

## DIO CHRYSOSTOM'S *CHARIDEMOS*: A STUDY

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**ABSTRACT:** This contribution is a study of structure, imagery, Platonic allusions, and meaning in Dio Chrysostom's dialogue *Charidemos*. It focuses on the frame dialogue as well as the deathbed speech of Charidemos which constitutes the core of the text, and examines the dualities and dramatized oppositions between conflicting worldviews represented by the two interlocutors in the frame conversation and the two *logoi* in the deathbed speech. In particular, it studies Dio's creation of a dramatic sense of contrast between "pessimistic" and "optimistic" visions and argues that the *Charidemos* is a work of purposeful ambiguity, testifying to Dio's interest in juxtaposing divergent personalities and worldviews.

Dio Chrysostom's *Charidemos* opens with an introductory conversation between Timarchos, the father of the recently deceased young Charidemos, and an unnamed visitor who knew the youth and has now learnt about his death. The exchange between these two characters constitutes a frame for the lengthy deathbed speech by Charidemos, read by Timarchos upon his interlocutor's request, which is built of two separate *logoi* offering two different visions of human life. Only recently has the question of the text's authenticity ceased to dominate scholarly discussion<sup>1</sup> and the complex, polyphonic nature of the dialogue has begun to be explored by scholars, especially by M. MENCHELLI and J. MOLES<sup>2</sup>. However, due to rich texture of the text, which abounds in imagery, metaphors, literary allusions, and a fair amount of very Dionian ambiguity, there remains much that can be said about the dialogue, its structure, and its meaning.

This contribution focuses on aspects of the dialogue which have not yet been treated extensively by scholars; it also reconsiders the scholarly interpretation of

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<sup>1</sup> The authenticity of the *Charidemos* was questioned by VON ARNIM 1898: 283 who believed that Charidemos was a real person and that the deathbed speech ("ganz und gar nicht dionisch") must have been composed by him; in his opinion, Dio was responsible only for the frame dialogue. DESIDERI 1978: 185, n. 19 followed VON ARNIM and denied the *Charidemos* authenticity altogether. The authenticity of the dialogue was defended by WILHELM 1918: 365 and CYTOWSKA 1952, and now seems to be generally accepted. For a more detailed discussion of the authorship, see MENCHELLI 1999: 29–37.

<sup>2</sup> MENCHELLI 1999; MOLES 2000.

certain passages. The first part is dedicated to the opening dialogue: it examines its structure and the compositional techniques employed by Dio, the characters of the interlocutors, and the main themes introduced. In the second part, I inspect the two *logoi* which constitute Charidemos' deathbed speech and their message. In my examination of the first *logos*, I will pay special attention to reminiscences from Plato's *Phaedo*, by means of which Dio creates a grim and dark vision of human life. In my reading of the second *logos*, I will argue that though it presents a vision much brighter and more colorful than the first one, it is hardly an "optimistic" worldview. In particular, I will discuss the relationship between the two songs of the peasant, the ambiguity of the *symposion*-metaphor, and the problematic nature of the earthly goods. In the conclusion, I will reflect on the overall nature of the text and relationships between its parts.

#### REMEMBERING CHARIDEMOS: THE OPENING DIALOGUE

The opening of the *Charidemos* consists of a dialogue between Timarchos, the father of the recently deceased young Charidemos, and an unnamed visitor<sup>3</sup> who knew the youth and has recently learnt about his death. Their short exchange (seven chapters out of forty six), which constitutes a frame for the lengthy deathbed speech by Charidemos<sup>4</sup>, has several functions: it outlines the situation and provides a context for the subsequent speech, presents the interlocutors and their personalities<sup>5</sup>, and finally draws a sketchy portrait of Charidemos, thereby preparing the reader for the speech and raising some questions and expectations. The opening conversation is the only dialogic part of the *Charidemos*, locating

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<sup>3</sup> Timarchos' interlocutor is labelled in modern editions and translations of the *Charidemos* as "Dio". His name, however, appears nowhere in the text and speaker indications were not regularly used in the first century CE: they are missing from both the manuscripts (I was able to inspect manuscript M; for manuscript details see MENCHELLI 1999: 111 f.) and early editions and translations of Dio, e.g. *Dionis Chrysostomi Orationes LXXX apposita est in extremo libro uarietas lectionum cum orationum indice* (Venetiis 1551); *Dionis Chrysostomi Orationes LXXX*, ed. Th. NAGEORGUS, F. MORELLUS (Lutetiae 1604), or *Selected Essays of Dio Chrysostom*, transl. G. WAKEFIELD (London 1800). For the indications of speakers in antiquity in general, see WILSON 1970; LIM 1991. I believe that the conventional straightforward identification of Timarchos' interlocutor with Dio lends the unnamed speaker an air of authority and diverts readers from a careful examination of his words, from which the character of the speaker is supposed to emerge. For a contrary view, see MOLES 2000: 188 n. 4 and 192; he argues that Dio's name is implicit in the text.

<sup>4</sup> The opening dialogue has been little studied, its function being reduced to "holding" Charidemos' speech. MOLES 2000 is an exception: he traces numerous themes and motifs signalled in the opening conversation which recur in the subsequent part.

<sup>5</sup> Dio himself considered character-sketching as an essential component of Platonic dialogue (*Or.* 55, 12), although he admitted that most people do not pay attention to the characterization of the interlocutors: οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ μάτην οἴονται τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγεσθαι καὶ ὄχλον ἄλλως καὶ φλυαρίαν ἡγοῦνται ("on other hand, most men suppose that such items are purposeless, and they regard them as vexation and nonsense").

the speech within a dialogic context; and it is the reason why the text is classified as a dialogue at all.

The opening dialogue conveys the illusion of a real conversation, “overheard” by the reader as if by a chance passer-by, an effect Dio acquires by the consistent suppressing of information. We can see this technique at work from the very beginning: in the opening sentence the visitor explains how he acquired the information about Charidemos’ death: as soon as he arrived “here”, δευρί, he asked around about certain people he knew, and particularly about “these two” (περί τε ἄλλων τινῶν καὶ μάλιστα δὴ περὶ τούτων ἀμφοτέρων)<sup>6</sup>. Then, he encountered an unidentified man (τις), who informed him that the younger of them was in Messene with the father on account of mourning for the older brother, in this manner conveying the information about the death of Charidemos. The visitor was deeply disturbed: at first, he could not believe it, and only after some time had passed (αὔθις) did he accept the truth. This short account is followed by an expression of grief, and the audience realizes that the unnamed speaker is talking with the father of Charidemos.

The temporality of the dialogue hinges upon the sequence of three events: the death of Charidemos, the arrival of the visitor at an unspecified place where he found out about the youth’s death, and finally the moment of the current conversation. The exact temporal relations between the three events are blurred: we do not know how much time passed between Charidemos’ death and the visitor’s conversation with the unidentified man, nor between that conversation and his meeting with Timarchos. The temporal vocabulary (πρὸ ἱκανοῦ, αὔθις) is resolutely vague. Also, we are lacking clear spatial markers. The only place name which appears thus far, Messene, does not help to locate the conversation: we do not know where the visitor arrived, where the conversation takes place<sup>7</sup>, from where the family had to travel to Messene to mourn Charidemos, and if there is any particular significance of Messene at all. This purposeful vagueness, consisting of hinting at a place or event and subsequently suppressing the information, creates a certain depth for the characters, who seem to have a life which extends beyond the reality of the dialogue.

The imitation of reality in the opening dialogue is counterweighted by another kind of imitation, namely the imitation of a literary model, Plato’s *Phaedo*<sup>8</sup>. The frame dialogue of the *Charidemos* does not evoke the *Phaedo* by means of

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<sup>6</sup> Throughout the paper I am relying on the standard edition of Dio’s works: VON ARNIM 1962: 295–306.

<sup>7</sup> MEISER 1912: 14 suggested that the phrase τοῦτον τὸν Ὀπούντιον (*Charid.* 3) indicates that the conversation might have taken place in Opus or its vicinity.

<sup>8</sup> HIRZEL 1895: 111 rather unflatteringly called the *Charidemos* “ein später und etwas entarteter Nachkömmling des platonischen *Phaedo*”. MENCHELLI 1999: 72 speaks of a “cento” based on the *Phaedo*. MOLES 2000: 196 refers to the dialogue as a “creative adaptation of *Phaedo*”, while TRAPP 2000: 223 f. discusses it as an example of “Platonic mimesis”.

verbal references – these only become abundant in the first part of the death-bed speech – but rather thematically and structurally. The dialogue describes the “philosophical death” of the eponymous youth, clearly evoking the image of the dying Socrates. Its main preoccupation is the “proper” behaviour of a person facing death: the visitor wishes to hear Charidemus’ last words to see “whether he really died cheerfully and courageously” (*Charid.* 7). The behaviour of the dying Charidemus is reminiscent of Socrates in two ways: the youth is not affected by the imminence of his death in a way people usually are, and he believes that the best way to spend his last moments is to philosophize and reflect on human nature, life, and death. There is a tension between the two types of imitation – the imitation of reality and the imitation of a literary model – both in the *Charidemus* as well as in mimetic dialogues in general – which imbues a mimetic text with a characteristic *déjà-vu* feel and a sense of playful unreality and artificiality: the text pretends to depict a real conversation, but at the same time playfully undermines its own claim by shaping the exchange in a way that resembles another text, another fictitious conversation.

There are some structural similarities between the *Phaedo* and *Charidemus*. The latter is set some time after the death of the young man, just as the opening conversation between Phaedo and Echecrates takes place some time after the death of Socrates. In both cases the circumstances of the death are narrated by a person who accompanied the one who died: Phaedo narrates Socrates’ last days in prison and his final conversation with friends; Timarchos describes the illness of Charidemus and his courage in facing death, and then provides an account of his last words upon request<sup>9</sup>. Both dialogues, then, operate on two different temporal levels: the present of the frame conversation, and the past of the narrated core, making the audience experience the events in an inverted order and move from the present to the past. Both texts end with brief final parts – Phaedo’s closing words to Echecrates, and the visitor’s concluding comments – which restore the temporal order.

The thematic and structural affinity of Dio’s *Charidemus* and Plato’s *Phaedo* creates a backdrop which highlights the very different nature of the interlocutors chosen by the two authors. In the case of the *Phaedo*, the choice of characters brings a spirit of reassurance which is contrasted with the gravity of the situation. Not only is Socrates unmoved by his death, but he spends his last hours in the company of his close friends, carrying on a discussion about the afterlife, the immortality of the soul, and philosophy. All the others are dismissed at the beginning of the dialogue: the wife is asked to leave (60 A: “Crito, let somebody take her home”); the opinions of the poets and sophists – which the poet Euenos

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<sup>9</sup> Phaedo narrates a conversation, while Timarchos – a speech (though the *Phaedo* ends with Socrates’ myth). Dio’s choice of format reflects the popularity of the speech in the popular philosophy of the imperial period, but also conveys a sense of Charidemus’ alienation.

represents<sup>10</sup> – are put aside (61 B: “Tell Euenos that and bid him farewell”), and *hoi polloi*, “the many”, are left behind (64 B: “Let us then, speak with one another, paying no further attention to them”). With only Socrates’ friends present, the *Phaedo* depicts one of the most amiable conversations in the Platonic corpus. Not only is Socrates conversing with friends, but, unlike, for example, in the *Crito*, he is talking with the philosophically minded ones, Simmias and Cebes, and thus the conversation sets a paradigm for a joint philosophical enquiry<sup>11</sup>. This friendly and philosophical character of the internal dialogue is mirrored by the frame conversation, which is also held by friendly disposed persons who are versed in philosophy.

Dio’s choice of characters sets a different tone for his dialogue. The frame dialogue between Timarchos, the father of Charidemos, and the anonymous visitor, under whose influence the young man was, highlights a tension between paternal authority and family relationships on the one hand and the intellectual influence of an outsider on the other. Timarchos represents family and social ties. He cares for the good name of his family (*Charid.* 5, where he emphasizes the respect other citizens had for Charidemos) and is deeply rooted in his community, as his repeated mentioning of fellow citizens and family implies. He reveals little interest in and understanding of the intellectual pursuits of his son and the visitor: he admits that he does not really know the visitor well when he says that he heard from others (ὡς ἔλεγον οἱ εἰδότες) that his son imitated him (*Charid.* 4), and he is not quite sure what to think of Charidemos’ speech (*Charid.* 6 f.).

The visitor, on the other hand, who represents the intellectual bond, is an outsider, a traveller, not clearly anchored in any community<sup>12</sup>. We do not know where he comes from nor what the purpose of his travelling is. He is dedicated to moral preaching, urging men to follow a life of virtue, and exercises an influence on young people, though we do not know whether he conducts formal teaching. His conversation with Timarchos suggests that he has a rather low opinion of human nature. He questions the priority of family ties for which Timarchos as a father stands: he emphasizes that his pain is either equal or greater than that of family members (*Charid.* 2 f.) and, with a hint of disparaging preaching, questions the validity of paternal love, relating an example of an Opuntian man who valued his possessions more than his son.

The text recurrently emphasizes that for Charidemos the intellectual bond with the visitor was more essential than his family and social ties. Timarchos

<sup>10</sup> For Euenos’ characterization as a poet and a sophist, see NAILS 2002: 153.

<sup>11</sup> On the *Phaedo* as a presentation of Socrates’ philosophical legacy, see ZUCKERT 2009: 765–768.

<sup>12</sup> The wandering, preaching visitor represents a type familiar to Dio’s readers, and he shares certain characteristics with other figures in Dio. On the significance of the theme of wandering in Dio’s texts and his self-presentation as “a knowledgeable wandering preacher”, see MONTIGLIO 2005: 193–203 (*Charidemos* mentioned on p. 199).

admits that Charidemos valued the stranger more than anyone else – even more than the father himself (*Charid.* 4); that on his deathbed, Charidemos kept calling the visitor's name, despite being surrounded by relatives, fellow citizens, and acquaintances (representing the family and community bonds). He also believes that Charidemos would have been more careful in what he said if the visitor had been present (*Charid.* 7). The same is signalled by Charidemos himself, who at the beginning of the speech says that he had a greater concern for the truth than for the people gathered around him (*Charid.* 9) – which would be commonplace had it not reiterated the motifs from the frame dialogue. In fact, we can speculate that, had the visitor been present at Charidemos' deathbed, we might have been presented with a deathbed conversation rather than a deathbed speech.

Not only do the lifestyles and values of the two interlocutors differ, but each of them also cherishes a surprisingly different image of Charidemos. The visitor describes Charidemos' appearance as manly and stately (ἀνδρεῖον, σεμνὸν τοῦ σχήματος), but also believes that he might have appeared to others as sober and serious (σκυθρωπότερος)<sup>13</sup>; Timarchos, on the other hand, remembers Charidemos as pleasant, smiling, and agreeable to his fellow citizens. Each of them, it seems, sees himself in Charidemos. For well-mannered and polite Timarchos, Charidemos was a playful, agreeable, well-liked youth; for the disillusioned, somewhat bitter visitor, Charidemos was serious and sober.

The opening dialogue, then, while thematically and structurally related to the *Phaedo*, introduces certain tensions absent from Plato's dialogue. It also raises questions about the actual character of the young Charidemos, questions with which we proceed to his speech. However, the speech is a surprise: rather than presenting us with a clear picture and statement of Charidemos, it offers us two *logoi*, which, again, represent different worldviews and conflicting opinions on human nature.

#### CONFINED IN PRISON: CHARIDEMOS' FIRST *LOGOS*

The speech of Charidemos opens with a short introduction (*Charid.* 8 f.), in which the youth assures the listeners that his death was ordained by the gods and thus he considers it good: τὰ μὲν καθ' ἡμᾶς οὕτω γέγονεν ὡς ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ, χρὴ δὲ μηδὲν τῶν ὑπ' ἐκείνου γιγνομένων χαλεπὸν ἡγεῖσθαι μηδὲ δυσχερῶς φέρειν. This sentence draws a distinction between two positions which will be developed in the form of extended *logoi*. The first one finds death and life's

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<sup>13</sup> The adjective σκυθρωπός ('sad, gloomy') is used by Diogenes Laertios to describe the severity and rigorousness of Xenocrates, who is described as σεμνός and σκυθρωπός (IV 6). In Dio's other works, the adjective frequently has a negative meaning, e.g. *Or.* 1, 79; 3, 101; 4, 91. In 16, 1 it is associated with pain and suffering. In the passage under discussion, it is contrasted with ἰλαρώτερος in Timarchos' response, and therefore probably should be understood as the latter word's antonym.

misfortunes difficult to bear (χαλεπὸν ἠγεῖσθαι, δυσχερῶς φέρειν, looking forward to δυσχερέστατος τῶν λόγων in *Charid.* 9), and will be elaborated in the first, shorter *logos* (*Charid.* 10–24). The other one accepts life as it is ordained by the divinity and insists that the divine will and its acts are good and lead to good: this worldview, embraced by Charidemos, will be developed in the second *logos*, twice as long as the first (*Charid.* 26–44). Both *logoi* are mediated through other voices. In the case of the first one, Charidemos indicates at the beginning that he is narrating a circulating account (*Charid.* 9), and after about two thirds of the *logos* introduces the figure of a wandering magician-priest, ἀνήρ ἀγύρτης<sup>14</sup>. The second *logos* is in its entirety ascribed to a peasant<sup>15</sup>.

The proem of Charidemos' speech ends with the assertion that even in the worst case scenario death is nothing terrible. The first *logos* is a detailed elaboration of this "most difficult to accept" (δυσχερέστατος τῶν λόγων) account. Its cornerstone is a declaration that human beings are descendants of Titans and for that reason are considered enemies by the gods. The world is a prison (called either φρουρά, *Charid.* 10, or δεσμωτήριον, *Charid.* 11; both words used in *Charid.* 17) prepared by the gods, and death is liberation from the punishment. The first part of the speech describes three components of human misery: the surroundings (earth, climate, air quality, food), the human body, and the human soul.

The prison metaphor and the imagery of the first *logos* draw inspiration from three sections of the *Phaedo*. In *Phd.* 62 B Socrates refers to secret Orphic doctrines according to which human life is a prison (φρουρά)<sup>16</sup>. Although Socrates himself does not accept the Orphic account, and calls it "weighty and not easy to understand" (μέγας τέ τις μοι φαίνεται καὶ οὐ ῥάδιος διδεῖν), the prison imagery returns in 82 E–84 B, where the human body is compared to a cage (82 E: εἰργμός) in which the human soul is confined; as a result, the soul is unable to see things directly with its own power, but has to look at them through the body, which leads to error and confusion. Finally, at the end of the *Phaedo*, Socrates describes the Earth and distinguishes between its pure, beautiful surface and its

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<sup>14</sup> On the meaning of the term, see DICKIE 2001: 60–67. In the first *Kingship Oration* Dio says that he travelled ἐν ἀγύρτου σχήματι καὶ στολῇ during his exile (1, 50). Epictetus says that the appearance of a philosopher resembles that of ἀγύρτης (*Diss.* IV 8, 5). The religious connotation of the term may be significant when we consider it in the context of Plato's frequent employment of religious language for depicting the nature of philosophical life, both in the *Phaedo* and elsewhere, see MORGAN 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Charidemos' narration of accounts he heard from other people is reminiscent of the myth about "the hollows of the Earth" at the end of the *Phaedo*, which Socrates "heard from someone" (*Phd.* 108 C: ὑπό τινος πέπεισμαι, 110 B: λέγεται).

<sup>16</sup> In the *Phaedo*, the Orphic metaphor of prison mirrors the real prison in which Socrates spends his last days and in which the dialogue is located. The Titans (*Charid.* 10) are not mentioned in the *Phaedo*, but come up in Orphic teachings (WEST 1983: 164 f.).

hollows, τὰ κοῖλα τῆς γῆς, which are full of mud and are corroded by bad air and moisture (109 D–110 A). The pure surface of the Earth is unattainable for mortals, who inhabit the hollows; however, men are unaware of this and believe that they inhabit the surface<sup>17</sup>.

Each of the three sections of the *Phaedo* conveys a sense of confinement and imprisonment<sup>18</sup>, and we can detect the presence of all three in the first *logos* of Charidemos. His prison metaphor is inspired by the Orphic doctrines mentioned in *Phd.* 62 B. His description of the Earth is based on Socrates' account of the hollows of the Earth (unstable air temperature, changing seasons, barely endurable climate, the bareness of the whole region, bad quality of food and consequent weakness and sickness of the human body: *Charid.* 11–13, 15; cf. *Phd.* 110 A, 110 E, 111 B). Charidemos' description of the misery of the soul, which is little more than a flux of desires, passions, fears and worries (*Charid.* 14), looks back to *Phd.* 83 B.

The image of chains, which bind prisoners to prevent them from escaping, and which are made of pleasure and pain, combines several elements from the *Phaedo*: in 60 B–C Socrates, referring to the sensation in his leg after the prison chains were taken off, observes lightheartedly that pleasure follows pain. This image, in which pleasure and pain are somehow related to the existence of real, physical chains, is twisted in *Phd.* 83 D, where pleasure and pain are said to be responsible for the soul being bonded to the body: ὅτι ἐκάστη ἡδονὴ καὶ λύπη ὥσπερ ἦλον ἔχουσα προσηλοῖ αὐτὴν πρὸς τὸ σῶμα (“for every pleasure and pain nails it [i.e. the soul] as with a nail to the body”). Both images are fused in Charidemos' first *logos*, in which pleasures and pains are imagined explicitly as links in the chain that keeps a person in prison. While in the *Phaedo* both pleasure and pain were considered evil (because they make a soul corporeal [83 D: σωματοειδής] and focused upon the physical world), in Dio it is pain and suffering that is considered bad, and pleasure only as far as it leads to pain.

There are also some notable differences between the *Phaedo* and Dio's dialogue. Reporting the account of the wandering magician, Charidemos depicts a chain made up of hopes (*Charid.* 22). He says that these fetters are greater in the case of foolish men and lighter in the case of more reasonable ones and that they help people endure the pains awaiting them at the end of their lives; therefore, presumably these are hopes concerning the afterlife<sup>19</sup>. In the *Phaedo*, the word

<sup>17</sup> The myth, as ROWE 2007: 108 observes, provides “a colourful and highly complex illustration of the limitations to the perspectives of ordinary, non-philosophical people [...] by contrast with the soaring freedom of the philosophical soul, such people live a kind of death, like ants/frogs round a pond”.

<sup>18</sup> Pl. *Phd.* 82 E–84 C abounds in vocabulary of confinement, binding, and liberation. At the end of Socrates' myth, the hollows of Earth are compared to a prison (114 C: δεσμωτήριον).

<sup>19</sup> MOLES 2000: 191. The association of hope with lack of knowledge and wisdom is common in Greek philosophy. On negative associations of hope, see e.g. NUSSBAUM 1986: 461, n. 37.



ἐλπῖς and its cognates never have negative connotations: in fact, Socrates presents himself as departing from life with joyous hope (63 C: εὐέλπις)<sup>20</sup>.

Another difference is the grim description of the nature of society and interpersonal relationships, which in Charidemos' account complements the bleak image of human life, and which is absent from the *Phaedo*. According to Charidemos, food is obtained by humans with the utmost hardship and there is not enough for everyone (*Charid.* 13). Houses and cities are smaller prisons (*Charid.* 12). The only rationale for the existence of community is human frailty, not the social nature of human beings. Also, the traditional understanding of parenting and family is undermined: most people cannot leave the prison until they leave a child to succeed to the punishment (*Charid.* 17).

The motif of a file (ρίνη) which represents reason in *Charid.* 23 f. is a figurative development of *Phd.* 82 D–83 B, where Socrates describes philosophy as an instrument which allows one to free his soul from the bonds of the body by rejecting pleasure and pain. In the *Charidemos*, the file can be found only by some people and can be used to file the chains of pleasure and pain: a prisoner can gradually wear the fetters away and then walk around the other prisoners “as if he was liberated”. The passage also reminds us of the cave allegory in book 7 of the *Republic*<sup>21</sup>, where Socrates imagines a man who got free from the bonds and managed to leave the cave; afterwards, he comes back to his previous fellow prisoners, and becomes the only free man among them.

Charidemos' first *logos* makes use of numerous images and motifs from the *Phaedo* by developing them in more detail, with an emphasis on the grim and pessimistic side. The Orphic metaphor of the prison is elaborated in detail and pushed further in the speech of Charidemos, with the help of the imagery from the myth closing the *Phaedo*; Socrates' mention of the succession of pain and pleasure grows into a somnambular vision of the chain of pleasure and pain, in which the emphasis is on the pain necessarily following the pleasure. The metaphor of the prison serves as a backdrop for the representation of human relationships which are bereft of any affection and are marked by distrust and isolation. The first *logos* ends with a tiny positive accent: those who used their reason assiduously throughout their lives are sometimes liberated by the gods from their punishments<sup>22</sup>. This element does not receive extended treatment and consequently fails to counterbalance the grim vision of human existence.

<sup>20</sup> For other instances of “good” hope concerning the afterlife, see *Phd.* 64 A, 67 B, 67 C, 68 A, 70 A, 114 C.

<sup>21</sup> TRAPP 2000: 225. The relation between the prison imagery in the *Phaedo* and the cave allegory in the *Republic* is discussed by BURGER 1984: 96 f., 195; CLAY 1985: 235.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. also Pl. *Phd.* 114 B–C: οἱ δὲ δὴ ἂν δόξωσι διαφερόντως πρὸς τὸ ὁσίως βιῶναι, οὗτοί εἰσιν οἱ τῶνδε μὲν τῶν τόπων τῶν ἐν τῇ γῆ ἐλευθερούμενοι τε καὶ ἀπαλλαττόμενοι ὥσπερ δεσμωτηρίων...

This leads us to the main difference between the *Phaedo* and the first *logos* of Charidemos: in Plato's text, Socrates' description of human frailty and the misery of human life serves as a contrast for absolute beauty and goodness. Socrates maintains that there is something beyond the hollows of the Earth: the surface of the Earth, pure and full of beauty. Similarly, in the cave allegory in the *Republic*, the man who has left the cave was able to get a glimpse of real light and real things. The existence of the other world, of some better reality, though attainable by reason only, is a source of comfort and positive hope for Socrates' listeners. In Charidemos' desperate account, hope is for the foolish. If there is something beyond the prison, it is unspecified and unattainable; if there is any afterlife, it is of no real interest. Death is presented not as a transition to another life (as in the *Phaedo*, in which it is called τοῦ παντὸς ἀπαλλαγὴ, 107 C), but a termination of the misery<sup>23</sup>: it is the greatest pleasure, for it follows the greatest pain. While drawing extensively from numerous sections of the *Phaedo* and using much of the dialogue's imagery, Charidemos' first *logos* builds a vision of human life strikingly diverging from that of the *Phaedo*.

#### FROM COLONISTS TO GUESTS: CHARIDEMOS' SECOND *LOGOS*

Charidemos ends the first myth by distancing himself from the view it presents: he decides that it is not true and not fitting for the gods (οὐ μὴν ἀληθῆ γε οὐδὲ πρέποντα θεοῖς)<sup>24</sup>. The second, better *logos* consists of two songs which Charidemos heard from a peasant. The very short first song (*Charid.* 26 f.) explicitly rejects the vision of human nature presented in the first *logos*: it argues that men are neither the offspring of Titans or Giants nor enemies of the gods, but are closely related to them and established on Earth as colonists. Although the image is peaceful, there is a sense of disquiet introduced by the sentence closing this section: when the gods permitted people to manage their affairs by themselves, "sin and injustice began". The passage ends abruptly, and Charidemos proceeds to narrate the second song of the peasant, which compares human life to a banquet.

What is the relationship between the two songs? Some scholars call the first song "an interludium"<sup>25</sup>; however, this does not explain its function. Does the

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<sup>23</sup> A view which is explicitly rejected by Socrates, *Pl. Phd.* 107 C: "if death were freedom from time as a whole, it would be a godsend for bad men, who in death would be at once set free – along with the soul – from their body and their vice. But now, since it's apparent that she's deathless, there'd be no other refuge for her from bad things nor any safety except for her to become as good and as thoughtful as possible" (transl. E. BRANN, P. KALKAVAGE, E. SALEM).

<sup>24</sup> The phrasing may be an echo of *Pl. Criti.* 109 B: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ὀρθὸν ἔχοι λόγον θεοῦ ἀγνοεῖν τὰ πρέποντα ἐκάστοις αὐτῶν, especially in the context of other echoes of this dialogue in the subsequent passages.

<sup>25</sup> WILHELM 1918: 366; MENCHELLI 1999: 38.

first song present an utterly different worldview than the second one, or are they somehow complementary? And why are there two songs to begin with? In chapter 25, Charidemus announces that he will present “a better account” rather than two accounts. It is helpful to read this passage against the backdrop of Plato’s *Critias*, to which the first song alludes through the image of colonization<sup>26</sup>. In the dialogue, Critias relates the wonderful beginnings of the island of Atlantis and its rise to power. Towards the end of the text, he states that with time “the divine portion” in the inhabitants of the island began to fade and their race degenerated. Consequently, Zeus decided to punish them. The dramatic ending of the dialogue – which breaks off when Zeus was just about to speak – was famous in antiquity<sup>27</sup>. The second *logos* mirrors the structure of the myth of Atlantis: it begins with a first song, which relates the divine origins of the human race and its greatness and depicts the “golden-age” period; then it refers to the degeneration of men (“sin and injustice”), which is the result of a gradual separation from the gods. The last words of the first song and its abrupt ending mark a transition to the second song, which describes the next stage in human history, namely the world in which human life is tainted by error. The division of the narration into two songs highlights the difference between the first period, in which men were citizens (“colonists”) of the world, and the second, in which they became guests.

The second song opens with a comparison of the universe to a beautiful, wealthy house (*Charid.* 28), which is followed by a comparison of human life to a feast<sup>28</sup>. There are several identifiable sources of the imagery here. The comparison of the world to a house seems to have a Stoic provenience<sup>29</sup>. The comparison of human life to a feast, which can be traced back to Bion of Borysthenes, is to be found in texts of other authors of the imperial period such as Plutarch and Epictetus. Remarkably, it is not used by these authors in order to present human life as cheerful and happy. Usually, the focus of the comparison is not life at all, but death, which is likened to leaving a feast<sup>30</sup>; or, alternatively, the comparison is employed in order to warn the audience that it should exercise continence and temperance rather than to convey the spirit of joyfulness and reassurance<sup>31</sup>. Clearly, then, for ancient readers the banquet

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<sup>26</sup> HAGEN 1887: 19; MENCHELLI 1999: 276, 278; TRAPP 2000: 224, n. 32.

<sup>27</sup> Plut. *Sol.* 32, 1 f., with a comment by HUNTER 2012: 48–50.

<sup>28</sup> Like TRAPP 2000: 224, n. 32, I do not find references to Plato’s *Symposium* in the second *logos*, and consequently do not believe that this Platonic dialogue serves as a model for Dio (*pace* MOLES 2000: 193, 201 f.).

<sup>29</sup> MENCHELLI 1999: 279 f.

<sup>30</sup> Bion, fr. 68; Plut. *Cons. ad Apoll.* 34 (*Mor.* 120 B); Epict. *Diss.* II 16, 37.

<sup>31</sup> Epict. *Ench.* 15, with wording resembling that of the *Charidemus*.

metaphor would have raised complex rather than straightforwardly positive and optimistic associations<sup>32</sup>.

The main feature of the second song is a dramatic juxtaposition of the beauty of the universe and the abject state of humankind, which, for the most part, is not able to make proper use of the goods provided by the gods. The charming description of the world – the beauty and order of the universe, the seasons, the abundance of resources available – draws from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* IV 3<sup>33</sup>. There are also echoes of Socrates' description of earth's appearance in the myth at the end of the *Phaedo*<sup>34</sup>, and it is with the *Phaedo* rather than Xenophon's passage that the second song shares the focus on the *appearance* of the reality being described. This focus is crucial for both Plato and Dio, as it allows them to depict the just man as a contemplator of the world (*Phd.* 111 A: ἀντὴν ἰδεῖν εἶναι θέαμα εὐδαιμόνων θεατῶν; *Charid.* 41 f.)<sup>35</sup>.

According to the second song, people are invited to enjoy the wonderful, divinely-guided world, but they are unable to use its resources properly. Flawed human nature and the abundance and attractiveness of earthly goods become men's doom. Chapters 33–43 describe lives of the majority of people, mainly their greed and incontinence. They are said to be intoxicated by pleasure, which is poured into the cups in great quantities by a female cup-bearer, Akrateia<sup>36</sup>. The drink, Charidemos states, is provided by the gods to test the characters of the banqueters (*Charid.* 36: ὥστε ἐξελέγχεσθαι τὸν ἐκάστου τρόπον). She draws her inebriating wine from gold and silver wine-bowls, which are decorated with figures of animals, scrolls, and reliefs. The description of the vessels is reminiscent of the account of a beautiful house, to which the universe was compared at the beginning of the song; the vessels represent the abundance of earthly goods, the variety of pleasures they offer, and their dangerous nature<sup>37</sup>. Intoxicated by Akrateia's drink, most people lead their lives stumbling, falling, fighting, vom-

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<sup>32</sup> The ambiguity of the *symposion* metaphor in the *Charidemos* is in accord with Dio's use of it in other works, in which both *symposion* and festival are used as a background to depict human intemperance and foolishness (see especially *Or.* 27).

<sup>33</sup> MENCHELLI 1999: 287.

<sup>34</sup> *Charid.* 28: ποικίλον – *Phd.* 110 B, 110 D: ποικίλη, ποικιλία, ποικίλον; *Charid.* 28: γραφαῖς – *Phd.* 110 C: γραφῆς; *Charid.* 28: χρυσῶ – *Phd.* 110 C and 110 E: χρυσοειδῆ, χρυσῶ; *Phd.* 111 A: τοὺς μὲν ἐν μεσογαίᾳ οἰκοῦντας, τοὺς δὲ περὶ τὸν ἀέρα ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς περὶ τὴν θάλατταν, τοὺς δ' ἐν νήσοις ἅς περιρρεῖν τὸν ἀέρα πρὸς τῇ ἡπειρῷ οὐσας – *Charid.* 30: τοὺς μὲν γὰρ πρὸς θαλάττη τυχεῖν, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς πεδίοις, τοὺς δὲ πρὸς ὄρεσι, both paragraphs followed by account of seasons (*Horai*).

<sup>35</sup> In Plato, the focus on the appearance of the Earth is manifest in Plato's vivid interest in colours. Xenophon's *Memorabilia* IV 3 emphasizes rather the usefulness of the resources provided by the gods.

<sup>36</sup> For the image of cupbearers cf. *Pl. Rep.* 562 C–D.

<sup>37</sup> MENCHELLI 1999: 308.

iting and shouting; upon their departure they must be dragged away by slaves (echo of *Phd.* 108 B–C).

The men lured and ruled by pleasures are contrasted with the men gathered around the other cup-bearer, Nous. The drink he offers is *sophrosyne* with a small admixture of pleasure. They do not freely use the earthly goods as they are aware of the danger involved: they neglect food and drink and enjoy pleasures in moderation “owing to their fear” (φοβούμενοι, *Charid.* 41). These people spend their lives contemplating the universe: they admire it and try to learn how it was built; they observe all the things happening as if they were depicted on paintings; they notice management and order<sup>38</sup>. They do not partake in the dancing and merrymaking and do not care for the variety of food available which was described so vividly before. For the temperate and virtuous, life is not about food and an abundance of goods, but about order and inherent reason. We can see this shift in the description of the Seasons. Chapter 31 provided a sensual description which emphasized their youth, beauty, and garment, but this is not what the temperate guests pay attention to; they rather admire ὡς εὔ τε καὶ ἐπισταμένως ἅπαντα πράττουσι, “how well and intelligently they do everything” (*Charid.* 41).

#### “PESSIMISM” AND “OPTIMISM”: DUALITIES IN *CHARIDEMOS*

There are manifest resemblances and parallels between the two *logoi* which constitute the deathbed speech of Charidemos. They both use allegorical, metaphorical language to represent the human condition: they imagine men as prisoners, colonists, or banqueters. In both cases, the discussion of human nature is contingent on the view concerning the relationship between men and gods. Both *logoi* distinguish two groups of men: those who lead a life of desire and those who are guided by temperance and reason. In both accounts, pleasure is identified as the main evil, and the majority of men are too frail to be free: they are either bound by the chains of desires or intoxicated by the wine of pleasure. Both *logoi* convey the same message: be on your guard, avoid a life of desires, cherish a life of temperance and reason<sup>39</sup>.

Regardless of the similarities – of structure, literary strategies, and general message – the two *logoi* create a contrast. They are juxtaposed by Charidemos himself, who calls the first *logos* “the most difficult to accept”, and the second “a better account”. The two visions draw inspiration from the duality present in the myth of Plato’s *Phaedo*. The metaphor of prison in the first *logos* parallels

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<sup>38</sup> We may notice that a notion of friendship appears in the second *logos*. The temperate ones are said to gather in small groups and have discussions (*Charid.* 42); also, when a temperate man leaves the human life, he says farewell to his friends “joyous and happy, because he has done nothing unseemly” (*Charid.* 43). This image clearly evokes Socrates: talking to his friends, joyful, rating his integrity above anything else.

<sup>39</sup> On the similarity of the message, see MENCHELLI 1999: 45.

the description of the hollows of the Earth, and, more generally, follows the Platonic model of confinement present both in several sections of the *Phaedo* and in the cave allegory in the *Republic*. On the other hand, certain elements of the peasant's songs point to the description of the surface of the Earth as a model. However, while Plato's Socrates describes two coexistent realities, in Dio we are faced with two competing worldviews.

Most of all, the dramatic sense of contrast between the two visions is a result of Dio's employment of vivid, profuse imagery with which he renders the grimness of the first vision and depicts the beauty of the universe in the second one. This imagery induced scholars to call the first *logos* "pessimistic" and the second "optimistic"<sup>40</sup>. While the first *logos* is indeed undeniably dark and gloomy, the designation of the second account as "optimistic" obfuscates its complexity. There is much drama in this vision, in which the magnificence of the universe becomes a background for a depiction of human faultiness and which presents the beauty and bounty of the world as playing an instrumental role in the gods' trial of men and their characters. Unlike in the first *logos*, it is not the gods that are responsible for human misery, but flawed human nature.

By means of conclusion, we can notice that there are some points of contact between the conversation which opens the text and the speech of Charidemos. The question raised by the frame conversation: what sort of man was Charidemos? does not receive a straightforward answer, but the deathbed speech oscillates between pessimistic, grim imagery on the one hand, and cheerful, joyous imagery on the other – though, as argued above, the beauty of the world in the second *logos* does not make the vision a straightforwardly optimistic one. The two visions create, in a way, a dialogue. The second *logos* is a response to the first one; it overwrites it, but the previous account never disappears completely. Although Charidemos clearly states his preference for the second vision, there is a sense of risk that one may succumb to the pessimism of the first one<sup>41</sup>, especially as we are not faced with philosophical arguments but rather worldviews rooted strongly in personal experience and based on beliefs concerning the nature of the gods and their relationship with the human race.

The duality of the two *logoi* in Charidemos' deathbed speech is paralleled by the contrasting personalities of Timarchos and the visitor in the frame dialogue. We can even note that the wandering ἀγύρτης of the first account bears some resemblance to the visitor, and the simplicity of the peasant is reminiscent of Timarchos. The opening conversation testifies to Dio's interest in juxtaposing and contrasting divergent personalities and life choices. Upon this background, Charidemos' brother, who is a silent listener to the conversation between his father and the visitor and a witness to Charidemos' speech, to whom the visitor

<sup>40</sup> HIRZEL 1895: 111; MENCHELLI 1999: 39; MOLES 2000: 193.

<sup>41</sup> MOLES 2000: 195: "they all risk succumbing to Orphic pessimism".

turns in his concluding remarks, is a figure provocatively undetermined, for whom the divergent possibilities still lie ahead.

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