus' reproduction of an *apotreptic* philosophical discourse via non-philosophical means.

Chapter 6 we explored some of the ways in which the *Hermotimus* can be read as a text parodying classical Platonic passages. Lycinus takes on the role of an anti-Socrates with some of the Socratic characteristics on his side (elenchos and irony), while Hermotimus resembles a somewhat unwise Cephalus. That Lycinus seems to be a fraud should therefore come as no surprise. The ending of the *Hermotimus* matches the description of Academics and Sceptics who cannot become fully happy, because of their own philosophical principles. Elsewhere, Lucian enjoys presenting narrators (as in *A True History*) or characters (as in the *Icaromenippus*) who are not completely trustworthy. Yet, the reason for doing so is precisely to challenge the reader and to nurture his intellect with entertaining reading. The ending of the *Hermotimus*, much like the

⁶⁷ See Luc. *Herm.* 7, 22.

ending of *On Pantomime*, does not intend to convince the reader by showing one character as victorious over another through the power of the formwe to convert the latter. Lucian's objective is to demonstrate that even if an argument or a display of elevated culture is reasonable and convincing, this does not mean that it is used for the purpose of proving an argument, and pointing somebody in the right direction of a particular way of thinking. Arguments, just like imagery, can also be used rhetorically. The reader that understands this level of interpretation will not be deceived and will therefore enjoy reading the text. The reader that does not understand, however, is in danger of becoming himself ridiculous.

When Lycinus uses the imagery of Hippocentaur, Gorgons and Chimerae and compares them with storytellers, over-daring poets, and geometers, he exposes the activities of philosophers, but also exposes himself and his own activities. Since he is also an inverted Socrates, Lycinus develops an argument that is consistent, but based on an unreliable principle. Furthermore, Lucian uses the imagery of Hippocentaur to describe the effect that the mixture of dialogue and comedy in his work has on his audience. Of course, all of the discussion about consistency in literature should also be seen against the problem of making fiction and verisimilitude, which goes back to Aristotle and Homer.⁶⁸

Yet it seems that Lucian's choice of the image of the Hippocentaur carefully makes reference to Plato's *Phaedo* in which Socrates argues that every *logos* should, like a living being, have an organic shape with a harmony between its parts and the whole.⁶⁹ In the composition of the *Hermotimus* Lucian seems to have borrowed and transformed the metaphor of the proportionate body used for the unity of a text, and uses instead the imagery of Hippocentaur to create

⁶⁸ Aristot. *Poet.* 1460a; Hom. *Od.* 19. 203. See Laird (2007).

⁶⁹ Plat. *Phaed.* 229c-e and 264c.

disbelief towards the *logos* in this same text.⁷⁰ The comparison between the paintings of Zeuxis and literature might also find parallel with Aristotle who talks about the necessity of poets to represent people in action who are either serious or fools (ἢ σπουδαῖους ἢ φαύλους),⁷¹ better than real men or worse. ἦθος follows from these two categories ἢ σπουδαῖους ἢ φαύλους. But Polygnotus, who depicts better men was a ἠθόγραφος while Zeuxis and the tragedies of Aristotle's time did not. A plot without proportions is not beautiful, because like a living being, its parts must be orderly arranged. Nothing too big or too small can be beautiful, because one cannot see the whole all at once, οἷον εἰ μυσίων σταδίων εἶη ζῶον. Hippocentaurs are another way of referring to non-existent beings.⁷² Because hippocentaurs are part of the realm of the monstrous and of the impossible, according to Artemidorus, if one has a dream about these monsters it means that one has false hopes that will inevitably be unfulfilled.⁷³

However, it is how Hippocentaurs appear in relation to the Stoics that is of greatest importance to Lucian's *Hermotimus*. While reviewing Zeno's precepts of impressions (φαντασίαι), physical perceptions (αἴσθησις) and thought (νόησις), Diogenes Laertius states that the 'eyes on the chest' are an example of those conceptions that come to us from transposition and that hippocentaurs are those that come to us from combination.⁷⁴ Chrysippus' similarly uses hippocentaurs in the context of telling lies,⁷⁵ and it is possible to think that Sextus had this Platonic and Stoic background in mind when he

⁷⁰ See Branham (1989), 43.

⁷¹ Aristot. *Poetic*, 48a1-6; see also 1450a 26-27 and 1450b 27-31. See also the similarities in Dion. Hal. *De Imit.* fr. 6.1. See also Halliwell's (1995) commentary, 91-101 and Heath (2013), 83-86 for a comparative study of Plato and Aristotle on unity.

⁷² Xen. *Cyr.* 4.3.17. Lucr. *Rer. Nat.* 5. 878-900.

⁷³ Artem. *Oneir.* 2. 44, 4.47. Similarly, in Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata*, Pegasus and Erichonius, Chimaeras and Hippocentaurs are recommended as useful citations against mythical narrations told by poets and historians about gods and heroes, whose natural shape has changed (Ael. Theon. *Progym.* 95).

⁷⁴ D. L. 7.53.

⁷⁵ Stob. *Eclog.* 2. 7, 106, 21.

summoned in the *Outlines of Pyrronism* the myth of the hippocentaurs as a favourite example (παράδειγμα) of unreality (ἀνυπαρξίας).⁷⁶ Therefore, there existed in all probability a philosophical-aesthetic context for the imagery of Hippocentaurs, of which Lucian was aware. This context not only refers to the mixing of such styles, but also points to classical ideas of proportion and unity in a text. The aporetic aspect of the ending of the *Hermotimus* is hence veiled under philosophical seriousness. Regarding the relationship between Platonic perplexity and Lucianic perplexity we can say that, for the former, perplexity is a device with which to reinterpret the Socratic elenchus as a preparation for constructive philosophy and that it therefore establishes implicit hints of positive doctrine. In Plato, aporetic dialogues are also protreptic, and urge us to practice philosophy.⁷⁷ In contrast, Lucian's perplexity urges the reader to reflect on the blending of literature and on the rhetoric of a problem as part as the problem itself. Causing perplexity is an aesthetic aim of the *Hermotimus* and by mixing the two philosophical genres *par excellence* (protreptic and aporetic literature) they cancel each other out, urging us not to live philosophically but to be prepared to think critically about philosophical discourses.

By way of conclusion I would like to draw on some ideas about the poetics of fiction and falsehood as they appear in *The Lover of Lies or The Doubter*. In this dialogue Tychiades tells Philocles how while looking for his friend Leontichus came across Cleodemus, a Libyan peripatetic philosopher, who works as a tutor, mainly of physics, at the houses of the rich.⁷⁸ Deinomachus the Stoic, Ion the Platonic, and Antigonus the physician at Eucrates' house, a former student of Pancrates the Athenian, who has some kind of foot rheumatism, are also there. Tychiades first learns about the ways in which philosophers prescribe different remedies to Eucrates according to their own philosophical

⁷⁶ Sext. Emp. *PH I*. 162; but see also *MI*, 41; 8, 60; 9. 395; 9. 251 and cf. *Cic Nat Deor.* I. 38, 105; II. 2 and 5. See Tackaberry (1930) 55.).

⁷⁷ For this definition see Kahn (1996), 100, 180. Cf. Matthews (1999), 123.

⁷⁸ Luc. *Philops.* 14.

doctrines.⁷⁹ But then the discussion about medicine will lead them to discuss *παράδοξα*, or ghost stories, which are ultimately related to the belief in the soul and the gods. Later in the dialogue, Arignotus, a Pythagorean and also pupil of Pancrates, joins them.⁸⁰ As in the *Hermotimus*, in *The Lover of Lies* or *The Doubter* dialogue Tychiades is easily noticable for his scepticism, but in this case about methods of curing an internal illness with external remedies, which brings him closer to Antigonus who initially looked to help Eucrates with his profession (*μετὰ τῆς τέχνης*) by prescribing abstention from wine, a vegetarian diet and rest.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Tychiades ends up being accused of behaving like a layman,⁸² and of being an atheist.⁸³ Like the Lycinus of the *Hermotimus* he is a character who doubts everything (*ἀπιστῶν ἄπισιν*),⁸⁴ and that includes summoning divine names to cure the sick,⁸⁵ and sacred books of magicians,⁸⁶ who are said to be able to fly and walk on water or on fire, and who can claim to be able to bring people back to life,⁸⁷ to have efficient love-spells,⁸⁸ and even to be able to change the course of the stars by creating eclipses.⁸⁹ Scepticism places Tychiades closer to empiricism and to a belief in sight as a criterion of truth.⁹⁰ He is loath to believe in spirits of any kind or philosophical metaphysical entities,⁹¹ and for this for reason too he admires Democritus of

⁷⁹ Luc. *Philops.* 6-7.

⁸⁰ Luc. *Philops.* 29.

⁸¹ Luc. *Philops.* 8.

⁸² Luc. *Philops.* 9.

⁸³ Luc. *Philops.* 9, 38.

⁸⁴ Luc. *Philops.* 15. Tychiades is said to be made out of adamant in 29.

⁸⁵ Luc. *Philops.* 10.

⁸⁶ Luc. *Philops.* 12, 31.

⁸⁷ Luc. *Philops.* 26-28.

⁸⁸ In Luc. *Philops.* 15 Glaucias is in love with Chrysis so he hires a chaldean magician. He performs a ritual, but in the end Tychiades argues that Chrysis was bribed by the magician to fall in love with Glaucias.

⁸⁹ Luc. *Philops.* 13, and 14, see also 16 and 28 .

⁹⁰ Luc. *Philopseud.* 15, 29. Think also of the story in Luc. *Philops.* 7-20 of the living statue of Pellichus the Corynthian, which Tychiades suggests he might be an automaton like Talos the Cretan made by Daedalus.

⁹¹ In Luc. *Philops.* 16 Tychiades disbelieves the metaphysical aspect of Platonism: the forms.

Abdera, a most wonderful man (μάλα θαυμαστόν ἄνδρα), who similarly did not believe in disembodied souls.⁹² Although Tychiades' scepticism is directed against superstition in general, *The Lover of Lies* is also a carefully elaborated attack against the sacred writings and teachings of Panocrates, and against the religious pilgrimage to his sect. This is evinced when we are told that in his youth Eucrates travelled to Amphilocheus in Mallus, Pergamon and Patara,⁹³ only to end up in Egypt where he completed his education with Panocrates, Arignotus' teacher and a holy man (ἄνδρα ἱερόν). Panocrates, although one of the scribes at Memphis who had acquired all the wisdom and paideia of the Egyptians, could no longer speak pure Greek (οὐ καθαρῶς ἑλληνίζοντα) and had become a believer in Isis.⁹⁴

The Lover of Lies or The Doubter tries to answer the question of why people are so keen on lies (εἰς ἐπιθυμίαν τοῦ ψεύδους). One immediate answer to the question is, of course, that they are useful for them (εἰς τὸ χρήσιμον). However, Tychiades very rapidly moves on to the deeper question of why it is that people are fond of lying without any real need to do so (ἄνευ τῆς χρείας), and why they enjoy this activity (ἠδόμενοι τῷ πράγματι) and waste their time without any obvious valid motive (καὶ ἐνδιατρίβοντες ἐπ' οὐδεμιᾷ προφάσει ἀναγκαίᾳ). His friend's answer is simply stupidity (ἄνοια). However this is not all that satisfying an answer as there are many great men (ἄνδρες ἄριστοι) and trustworthy men (ἀξιόπιστος) who are lovers of lying (φιλοψεθδεῖς), such as Herodotus, Ctesias and the poets before them such as Homer, who not only deceived listeners (ἀκούοντας), but also made use of the written lie (ἐγγράφῳ τῷ ψεύσματι κεχρημένους), passing down from one generation of readers to the next their lies, preserved in the most beautiful words and verses. Perhaps the falsehood of poets and of cities can be pardoned because they have to

⁹² Luc. *Philops.* 32.

⁹³ Luc. *Philops.* 38.

⁹⁴ Luc. *Philops.* 33-34.

convey in their writing the delightfulness of the story (τὸ ἐκ τοῦ μύθου τερπνόν), which is either the most alluring thing (ἐπαγωγότατον ὄν), or the most useful thing for their audience (οὐπερ μάλιστα δέονται πρὸς τοὺς ἀκροατάς), or to make cities more remarkable (σεμνοτέρως). If τὰ μυθώδη were taken away from Greece, nothing would prevent the guides (τοὺς περιηγητάς) from dying from starvation, because foreigners (ξένοι) would never care to hear the truth even if they do not have to pay for it (ἀμισθί). However, it is those who have no motives for lying but who still enjoy it, who might be considered the most ridiculous.

The social need for fiction and for falsehood (τὰ μυθώδη) implies the narrating (διηγείτο) of things with a special kind of poetics which cannot really be believed or trusted (τὰ ἄπιστα). A narrative can become so exaggerated that it can, like a Fury, drive out (ἐξήλασαν) of their minds reasonable men by going through in detail many unusual (τεράστια), portentous (ἀλλόκοτα) and varied (ποικίλα) things in which there is great deal of quackery (ἀλαζονεία). Words in a fiction can resemble those of a sorcerer (γόη)⁹⁵ and old wives' stories (γραιῶν μῦθοι),⁹⁶ although fiction is all about old men (γέροντες ἄνδρες) telling strange stories (τερατολογούντες) with plenty of superstition (δεισιδαιμονία)⁹⁷ and bragging (μεγαλαυχέσθαι).⁹⁸ Creating fiction or lies implies making something wonderful (θαυμάσιόν τι διηγέσομαι),⁹⁹ which has to be verisimilar, and neither too novel, unrealistic,¹⁰⁰ or excessively marvellous to be believed by a fool.¹⁰¹

The ending of the *The Lover of Lies* or *The Doubter* prescribes a remedy to the snares of fiction which is very similar to the one given in the *Hermotimus*. At

⁹⁵ Cf. Luc. *Philops* 5, and 22 where narration is said to be able to make people tremble.

⁹⁶ Luc. *Philops*. 9. Cf. 37 μυθολογημάτων and 39 τῶν μυθολογουμένων.

⁹⁷ Luc. *Philops*. 37.

⁹⁸ Luc. *Philops*. 38.

⁹⁹ Luc. *Philops*. 11.

¹⁰⁰ Luc. *Philops*. 25.

¹⁰¹ Luc. *Philops*. 26.

some point, Tychiades believed that Arignotus could save him like a *deus ex machina*,¹⁰² but in the end he ended up being affected by the same stupidity (ἄνοια) as the rest of the philosophers by believing that phantoms and spirits existed, and that the souls of the dead could come above the ground.¹⁰³ Tychiades ends up leaving the house of Eucrates, wishing to forget everything he has heard and feeling as if he has drunk too much wine and needs to vomit. He wishes that philosophers might be aided by the gods to participate in their telling of myths (συνεπιληψομένους ὑμῖν τῶν μυθολογουμένων), and know that they are now free to continue telling each other false stories.¹⁰⁴ Nevertheless, just as when one dog with rabies bites another dog and then this dog bites a person who ends up getting rabies, Tychiades' narration about falsehood has the same effect upon his friend Philocles. In the end, the only remedy to not becoming disturbed (ταράξει) by fiction is to refute its falsehood (ἀντισοφιστῆ τῶν ψευσμάτων),¹⁰⁵ its truth (ἀλήθεια), and a correct argument for everything (τὸν ἐπὶ πᾶσι λόγον ὀρθόν).¹⁰⁶ The main difference between *The Lover of Lies* or *The Doubter*, the *Ship* and the *Hermotimus* is that the first two oppose 'fiction' to 'reality' while the latter, through perplexity, uses the poetics of fictional narrative against fictional narrative itself.

¹⁰² Luc. *Philops.* 29.

¹⁰³ Luc. *Philops.* 32.

¹⁰⁴ Luc. *Philops.* 39.

¹⁰⁵ Luc. *Philops.* 37.

¹⁰⁶ Luc. *Philops.* 40.

Chapter 8

Conclusions

In the first three chapters of this dissertation I discussed how in Lucianic studies two different opposing trends, the developmentalist and the unitarian, were formed as a result of the works of Lucian falling into the hands of Christians. Recent scholarship has been inclined to the unitarian account of Lucian and focuses its attention on the de-centralization of the authorial voice, the rejection of dogmatism, and an emphasis on the author's nihilistic tendencies.

In the course of this thesis we have seen that the *Hermotimus*, as a kind of literary game, has its own kind of philosophical seriousness. In Chapter 4 and Chapter 6 it has also been proven that despite the aporetic ending of the *Hermotimus*, in which the reader is left unable to choose between the philosophical life and that of the ordinary man, Lycinus does convey a moral message, which is that one should distrust the hope of becoming happy through the study of philosophy just as one would distrust impossible and unrealistic dreams of becoming excessively rich or powerful.

The ἀποτρεπτικὸς λόγος of the *Hermotimus* appears to encourage readers not only to reflect philosophically on what the criterion of truth might be, and how to define the best life (and indeed this *is* part of its motivation), but also to reflect on the way in which the rhetoric of protreptic literature and exhortations to philosophy can be used for the sake of self-promotion, as opposed to that which is philosophically, morally or rationally correct. By giving the reader an ἀποτρεπτικὸς λόγος, Lycinus conveys the moral message of the need to distrust philosophical hope in impossible utopias and to recognise it both as ambition and the excessive desire for reputation. The aporetic aspect of the dialogue serves to reinforce the conclusion that one

should avoid hope, and this is a message that is also found in the *Charon*, *Alexander*, and *Demonax*.

In Chapters 6 and 7 I argued that there is nothing unusual in the *Hermotimus*' ending being inconclusive and aporetic, as the creation of paradoxical situations is an aesthetic aim of Lucian's comedy. By portraying Hermotimus as an opsimath and Lycinus as an anti-philosophical Socrates, and by mixing clichéd images of the philosopher and sophist as they appear in Plato, Lucian invites the reader to think about the adequacy of classical philosophical discourses and how they might be used for non-philosophical purposes. In the end, the *Hermotimus* presents a fascinating mixture of protreptic and aporetic literature and in such a way as they appear to cancel one other out. It is a text that urges us not to live philosophically but to think critically about philosophical discourses. In this way, it is both an attack on philosophical asceticism and utopianism, and a critical parody of the *Tabula of Cebes* and Alcibiades' promise of conversion as it appears in the homonymous Platonic dialogue.

As demonstrated throughout this argument, it seems to me that the unitarian account of Lucian offers particularly compelling and pertinent readings of the *Hermotimus*, which developmentalist readings do not. Indeed, I am very much in agreement with Möllendorff's proposal that the ending of the dialogue is open and believe it much more plausible that Lycinus' proposal to live like everyone else is ironic. If this is taken to be the case, then we should reject Nesselrath's perception of the *Hermotimus* as a manifestation of Lucian's sincere and serious rejection of dogmatic philosophy, and avoid reading it as a confessional text which contributes to a developmentalist account of Lucian's work. Despite this assertion, there does still exist a caveat against the unitarian account.

Lycinus is an authorial voice, and his ironic proposal conveys more than a simple message. The seriousness of the game of the *Hermotimus* derives from

the fact that, as the life of the ἰδιώται is not presented as an alternative in its own right, it is therefore difficult to prove that in this text Lucian sides with the common life, or even, for that matter, with the poor. Indeed, the occasional positive depictions of ordinary people are only perceived as such in relation to representations of philosophers who are presented as overambitious and hypocritical. Therefore, rather than offering the reader a glimpse of the autobiographical, the story of the old man in *Hermotimus* 24 and the characterisation of Lycinus are anything but sincere. In fact, I would argue, such characters are a continuation of a line of argumentation and demonstrate a critical attitude that Hermotimus himself should have adopted before making the decision to join the Stoics. But we should not take Lycinus' anti-utopian message lightheartedly, as it may yet open another avenue to an interpretation of Lucian that is located in his own historical context, and which goes beyond the unitarian and the developmentalist accounts of his work. To open up such a perspective, I will conclude this thesis with an analysis of the aischrologic aspect of the *Hermotimus* and explore other ways in which the text might have been received by its readers.

1. Friendship and Reputation

The best way to study the aischrologic aspect of the *Hermotimus* is to look for it within the dialogue itself. The *Hermotimus* can be divided into four sections: a prologue (1-12), a main apotreptic section (13-70), a protreptic section (71-85), and an epilogue. Taken as whole, they depict Hermotimus' conversion to the laymen's life (85-86).

The apotreptic section can be further divided into five subsections. The first of these presents the challenge of finding an appropriate criterion with which to choose the right philosophy and assure the reader that Stoic philosophy is *that* very philosophy (13-21). This is followed by a corroboration

that even if a criterion could be found it would be impossible to know whether by following any one sect one could achieve true happiness. One solution might lie in testing, through experience, each path to happiness although this is revealed to be an impossible task (21-50). In the first interlude Hermotimus' mood changes from vexation to anger and the relationship between Lycinus and truth is explained (50-53); Hermotimus also fails to give a sufficient method with which to test the philosophies, in order to prove whether it is possible to know the whole from the parts (54-62). In the following interlude, Hermotimus admits that he is completely defeated (63) and the concluding section proves the impossibility of finding any such criterion at all (64-68). This is followed by a corollary (68-70), which contains the similar impossibility of knowing whether any philosophy has found truth, as well as the argument of regress to infinity. Regarding the metaphoric level of discourse, from §21 to paragraph §70, the argument starts from the goal of the quest of philosophy and ends by bringing Hermotimus well and truly down to earth.

During the conversation Hermotimus goes through a series of emotional changes: from self-conviction to indecision, from equanimity to anger, and from exasperation to sadness. Lycinus, on the other hand, remains emotionally the same throughout. Only from Hermotimus' perspective does his attitude change; at first, he seems to present himself as a well-disposed friend who is keen to join the Stoics, but he then turns and becomes a mocker, an exposé of lies, and finally a convincing adviser and ultimately a better kind of friend. In fact, it seems by looking at the role of laughter in relation to Hermotimus' emotional changes, is an obvious place to start an investigation into the *aischrologic* potential of the *Hermotimus*.

Lycinus and Hermotimus have been acquainted with one another other for 20 years, or at least since the latter began studying Stoicism,¹ but in the course of their conversation Lycinus' laughter threatens to shame the reputation

¹ Luc. *Herm.* 2

of Hermotimus, his teacher, and philosophy altogether. In the first part of the dialogue Hermotimus believes he is the more privileged of the two and sees in Lycinus a potential acolyte or *ἐταῖρος*.² Hermotimus is at this point convinced that at the pinnacle of virtue, where his teacher resides, philosophers are *εὐδαίμονες* and that this is the ultimate goal in life. Philosophers, on the other hand, laugh scornfully (*καταγελῶντες*) at those who think that riches, glory and earthly pleasures have any value.³ But then, seemingly by overcoming his hesitation (*μηδὲν ὀκνήσαντα εἰπεῖν τάληθές*) and through the revelation of the vicious behaviour of Hermotimus' teacher, Lycinus moves the conversation in a direction that may put the friendship under strain.⁴ On this occasion, however, the revelation of the inward life of philosophers will in fact imply that Hermotimus and Lycinus will engage in more than just a casual conversation as friends (*φίλοι ὄντες*).⁵

Indeed, the strength of this friendship will be tested throughout the dialogue with the fire of laughter, and will crucially depend on how well Hermotimus can defend the philosophical life.⁶ Lycinus for example, encourages the discussion by calling his interlocutor either *ἐταῖρε*, *θαυμάσιε* or *ᾧγαθέ* each time that Hermotimus fails to prove an argument or needs some encouragement not to abandon it.⁷ Friendship is summoned various times.⁸ But

² Luc. *Herm.* 7, σοφίαν καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ τὸ καλὸν αὐτὸ καὶ τὸ δίκαιον καὶ τὸ πάντα ἐπίστασθαι βεβαίως πεπεισμένον ἢ ἕκαστα ἔχει. τὸ καλὸν is perhaps equivalent in Latin for *honestas*, cf. Brunt (2013), 226-227 and different from *τιμημάτων* Luc. *Herm.* 24, and *τιμήσονται* and *προτιμᾶσθαι*, Luc. *Herm.* 72.

³ ἐπὶ τὸ ἄκρον εὐδαιμονοῦσι πλούτου καὶ δόξης καὶ ἡδονῶν ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μεμνημένοι ἔτι, καταγελῶντες δὲ τῶν οἰομένων ταῦτα εἶναι Luc. *Herm.* 7.

⁴ Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 8: Ὅρα, ᾧ ἐταῖρε, ὡς ἔγωγε καὶ πάνυ ὀκνῶ... ἀλλὰ μὴ ὀκνεῖ, ᾧ γενναῖε;

⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 13.

⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 15, Luc. *Herm.* 19 ἀλλ' ὄρα μὴ καὶ ταῦτα, ᾧ Ἐρμότιμε, παίζεις πρὸς με πειρώμενος εἰ ἐξαπατῶμενος συνήμη; Luc. *Herm.* 20. Cf. also the use of ᾧ χρηστέ in Luc. *Herm.* 21 and ᾧγαθέ Luc. *Herm.* 21 and ᾧ καλὲ Ἐρμότιμε Luc. *Herm.* 28.

⁷ Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 50, 64, 66 respectively. For *θαυμάσιε* see also Luc. *Herm.* 64.

⁸ *ἀνδρὶ φίλω*, and *φίλω ἀνδρὶ*; note that the resurrected philosophers call Lycinus Ὡ βέλτιστε Λυκίνε. Luc. *Herm.* 30. οὐχὶ δὲ ἀναγελάσαντας ἄν εἰπεῖν πρὸς ἐμέ. Luc. *Herm.* 33. That *ἀναγελάω* can also imply a power relationship can be exemplified with Luc. *Tox.* 26: ἀνεγέλασε. If Hestia in Luc. *Herm.* 35 is the goddess of the hearth, then why would

finally getting angry (οὐ μετρίως ἀνιᾶς), Hermotimus is forced to admit that it is impossible to know if the Stoic school is the true philosophy and he blames Lycinus for his constantly bullying (ὕβριστῆς ἀεὶ σύ), for hating philosophy (μισεῖς) and for scoffing at philosophers (ἐς τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας ἀποσκώπτεις). Lycinus argues that he is only telling the truth, which is not as pleasant or attractive as listening to falsehood, because truth is honest and speaks freely, and for this reason people are offended by her (διὰ τοῦτο ἄχθονται αὐτῇ). But despite Lycinus' good will (ὕπ' εὐνοίας), Hermotimus is offended and believes conversely that he friend speaks in this out of bad will (δύσονουν ἐμέ).⁹ Lycinus is making out of the choice of the best life a παγγέλοιο matter.¹⁰ What started in jest is now in Hermotimus' eyes the words of a buffoon.¹¹

So it is that 20 years of friendship are now at stake. Hermotimus' attempt to transform Lycinus the mocker into the butt of the joke fails. Lycinus might seem irreverent,¹² but he is acutely aware that if he so wished, Hermotimus could dismiss him as a lunatic, and leave him alone with his foolish chat (ἔα ληροεῖν). Hermotimus retorts that he cannot because Lycinus is forcing his hand and it is then that Lycinus argues that he himself has been dragged too by the argument, which is more forceful than he is.¹³ The impossibility of finding a criterion capable of discovering whether any one of the many philosophies has ever found the truth moves Hermotimus to tears.¹⁴ This emotional breakdown might be seen to threaten Hermotimus and Lycinus' friendship in much the

Hermotimus invoke her? Costa (2005), 265, for instance, does not give any further explanation. Montagu (2001), 25, might be right in claiming that the name of Hestia stands for in the name of friendship in this context. This is how Harmon (1921), 329, understands the swearing in Luc. *Philop.* 5. His translation of Luc. *Symp.* 32, however, follows Plat. *Crat.* 401C6-8, where Socrates says that the name of Hestia is derived from ἐστί.

⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 51.

¹⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 54.

¹¹ Ταυτὶ μὲν, ὦ Λυκῖνε, βωμολοχικὰ καὶ οὐ κατὰ σε, Luc. *Herm.* 58.

¹² βλασφημεῖν, Luc. *Herm.* 62.

¹³ Luc. *Herm.* 63.

¹⁴ Luc. *Herm.* 69, λυπερόν τι καὶ δύσελπι.

same way as the previous outburst of rage, for which Lycinus again consoles his companion. Hermotimus' anger is like that of a man whose irritation comes from the realization that his dreams of great wealth, digging up treasure, or discovering mountains of gold; of ruling, or flying or becoming a giant like the Colossus are in fact impossible.¹⁵ As a friend Hermotimus should not feel that way towards Lycinus¹⁶ and yet the problem has been all along that even laymen laugh at philosophers' pretensions and nonsense.¹⁷ Lycinus continues to console Hermotimus. All that he says, he argues, is said out of friendship (ὦ φιλότης) and because all philosophers are vulnerable to the undermining case that he has made.¹⁸ He is pains to say that he holds no real hostility towards the Stoics.

The friendship between Hermotimus and Lycinus tells us much about the risks of offence in the *Hermotimus*. Whilst Lycinus' relationship with Hermotimus remains the same, Hermotimus' view of the friendship changes considerably. In the entire dialogue Hermotimus only once addresses Lycinus using the vocatives ὦ ἑταῖρε and ὦ γενναῖε, and this happens when he perceives in him a potential acolyte or when he is afraid of telling the truth. Conversely, Lycinus constantly uses a friendlier tone, but allows himself to offend Hermotimus a bit in the way friends do when they tell the truth. He is aware of his control of the conversation. Who is mocking who in this dialogue is the gauge of right and wrong, and it is this that drives Hermotimus from conviction to indecision and from equanimity, anger and exasperation, to sadness. But juggling with Hermotimus' hopes of becoming happy through philosophy, threatens to shame that which is most important to him and to all philosophers: their reputation.

¹⁵ See the expression, ὦ ἑταῖρε in Luc. *Herm* 71.

¹⁶ Luc. *Herm* 72 Ἀλλὰ σύ, ὦ φιλότης, μὴ πάθῃς αὐτὸ πρὸς ἐμέ.

¹⁷ See the use of γελῶμεν, τί ταῦτα ληρεῖ, καταγελάσας αὐτῆς, ληρον in the student's story, Luc. *Herm*. 81.

¹⁸ Luc. *Herm*. 85 μὴ με νομίσης κατὰ τῆς Στοᾶς παρεσκευασμένον ἢ ἔχθραν τινὰ ἐξαίρετον πρὸς Στωϊκοὺς ἐπανηρημένον εἰρηκέναι.

Lycinus' laughter threatens the respected position that philosophers occupy in society. Hermotimus' teacher deserves respect (αἰδοῦς) because of his old age and his philosophical wisdom.¹⁹ Philosophers are also revered (σεμνοί) and honoured (τιμῶσονται) by the majority (ὑπὲρ τοὺς πολλοὺς);²⁰ and from this reputation they receive payment, and sow the seeds of unattainable desires in their pupils. Exposure of the lack of coherence between the deeds and words of the philosopher puts at risk both his reputation and his salary. In theory, money should not concern a Stoic philosopher.²¹ But in truth, those philosophers who

realize too late that they have been deceived, and after this they have become old, because of their reputation hesitate to turn back (ὀκνοῦσιν ἀναστρέφειν αἰδούμενοι) if at their age they must confess that they did not realize that they were acting so childish. As a result, they persist through shame (ὑπ' αἰσχύνης), praise what they have, and encourage as many as they can in the same course, so that they will not be the only ones deceived, but can have a consolation from the fact that the same has happened to many others.²²

It is both fear of losing their reputation and the wealth that they acquire that is the real reason philosophers do not change their ways, even after they discover that philosophy is unattainable.²³

The worst that can happen to one with a good reputation is to be laughed at by laymen. Though laymen also send their sons to study philosophy hoping that philosophy will improve them and yet quickly realize that it is all bluff. However, philosophers have arguments for this too. When a layman complains

¹⁹ αἰδοῦς ἄξιος καὶ γέρον ἤδη ἐς τὸ ὕστατον. *Luc. Herm.* 9.

²⁰ *Luc. Herm.* 75.

²¹ *Luc. Herm.* 10; see ἡγανᾶκτει *Luc. Herm.* 81.

²² *Luc. Herm.* 75.

²³ *Luc. Herm.* 80, 81.

that the philosopher has made the student even more shameless than before,²⁴ the teacher of philosophy answers in return that had it not been for philosophy and the respect for her (ἡ φιλοσοφία καὶ ἡ πρὸς ταύτην αἰδώς), which brings the student moderation and shame if he seems unworthy of the robe and the name, he would have behaved even worse. Therefore, the philosopher also believes that he deserves payment despite there being no improvement in the student.²⁵ The philosopher's biggest problem is to lose his patrons and for that reason he must keep his reputation clean.

In making Hermotimus overcome his shame, Lycinus manages to persuade him to abandon philosophy. Lycinus argues that there are few distinguished people that one can call a philosopher, but those that are, are paradoxically the ones brave enough to quit the philosophical quest.²⁶ So Hermotimus should not be ashamed, for if he is sensible, he will change direction and it will all be for the better even if he is now getting on in years.²⁷ Unlike his teacher, Hermotimus did not actively tell lies,²⁸ neither did he become a philosopher to earn money, but was cheated by his teacher to whom he paid a lot of money in the hopes of achieving some unachievable virtuous state. The only thing left to Hermotimus is to save what is left of his good reputation and learn how to expose those philosophers who cheated him.²⁹

Reputation, laughter and shame are the most basic markers that give form to the main level of discourse or a plot of the *Hermotimus*. Clearly the *Hermotimus* is a caricature of a friendship as much as it is a caricature of philosophers and laymen. But the need for one true philosopher and one true sect, a belief which is itself an agreed assumption between Hermotimus and

²⁴ τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐς ὀργὴν καὶ θυμὸν καὶ ἀναισχυντίαν καὶ ἐς τόλμαν καὶ ψεῦδος μακροῦ τιμι ἄμεινον εἶχε πέρυσιν ἢ νῦν. Luc. *Herm.* 81.

²⁵ Luc. *Herm.* 82.

²⁶ Luc. *Herm.* 75.

²⁷ Luc. *Herm.* 85, καὶ οὐκ αἰσχυνῆ, ἦνπερ εὖ φρονῆς, εἰ γέρον ἄνθρωπος μεταμαθήσει καὶ μεταχωρήσεις πρὸς τὸ βέλτιον.

²⁸ Luc. *Herm.* 77.

²⁹ Luc. *Herm.* 86.

Lycinus, reveals the dogmatic and *hairetic* environment within which this conversation takes place.³⁰ Lucian was a satirist 'both fascinated and repelled by the activities of holy men,'³¹ but would his caricature of philosophers offend a Stoic or other philosophers?

Given the little we know about the concerns and horizons of expectation of the *Hermotimus'* second-century readers, was the dialogue seen as a destabilizing *aischrologia* or was it a challenge to think about how the educated should execute philosophical *paideia*? We might, for argument's sake, start by suggesting two possible readers of the text; the first a convinced, practising Stoic and the second a convinced, practising Sceptic. This hypothetical situation provides an interesting insight in the context of the quarrel between Favorinus of Arles and Epictetus.

2. The Quarrel between Favorinus of Arles and Epictetus

Philosophical ambition among the educated elite could lead to bitter competition. An anecdote preserved in Galen about a quarrel between the pupil of Plutarch, Favorinus of Arles, who was an Academic philosopher with Peripatetic leanings,³² and Marcus Aurelius' favourite Stoic, Epictetus, might serve as an example of how philosophical sectarianism could be a divisive force among well established *pepaideumenois*.

Galen, the favourite doctor of the Empire, was critical of Favorinus for having argued in his *Plutarch or On the Academic Disposition* (περὶ τῆς Ἀκαδημαϊκῆς διαθεσέως) that the best education consists of teaching a student how to argue on both sides (εἰς ἑκάτερα ἐπιχείρησιν) in order to induce

³⁰ Luc. *Herm.* 77.

³¹ Anderson (1994), 3.

³² Plutarch presents Favorinus as an admirer of Aristotle (*Quaest. Conv.* 734F). But Lucian presents him as an Academic (*Eun.*-7). See Glucker (1978) 280-293.

suspension of judgement. Discussing the ἐποχή that the old Academics called ἀοριστίαν, Galen observes that

not just Favorinus, but also the Academics of the new generation (οἱ νεώτεροι) emphasised so much the suspension of judgement that sometimes they could not agree that the sun is an object of understanding (καταληπτόν) as much as it is of comprehension (γνώσιν), that they could not transmit it (i.e. the notion of ἐποχή) to their students (τοῖς μαθηταῖς ἐπιτρέπειν) without having taught them first the criterion of knowledge (ἐπιστημονικὸν κριτήριον).

Even though Favorinus was a Sceptic, it seems that in this dialogue he concedes the possibility of there being something like firm knowledge (τὸ βεβαίως γνωστόν). We know that Favorinus wrote later a dialogue on a similar subject called *Against Epictetus*, in which he depicts Epictetus conversing with Plutarch's slave Onesimus. In all probability Epictetus' attacks against the Academics were one of the reasons Favorinus points at the Stoic's previous social status. Epictetus can indeed be seen to display a dogmatic attitude as an orthodox Stoic, attacking the scepticism of the Academy, Pyrrhonians and Epicureans. His issues with the Sceptics are chiefly in the field of epistemology. He criticizes their relativism,³³ and mocks their proofs of ἀκαταληψία by summoning the conundrum of the impossibility of distinguishing between dreaming and being awake.³⁴ Epictetus also contests the idleness of the σοφίσματα of the Pyrrhonians and Academics who argue that there are no true φαντασίαι or real impressions. Finally, Epictetus says he has no leisure time (οὐκ ἄγω σχολήν) for the discussions of the Academics and Pyrrhonists and that he is not capable of arguing in favour of their club (τῇ συνηθείᾳ).³⁵ These passages of Epictetus against the Stoics prompted Glucker to think that the

³³ Epict. *Diss.* II. 20.

³⁴ Epict. *Diss.* I. 5. 6.

³⁵ Epict. *Diss.* I. 27.

reason for reminding Epictetus and his contemporaries of his condition as a former slave was that the Academics attacked in the *Discourses* were Plutarch and his circle.³⁶ Galen adds that in his *Alcibiades*, Favorinus praised the Academics for their skill in arguing on both sides, and he also allowed his students to choose whatever side was truer (ἐπιτρέποντας δὲ τοῖς μαθηταῖς αἰρεῖσθαι τοὺς ἀληθεστέρους). Furthermore, he said that it seemed probable (πιθανόν) that nothing could be apprehensible (φαίνεσθαι μηδὲν εἶναι καταληπτόν). It therefore seems to Galen that in the *Plutarch* and in the *Alcibiades* Favorinus shows two different and contradictory views about the apprehensible.

This quarrel between Favorinus and Epictetus, as documented by Galen, certainly reminds us of Lucian's parody of the Stoics and Sceptics. In this sense, we might find attractive the idea that Lucian borrowed the modes of Agrippa from Favorinus of Arles in his writing of the *Hermotimus*, but it is also important to concede that there is no solid evidence to confirm this hypothesis. What this anecdote does offer is an opportunity to play with the idea of a convinced Stoic and a convinced Sceptic, like that of Epictetus and Favorinus, reading the *Hermotimus*.

3. A Stoic Reader of the *Hermotimus*

As for Stoic readers of the second century AD, it is possible that they would have grasped from the very start of the dialogue that Hermotimus was following the wrong kind of Stoicism. In addition, Hermotimus' affected βάδισμα might have betrayed him early on as a clichéd philosopher.³⁷ In addition, the philosopher's gait was a popular subject for comedians of the period. Alexis, for example, mocks a Platonic walk consisting of walking back

³⁶ Glucker (1978), 294.

³⁷ On the Romans on Greek walking see O'Sullivan (2011), 89-96.

and forth to solve philosophical *aporías*.³⁸ In Plautine comedy the philosopher's walk became a distinctively Greek trait.³⁹ The enemies of Scipio Africanus laughed at him while he was in Sicily during the Second Punic War for devoting too much attention to his books,⁴⁰ and for walking like an unmanly Greek philosopher in times of pressure. This was an attitude that Germanicus would also emulate centuries whilst making a trip to Egypt.⁴¹ For Lucian too, the ἱμάτιον is not only a philosophical garb, but also a distinctively Greek dress.⁴² Therefore it is possible to argue that from the very start of the *Hermotimus*, Lucian wanted any reader, and in particular the Stoic reader, to be able to recognize Hermotimus as a clichéd Stoic.

The first part of the prologue of the *Hermotimus* might also have worked as a way to hook a Stoic reader by presenting to him Sceptic arguments. However, immediately after this section even the least attentive Stoic would have noted that Hermotimus was following the wrong teacher. The Stoics were well aware of the strangeness of their own gait. According to Seneca, the philosopher need not worry about how he looked when he walked,⁴³ although he might well know how ridiculous he looked whilst doing so.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Epictetus attacked those who used the appearance of asceticism to pretend to be philosophers,⁴⁵ and who dressed like Stoics but were not,⁴⁶ but merely use the philosophical rhetoric as an appearance.⁴⁷ The Stoic philosopher need not to wear the τρίβων, nor to go out without a tunic (ἄχιτων) underneath, nor grow his hair, nor deviate from the behaviour of the majority of people (τὸ κοινὸν

³⁸ Alex. Fr. 151 PCG.

³⁹ Plaut. *Curc.* 288-291 with Csapo (1989), 150-4.

⁴⁰ Liv. 29. 19. 11.

⁴¹ Tac. *Ann.* 2.59.

⁴² Luc. *De Merc.* 34, 25.

⁴³ Sen. *Tranq.* 2. 1.

⁴⁴ Sen. *Ep.* 15. 7.

⁴⁵ Epict. *Diss.* 3. 2. 16.

⁴⁶ Epict. *Diss.* 4.8. 15 and 3. 22. 9,50, 80.

⁴⁷ Epict. *Diss.* 3.2 6; 2.19. 8-10.

τῶν πολλῶν).⁴⁸ But, being unprepared for the question of what his criterion is in choosing to join the Stoics Hermotimus claims to have followed his teacher for his respectable appearance alone. Epictetus warns the aspirant to philosophy against charlatans to whom the label “philosopher” is commonly attached.⁴⁹ Indeed, in Stoicism a philosopher should not be judged on his garb or his *logoi*, but on his actions.⁵⁰ Clearly Hermotimus’ teacher is in this sense, from the very start of the dialogue, a false Stoic,⁵¹ who fails to follow his *askesis*,⁵² which consists of moderation, respectability and a simple life. Hermotimus’ teacher uses his garb to charge money, and therefore he, Hermotimus, and his fellow pupils behave contrary to Marcus Aurelius’ recommendation to not impress others with a reputation for asceticism.⁵³

When engaging with Lycinus’s talk, Hermotimus might have been violating the Stoic advice to stay away from former friends and relatives,⁵⁴ and from laymen who could give wrong advice,⁵⁵ and distract the Stoics from the right path.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Hermotimus fails to be a Stoic with a solid *logos*. The Stoic must become an expert in dialectic and logic,⁵⁷ -dialectic being the science of eloquence and logical argumentation.⁵⁸ This is, however, something that Hermotimus evidently lacks. Though, given what has already been mentioned, from the very start of the dialogue, a Stoic reader of the *Hermotimus* might have seen that Lycinus, an inverted Socrates, was sincerely helping his friend by giving him an argument that could work to detect false teachers.

⁴⁸ Mus. Ruf. *Diss.* 16. 106

⁴⁹ Epict. *Diss.* 3. 22. 2, 10-11, 15, 50, 80.

⁵⁰ Epict. *Ench.* 52. 1.

⁵¹ Luc. *Herm.* 1-12.

⁵² Epict. *Diss.* 3. 12; 2. 9.13; Mus. Ruf. 6. 56.

⁵³ Marcus Aurelius. I. 7. Cf. Luc. *Herm.* 83.

⁵⁴ Epict. *Diss.* 4. 2. 1.

⁵⁵ Disc. 3.16.3, 16. Konstan (1997) 113-114.

⁵⁶ Sen. *Vit Beat.* 1.

⁵⁷ D. L. 7. 83.

⁵⁸ Alex. Aphr. In *Top.* I, 8-14.

Ironically this is an argument of the Sceptics, and therefore in its application Lucian seemingly uses it in a way that is advantageous for their opponents.

But besides this ironic use of Sceptic arguments, a Stoic too could have seen Lycinus' ironic proposal to live like everyone else as an argument favouring the Stoic idea that it is impossible to be a Sceptic. According to Epictetus, even those Academics who deny that there are propositions that are true and evident need these same propositions to make their assertions. Scepticism leads Academics to the self-contradiction as they demand of others those beliefs which are advantageous to them, when they themselves assert that one should never trust a man.⁵⁹ Furthermore, as aforementioned, not all Stoics were keen on radical dogmatism,⁶⁰ and in all probability a Stoic with Cynic traits like that of Epictetus would have agreed with the proposition that virtue lies in deeds and not in words. For these reasons, perhaps a Stoic would not have found the ἀποτρεπτικός λόγος of the *Hermotimus* to be working against him. Indeed, perhaps any philosopher would have welcomed, on some points, Lucian's attack against hope.⁶¹

4. A Sceptic reader of the *Hermotimus*

Of all Lucian's texts, the *Hermotimus* is perhaps the one most influenced by Scepticism, for it makes use of the modes of Agrippa. Yet despite this, Lucian seems not to have had great respect for Favorinus as either an empowered intellectual or a nobleman.⁶² On the other hand, Lycinus' unsettling alternative, to live the life that is common to all, might also have been read by a Sceptic as a parody of the Sceptic take on morality. In the *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* Book 3, where Sextus Empiricus tries to demonstrate that there is no expertise in living,

⁵⁹ S.E. *P.* 1. 20. 4-5.

⁶⁰ Sen. *Epist.* 80. 1.

⁶¹ Cf. Max. Tyr. *Or.* 1.5.

⁶² Luc. *Demon.* 12-13; *Eun.* 7.

we see both Sceptics and laymen joining sides against the dogmatic philosophers. The whole purpose of this coalition is to provide an alternative to dogmatism, which teaches individuals how to suspend judgment and reach tranquillity. Lycinus' proposal is, after all, close to the Sceptical life-advice which calls for a fall back on nature, necessitated by feelings, and the handing down of laws, customs and teachings of certain kinds of expertise.⁶³ When discussing whether the individual who suspends judgement about the nature of the good is in all respects happy, Sextus implies that ἀταραξία is sufficient for εὐδαιμονία. According to the Sceptics, all unhappiness is due to disturbance, and to the pursuit of things that *seem* to be good and the avoidance of those things that *seem* to be bad. Stoics and all dogmatic philosophers believe there are things that are bad and that are good, and therefore according to the Sceptics they are bound to be disturbed and unhappy. The Sceptic, on the contrary, suspends judgment about the nature of good and bad, and thereby achieves tranquillity. This association between happiness and tranquillity seems to go back to Pyrrho and Timon of Phlius, and to continue until Sextus.⁶⁴

Lycinus' proposal to find a criterion and virtue lying in deeds, as Hankinson suggests, echoes the practical philosophy of Arcesilaus.⁶⁵ Taking for granted that one must inquire into the business of living, and that one needs a criterion with which to choose safely the best kind of life, Arcesilaus suggests that he who suspends judgement about everything is moderate in his actions, as he chooses what is 'reasonable' (*eulogon*). According to this criterion the individual will advance straight (*katorthosei*), because *eudaimonia* comes through wisdom (*phronesis*), and wisdom consists in right actions (*katorthomata*). An action is right when it is performed reasonably; therefore anyone who attends to the reasonable will act correctly and will therefore be happy.

⁶³ S.E. P. 1.23.

⁶⁴ S.E. M. 9. I.

⁶⁵ S.E. M 158. See Hankinson (1995), 79.

However, the ending of the *Hermotimus* leaves the reader concerned that Hermotimus will now be in pursuit of things that *seem* to be good to him (i.e. living like everyone else), and that he will avoid those things that *seem* to be bad (i.e. philosophers). But Hermotimus is unaware of the incidence of bad behaviour in ordinary life. A true Sceptic would have suspended his judgement on the matter of the life of laymen or the philosophical life as it is presented in the *Hermotimus*. Perhaps Lucian, by using the metaphor of the road, and leaving the text of the *Hermotimus* open-ended, is addressing the dubious status of Pyrrhonism and later Scepticism as a *hairesis* or philosophical choice.⁶⁶ For Diogenes Laertius, but also for Sextus, it is important to explain the terms under which Scepticism can be considered a *hairesis*. This becomes clear when Sextus Empiricus' uses the word ὁδός to address Aenesidemus' claim that Scepticism is a *path* towards the philosophy of Heraclitus.⁶⁷ Although a Sceptic like Favorinus might have been flattered in seeing his arguments used against a Stoic, it does however seem likely that the proposal of living like everyone else, as it appears in the *Hermotimus*, would have come across as ironic. If used thus, then it is also likely that Lucian was using Sceptic philosophy for non-Sceptic purposes.

Like most of his contemporaries, in Lucian's work we find a respectful opinion of Epictetus.⁶⁸ If one wishes to believe that in the *Hermotimus* Lucian is not only borrowing from Favorinus the five modes of Agrippa, but also rejecting Stoicism and all philosophy, and that the author not only advocates for

⁶⁶ Perhaps the distinction between the attainment of the goal and what leads to the goal could also be added to the list of Sceptic motifs in the *Hermotimus*. See Sextus' P I, 231, where he makes a distinction between the New Academy and the Sceptics. See, however, Arist. *EN*. III. 2.1111b26-29 and VI. 13.1145a5-6. The status of Pyrrhonism and later Scepticism as a *hairesis* remained ambiguous at the time of Lucian and thereafter. For a discussion of this Scepticism and the possibility of it as a *hairesis* see Polito (2007).

⁶⁷ See Polito (2004), and S. E. P I. 210: *But Aenesidemus and his followers used to say that the Sceptical persuasion is a path to the philosophy of Heraclitus [...]*207 ἐπεὶ δὲ οἱ περὶ τὸν Αἰνησίδημον ἔλεγον ὁδὸν εἶναι τὴν σκεπτικὴν ἀγωγὴν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἡρακλείτειον φιλοσοφίαν (trans. Annas and Barnes 2000).

⁶⁸ Luc. *Alex.* 2; *Dem.* 2, 55; *Adv. Indoct.* 14.

the life of laymen but is also inclined to Scepticism, then one would have to explain how it is possible that he seems to speak of Favorinus negatively and of Epictetus positively.

5. Final Observations

It is possible that neither convinced Stoics nor convinced Sceptics would have found the outcome of the *Hermotimus* either particularly worrying or insulting. In the 1960s new literary historians, such as Glen Bowersock, had already noticed that there were too many problems in reducing all literature of the Second Sophistic to entertainment.⁶⁹ What was seen as entertaining literature was in many ways a central aspect of the lives of powerful individuals who were also sophists and philosophers. Admitting the need for a solid culture, it was the elite of the Antonines that (re)-created the figure of the sophist, and formed a new kind of intellectual, which would fight against *ψευδοπαιδεία*.⁷⁰ Even if his stance is a mixture that does not indulge in sectarianism, Lucian has 'visible preferences among the schools',⁷¹ in spite of his clear inclination towards Epicureanism and some forms of Cynicism.⁷² It is even probable that he might have found some common ground agreement on some few points with Christians.⁷³ This means that Lucian's literature can not have been entirely uncompromised, as the oldest evidence that we have seems to suggest, and that his take on philosophy had to respond at least to the internal politics of the economy of *paideia*. Rostovtzeff saw the importance of what seems to be Lucian's criticism of the gulf that separated the rich from the poor, but he also warned of the fact that Lucian praises poverty only over those who are striving

⁶⁹ Bowersock 1969, for Lucian p. 115

⁷⁰ Bompaire (1958), 118- 119; Norden (1898) 1. 374. For *ψευδοπαιδεία* see Boulanger (1923) 438.

⁷¹ Jones (1986), 26.

⁷² Jones (1986), 32.

⁷³ Jones (1986), 45.

to become richer. In his investigation of the relevance that civil unrest in the second century, Rostovzeff suggested that philosophers, and in particular Cynics, were not only tolerated during the reign of the Antonines, but might even supported Lucian and other writers who used their literature to uphold the *status quo*.⁷⁴ After all, perhaps the moral message of the *Hermotimus*, that of avoiding hope, would have better matched its classical, popular and paideutic notion⁷⁵ than its philosophical counterpart. Similarly, the message of avoiding excessive ambition can be found in school texts of the period, in which practical virtue is advised often along the lines of self-control.⁷⁶ We might therefore suspect that the *Hermotimus*' aporetic aspect was not only perceived as inoffensive by more sectarian readers, but that it might also have been seen as combining ideologies (Stoicism and Scepticism) commonly seen as incompatible. The problem with which we are left and which is far beyond the scope of this thesis is how can we start to understand Lucian's fictionalized autobiography as a *pepaideumenos* and his attack against philosophical ambition and the greed for power and money.

Perhaps one way forward might be to think of Lucian's literature engaging with two currencies that found themselves in contradiction: honour and wealth. In all probability, Lucian's readers would have belonged to the governing élite. The *Hermotimus* like the vast majority of works preserved from Lucian's time was destined to the minority of Greek literate individuals in the Roman Empire.⁷⁷ But it was not always expected of the elite that they should know how to read and write quickly, since they had slaves that could read to

⁷⁴ Baldwin (1963), 75-76 follows Rostovtzeff (1957), 120, on the theme of civil unrest, but does not pay a lot of attention to what he says about the widespread tolerance towards philosophers and in particular towards Cynics: 'The activity of Dio and Plutarch, the speeches of Aelius Aristides, even the diatribes of Lucian, all show that the leading classes in the Greek-speaking portions of the Empire gradually acquiesced in the existing state of things, that they abandoned their dreams of liberty and worked for the consolidation of Roman power in the East.'

⁷⁵ Armstrong (1998), 30-48. Solon's Fr. 38 including the tetrameters to Phocus is not discussed by Armstrong. For *Hes. WD* 96 better see West's (1978), 171. See Polito (2004),

⁷⁶ See Morgan (1998), 125-126 for riches; 127 for self-control, and 132-133 for virtue.

⁷⁷ On literacy in the Greek and Roman worlds see Harris (1989).

them instead.⁷⁸ This meant that both aristocrats, but also sometimes slaves, needed to have possessed a lower level of the *enkyklos paideia*, or common education, which consisted of grammar, literature, rhetoric and dialectic among other things.⁷⁹ However, the *Hermotimus* is a dialogue, and the genre of the dialogue maintained a special reputation as higher literature among other lesser literary genres. It has been argued that Lucianic dialogues could have been performed,⁸⁰ but perhaps it is more likely that they were read in more intimate occasions such as symposia or other private readings. The dividing features of a sophist and a philosopher were not always clear, and sometimes sophists could give speeches in the form of dialogues. But even though sophists and philosophers wrote dialogues, this remained the most distinctive genre of philosophy,⁸¹ and its style was thought to deal with more serious matters about epistemology, ethics, and the order of the cosmos. In this sense, we can speculate that Lucian might have had in mind as his reader, an educated individual or at least a youngster who had started his *mese paideia*. In support of the latter, one might think back to the large group of young students who are listening earnestly to the old teacher of philosophy at the end of the *Hermotimus*,⁸² or indeed of the example of the student who is sent to study philosophy with the teacher by his uneducated and ordinary (ἄγρoυκοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ ἰδιώτης) uncle.⁸³ Camerotto has tried to show that even though it is better when readers can understand the parodied text, it is not necessary for them to know it for them to experience a μάθησις about *paideia*. However, the *Hermotimus* is a complex dialogue that contains quite an elaborate set of

⁷⁸ Cf. Quint, *Inst.* 1. I. 28. See Harris (1989) 249.

⁷⁹ Morgan citing Philo 114 De Cong. 11-18, 74-6, 142, 148-50.

⁸⁰ Ureña Bracero, Andrieu

⁸¹ Russell 1968; König 2009. See also Reardon 1971 p. 155-180 whose emphasis on the dialogue form leads him to place Lucian's work in the context of the major literary movements of his time. For the history of dialogue as a literary genre see Höslé's 2012 important book on the poetics and hermeneutics of the philosophical dialogue p. 71-121, specifically on Lucian, p. 44, 94, 100, 118 and Hirzel 1895 p. II. 277, 306, 312, 314.

⁸² Luc. *Herm.* 80.

⁸³ Luc. *Herm.* 81-82.

philosophical arguments and various direct and indirect references to Hesiod, Homer, Hippocrates, and other authors from antiquity. We might, therefore, speculate that it was written with the hope that it would have been read in private occasions by a more specialised audience. Owing to the general trend in book commerce and as the *Hermotimus* seems to emulate a philosophical text, it can be speculated that the more probable readers of the *Hermotimus* apart from being relatively well-trained *pepaideumenoi*, would have also been members of the ruling class.

Most of the power of the ruling class, which consisted of the various communities across the Roman Empire were directly linked through the delegation of power from the Emperor, on whom decision making was ultimately centralized, as well as the Roman Senate, laid in its honour. Military power, police and law enforcement were fundamental in keeping the structure of the Roman Empire intact. Ancient honour was the 'public verdict' of a man's qualities and achievements in relation to his position in society.⁸⁴ These qualities included high birth in an important place, wealth, legal status, glory in war, property and public displays of slaves and clients, clothing, and education. However, aristocrats of the Empire had to ensure that their offspring kept their family's honour (τιμή or *honos*), which consisted of both economic and cultural capital. It was aristocratic honour that allowed the Emperor and its government to maintain authority, and to help it in its job the ruling class advertised their classical and imitable moral virtues through institutional propaganda which was found on coins, in cults and inscriptions, in art and architecture, and in education. In Greece, since the times of Homer, honour and the military glory attached to it were central to the identity of the aristocracy. It was expected of the nobility that they maintain their honour, and that they kept it from others who competed with them by achieving greater reputation in combat, by claiming higher birth, more wealth, or having stronger arguments. Even though

⁸⁴ Lendon p. 36

the Homeric world and Lucian's world were very different from one another, Latin writers and thinkers adapted the Athenian concept of honour, which to the Roman Empire remained an aristocratic moral value of vital importance.

Through the practice of euergetism the aristocracy showed its superiority by constructing aqueducts, baths, libraries, and stadiums, all of which were allegedly useful for the entire city. Very often aristocrats would also build theatres or would organize events such as literary symposia, in which all the *literati* could show-off their skills. During Lucian's lifetime, drama, and comedy in particular, experienced a revival, but it was also through writing, and mostly declamation that the aristocrat was able to display his individual competence in Greek *paideia*. Indeed, such a display, is made particularly visible in Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists*.

In some ways philosophy purported values contrary to 'ordinary' education. Philosophers like Hermotimus, who claimed to understand better the nature of the cosmos, could laugh at those who sought a traditional understanding of τιμή. From Socrates onwards, the reputation of philosophers presented itself as problematic in its divergence from traditional reputation, which emanated from τιμή. Being a philosopher implied the choice of particular way of living (*prohairesis*), which led to freedom from the conventional pursuit of honour and the political life, and the opportunity to live a theoretical life in which moral excellence was seen as the most valuable element for a good and happy life. Philosophers claimed to conduct their lives and to carry out their social duties according to real virtue, and thereby considered other goals to be mistakenly perceived as virtuous and to be unimportant distractions. Since the Hellenistic period philosophy had focused on self-transformation, through the common analogy between the soul and the city, but it had kept to some extent its utopian and political agenda, which could on some occasions challenge basic established social forms. Philosophers did not earn their reputation from their linguistic skills, but from their alleged

superior knowledge of the soul, of goodness, and of the order of the cosmos. Dio went as far as to declare that philosophers despised everyone.⁸⁵ Behind the philosopher's asceticism was the aim of becoming holy. In return for their alleged contempt and rejection of public life, philosophers were honoured, indeed sometimes even having statues erected to them as in the interesting cases of Apuleius and Aelius Aristides.⁸⁶

But although asceticism might always represent a problem for the order of the Roman Empire, and regardless of whether philosophy had sometimes also been problematic for the ruling classes,⁸⁷ for the most part it was a system of thought and life style that found itself on good terms with the values of the aristocracy. In Lucian's time *philosophia* had become part of *paideia* and was a shared tradition between Greeks and Romans. Philosophy had experienced a revival in the Antonine Era after the philhellenic Emperor Hadrian, who was particularly influenced by his wife Plotina, and who allowed Epicureanism to flourish in Athens as well as all philosophy in general.⁸⁸ Antoninus Pius, for example, fixed in an edict the maximum number of doctors and teachers who could qualify for tax immunity in a city of a given size, but added that since philosophers were rare, those philosophers that were already rich might give their money to improve the city. Those who did not do so, would be exposed as false philosophers.⁸⁹ Being counted as a *philosopher* might mean that one could enjoy exemption from taxation.⁹⁰ Marcus Aurelius established an institution known as the Imperial Chairs of Philosophy, which was created to support the cult of Athena in the Acropolis.⁹¹ This institution seems to have been the result of a quarrel between Herodes Atticus and the Athenians, and it offered an

⁸⁵ Dio. 64. 13.1

⁸⁶ Gsell (1922) n. 2115. Cf. Apul. *Flor.* XVI. Philost. *VS* 582.

⁸⁷ Francis (1995), 2.

⁸⁸ See Oliver (1981)

⁸⁹ Digest. 6. 1.6.2-7.

⁹⁰ Millar (1977) 491-506.

⁹¹ Oliver 1967 p. 329. See Millar (1977) 502; Hahn (1989) 119-27 for the Imperial Chairs.

option for those rich individual interested in culture, thereby contrasting sharply with the Areopagus that dealt specifically with political offices. Herodes Atticus seems to have been in charge of appointing a member for each one of the chairs of philosophy in order to represent the Platonist, Epicurean, Stoic and Aristotelian schools.⁹² Each philosopher would earn 10,000 drachmas a year, the equivalent of 60,000 sesterces. If Juvenal is to be believed, 2000 sesterces were paid to Quintilian per student each year, an amount four times greater than the average grammarian got and therefore an attractive sum indeed.⁹³ However, we do not know much about the structure and organization of philosophical schools, or about how they managed to sustain themselves. Some of these schools might have emerged as θιάσοι and as such may have been institutions owned by the community. However, by Lucian's time, and to judge from what we know of the Academy, euergetism seems to have been the way in which the schools managed to survive. The Academy seems to have been always supported by patrons, and only later became self-supporting. Marinus, for example, speaks of Theagenes, who was an eponymous archon of Athens, a *patricius*, and a member of the senate of Constantinople as an *euergetes*, and it seems that he supported the institution with money which was to be spent on teachers and doctors.⁹⁴ In this competitive high-class environment, philosophers such as like Hermotimus might well have laughed at other philosophical sects believing them to be uneducated and misleading about the nature of virtue. In this way, philosophy presented itself as a very complex phenomenon in which a philosopher could live the ascetic life of a sage on the one hand, and on the other behave as an intellectual who enjoyed, perhaps too much, the economic benefits of philosophical τιμή. In any case, to

⁹² Birley (1966), 195.

⁹³ Birley (1966), 243.

⁹⁴ Marinus speaks of him as an *euergetes* (Procl. 29) and a benefactor of the academy, see Dillon (2005) 1-17.

the eyes of the common crowd, both kinds of philosophers had the power to challenge the reputation of most traditional aristocrats.

However, philosophers and aristocrats alike may have feared the monetization of the economy as such rewards could potentially damage the hierarchy established by honour. Even in this late period, some landowners might avoid using money by leaving to *negotiatores* the merchandizing of their products.⁹⁵ However, due to urbanization and to the stimulus to monetization caused by the Roman army, increasingly more aristocrats were induced into the use of money,⁹⁶ and this led to social mobility of people who would not necessarily be part of the aristocracy. Such social shifts are found expressed in the poems of Juvenal and Martial.⁹⁷ To read the *Hermotimus* as a warning against philosophical ambition and the ambition for power and riches, allows for the possibility that this text to have been written by a hand that was trying to appeal to a relatively large numbers of readers that belonged to a reduced number of elite aristocrat *pepaideumenoï* and who feared changes brought by asceticism and monetization. Therefore, perhaps rather than trying to find in Lucian's fictionalization of his own life evidence for spiritual development, as argued by Francis,⁹⁸ we should see Lucian's inevitable attacks against asceticism as a defence against all that threatened Greek education in a general sense, and by extension, the aristocracies of the Roman empire. By adopting this particular reading, the intention of Lucian's texts in which is difficult to assert whether his philosophers are savours or charlatans,⁹⁹ or which seem to de-centralize and subvert the 'author' are made clearer. Through this particular reading, the relationship between Lucian's *Syrianess*, *hellenismos* and *latinitas* as well as his paideutic identity emerges.

⁹⁵ Tchernia (2016), 15-16.

⁹⁶ Erdkamp (2012).

⁹⁷ Malnati (1987-1988).

⁹⁸ Francis (1995), 53-82.

⁹⁹ Marquis (2007).

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