

## Apuleius the Philosopher?

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**Abstract** This paper is about the classification of Apuleius as either a philosopher or as a sophist. Known to us primarily through his Second Sophistic novel *Metamorphoses* (*Transformations*), alternatively entitled *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius 'the philosopher' does not trip off the tongue. As Apuleius says in *Florida* 13, the wisdom and the eloquence of the philosopher (*philosophi ratio et oratio*) are ready at all times to awaken awe in all who hear. Apuleius is equally *rheto*r and *philosophus* and both these facets are exemplified not only in his philosophical works but also pre-eminently in the *Metamorphoses*.

Known to us primarily through his entertaining second-century Latin novel *Metamorphoses* (*Transformations*) alternatively entitled *The Golden Ass*, Apuleius 'the philosopher' does not trip off the tongue.<sup>1</sup> The title of a recent useful translation and commentary that actually includes one of his philosophical treatises, *On the god of Socrates* (*De Deo Socratis*), is *Apuleius, Rhetorical Works*.<sup>2</sup> Apuleius' treatise on *daimons* is presented here along with an important forensic speech *Apology*, and *Florida*, a series of extracts from speeches on different subjects including philosophy. *On Plato and His Doctrine* (*De Platone et eius dogmate*) and *On the Universe* (*De Mundo*) are available in an older French translation.<sup>3</sup> The *Metamorphoses* chronicles how a young man Lucius who, due to unbridled curiosity, is transformed into a donkey, has many adventures as an animal in Thessaly, and is transformed back into human shape by the goddess Isis. This novel overshadows Apuleius' contribution as a philosopher because it is an extraordinary creative achievement. But to let the novel eclipse the philosophical works altogether is going too far in the other direction because the novel is in a sense Apuleius' supreme exposition of his philosophical worldview.

Why might it be more instructive to see the novel as part of Apuleius' philosophy or philosophical 'worldview', rather than to view

<sup>1</sup> J. L. Hilton, in S. J. Harrison, J. L. Hilton and V. J. C. Hunink, *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 128-30, eventually concludes that Apuleius resembles a professional sophist rather than a philosopher merely in respect of Apuleius' 'bitter rivalry for the favour of influential men'.

<sup>2</sup> S. J. Harrison, J. L. Hilton and V. J. C. Hunink, *Apuleius: Rhetorical Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

<sup>3</sup> J. Beaujeu, *Apulée: Opuscules philosophiques et fragments* (Paris, 1973). Hereafter, *De Platone et eius Dogmate* will be abbreviated as DP, and *De deo Socratis* as DDS.

the philosophical works as adjuncts to, or even totally separate from, the novel? I think it correct to say that Apuleius himself would have viewed the novel as integral to his work as a philosopher because eloquence is always at the centre of his philosophy.<sup>4</sup> Many literary and cultural theorists, notably Bakhtin, view even Plato's philosophical dialogues as proto-novels.<sup>5</sup> One of the fragments of Apuleius tells the story of the pupil of Socrates, Aristippus, who was asked by a tyrant what he achieved from his devoted study of philosophy. Aristippus replies that this study meant that he could safely and cleverly converse with all men (*ut omnibus hominibus secure et intrepide fabularer*).<sup>6</sup> As Apuleius says in *Florida* 13, the wisdom and the eloquence of the philosopher (*philosophi ratio et oratio*) are ready at all times to awaken awe in all who hear. Apuleius is equally *rheto*r and *philosophus* and both these facets are exemplified in the *Metamorphoses*. Of course the novel is not written as a philosophical treatise—this would be absurd—but it is written in the manner of its time, replete with the wisdom and eloquence of a philosopher. This is the background to Apuleius as we see him now.

While hoping to avoid accusations of measuring the feet of a flea, I want to look at why classifying Apuleius (125 -180? AD) as a philosopher in any way whatsoever is problematic at the present time. It is strange to me that in our era of post-modern rejection of many cultural assumptions, and even certainties, to do with truth, language, and knowledge, that it is not always recognised that the prevailing picture of the philosopher as a type of logician, and a professional, rational dialectician is only one option. This view of what a philosopher is does not fit with the views of what constituted a philosopher in the Second Sophistic. A brief review of ancient and modern scholarship on the question of classification of philosophers is followed by some remarks on Apuleius as a philosopher and a short discussion of two examples from his repertoire.

<sup>4</sup> See M. O'Brien, *Apuleius' Debt to Plato in the Metamorphoses* (Lewiston, NY; Mellen Press, 2002), especially 'Apuleius: The concept of a philosophical discourse', pp. 1-26.

<sup>5</sup> Notably M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by M. M. Bakhtin, edited by M. Holquist, translated by M. Holquist and C. Emerson (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 259-422; A. Cook, *The Stance of Plato* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996), pp. 91-93; J. Wang, 'The Invention of 'Greek' Love Stories: Plato's Symposium', in *Novelistic Love in the Platonic Tradition: Fielding, Faulkner and the Postmodernists* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield 1997), pp. 29-65.

<sup>6</sup> Apuleius, *Fragments*, 2.106; Beaujeu, *Apulée*, 165. Hilton translates as follows: 'To be able to converse with all without fear or anxiety' (in Harrison, Hilton and Hunink, *Apuleius*, p. 182).

Apuleius was known primarily as a philosopher of the Platonic hue in antiquity. A fellow North African, Augustine (354-430 AD), sets him alongside Plotinus (205-269/270 AD), Iamblichus (245-325 AD), and Porphyry (234-305 AD), as a Platonist philosopher; indeed, Apuleius alone is dubbed rather patriotically 'Apuleius the African ... the noble Platonist' (*Apuleius Afer ... Platonicus nobilis*, *De Civ. Dei* 8.12). It is probably due to Augustine in the first instance that Apuleius is most famous as a philosopher for his disquisition on daemons, intermediary entities existing between God and humanity, noticed by Augustine for his own purposes in *The City of God*. The grammarian, Charisius, in the third century records an onomatopoeic word *mutmut* ('muttering') in the work of one 'Platonic Apuleius' (*Apuleium Platonicum*).<sup>7</sup> *Philosophus Platonicus* may be a mere tag, but, as against this, it is pervasive in designations of Apuleius at this time and would not be so if he were not seen as a leading intellectual. Sidonius Apollinaris (431-489 AD), bishop of Clermont, writing to a friend urges him to discuss religious stories, but that if he should tire of these he would improve himself by looking up the systems of thought (*formulas*) of the Platonic Madaurensan, that is, of Apuleius (*Ep.* 9.13).<sup>8</sup> In addition, Apuleius, who was a native of Madaura in Algeria near the Tunisian border, is the subject of at least one inscription from that area appended to an honorary statue that is dedicated to a Platonic philosopher.<sup>9</sup> This philosopher is thought to be Apuleius. On the other hand, among modern scholars, Apuleius is not often even considered to be worthy of being called a philosopher. Second century contemporaries Numenius of Apamea, Nicomachus of Gerasa, Eudorus, Moderatus of Gades, Albinus, Plutarch, or Atticus, while not all philosophers of the highest rank, are all still allowed the title of philosopher at least. One expert in philosophy says that Apuleius 'is not a philosopher' and merely

<sup>7</sup> H. Keil, *Grammatici Latini* (Teubner, 1857), Volume 1, 240. K. Barwick (1925 & 1964).

<sup>8</sup> O. M. Dalton, *The Letters of Sidonius Apollinaris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915); also, R. A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). On the durability of the tag *philosophus Platonicus*, see B. Hijmans, 'Apuleius: Philosophus Platonicus', *ANRW* 2, 36, 1 (1987), pp. 395-475—the locus classicus on Apuleius' work in philosophy. Cf. G. Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius: Apuleius and the Second Sophistic* (Leiden: Brill, 1997); and J. M. Dillon's indispensable *The Middle Platonists* (London, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> S. Gsell, *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie* (Paris, 1922), 1.2115: 'By a decree of the Senate the citizens of Madaura grant this at public expense to their Platonic philosopher, to their ornament' (PHILOSOPHO PLATONICO, MADAURENSES CIVES ORNAMENTO SUO DECRETO DECURIONUM PECUNIA PUBLICA). Cf. Apuleius, *Florida* 16.

plays at being one.<sup>10</sup> Another expert, this time on the novel, in a discussion on the inscription at Madaura, is perplexed as to why Apuleius calls himself a Platonic philosopher ‘when he was nothing of the kind’.<sup>11</sup> Rives expands on Dillon’s remarks about Apuleius playing at philosophy when he says that philosophy at this time was understood more as a way of life rather than a narrow academic pursuit.<sup>12</sup> Sandy comes closer to the mark when he says that for Apuleius *belles-lettres* and philosophy are inextricably linked, yet Sandy veers off again, as noticed in a recent commentary on the *Florida*, when emphasising Apuleius’ celebrity because he practically puts Apuleius in the ‘rock chick’ category of celebrity!<sup>13</sup>

Apuleius was not the kind of professional philosopher who taught, like the earlier Epictetus, or engaged in criticism like the later Sextus Empiricus, or rethought vast philosophical concepts in a radical way.<sup>14</sup> In this he was no different from many other figures of the second century, such as the philosophers Numenius of Apamea, or Albinus, or the even more obscure Nicomachus of Gerasa. A work of the last named, *Introduction to Arithmetic*, may have been translated by Apuleius into Latin. Apuleius also made a translation of Plato’s *Phaedo*, now also lost.<sup>15</sup> Such translations mean that Apuleius is seen at best as a ‘serious but unoriginal philosopher.’<sup>16</sup> Now, this is the case, I think, if you look at the philosophical works separately and apart from the *Metamorphoses*. Apuleius’ philosophical works *On the God of Socrates* (*De Deo Socratis*), *On Plato and His Doctrine* (*De Platone et eius dogmate*), *On the Universe* (*De Mundo*) on their own are derivative, and although serious are unoriginal. Dillon says that Apuleius was interested in philosophy as part of culture—not as a serious study. Building on this in a way Dillon may not have intended, it can be observed that if looked at altogether, the philosophical works, including the *Florida*, and importantly the novel, make a striking and

<sup>10</sup> Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, pp. 310-11

<sup>11</sup> J. Tatum, *Apuleius and the Golden Ass* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979), p. 108

<sup>12</sup> J. B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 41

<sup>13</sup> Sandy, *The Greek World of Apuleius*, pp. 178-9 and cf. pp. 26, 35-6. Cf. B. Todd Lee, *Apuleius’ Florida: A Commentary* (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin 2005), p. 24.

<sup>14</sup> Hijmans, ‘Apuleius: Philosophus Platonicus’, p. 470; Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 307

<sup>15</sup> Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 352; Apuleius *Fragments*, 9-10 (Beaujeu *Apulée*); Apuleius, *Florida*, 20.5-6. Cf. S. J. Harrison, ‘Apuleius in Context: Life, Background, Writings’, in *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 1-38 (esp. pp. 16-23).

<sup>16</sup> M. Morford, *The Roman Philosophers* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 226

original contribution to formulation of the concept of a philosophical discourse in the second century.

Again, it is often the way Apuleius is interested in philosophy that vitiates his claim, in many eyes, to be a philosopher, Platonic or otherwise. It is precisely because he *is* seen as a novelist and because he was interested in philosophy as a doctrine that leads not only to living well in the Roman tradition, but also, most importantly for the novelist, to speaking well that his contribution has not been recognised. He is seen as more akin to the self-help gurus of today than to a professional philosopher.<sup>17</sup> This view arises too from the way Apuleius interprets Plato's philosophy as a system or set of beliefs. This set of beliefs leads humans to the facility (*utilitas*) of living and learning and the theory (*ratio*) of speaking (*De Platone* 189). Apuleius' interpretation of Plato's philosophy is grounded in the practical Roman tradition which dictates that philosophy is a system that trains people to live well and to learn a proper method of speaking, a philosophy that defines the world and man's place in it.<sup>18</sup> Plato, Apuleius' hero, in Apuleius' interpretation uses rhetorical art or the art of *logoi*, words, not merely as a kind of adjunct to wisdom, rather he maintains that if rightly employed rhetoric is a proper part of a system of higher knowledge in, for example, *Phaedrus* (278b-d), and *Phaedo* (90b). This is the hook on which Apuleius hangs his Platonism.<sup>19</sup> Apuleius places discourse in a centrally important place in his philosophical system. He even defines humans, who reign supreme in the perceptual arena, as those who rejoice in reason and are powerful in speech.<sup>20</sup> Similar to Apuleius, Cicero (106-44BC) was attracted to the Academic philosophy because of his conviction that this school admitted of both philosophy and rhetoric in a complementary relationship.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire*, p. 41

<sup>18</sup> Apuleius, DP 189. Cf. E. Black, 'Plato's View of Rhetoric' in *Plato: True and Sophistic Rhetoric*, edited by K. V. Erickson (Amsterdam, 1979), pp. 171-91; Black concludes (much as Apuleius does) that Plato did not despise rhetoric, citing passages like *Phaedrus* 278b-d and *Phaedo* 90b. This was not unheard of: see Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.2.31 on Socrates' almost magical eloquence; cf. Plato, *Meno* 80b, *Theaetetus* 157c-d, *Menexenus* 235a-b, *Symposium* 215c-d, *Phaedrus* 271c, *Gorgias* 456a, *Phaedo* 77e.

<sup>19</sup> See Dillon, *The Middle Platonists*, p. 307; Hijmans, 'Apuleius: Philosophus Platonicus', p. 467

<sup>20</sup> Apuleius, DDS 126-7

<sup>21</sup> On Cicero and the Academic philosophy, see Cicero, *De Fato* 2.3, *Tusculan Disputations* 1.3.6 and 4.4, *Paradoxa Stoicorum* Proems 2 and 3, *De Officiis* 1.3 and *De Natura Deorum* 2.59.148; cf. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* 1. Pr. 13 and 2.16.15; cf. 2.21.13. On the ideal orator, see Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria*, 12.1.25 and 2.8, and compare Apuleius DP 228,

Apuleius' Latin predecessor, Cicero, maintains that speech is the queen of all the arts.<sup>22</sup>

Yet it is true to say Apuleius is not a professional philosopher in the sense understood today. Apuleius may not have been a 'professional philosopher' in his day. Who was? The problem of classification remains and has a long ancestry. Even in the ancient world such a mixture of eloquence and wisdom was suspect and wide open to being ridiculed and charged with being lightweight. The most famous example in the ancient world of this vexing conflation of linguistic virtuosity with philosophy noticeable in Apuleius is from the Greek tradition, and a sarcastic and comic one familiar from the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. The *Clouds* are foster-mothers to a crowd of linguistic virtuosos or Sophists. Aristophanes satirises Socrates by calling him a Sophist even though Socrates took no fees and Plato constantly represents him as the Sophists' opponent. Our Apuleius, a much later figure, and another example of this conflation of linguistic virtuosity with philosophy, is a lively conundrum of the so-called Second Sophistic: variously dubbed a novelist, a philosopher, a self-professed follower of Plato, a magician, a person tried and acquitted of fraud. The cultural background of the time meant that sophistry was *not* exclusively reserved for entertainment. Further, sophistic discourse was not considered unsuitable for dealing with serious issues, a point made by Moles in a paper on the more specious than real 'conversion' of Dio, Apuleius' contemporary, from rhetoric to philosophy.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, Bowersock in his book on sophists in the Roman Empire is right when he notes that in the second century both sophists/rhetors and philosophers were indistinguishable.<sup>24</sup> This classification 'problem' as Stanton has it, is evident in the directions modern Apuleian scholarship has taken.<sup>25</sup> It mirrors Aristophanes' problem with the philosopher Socrates and the Sophists: Apuleius is at one and the same time both a philosopher and an author of a funny novel. So then is it the case that philosophy, which seems to equal

where both recommend that the ideal orator should have practical wisdom (*prudentia*) and theoretical knowledge (*sapientia*)—that is, knowledge of things human and divine.

<sup>22</sup> On speech as queen of all the arts, see *De Natura Deorum* 3.31.77 ff; cf. *Orator* pp. 10 and 101.

<sup>23</sup> J. L. Moles, 'The Career and Conversion of Dio Chrysostom', *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 98 (1978), pp. 79-100 (esp. pp. 80-1)

<sup>24</sup> G. W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 11-15

<sup>25</sup> G.R. Stanton also quotes Bowersock in his 'Sophists and Philosophers: Problems of Classification', *American Journal of Philology* 94, 4 (1973), pp. 350-64.

serious, and novel writing which is seen as equivalent to entertainment almost exclusively, clouds all recent work on the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius? The answer is yes. Novel writing is seen as a kind of betrayal of his claim that he is a philosopher and Apuleius only occasionally emerges from the clouds as a philosopher as well as a novelist.<sup>26</sup> Similar to Iris Murdoch, it could be said that Apuleius—at odds with what we now define as the rational, professional, philosopher, as Peter Conradi has it of Murdoch—is ‘simply interested, as philosophers once in the golden age once were, in everything on earth’.<sup>27</sup> In sum, Apuleius emphasizes, on the one hand, the changeable nature of inferior discourse and how it captivates by semblances. On the other hand, he maintains the existence of his philosophical discourse with its fixed and constant nature, the discipline which contemplates good, so difficult to study that even Plato failed to achieve perfection in it. Apuleius, who styles himself *philosophus platonicus*, is equally *rheto[r] platonicus*, and he himself would have seen no conflict between the two terms. Apuleius is a philosopher of his time and his contribution, obvious in all he wrote, is in placing discourse at the centre of his philosophical thought.

To understand his contribution one must see that philosophy and literature, the story, were not as separate in the ancient mind as they are in the modern one. Anderson reveals this in the case of Apuleius’ contemporary, Aulus Gellius, and his love of the anecdote.<sup>28</sup> Aulus Gellius is in a way a novelist or a story-teller in the exposition of his philosophical ideas. This notion is admirably teased out, in the case of Plato, by Watson in ‘Plato and the Story’ where he maintains that the ‘proper story’ in Plato, such as the cave in the *Republic*, is not a story about the world but an ‘image of the world and of man’s place in the world’.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Most notably in the work of the Dutch scholar Ben Hijmans (‘Apuleius: Philosophus Platonicus’) and Carl Schlam (see *infra*, n. 38).

<sup>27</sup> P. J. Conradi, *Iris Murdoch: A Life* (London, 2001), pp. 268 and 460, where Murdoch herself in her journal in 1970 wonders when her obsessive phase as a novelist will end! Difficulty in categorising Murdoch appears again in A. N. Wilson, *Iris Murdoch as I Knew Her* (London, 2003), pp. 27-8.

<sup>28</sup> G. Anderson, ‘Aulus Gellius: A Miscellanist and his World’, *ANRW* II.34.2 (Berlin, 1994), pp. 1834-62: see esp. pp. 1848-9 on rhetoric and philosophy and the importance of anecdotes in philosophy about intellectual luminaries, as, for instance, whether Plato and Xenophon were rivals. Cf. D. Sedley, ‘Philosophical Allegiance in the Greco-Roman World’ in *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Philosophy and Roman Society*, edited by M. Griffin and J. Barnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 97-129, esp. pp. 99 and 118.

<sup>29</sup> G. Watson, ‘Plato and the Story’ in *Platonic Investigations*, edited by D. J. O’Meara (Washington D.C., 1985), pp. 35-52 (p. 51). Cf. Plato, *Republic* 532a.

Turning to Apuleius, we see the 'story' of Thales in Plato's *Theaetetus* reworked by Apuleius in *Florida* 18. 17. First, in Plato, Socrates takes up the example of Thales for consideration:

While he [Thales] was studying the stars and looking upwards, he fell into a pit, and a witty Thracian servant girl jeered at him, they say, because he was so eager to know the things in the sky that he could not see what was there before him at his very feet. The jest applies to all who pass their lives in philosophy. For really such a man pays no attention to his next-door neighbour, he is not only ignorant of what he is doing, but he hardly knows whether he is a human being or some other kind of a creature.<sup>30</sup>

This man is compared to the non-philosopher who, when he is compelled to give an account of philosophical matters,

... stammers and becomes ridiculous, not in the eyes of Thracian girls or other uneducated persons, for they have no perception of it, but in those of all men who have been brought up as free men, not as slaves (*Tht.* 175d).

Apuleius turns around Plato's *exemplum* of the perplexed philosopher by making the sophist Protagoras the laughing stock and saving the eloquent sage Thales from the indignity of a fall. This story becomes a practical and populist illustration of Apuleius' discourse theory, a theory that is at the centre of his philosophical world-view.<sup>31</sup> So it is that in *Florida* 18 Apuleius divines that his audience, despite their bookish and philosophical interests, wish to hear stories. The *exempla* of Protagoras and Thales illustrate the complicated nature of discourse: the rewards of sophistry are illustrated, and also the prizes of practical and theoretical knowledge won by philosophy. The example of Protagoras is as follows. Apuleius' description of him emphasizes his rhetorical skill; he is 'one of the most eloquent among the first inventors of the art of rhetoric' (*Florida* 18.19). Protagoras pledges rashly that his pupil, Euathlus, should pay tuition fees to his teacher after Euathlus wins his first case. Euathlus learns all the tricks of the trade, but when he completes his studies he

<sup>30</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus* 174c. On commentary as a legacy of earlier philosophy and specifically on the anonymous commentary of the *Theaetetus* (known from a papyrus of ca. 150 AD) which dated to the first century BC, see D. Sedley, 'Plato's Auctoritas and the Rebirth of the Commentary Tradition', in *Philosophia Togata II: Plato and Aristotle at Rome*, edited by M. Griffin and J. Barnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 110-29.

<sup>31</sup> Apuleius, *Florida* 18.29. See esp. Lee, *Apuleius' Florida: A Commentary*, pp. 167-78: 'Apuleius defines his rhetoric as philosophy rather than sophistry' (p. 168). Cf. Hijmans, 'Apuleius: Philosophus Platonius', p. 396; and Diogenes Laertius, 9.6.



displays great reluctance to plead any case and to pay his fees. Protagoras takes him to court on a charge of non-payment of fees. Protagoras argues: if you lose, Euathlus, you will have to pay your fees because you will be condemned to do so. If you win, you will still have to pay under the terms of your contract. Euathlus, *perfectissimus discipulus*, replies: if I win, I am acquitted by the court; if I lose, I will not have to pay you, Protagoras, because I will have lost my first case. Therefore, says Apuleius, the reward of Protagoras must be left to the shrewd and avaricious.

The reward Thales receives is far better. Thales is described as one of the Seven Sages, philosopher, inventor, investigator and observer. Mandraytus of Priene promises, in reply to Thales' request that he will always honour Thales as the founder of the knowledge he learned from him. Apuleius concludes: 'In truth, that was a noble recompense, worthy of so great a man and beyond the reach of time' (*Florida* 18.35). This story functions as an image of Apuleius' philosophical worldview and the place in it of the discourse of a philosopher.

Our second example comes from the *Metamorphoses*. Even though Apuleius says (*DDS*, 124) that Plato was not able to pass on such learning and maintains that he, Apuleius, will not be able to convey an understanding of this supreme knowledge to others, he nevertheless gives it a shot in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>32</sup> The novel is, in effect, an account of the internal musings of the soul of Lucius, for although he is an ass for most of the novel, his soul is still there, as he is intent on telling us. For example, at the point of his first metamorphosis into an ass he anxiously points out that he retains his human sense even though he is an ass (*Met.* 3.26). Later, just prior to his anamorphosis, he notes that his soul, which seems to be endowed with vision, sees everything (*Met.* 11.3). In between, in the course of the rest of the intervening books we are constantly reminded of his speechless state.<sup>33</sup> One such reminder occurs in

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Plato, *Timaes* 28c: "The maker and father of this universe it is a hard task (*ergon*) to find, and having found him it would be impossible (*adynaton*) to declare him to all mankind' cf. Apuleius *DP* 190, *Apology* 64, and *Met.* 11.23. See R. Mortley, 'The Fundamentals of the Via Negativa', *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), p. 433, for the new awe before the transcendent in this period. For the later Platonist Plotinus, even the attainment of knowledge is now seen as impossible, not to mind passing it on to others (*Enn.* V.3.14). It is interesting to note how much closer to Plato Apuleius is in this respect.

<sup>33</sup> In *Met.* 3.25, he cannot admonish Photis since he has no voice or limbs to gesture appropriately (similarly in *Met.* 10.29). In *Met.* 3.29 and 7.3, he tries to shout 'Caesar'. In *Met.* 8.29, 7.25, he cannot defend Lucius on a 'false' charge. In *Met.* 4.5, he resolves to

*Metamorphoses* 10, and focuses on Socrates who is mentioned by the moralizing ass in an inane commentary interjected on the entire episode.<sup>34</sup> Socrates is one of the luminaries revered by the writers of the Second Sophistic, who like to compare their own experiences to those of the great men of old.<sup>35</sup> Apuleius is no exception to this trend. Lucius, the hero of the *Metamorphoses*, can be seen as a kind of anti-Socrates.<sup>36</sup> He ends up in a leathery skin wandering about in Thessaly where Platonic Socrates would not be led.<sup>37</sup> It is then supremely ironic that his 'cogitations' (*meis cogitationibus*, *Met.* 10.35) culminate in this vignette of the one the Delphic oracle judged the wisest (*Met.* 10.33). Platonic allusions permeate the entire *ekphrasis*: the allusion to the two Venuses and the notion that this entire episode is a kind of presentation of the gods as a corrupt spectacle 'like the stories Plato condemned'.<sup>38</sup> The allusion to Socrates comes while the ass is watching a pageant depicting the judgment of Paris. A couple of similarly ruinous judgments are adduced by the ass: Palamedes, unjustly accused of treason by the Greeks on forged evidence produced by Odysseus, the false judgment made against Ajax, and the judgment of the Athenians against Socrates. Are not the Athenians sorry now, says the ass, since they are marred with an eternal mark of shame 'since even now many outstanding philosophers' (*egregii philosophi*) want to follow Socrates (*Met.* 10.33). The story of Socrates illustrates the perils of making judgments by listening to two opposing sides in an argument and is similar to the Protagoras *exemplum* in the *Florida* discussed above. Such discourse is imperfect and is injurious to those who engage in it and also to those who are judged by it. Lucius, the anti-Socrates, or parody of Socrates, is a mix of creatures. He is in essence an apt illustration of the state of mind of the philosopher described in the

think (*cogitans*) because he cannot talk. In *Met.* 6.29, Charite muses on whether there might not be a man inside the ass (cf. the auctioneer, *Met.* 8.25).

<sup>34</sup> *Met.* 10.29-34, esp. 33. For a detailed reading of the entire episode using reader-response theory, see M. Zimmerman-de Graaf, 'Narrative Judgment and Reader Response in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* 10.29-34: The Pantomime of the Judgment of Paris', *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel V* (1993), pp. 143-61 (esp. pp. 157-8).

<sup>35</sup> Moles, 'The Career and Conversion of Dio Chrysostom', pp. 96-9.

<sup>36</sup> M. O'Brien, 'Lucius the anti-Socrates in Thessaly' in *Apuleius' Debt to Plato in the Metamorphoses*, pp. 27-45

<sup>37</sup> Plato, *Crito*, 53

<sup>38</sup> Zimmerman-de Graaf, 'Narrative Judgment and Reader Response', p. 152. Cf. Schlam, *The Metamorphoses of Apuleius: On making an Ass of Oneself* (Duckworth, 1992), pp. 55, 73. Cf. quoted by Zimmerman above, N. Fick, 'Die Pantomime des Apuleius (*Met.* X,30-34,3)' the *ekphrasis* is defence of the 'inspired written word' in *Theater und Gesellschaft im Imperium Romanum*, edited by J. Bländsdorf (Tübingen, 1990), pp. 223-32.

*Theaetetus* who ‘knows not whether he be a human being or some other creature’. The story is an illustration of the real power of discourse. This discourse is silent and explored silently in the soul/mind of the philosopher. Apuleius’ ‘discipline of contemplating good’, equivalent to the discourse ‘full of steady reasoning and credibility’ or the ‘eternal and constant account’, describes the true power of supreme discourse which approximates to Plato’s dialectic<sup>39</sup>. In Plato, this dialectic has no voice, no assistance of the senses, and so by analogy, as Apuleius must wish us to see, his superior discourse is a silent one.<sup>40</sup> In the *Metamorphoses* Lucius resolves to think in order to gain the favour of his masters because he cannot talk (*Met.* 4.5.). His ‘assy cogitation’ (*asinina cogitatio*, *Met.* 6.26) is our text. Again and again, he refers to thinking and so draws the reader’s attention to the fact that he is not speaking.<sup>41</sup> His use of his judgment or thought alone is emphasized, sometimes to ridiculous effect.<sup>42</sup> Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* aptly illustrates that one who does not know his way around philosophy stammers and seems ridiculous.<sup>43</sup> Lucius, is not just some other animal but is described specifically as a ‘philosophizing ass’ (*asinus philosophans*) in *Metamorphoses* 10.33. One might agree that his assy form has made him more experienced (*multiscium*, *Met.* 9.13) but less wise.

A book is silent until it is read. Apuleius has put before the reader an illustration of his philosophy showing that discourse can be both silent and speak eternally. Like the philosophizing ass in the *Metamorphoses* Apuleius *philosophus* appears to be silent but unlike the ass he must not be deemed ridiculous for having grabbed a tablet and *stilus* and silently funneled his views through the judgement of an ass. His book is Apuleius’ other form, corresponding to Lucius’ donkey-form: it is Apuleius’ thought, his contemplation, his eternal and constant account of all his amazing adventures in philosophy. So it is the reader’s call in the end. It is up to us to make the judgment. Very carefully let us consider the question *Apuleius philosophus?* Now you see him now you don’t.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Apuleius *DP* pp. 193-4, 200-1 and 321.

<sup>40</sup> See Plato, *Seventh Letter* 341c and *Rep.* 508c-d where the soul fixes its eye on the brightness of reality in the place where truth and real being shine; cf. *Meno* 81c-d.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. *Met.* 6.29 where he discusses things silently in his soul.

<sup>42</sup> *Met.* 7.4 and 7.10 (on women); 7.12 where he sees through Tlepolemus’ story; 7.15 where he ponders on how to gain his freedom; 7.16 where Lucius as the ass remembers reading how a tyrant used to feed his human guests to his horses, and here Lucius compares himself to the humans not the quadrupeds; 8.31 where Lucius, while still a donkey, uses his human faculty of memory (*memini*).

<sup>43</sup> Plato, *Theaetetus* 174c: *aporon oun geloios phainetai*.