

# Style and the 'Idea' of the Sophist in the Time after Plato. The Impact of Form Typology in Sophistic Teaching and Writing on Interdisciplinary Scholarly Work

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**Abstract:** Sophists acted among the educated persons and scholars in the Mediterranean after the 1<sup>st</sup> Sophistic in many regards as a special and distinct group. Since many examples show that they acted not only as sophists, but also performed other activities, we will examine here several cases where we see similarities and differences between them and other groups of scholars. Our three basic questions 'what, how and why did the sophists teach and write?' we answer examining diachronically the major forms and genres of writings they produced ('What'), the 'How' will be answered looking at their performance as a communicative activity beyond borders of contemporary disciplines, and the 'Why' we try to answer emphasizing the necessity of sophistic activity in the contemporary socialization and education of late antiquity. Claiming that style was the idea of the sophists, we put Plato's concept of ideas critically in the context of the concept of ideas derived from contemporary and later sophists focusing on the function of visuality from early sophistic works to the late antique era represented by Philostatus' *Imagines*.

**Keywords:** Rhetoric; Sophistry; Late Antiquity; Mediterranean; Style; Idea.

## **Introduction: *Idea* and the Melting of Philosophy, Rhetoric, and Sophistry in Historical Examples**

Idea and form, even though occurring in literal context, belong to visual and theoretical phenomena. Recently, in studies of visual culture, also ancient cultures have become objects of interest in this relatively new branch. For example Francis (575) mentioned that 'living icons' in late antiquity are an "intense emphasis on visuality in literary representation of the second to fourth centuries." The *idea* of the sophist in the time after Plato is actually completely different from the image Plato presented in his *Sophist*. But Plato was the first one who established this cliché or image of them. We must consider that even Plato was as a

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teacher a performer of communicative strategies in dialogues and his field of teaching was not completely separated from the fields sophists practiced in. His answer of the question ‘What is a Sophist’ in the *Sophist* was a performance of analytical techniques that preserved his image of the sophist. In late antiquity this image was less important compared to the scholarly reflection that followed after antiquity in the West based on Plato’s esteem. Plato’s argumentation strategies derived from this question have been widely analyzed and Muckelbauer (225) assumed that Plato “well understood that its self-evident simplicity could be deceptive and that its effects might proliferate uncontrollably.” From a cultural historical perspective on the reception of Platonic views Muckelbauer’s statement is truly acceptable. From the perspective of the actual activity of the sophists Plato’s image is simply speaking a damage for the contribution of the sophists in intellectual life of antiquity reflected in the variety of their writings and their biographies we will now focus on in the following sections.

The infamous reputation “to make the weaker argument defeat the stronger” includes all the negative assumptions about sophistry. We agree with Sesonke (217) who says “We who read Plato will most likely think first of the Sophists when we hear the phrase “to make the weaker argument defeat the stronger.” For, though he does not often state the charge in just these terms, Plato’s treatment of Sophists, whether in the sharply etched portrait of Protagoras or the schematic logic of the Sophist, seems designed to display this aspect of their activity.” The concept of the *idea* Plato employed also in the *Sophist* cannot be used in order to understand the *idea* of the later 2<sup>nd</sup> Sophistic. Our examination now investigates the concrete ‘leftovers’ of the sophists in order to answer the questions above. Philosophy and sophistry were not as much separated as Plato wants us to believe; even some of the early sophists were closely related to Plato. According to *Sudas* (Adler number: mu, 1010), Metrophanes from Lebadia, son of the rhetorician Cornelianus, was a sophist. Metrophanes wrote *On the Stylistic Characters of Plato*, *Xenophon*, *Nicostratus*, *Philostratus*, declamations, and panegyric speeches. Thrasymachos was a Chalcedonian sophist from Chalcedon in

Bithynia. Thrasymachos was the first to discover period and colon, and he introduced the modern kind of rhetoric. Thrasymachos was a pupil of both Plato and the rhetor Isocrates (Adler number: theta, 462). Sullivan (79) wrote that “for modern readers, the career and literary output of the Attic rhetorician Isocrates is uncomfortably situated at the boundary between what we conceive as technical rhetoric and professional philosophy”.

Asking the question *Who is the Sophist?* in the way Plato did might be reasonable and a technically perfect answer, but it fails to describe the special cultural conditions of sophistry; we investigate the phenomenon sophistry using antique sources that stand in a tradition of the antique heritage. The literature we examine consists of compilations made by contemporary or later writers regarding sophistic writings. The Byzantine lexicon *Sudas* is the most comprehensive source about the lives of sophists, even though earlier biographies exist and most of the sources *Sudas* consulted are unknown. Plato was a teacher of rhetoricians for example of Hypereides of Athens, son of the rhetorician Glaucippus or Pythocles, who was a rhetorician among the ten rhetoricians of highest rank. Hypereides studied under Plato and Isocrates. According to *Sudas*, Hypereides became an ‘able orator’. Hypereides was killed by Antipater the king, who had him dragged out of the temple of Demeter in Hermione by Archias (nicknamed ‘exile-hunter’), his tongue was cut out, and he died. He left 56 speeches (Adler number: epsilon, 294). The early beginnings of sophistry are connected to Protagoras of Abdera, son of Artemon, Maeandrides or Neandrius, who was first a philosopher and later turned to rhetoric. According to *Sudas*, he was the first man who was called sophist, the first who invented eristic arguments, and the first one who made a contest of speeches and to charged 100 mina. Protagoras was the teacher of the rhetorician Isocrates. Protagoras was the first sophist who divided all discourses into four categories: wish, question, answer, and command. After him others made a division into seven categories: narration, question, answer, command, statement, wish, and appellation. Alcidamas said that four kinds of discourse exist: assertion, denial, question, and address. Protagoras’ books were burned by the

Athenians, because he made a speech which began with the words: ‘About the gods I can know nothing — neither that they exist, nor that they do not exist’ (Adler number: pi, 2958). We know from records of later cases that a transgression of common rules was often a topic for the accusation of sophists and rhetoricians; in modern terms expressed, the ‘freedom of speech’ was always endangered and the sophists and their profession not accepted or aggressively verbally attacked. In *Sudas* we find a reference about Aristotle among the sophists from Timaios of Tauromenion, a historian of the 4<sup>th</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. who said against Aristotle that “he was arrogant, reckless, and headstrong [...] but not a pedantic and detestable sophist who had just locked up his precious surgeon’s shop, and who besides this had forced his way into every court and onto every stage and was a glutton and epicure catering for his mouth in everything. “I think that surely such language could scarcely be tolerated even from the lips of some unscrupulous knave making random accusations in a law court. Note that Aristotle was a clerk by nature, steeping his pen in intellect, from whom perhaps it was not necessary to seek anything useful, even if it is more technical and exceptionally worked out.” (Adler number: alpha, 3930) Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* (1, 1, 1355b) wrote regarding the sophist that the quality that makes a man a ‘sophist’ is not his faculty, but his moral purpose. In rhetoric, however, the term ‘rhetorician’ may describe either the speaker’s knowledge of the art or his moral purpose. In dialectic a man is a ‘sophist’ because he has a certain kind of moral purpose, a ‘dialectician’ in respect, not of his moral purpose, but of his faculty. According to a *Sudas* entry, also Aspasia was a sophist (σοφίστρια) and a *teacher of rhetorical principles* (διδάσκαλος λόγων ῥητορικῶν). (Adler number: alpha, 4202)

The non-religious approach towards knowledge was based on the concept *sophia* sophists and philosophers shared. Johnstone (265) wrote that the “pursuit of Wisdom is at the center of the Western intellectual tradition, its attainment the literal ideal and end of all philosophical inquiry. [...] Is it one thing, or are there different kinds of wisdom? How is it acquired? Can it be taught or communicated to others? How, if at all, do speech and language figure in the attainment and dissemination of

wisdom?” The relationship between wisdom and speech was not only reflected in the ‘connection between philosophy and rhetoric’, but also sophistry. The relationship between sophistry and rhetoric has been discussed and it depends either on definitions or on the classification of each of them to draw a line between the groups. In the majority of the works written by sophists we find contributions that could actually also be classified as works of rhetoricians. If we look at the literature the sophists left, we find here many rhetorical didactical works. While the sophists acted primarily as teachers, the rhetoricians spoke in public. The classical rhetorician did not intend to ‘offer’ wisdom. The sophists and the philosophers, both interested in wisdom, had similar interests. The sophists in the time after Plato actually employed the same techniques in order to teach speech through stylistic principles and even the *idea* became as term of sophistry a synonym for style. For Plato the *idea* had been always an abstract level of representations of concrete phenomena. In other words: The sophists can claim to have given the idea for the first time a concrete field of applications: words. The Platonic view of the relation between a philosopher and rhetorician /sophist is not representative for later times. We have even among the Epicureans an example of a philosopher who changed his profession and became a rhetorician. Sueton in *Lives of the Eminent Grammarians* (6) wrote that Aurelius Opilius, the freedman of some Epicurean, first taught philosophy, then rhetoric, and last of all, grammar. He followed Rutilius Rufus, when he was banished to Asia and wrote several volumes on a variety of learned topics, nine books distinguished by the number and names of the nine Muses, the patrons of authors and poets. According to *Sudas*, Damophilus was both a philosopher and sophist raised by Julian, the consul under the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Damophilus was a prolific author. *Sudas* or the source of *Sudas* (Adler number: delta, 52) writes that he has found the following of his works ‘in the libraries’: *Bibliophile* in one book, on books worth purchasing, *To Lollius Maximus*, *On the Life of the Ancients*, and many other works. This work also aims to revive the discussion about the style as a part of rhetoric that actually was less important in the recent academic history of rhetoric. Poster (116)

mentioned that “the inventional focus [...] of much modern rhetorical theory has tended to relegate figuration either, on the one hand, to the domains of literary criticism or linguistics (the heirs of ancient grammar) or, on the other hand, to an ancillary position. The concomitant marginalization of the study of figures has had a significant effect upon contemporary scholarship in historical rhetoric. Many of the seminal scholarly works on the history of rhetoric have denigrated or minimized the importance of figural rhetoric”.

At this point we will start now to investigate details regarding the aspects ‘what, how and why did the sophists teach and write’. Approaching the phenomenon ‘style’ means also to investigate the categories the sophists and rhetoricians used for the establishment of structures of speaking. Stylistic principles were codified in their works assuming that style was taught and could be learned. It seems to be an absurd result that despite the existence of principles the commonly accepted opinion about the sophists was, as described by Cassin and Wolfe (102), that their doctrines and the shared intellectual attitude of the main Greek sophists were considered to be a “philosophy of verbal reasoning lacking solidity or seriousness”. The authors in the following part say that the set of doctrines or teachings associated with sophists is termed *sophistike*. Since a term like *sophistike technike* never became popular and the majority of the sophists produced works entitled *rhetorike technike*, we can see here the common source of principles both sophists and rhetoricians shared.

### **I. Answering the ‘What?’: The *Idea* Among the Sophistic Works Principle Categories for Style Principles in the Work of Sophists**

A part of the categories for stylistic principles in the work of sophists and the contents of their teaching are literary and rhetorical classification. They are important, since they demonstrate the organization of the work of a single sophist and also the reference system including literal and oral works and speeches of other sophists and scholars.

### Didactical Writings and Lectures of Sophists and Rhetoricians

McAdon (223-248) made an attempt to differentiate between probabilities, signs, necessary signs, *idia*, and *topoi* as materials for enthymemes. In argumentations enthymemes were shared by logical philosophical, rhetorical, and sophistic scholars. Often used as a tool for fallacies attributed to sophistic writing, we must mention here that most of the sophistic writings were not dedicated to fallacies. We discuss now the categories of literary and oral works the sophists used. For many books written by the sophists we can assume that they were composed as didactical material for teaching. Sueton in *Lives of the Eminent Rhetoricians* (524, I) wrote about the rhetoricians in Rome that the same mode of teaching was neither adopted by all of them nor did individuals always confine themselves to the same system. Each of them varied his plan of teaching according to circumstances. They were accustomed to state their argument with the utmost clearness, to use figures and apologies, to put cases as circumstances required, and to relate facts, sometimes briefly and succinctly, and, at other times, with greater feeling. Commonly used forms of didactical works of style the sophists used are:

Art of Rhetoric	Τέχνη ῥητορική
<i>Hypomnema</i> , commentaries on special topics	ὑπομνήματα
<i>Progymnasmata</i> with collections of sample texts	Προγυμνάσματα
The <i>onomasticon</i> with words for different things	Ὀνομαστικόν

Obviously, each of the sophists composed his own technical handbook for his students. Also other literary material in the form of a collection of literature might have been served for the purpose of the education of their students. But poetical production of sophists was untypical. Both sophists and rhetoricians wrote books entitled *Art of Rhetoric* (Τέχνη ῥητορική). Since many of these works were mentioned together with the name of their authors in *Sudas*, we can conclude that each of the teachers used his own work. We know no work called *Techne Sophistike* serving as an introduction to this field for learners. Thus, we can assume that a sophist taught either relying on rhetorical works or purely orally. In *Sudas* Pollux (Polydeukes) of Naukratis is mentioned as a sophist who taught in Athens

in the time of the emperor Commodus and died aged 58 having composed *Onomasticon*, informal discourses or talks, declamations, an *Epi-thalamium to Caesar Commodus*, a *Roman Speech, Trumpet, or Musical Contest*, *Against Socrates*, *Against the People of Sinope*, a *Panellenic Speech*, an *Arcadian Speech*, and other works. (Adler number: pi, 1951)

The Greek term *idea* (*eidon*) was the expression for speech style. We can trace this category back to Plato. Sophists employed this term for the style of speech, since many works of this topic are entitled *About Ideas* or similarly. *Schemata* are speech figures. A Harpocraton with the surname Aelius was a sophist who wrote *On the Apparent Examples of Ignorance in the Orators* (Περὶ τῶν δοκούντων τοῖς ῥήτροσιν ἠγνοῆσθαι), *Hypotheses to the Speeches of Hyperides* (Ὑποθέσεις τῶν λόγων Ὑπερίδου), *On the Falsity of Herodotus' History* (Περὶ τοῦ κατεψεῦσθαι τὴν Ἡροδότου ἱστορίαν), *On Order in Xenophon* (Περὶ τῶν παρὰ Ξενοφῶντι τάξεων), *On the Art of Rhetoric* (Περὶ τέχνης ῥητορικῆς), *On Types of Style* (Περὶ ἰδεῶν). (Adler number: alpha, 4013) Basilicus the Sophist wrote *On the Figures of Diction* (Περὶ τῶν διὰ τῶν λέξεων σχημάτων), *On Rhetorical Preparation* (or *On Practice*) (Περὶ ῥητορικῆς παρασκευῆς ἥτοι περὶ ἀσκήσεως), and *On Paraphrase* (Περὶ μεταποιήσεως) besides other works. (Adler number: beta, 159)

### Speeches

We can distinguish between the following forms of speeches:

Declamation	<i>meleta</i>	Μελέτα
Informal discourse	<i>lalia</i>	Λάλια
Informal discourse	<i>dialexis</i>	Διαλέξις
Panegyric speech	<i>logos panegyrikos</i>	Λόγος πανηγύρικος
Praise of thing or person	<i>encomion</i>	Ἐγκώμιον

Aspasius of Byblos was a sophist and a contemporary of Aristides and Hadrian. Aspasius wrote *On Byblos*, *On Figured Issues* (Περὶ στάσεων ἐσηματισμένων), declamations (Μελέται), *Arts* (Τέχναι), commentaries (Ὑπομνήματα), and informal discourses (Λάλια), an



*Encomium of the Emperor Hadrian* (Ἐγκώμιον εἰς Ἀδριανὸν τὸν βασιλέα) and *encomia* of other persons. (Adler number: alpha, 4203) Not only the concrete speech written and performed by the sophist was a work a sophist produced. Also critical commentaries about speeches were commonly written. We know through *Sudas* that Sarapion surnamed Aelius was a rhetorician in Alexandria. Sarapion wrote *On Mistakes in Declamations*, lectures in seven books, *Panegyric on the Emperor Hadrian*, *Speech in Council to the Alexandrians*, *Whether Plato was Right to Expel Homer from the Republic*, and an *Art of Rhetoric* besides a host of other works. (Σαραπίων, ὁ Αἴλιος χρηματίσας, ῥήτωρ, Ἀλεξανδρεὺς. ἔγραψε Περὶ τῶν ἐν ταῖς μελέταις ἀμαρτανομένων, Ἀκροάσεων βιβλία ζ, Πανηγυρικὸν ἐπὶ Ἀδριανῷ τῷ βασιλεῖ, Βουλευτικὸν Ἀλεξανδρεῦσιν, Εἰ δικαίως Πλάτων Ὅμηρον ἀπέπεμψε τῆς πολιτείας: καὶ ἄλλα συχνὰ. καὶ Τέχνην ῥητορικὴν.) (Adler number: sigma, 115) Pagan religious activities could be performed by a sophist. *Sudas* narrates that Aelian surnamed Claudius from Praeneste in Italy in the time of Hadrian was a high-priest and sophist. Aelian was nicknamed ‘honey-tongued’ or ‘honey-voiced’. (Adler number: alphaiota, 178) *Sudas* states that Potamo of Mitylene, son of Lesbonax, was both a rhetorician and sophist in Rome in the time of Caesar Tiberius. Potamo wrote *On Alexander of Macedon*, *Annals of the Samians*, *Encomium of Brutus*, *Encomium of Caesar*, and *On the Perfect Orator*. (Adler number: pi, 2127) The counterparts of the encomion are speeches directed against fictive or real persons. It was a very common form of sophistic speech. An example of this kind of speech in *Sudas* is a work of Aspasius of Ravenna, a pupil of the critic Demetrianus, who practiced as a sophist in the time of Alexander, son of Mamaea. Aspasius attended the classes of Pausanias and Hippodromus and worked as a sophist in Rome. Aspasius wrote *Against Those who are Fond of Slander*, *Against Ariston*, and miscellaneous discourses. (Adler number: alpha, 4205)

In legal rhetoric both *declamatio* and *controversia* employed imaginative inventions for fictive cases. Sueton (524, I) noticed that formerly the rhetoricians used the Greek term *syntaxeis* and later ‘controversies’ [*controversia*, F.H.] for fictitious cases or those in trials in

the courts. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> Sophistic a differentiation between these professional and scholarly disciplines didn't exist. *Sudas* writes regarding Antiphon of Athens, one of the early sophists, that he was a diviner, an epic poet, and a sophist. Antiphon was called 'word-cook' (Λογομάγειρος). (Adler number: alpha, 2744) Another entry in *Sudas* for Antiphon from Athens refers that no one was recognized as his teacher. Antiphon, nevertheless, was the leader in the judicial style of oratory after Gorgias. Antiphon is said to have been the teacher of Thucydides. (Adler number: alpha, 2745)

### **Literature: Literary Forms of Sophistry. The Eclectical and Comprehensive Literature**

Unusual topics and themes and the 'grande style' and bombastic forms and sizes are characteristic features for literary sophistic works. Athenaeus' *Deipnosophists* represents the bombastic form implementing other sources nesting them in a fictive dialogue. This narrative form established by Plato and quotations of other sources result in a piece of literature with elements of a lexicon, a dialogue, and fictive narrative.

### **Small Forms of Sophistic Writing: Poetical Narratives**

Poetical narratives like romance, fable, or short historical and biographical writing are typical for sophistic literature. Often details are described in an ornamental way.

Description of objects or persons in small pictures;	
it is also a school exercise	<i>ekphrasis</i>
The epigrams are small poems especially describing a person or object	<i>epigrammata</i>
Descriptions of visual objects	<i>imagines</i>

An example for this kind of literature is the work *Imagines* written in the family of sophists named Philostratus. According to *Sudas*, Philostratus, son of Philostratus, the sophist from Lemnos, was among the sophists of the second class in Athens and in Rome in the time of the emperors Severus and Philip. He wrote declamations, *Erotic Letters*, *Images* in four books, i.e. descriptions, *Market-Place*, *Heroicus*, informal

discourses, *Goats, or On the Pipe*, a *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, *Lives of the Sophists*, epigrams, and other works. (Adler number: phi, 421) In *Sudas* is another Philostratus, son of Nervianus, mentioned, the nephew of the second Philostratus of Lemnos, who was also a sophist. Philostratus was a pupil and son-in-law of the second Philostratus who wrote *Images*, *Panathenaicus*, *Troicus*, *Paraphrase of Homer's Shield*, and five declamations. Some also attribute the *Lives of the Sophists* to him. (Adler number: phi, 423) The *Imagines* as a collection of short essays describing mostly myth-themed paintings poetically. They are actually a work that demonstrates the change from the abstract *idea* of sophistry in a collection of stylistic forms to the *imago* are a literary narrative form in order to describe pictures.

### **Biographical and Historical Writings**

Many writings related to Alexander the Great written in Alexandria have been lost. These writings, partly written by sophists in the time of the Ptolemies, had the function to glorify the emperor. At least the first kings among the Ptolemies considered it an increase of their prestige to support the flourishing of literature in Alexandria and aimed to show in this way prosperity of their kingdom. Here sophists could work relatively freely. On the contrary, state employed and private professors of rhetoric were in Rome, Athens, and Constantinople common. A sophist who wrote historical works mentioned by *Sudas* is Nikagoras, the son of the rhetorician Mnesaeus. Nikagoras was an Athenian sophist who lived in the time of the Caesar Philip. His works include *Lives of Famous People*, *On Cleopatra in Troas*, and an *Embassy Speech to Philip the Roman Emperor*. (Adler number: nu, 373) Bemarchius of Caesarea in Cappadocia was a sophist who wrote the acts of the emperor Constantine in ten books besides various declamations and discourses. (Adler number: beta, 259) Heliconius was a sophist of Byzantium who wrote a *Chronological Epitome from Adam to the Time of Theodosius the Great* in ten books. (Adler number: epsilon, 851) In *Sudas* Ulpian of Emesa was a sophist. Ulpian wrote *Traditions of Emesa*, *of Heliopolis*, *of Bosporus*, *and About Many other Peoples*, *progymnasmata*, and an *Art of Rhetoric*.

(Adler number: omicron, 9119) Prokopios of Caesarea in Palestine was a rhetorician and sophist who wrote a *Roman History* about the wars of Belisarius the patrician and actions in Rome and Libya. Prokopios lived in the time of the emperor Justinian, was employed as Belisarius' secretary, and accompanied him in all the wars and events he recorded. Prokopios also wrote another book, the *Anecdota*, on the same events. Both works were written down in eight books. The book of Prokopios called *Anecdota* contains details about abuse and mockery of the emperor Justinian and his wife Theodora and of Belisarius and his wife. (Adler number: pi, 2479)

### **Letters**

According to *Suda*, Hadrian of Tyre was a sophist and a pupil of Herodes who flourished in the time of Marcus Antoninus. As a teacher Hadrian was a rival to the rhetor Aristides in Athens. Hadrian was also a practicing sophist in Rome and a secretary with responsibility for correspondence under Commodus. Hadrian wrote declamations, *Metamorphoses* in seven books, *On Types of Style* in five books (Περὶ ἰδεῶν λόγου ἐν βιβλίοις ε), *On Distinctive Features in the Issues* in three books (Περὶ τῶν ἐν ταῖς στάσεσιν ἰδιωμάτων ἐν βιβλίοις τρισίν), letters and epideictic speeches, *Phalaris*, and *Consolation to Celer*. (Adler number: alpha, 528) The sophist Aristocles of Pergamum lived in the time of Trajan and Hadrian. Aristocles wrote an *Art of Rhetoric* (Τέχνη ῥητορική), letters (Ἐπιστολαί), *On Rhetoric* in five books (Περὶ ῥητορικῆς βιβλία ε), declamations (Μελέται), *To the Emperor*, and *On the Distribution of Gold*. (Adler number: alpha, 3918) Ausonius the Sophist for example wrote letters and certain other works addressed to Nonnus. (Adler number: alpha, 4460). Especially sophists in late antiquity and Christians used the letter as a way to spread their writing.

### **Homiletic Literature**

In Christian sophistry we find similarities to the pagan culture in terms of speeches directed against other persons, here of course from a religious perspective directed to the pagans. The art of preaching or

writing sermons also developed under the influence of rhetorical knowledge. Milovanovic (187) described the declamation as a fictitious speech on a popular stock theme that had been developed in schools of rhetoric as a means of practicing the rules of forensic oratory, the so-called *staseis*. A subset of those stock themes was concerned with school life in general, and Gregory of Nazianzus used school-related themes. A declamation was not expected to be based on real events.

## II. Answering the ‘How?’: Style as the Communication Concept of *Idea*

How could the sophists communicate between the different sciences and arts? They communicated ideas in types or forms collected in stylistic principles commonly known and shared not only among them, but also among the youth they educated. The word *idea* (Lewis; Short: 1879/2008 online; entry “idea”) became a part of the Latin thesaurus due to the Platonic concept of *ideas* as depiction of an archetype. Aristotle’s work *On Ideas (Peri Ideon)* is lost. As a Greek word *idea* was used by Cicero. According to Liddell and Scott (online; entry “idea”), *idea* was used as descriptions of a form by Pindar and Aristotle. It meant the look of a thing opposed to its reality or a kind, sort, or nature in Herodotus’ work. In Platonic writings *eidos* was used for a types, class, kind, sort, or species. In the Latin language Seneca used the term (Sen. Ep. 58 med.). *Idea* was especially in rhetoric a literary form employed since the time of Isocrates. According to Liddell and Scott (online entry ‘idea’), as a term for the style of a writer or speaker in expressions like ‘Platoic style’ or ‘style of Demosthenes’, it was used in the time of Hermogenes by Syrianus in his commentary of Hermogenes’ work; Stafford and Herrin (86) mentioned this commentary *On Forms of Style (Peri Ideon)* of Hermogenes. *Idea* also depicted a quality of style (Hermog.Id.tit). *Sudas* mentions that Hermogenes’ *On Forms of Style (Peri Ideon)* was commonly known in late antiquity and Byzantine time and used as a standard textbook in rhetorical schools. *On Forms of Style* separated between types (*ideai*) of style of clarity (*sapheneia, claritas*), grandeur (*megethos, magnitude*), beauty (*kallos, pulchritudo* or *venustas*), rapidity

(*gorgotes, velocitas*), character (*ethos, affection*), sincerity (*aletheia, veritas*), and force (*deinotes, gravitas*) according to Burton's *Silvae Rhetoricae* (online entry 'Hermogenes'). Hermogenes' *On Style (Peri Ideon)* represents a body of literature Rutherford (104) called 'idea-theory'. Even *Sudas* noticed that Hermogenes' *Art of Rhetoric* was very famous and used by other rhetoricians and sophists. *Sudas* narrates that Hermogenes lived in the time of the emperor Marcus Aurelius and had great natural talent. When Hermogenes was lacking in years his wisdom by contrast abounded. But he did not enjoy this for long, since at the age of about 24 he went out of his mind and did not know himself. When he was 18 or 20 he had already written an *Art of Rhetoric*, *On Issues*, *On Types of Styles* in two books, and *On Coele Syria* in two books. Philostratus of Lemnos, in his descriptions of the sophists, says about Hermogenes his reputation as a sophist was even known by the emperor Marcus delighted by his informal discourse and amazed by his improvisation. In his informal discourse in front of Marcus he said: 'See, emperor, a rhetor still needing a pedagogue, a rhetor still awaiting his prime.' (Adler number: epsilon, 3046) Aphthonius the Sophist wrote a commentary on Hermogenes' *Art of Rhetoric* and *progymnasmata*. (Adler number: alpha, 4630) Also Menander of Laodicea was a sophist who wrote a commentary on Hermogenes' *Art of Rhetoric* and Minucianus' *progymnasmata* besides other works. (Adler number: mu, 590)

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century C.E. Demetrius in *On Style* separated in five books between preliminary remarks of the period and four types of style consisting of the elevated style, the elegant style, the plain style, and the forcible style. Among the figures of speech Demetrius mentions hiatus, metaphor, simile and imagery, onomatopoeic or coined words, allegory, brevity, aposiopesis, indirect and harsh-sounding expressions, and epiphoneme and poetical color in prose (Demetrius. Online). Obviously, some of the figures were dedicated to quasi-visual phenomena.

Especially the philological works about Homer must be mentioned here in the context of sophistry, since they have some aspects with the works of the sophists in common. For example *glossae* and *lexica* for uncommon words or themes are regarding their focus on style of a single

author closely related to sophistry. Homer was the most important source for investigating poetry by the use of figures of speech. According to *Sudas*, Apollonius, the Alexandrian writer of epic poems, lived in the time of Eratosthenes, Euphorion, and Timarchos in the reign of Ptolemy Evergetes. He was Eratosthenes' successor in the directorship of the library in Alexandria. The commentator of his *Sudas Online* entry mentions that *Sudas* or its source seems to have confused Apollonios the poet with the later character 'Apollonios the Compiler' named in P.Oxy. 1241. (Adler number: alpha, 3419). In another entry of *Sudas* Apollonius 'Dyscolus' of Alexandria is mentioned as father of Herodian, the technical writer. Apollonius was a grammarian who wrote two rhetorical works, *On the Division of the Parts of Speech* in four books and *On the Syntax of the Parts of Speech* besides grammatical and philological works about Homer like *On the Verb, or Rhematikos* in five books, *On the Formation of mi-Verbs*, *On Nouns, or Onomatikos*, *On Nouns according to Dialect*, *On the Nominative Case of Feminine Nouns*, *On Paronyms*, *On Comparatives*, and *On Dialects — Doric, Ionic, Aeolic, Attic*, *On Homeric Figures*, *On Fabricated History*, *On Modifications of Forms*, *On Necessary Accents*, *On Skewed Accents*, *On Prosodies* in five books, *On Letters*, *On Prepositions*, *On Didymus' Pithana*, *On Composition*, *On Words with Two Spellings*, *On the Word 'tis'*, *On Genders*, *On Breathings*, *On Possessives*, and *On Conjugation*. (Adler number: alpha, 3422) Dio of Prusa, sophist and philosopher, is one of the most famous sophists who wrote books about Homer and other classical authors not from the grammatical perspective, but a rather free reception of classical authors in common types of speech the sophists used to employ we already mentioned above. Dio wrote *Is the Cosmos Perishable?*, *Encomium of Heracles and Plato*, *In Defence of Homer Against Plato* in four books, and *On the Virtues of Alexander* in five books. *Sudas* closes this entry with the note that this man even attacked Homer for falsifying his record of the Trojan War. (Adler number: delta, 1240) Poetical production of sophists is rather untypical. Classic authors became the subject of their speeches as we can see from Dio's works. The most accepted poet was Homer and his work was the authority of later

poetry; Homer's works kept Greek pagan mythology in written form memorized and contributed in this way to the common cultural heritage. Sophistic reception had a similar effect.

### **III. Answering the 'Why?': The Idea of the Sophistic Works in its Cultural Context**

Why were sophists important for the culture of late antiquity? The historiography of late antiquity, as Ando (31) critically stated, was based on popular indices of continuity, change, and decline to particular systems of moral and aesthetic evaluation. Rhetoric is one of them and the 'decline of rhetoric' is a common topos in the historiography of rhetoric after the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The sophistic movement as a part of rhetoric crossing the borders of Greek and Roman homeland and spreading all over the Mediterranean is actually an indicator for the continuity of sophistry. Sophistry guaranteed an export of cultural values in a common language and the education in common forms of discourse of the dominant Greek and Roman culture. The fact that sophists often worked for embassies also should be mentioned here, but also the single traveling sophist crossing borders and performing speeches in urban social settings guaranteed both continuity and exchange of knowledge. Style as an intertextual linguistic and abstract structure in a means of both oral and written communication, i.e. language, enabled the reader or hearer/viewer to receive it in recognizable structures; the memory (*memoria*) is the corresponding area in rhetoric. Commonly shared stylistic principles were the concern of the *idea* of sophists we can see in many of their didactical writings. Style was concretely bound to the existence of words and its effectiveness resulted in the demand of teachers for sophistry and a variety of places and institutions to perform sophistry. It is an economic response, when contemporary scholars narrate that such an activity was paid. On the contrary, philosophers could not claim such efficiency and their practical efficiency was lower than the one of the sophists. The continuity of sophistic teaching and writings in Constantinople and its adaptation in Christian Europe in the Middle Ages and in Arab philosophy are actually reasons to ask for a



change of the cultural context in times of continuity of sophistic values and practice. Sophists were among the first who developed a historical perspective of events of the past and offered writings of historiography beyond the level of the *encomium* of a person, the speech type sophistic historical writing derived from.

Works like *On Style (Peri Ideon)*, canons of figures of speech, and typologies of style are core elements of rhetoric and sophistry and essential for the success of the speaker and the basic subject all sophists taught. Rhetoric with its impact of the types of style and figures on interdisciplinary scholarly work enabled sophists to transcend borders of knowledge. Most of the opponents speaking against the sophists were either politically or religiously motivated and accused the sophists as elements of the pagan culture in late antiquity. This tendency of competition we can already see when we examine the relation between rhetoric and sophistry; they have never been divided in terms of their activity as a unit of speakers and teachers and their common codified rules in technical handbooks. In general, sophistry served as an important tool of transfer for Greek scholarship. The early separation between philosophers and sophists in the time of the 1<sup>st</sup> Sophistic was in late antiquity not as strict as in the time of the beginning of both disciplines. Actually, both groups now shared the common pagan heritage and in terms of their techniques they even had similarities in their roots of argumentative patterns. Taking the example of Aristotle, we can even say that this man, traditionally considered to be a philosopher, also wrote sophistic books, which are actually the rare exception among the books of sophists mainly writing technical rhetorical works. Many among the philosophers of late antiquity in the Mediterranean were also sophists, as we can see from the biographies of their lives in *Sudas*. It was also not uncommon in a career path to change the profession from sophist to philosopher and other disciplines and *vice versa*.

Crick (21) stated that the dividing line between rhetoric and science has traditionally been drawn “at the split between persuasion and logic. “Crick also mentioned that recent scholarship has blurred this border. Examining the role of the sophists we even can extend the blurred

area to the professions and to the contemporary literature. The necessity of style arose from the need of communicable contents and stylistic principles guaranteed recognizable linguistic patterns. After the conflicts between rhetoricians and politics of Rome restricting this discipline that came from Greece to Rome, rhetoric and sophistry had a stable position both in the education system and the political system. While in Alexandria the sophists and rhetoricians were not state employed professors, in other cities like Rome and Constantinople the job of a professor of rhetoric was institutionalized. Sophistry was an urban and personalized phenomenon with individual actions of the single sophist. It required a public audience of educated persons or — as a teaching field — persons interested in education. Since it was in most cases of performing sophists not separated from other fields of studies and knowledge, it made the transfer of knowledge out of a separated discipline to other disciplines possible. Since the sophists performed free speech, they were often in danger to say something not accepted according to social norms and practice. Even though they worked at the courts as speakers, there are also cases of sophists in conflict with customs and laws and accused due to the performance of their profession or the contents of their speeches and teachings.

#### **IV. Outlook and Summary. The Impact of the Image on Scholarly Work**

The impact of the image and related forms on scholarly work regarding the sophists themselves was relatively small; references to Plato's image of the sophist are in late antiquity relatively unimportant. Negative descriptions of sophists during this time were actually a result from different cultural groups and one among them was the one of the sophists. If we look at the image as a feature of scholarly work in antiquity we come to quite different conclusions. Visuality and typology were categories both the philosopher Plato and sophists employed. The *idea* with its very distinct meaning and function was a part of their concepts; from the specific functions the *idea* had we can derive the importance of the visual in their theories. Regarding the sophists, it is the

area of the figures of style. The comparative study of the differentiated use of visual phenomena like the *idea* used in different antique disciplines enables us to compare their concepts. Its linguistic intertextuality and the interdisciplinarity in sophistic works indicate the transfer of knowledge across geographical areas and social and professional groups in antiquity.

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**Resumo:** Os sofistas exerceram a sua actividade entre pessoas educadas e eruditos do mundo do Mediterrâneo, depois da 1ª Sofística, e em muitos aspectos como um grupo especial e diferenciado. Atendendo a que numerosos testemunhos indiciam que eles actuaram não só como sofistas, mas que executaram também outras actividades, examinaremos aqui vários casos em que se podem detectar semelhanças e diferenças entre eles e outros grupos de eruditos. Às nossas três perguntas básicas ‘que, como e porque os sofistas ensinaram e escreveram?’ responderemos, analisando diacrónicamente os principais géneros e formas de escrita que eles produziram ('Que'); o 'Como' será respondido a partir da observação da sua acção como uma actividade comunicativa situada nas margens das disciplinas contemporâneas; e ao 'Porque' tentaremos responder, enfatizando a necessidade da actividade sofística na educação e socialização contemporâneas da Antiguidade tardia. Assumindo que o estilo foi uma ideia dos sofistas, debruçar-nos-emos criticamente sobre o conceito platónico de ideias, no contexto do conceito de ideias decorrente dos sofistas contemporâneos e posteriores, focalizado em função da visualidade, desde os primeiros trabalhos sofísticos até à época mais tardia, representada nas *Imagines* de Filóstrato.

**Palavras-chave:** Retórica; Sofística; Antiguidade Tardia; Mediterrâneo; Estilo; Ideia.

**Resumen:** Los sofistas desarrollaron su actividad entre personas educadas y eruditos del mundo mediterráneo, tras la primera sofística, y en muchos aspectos como un grupo especial y diferenciado. Teniendo en consideración que numerosos testimonios dejan ver que no sólo actuaron como sofistas sino que también realizaron otras actividades, examinaremos aquí varios casos en que se pueden detectar similitudes y diferencias entre ellos y otros grupos de eruditos. A nuestras tres preguntas básicas (¿Qué enseñaron y escribieron los sofistas? ¿Cómo? ¿Por qué?) responderemos analizando diacrónicamente los principales géneros de forma escrita que produjeron (¿Qué?); se responderá al “¿cómo?” a partir de la observación de su acción como una actividad comunicativa situada en los márgenes de las disciplinas contemporáneas; e intentaremos responder al “¿por qué?” destacando la necesidad de la actividad sofística en la educación y socialización contemporáneas de la Antigüedad tardía. Asumiendo que el estilo fue una idea de los sofistas, nos extenderemos críticamente sobre el concepto platónico de ideas, en el contexto del concepto de ideas que viene de los sofistas contemporáneos y posteriores, centrado en función de la visualidad, desde los primeros trabajos sofísticos hasta la época más tardía, representada en las *Imágenes* de Filóstrato.

**Palabras Clave:** Retórica; Sofística; Antigüedad Tardía; Mediterráneo; Estilo; Idea.

**Résumé:** Après la 1<sup>ère</sup> Sophistique, les Sophistes ont exercé leur influence sur des personnes éduquées et des érudits du monde Méditerranéen, et en de nombreux aspects comme un groupe spécial et autre. Mais le fait est que de nombreux témoignages révèlent qu'ils n'ont pas seulement agi comme sophistes, mais qu'ils ont aussi exercé d'autres activités, c'est pourquoi nous examinerons, ici, plusieurs cas où il est possible de découvrir les constantes et les différences existantes entre eux et les autres groupes d'érudits. Nous répondrons à nos trois questions de base, "que, comment et pourquoi les sophistes ont-ils enseigné et écrit?", en analysant diachroniquement les principaux genres et formes d'écriture produits par eux ("Que"); nous répondrons au "Comment" en observant leur action comme une activité communicative située aux marges des disciplines contemporaines; et nous essayerons de répondre au "Pourquoi", en mettant l'accent sur l'importance de l'activité sophistique en ce qui concerne l'éducation et la socialisation contemporaines de l'Antiquité tardive. Partant du principe que le style est une idée des sophistes, nous nous intéresserons de façon critique au concept platonicien d'idées — dans le contexte du concept d'idées découlant des sophistes contemporains et de ceux qui s'ensuivront —, centré sur la fonction de représentation présente dans les *Imagines* de Philostrate, à partir des premiers travaux sophistiques jusqu'à la période plus tardive.

**Mots-clé:** Rhétorique; Sophistique; Antiquité tardive; Méditerranée; Style; Idée.