

Plato's Love Epigrams

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FROM *Ἀριστιππος, περὶ παλαιῆς τρυφῆς*, Diogenes Laertius has inserted in his Plato biography eight epigrams, said to be composed by Plato himself.¹ Beside the famous commemorative epigram to his departed friend Dion there are six erotic epigrams, in which Agathon, Alexis and Phaidros, Xanthippe, the courtesan Archeanassa, and a certain Aster are the objects of his love. A funeral epigram to Aster is joined to the *erotikon* written to him. If it is true that these erotic epigrams are Platonic, the philosopher would be for us the earliest representative or even the inventor of the erotic epigram, a poetic genus which, as we know from the *Anthologia Palatina*, flourished during the Hellenistic period. The problem of the Platonic authorship of these epigrams is, therefore, not only interesting for our conception of Plato, but it is also important for our idea of the development of Greek epigrammatic and love poetry.

During the last century and the beginning of the twentieth, there were doubts concerning Plato's authorship.² Today, however, the epigrams are generally looked upon as genuinely Platonic. U. von Wilamowitz and C. M. Bowra decidedly argued this view.³ Others have regarded the question as insoluble. I shall attempt to show that there are convincing reasons to assume that these epigrams (with the exception of the Dion epigram) are not composed by Plato, but that

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¹ See D.L. 3.29–32. The source of the three following epigrams (3.33) is, as R. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion* (Gießen 1893) 182f, and "Platos Epigramme," *NGG* 1921, 53f, has shown, not Aristippos, but another, later one. There is no need here to discuss these and the other epigrams ascribed to Plato in the *Anthologia Palatina* or elsewhere (conveniently collected in E. Diehl, *Anthologia Lyrica Graeca* fasc. 1³ [Leipzig 1954] 102ff). It is evident and generally accepted that most of these are false attributions. In any case, there are no subjective, erotic epigrams among them comparable in any way with the Aristippos collection. The Aristippos epigrams have entered *AP* through D.L., not Meleager: see R. Weisshaupt, *Die Grabgedichte d. gr. Anthologie* (Wien 1869) 36ff.

² See Bergk, *PLG* II⁴, 295ff, and most important R. Reitzenstein (n.1 *supra*).

³ See generally H. Leisegang, *RE* 20.2, 2535ff; U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* I (Berlin 1919), *passim*, *Hellenistische Dichtung* I (Berlin 1924) 131 (but *cf.* nn. 27 and 47 *infra*); C. M. Bowra, *AJP* 59 (1938) 395ff (= *Problems in Greek Poetry* [Oxford 1953] 126ff), *cf.* H. Lloyd-Jones, *JHS* 75 (1955) 159.

they have been written probably in the third century B.C. and have then been falsely ascribed to him.

First of all, to show the literary context of these epigrams, we must provide a short survey of the development which led to the erotic epigram of Hellenistic times.

As early as the seventh century B.C., as far as we know, there were elegies being recited at the symposia of the Greeks. The topics of these poems included anything that concerned the assembled guests either in their private or public life. They covered politics and morality as well as the pleasures of wine and love. We are able to trace the development of form and topics from the seventh to the fifth century through the fragments of Archilochos, Mimnermos, and Solon, by the Theognis collection, and finally by the few remains of Xenophanes, Ion, Dionysios, Euenos, and Kritias. During the fifth century the Greeks seem to have confined themselves in their sympotic elegies more and more to themes of lighter convivial entertainment. The elegiac distich was well suited for the brief poems which the members of a symposium, as a playful contest, recited in turn for their mutual entertainment. It was possible to recite famous, old elegies, or parts of them, or to improvise some simple verses. For all this there was no need of great poetic skill. Thus the elegy consisting of a few verses became more and more the conventional vehicle for dilettante compositions. If we set apart the so-called Platonic erotic epigrams, we do not find any poetic genius from the fifth until the fourth century who made an attempt to raise the short sympotic elegy to a higher level of art. Nobody used it more than occasionally. After the close of the fifth century our tradition ends.

In the transition from the fourth to the third century, however, there began a new poetic movement in Ionia, the center of which soon was transferred to Alexandria. Its leader was Asklepiades of Samos; his most important follower in the next generation, Kallimachos. Now sympotic poetry composed in short elegies was revived and brought to an artistic perfection that had never before been attained. This new poetic form was cultivated in small esoteric circles. These poets aspired, as Hedylos once remarked, to compose a *νέον καὶ μελιχρὸν καὶ λεπτὸν ἔπος παρ' οἶνον*, that is a new, honey-sweet, and polished poem, intended originally for the entertainment of friends assembled at a symposion, later on for circulation in published books. Monarchy restricted people to their private lives; and political

topics were not revived in their poetry. Serious philosophical ideas were not suited for the light atmosphere of these *παίγνια*. Erotic motives consequently became the more important. The poets described sensitively the pain and happiness of love and examined with irony their own feelings. They enjoyed varying their love theme in all forms.

These short sympotic and erotic poems, which consisted of only a few elegiac distichs, were called epigrams, because the conception of the epigram, which originally had embraced only true epigrams, *sc.* sepulchral and dedicatory inscriptions, had meanwhile been extended so far that it included not only all real and fictitious versified inscriptions, generally, not always composed in elegiac distichs, but also the other poems consisting of one or several distichs. It would be too long and irrelevant to describe this process in detail here.

The characteristic difference between the new erotic epigram and the short sympotic elegy of former times is the new interest in the poetical form. The artistic perfection, reached by Asklepiades and his followers may best be seen, if we look at a short elegy of the Theognis collection, which in its subject matter resembles the erotic epigrams of Hellenistic times (vv. 1345ff):

*Παιδοφιλεῖν δέ τι τερπνόν, ἐπεὶ ποτε καὶ Γανυμήδους
ἦρατο καὶ Κρονίδης, ἀθανάτων βασιλεύς,
ἀρπάξας δ' ἐς Ὀλυμπον ἀνήγαγε καὶ μιν ἔθηκεν
δαίμονα παιδείης ἄνθος ἔχοντ' ἔρατόν.
οὕτω μὴ θαύμαζε, Σιμωνίδη, οὐνεκα κἀγὼ
ἐξεφάνην καλοῦ παιδὸς ἔρωτι δαμείς.*

The motif of justifying passionate love by referring to a love adventure of Zeus is also to be found in Asklepiadean epigrams, and once Asklepiades declares also that love is a sweet thing (*AP* 5.64, 167, 169). But he never writes in so lengthy and exuberant a way. He never retells the myth at full length, but confines himself to the leading details. He would have cut and trimmed everywhere and would have composed the whole poem in a tighter, more pointed manner. He would have avoided formulaic phrases and padded lines. He would have adjusted his expression in a flexible way to the modulations of thought and mood, and he would perhaps have sought to transform the whole into one short dramatic scene. These epigrams of Asklepiades were heard and read during the third century with enthusiastic

admiration and were imitated by such poets as Poseidippos, Hedylos, Kallimachos, Dioskorides, and Rhianos.

When we now, after this short survey, return to the erotic epigrams preserved by Diogenes Laertius under Plato's name, we are astonished to notice that these poems are composed in quite the same style as the Hellenistic erotic epigram and that they, which are alleged to have been composed during the transition from the fifth to the fourth century, are based substantially on a literary development which was not to take place, as far as we know, before *ca.* 300 B.C. There exists nothing like these poems in Plato's time, nor indeed have they had imitators immediately after Plato. And, furthermore, about one hundred years later, Asklepiades does not know them but rather seems to have created the erotic epigram in a new way. His epigrams partly show forms that are demonstrably simpler than those of the so-called Platonic epigrams. Indeed no trace of influence by these "Platonic" epigrams is discernible before Dioskorides, who lived in the second half of the third century. If the so-called Platonic erotic epigrams had really been composed by Plato, they would destroy the apparent logic of the literary development—after the seventh and sixth centuries, decline in the fifth and fourth, then *ca.* 300, the revival with Asklepiades. This fact at the start necessarily makes us suspicious about the tradition ascribing these love epigrams to Plato.

Let us now investigate the several epigrams in question. Concerning Aristippos' book *περὶ παλαιᾶς τρυφῆς*, from which (probably through an intermediate source) Diogenes Laertius takes them, it is possible to make several statements.⁴ It must have been written between the second half of the third and the first century B.C.; and contained scandalous revelations about the private lives of famous statesmen, philosophers, and poets of the past. The author's habit was to defame persons famed for their moral integrity and to attribute *τρυφή* and all kinds of love affairs to them. For this purpose he did not eschew calumny. It was this man who adduced the epigrams alleged to be written by Plato, in order to convict the philosopher of varied love affairs.

⁴ See U. von Wilamowitz, "Antigonos von Karystos," *Phil. Unters.* 9 (Berlin 1886) 48ff; R. Reitzenstein, *NGG*, 53; L. Radermacher, *RhM* 91 (1942) 181ff. Our Aristippos is not a philosopher from Kyrene (*RE* 2.902, s.v. 8; 906, s.vv. 9 and 10). The name may be assumed or a personage otherwise unknown. Certainty is not attainable, and in this paper he will be called *Aristippos*.

The Dion epigram, however, must be set apart. It is not an erotic epigram composed in Hellenistic style, but a commemorative one to a deceased friend, its form already possible in an earlier time.⁵ In their interpretations of the poem Bowra and Herter have succeeded in showing its correspondence to ideas expressed in Plato's dialogues and letters.⁶ Therefore, there is no reason for us to regard this poem as not composed by Plato. It is easily imaginable that it was (together with some other material from the Academy) early inserted into the Dion biographies. From there it is most likely to have reached Aristippos. The author referred to it because of its final verse ω ἐμὸν ἐκμήνας θυμὸν ἔρωτι Δίῳν, which he seems to have taken as proof of a normal homosexual affair between the philosopher and Dion. He never considered that here the term ἔρως recalls rather those emotions which Plato described in *Symposium* and *Phaidros* as characteristic signs of philosophical ἔρως.⁷

To accept the Dion epigram as authentically Platonic does not require us to believe that Plato was also the author of the erotic epigrams. Aristippos, who in the case of the Dion epigram tendentiously interpreted the sense of verses composed by Plato, did not even hesitate to alter phrases of a well-known epigram written by Asklepiades, and subsequently assert that its author was Plato. The text in point is the Archeanassa epigram preserved for us by Meleager in his *Stephanos*, a sepulchral epigram composed by Asklepiades in the following form (AP 7.217):

Ἀρχεάνασσαν ἔχω, τὰν⁸ ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ἐταίραν,
 ἄς καὶ ἐπὶ ρυτίδων ὁ γλυκὺς ἔζητ' Ἔρωσ·
 ἄς⁹ νέον ἠβῆς ἄνθος ἀποδρέψαντες, ἐρασταὶ
 πρωτόβολοι,¹⁰ δι' ὅσας ἦλθετε πυρκαϊῆς.

⁵ See H. Herter, *RhM* 92 (1944) 298; W. Peek, *Griech. Vers-Inschriften* I (Berlin 1955) 420ff.

⁶ See C. M. Bowra, *op. cit.*; H. Herter, *op. cit.*, 289ff.

⁷ See esp. *Symp.* 209a, *Phdr.* 253c and R. Lagerborg, *Platonische Liebe* (Leipzig 1926) *passim*.

⁸ The epigram in P (throughout I use Stadtmüller's sigla) has Doric forms (cf. the same author's epitaph for Ajax at AP 7.145): v. 1 τὰν P; v. 2 ἄς P Pl; v. 3 ἄς AC₁; v. 4 δισσᾶς A^{ac} δι' ὅσας conj. Brunck. Therefore consistency would require Stadtmüller's suggested ἠβᾶς and Brunck's πυρκαϊᾶς (followed by Reitzenstein), but there is the possibility of Homerisms (cf. D. L. Page, *Alcman: the Partheneion* [Oxford 1951] 162). Certainty is not attainable; I print with MSS. ἠβῆς and πυρκαϊῆς.

⁹ In v. 3 all editors print ἄ following C₂. But C₁ has ἄς (ἄς A). The ἦν of Plan. derives from this form. With its repeated relative pronoun Antipater's imitation suggests a second ἄς in the version of Asklepiades (AP 7.218: Λαῖδ' ἔχω, πολιῆτιν ἀλιζώνιο Κορίνθου, . . . , ἐφ' ἧ . . . , ἦς καὶ . . . , ἦς . . . , ἦς ἐπι . . .). Cf. R. Reitzenstein, *NGG*, 54f. ἄ belongs to the "Platonic" version ἄ δειλοί, νεότητος ἀπαντήσαντες ἐκείνης πρωτοπλόου, which C₂ introduced to the text of Asklepiades. Jacobs first combined the two versions into ἄ νέον.

¹⁰ In v. 4 all editors and critics have printed πρωτοβόλου of Stadtmüller's P₁^{pc}. It could

In modern times, however, this epigram was often assumed to be not an epitaph, but an *erotikon* written about a living courtesan. Brunck for the first time advanced this view, to be approved by Jacobs; and later Wilamowitz agreed. Knauer and Beckby followed.¹¹ The reason for uncertainty is the elision in ἔζετ'. The verb may be understood as imperfect or present.¹² According to the decision, the epigram is a poem about a departed courtesan or about one still living. Surely ἔζετ' must be read as imperfect and the epigram becomes sepulchral. The reasoning follows.

Antipater of Sidon, a contemporary of Meleager, understood the epigram as an epitaph and tried to better it by writing a sepulchral epigram for the Corinthian courtesan Lais (AP 7.218). Meleager added Antipater's poems to his collection and it is perfectly probable that it was he who placed these two epigrams together as we find them in the *Anthologia Palatina*.¹³ We must therefore assume that he also regarded the Asklepiadean epigram as an epitaph.

Why do the majority of modern interpreters in spite of this ancient testimony believe that it was an *erotikon*? The words Ἀρχεάνασσαν ἔχω might be understood in an erotic sense.¹⁴ But there is doubt. Would Asklepiades have chosen the crude term ἔχω for such a statement in the first person? Whenever he represents himself in his poems as a lover, he never appears at the moment in which he possesses a woman. His epigrams written in the first person normally show him courting or lonesome, unhappy or deserted. They reveal his impetuous, passionate love or are a confession where he describes

only be taken with ἀς. Even this would be intolerable. A^{ac} and Plan. have πρωτοβόλοι. The accent is wrong. One must read πρωτόβολοι. The proparoxytone (unknown to Chandler⁸ 464) occurs with passive meaning in Eur. *Tr.* 1068 as epithet of a mountain peak that is first to be struck by the rays of the sun (βολαὶ ἡλίου). In our case the lovers addressed are those first to be "struck" by love for Archeanassa (cf. AP 5.188.2 [Leon.Tar.] βέβλημαι ἐκ δολίου κέραος). For the emphatic position of the adjective cf. E. Norden. *Aeneis VI*, 399f; AP 5.185,3f; 203,5f (both Ascl.); 7.218,5ff (Antip.Sid.), which reads in imitation of Asklepiades: ἐφ' ἣ μνηστῆρες ἀγαυοὶ / πλείονες ἦ . . . / δρεπτόμενοι . . . One must literally translate: "Having plucked whose fresh blossom of youth, O lovers who were first struck, through how great a flame have you come!"

¹¹ See U. von Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung II*, 116; O. Knauer, *Die Epigramme des Asklepiades von Samos* (Diss. Tübingen 1935) *ad loc.*; H. Beckby, *Anthologia Graeca II* (Munich 1957) *ad loc.*; Stadtmüller *ad loc.* implies an epitaph by citing AP 7.2b, followed by P. Waltz, *Anthologie Grecque IV* (Paris 1960) 149 n.2, who, however, provides no reasons.

¹² For Asklepiadean elision of verbal -αι cf. AP 5.162,3.

¹³ See A. Wifstrand, *Studien zur griechischen Anthologie* (Lund-Leipzig 1927) 14ff.

¹⁴ Cf. e.g., PMG, *Carm.Conv.* 904.2: κἀγὼ παῖδα καλὴν τὴν μὲν ἔχω, τὴν δ' ἔραμαι λαβεῖν, Asklep. in AP 5.158,4 (a courtesan is speaking): μὴ λυπηθῆς, ἦν τις ἔχη μ' ἕτερος.

himself as being hurt, deeply wounded, or captured.¹⁵ If we understand Ἐρχεάνασσαν ἔχω as words said by a lover they would differ from a characteristic feature of all the other Asklepiadean epigrams written in the first person. On the other hand this expression fits very well into the pattern of an epitaph. Besides the forms τὸν δεῖνα ἔχει (κατέχει, καλύπτει, κρύπτει) τύμβος (τάφος, γαῖα, χθών) we often read such an expression as τὸν δεῖνα ἔχω.¹⁶ Moreover, the indication of origin and profession and the praise which in the next verse is added by means of a relative sentence well suit a sepulchral epigram.

But above all it is because of the second distich that the epigram has again and again been interpreted as an *erotikon*. Knauer says: "Der Schlußgedanke ist, vom monumentum gesprochen, undenkbar." This is simply not right.¹⁷ If the personified tomb is able to speak in the first person, there is no reason not to make it say the final sentence as well. In the summary of the courtesan's life, the praise of her former beauty is perfectly fitting. Here it appears in the form of an address to her former lovers. Not rarely sepulchral epigrams end with addresses. There is therefore no objection to the view that it is an epitaph. Indeed, it seems a bit tasteless to make a lover who, a moment before, was about to praise his happiness in love, declare that the courtesan's former lovers had passed through an incomparably greater flame.

Of course, the epigram was never intended for the actual tomb of the Kolophonian courtesan. It belongs to the genre of fictitious sepulchral epigrams and its composition by Asklepiades was a literary *paignion*, just as later on Antipater, referring to this model, wrote an epitaph for Lais, another celebrated denizen of the demi-monde of the fourth century.

If we now return to Aristippos, we find the epigram in the following form:

Ἐρχεάνασσαν ἔχω, τὴν ἐκ Κολοφῶνος ἑταίραν,
ἧς καὶ ἐπὶ ῥυτίδων πικρὸς ἔπεστιν Ἐρως.
ἄ δειλοί, νεότητος ἀπαντήσαντες ἐκείνης
πρωτοπλόου, δι' ὅσης ἦλθετε πυρκαϊῆς.

¹⁵ In AP 5.158 the love scene depicted by him is used as background for the main theme, the faithlessness of the courtesans; in AP 5.169 he praises generally the joy of love, but he neither introduces himself as a happy lover, nor uses a frank term like ἔχω.

¹⁶ See W. Peek, *op.cit.*, nos. 505, 585ff, 591, 593, 767, 789; AP 7.2b, 218.

¹⁷ Whether or not we read ἄς in v. 3 or with Knauer ἄ.

The Doric forms are removed.¹⁸ In the place of *ὁ γλυκὺς ἔζειτ' Ἔρως* we read *πικρὸς ἔπεισιν Ἔρως*,¹⁹ and thus instead of a sepulchral we have an erotic epigram. The greatest difference is at vv. 3f, which translate thus: "Alas, poor fellows, you who met with the youth of that woman when she made her first voyage."²⁰ The other verses are identical. It is evident that the two versions were not composed independently. The author of one version must have closely followed the other. Bowra supposed that Plato was the real author of the *erotikon*. In imitation of this, he argues, Asklepiades, later on, composed the *epitymbion* for the same courtesan. This hypothesis, however, may be proved false through a close comparison of the two versions.

In v. 2 Asklepiades extended the image of Eros sitting on the smooth cheeks of a girl—a famous image known from earlier poetry²¹—with the idea that Eros sat even on the wrinkles of the aged Archeanassa. He applied to Eros the traditional adjective *γλυκὺς* without intending a special new point in this verse. Eros sitting on the cheeks is by nature sweet and tempting. It is just this *γλυκὺς* which the author of the "Platonic" version sought to enhance. Asklepiades had used only one aspect of the famous *γλυκύπικρος Ἔρως* of Sappho: "Archeanassa was still of a tempting sweetness even though she had grown old." The opposite aspect makes the power of Archeanassa's beauty even greater and more effective: "She can even make a man suffer the pains of love." The epithet *πικρὸς* provides a further point. It can only be interpreted as replacing an earlier *γλυκὺς*. This intentional elaboration, on the other hand, impairs the original naturalness of the image. For although Archeanassa herself may make a man suffer the pains of love, these pains, strictly, do not spring primarily from her cheeks, which rather emit a sweet, seductive charm. Further, the verb *ἔζειτο* is undoubtedly more vivid (we see

¹⁸ The dialect has become Attic, if we read *πυρκαϊῆς* as a Homerism. But also the Ionic form *ἑταίρην* is not impossible (v. 1 *ἑταίρην* Athen. [with P^{PC}, Su.], *ἑταίραν* Diog. [with P^{AC}, Plan.]). Some uncertainty remains; compare n.8 *supra*.

¹⁹ Reitzenstein, *NGG*, 55, has cogently argued that for the original version of Aristippos the variant *πικρὸς ἔπεισιν* which Athen. 13.589c preserves, must be preferred to D.L.'s *ἔζειτο δριμύς*, which in the manuscript he used seems to have been interpolated under the influence of the Asklepiadean version.

²⁰ Reitzenstein, *NGG*, 56, believed *ἀπαντήσαντες* to be corrupt because there is no parallel for *ἀπαντῶν τινος*. His conjecture *ἀπαμήσαντες*, however, is not convincing. It seems better to accept the MSS. *ἀπαντάω* here takes the genitive on the analogy of the simplex *ἀντάω*, which is often combined with a *gen. rei* (e.g., *Il.* 7.158, *Od.* 3.44).

²¹ Cf. Sappho 112 LP *ἔρος δ' ἐπ' ἰμέρτω κέχνηται προσώπῳ*, Phryn. 13 N² *λάμπει δ' ἐπὶ πορφυρέαις παρήσι φῶς ἔρωτος*, Soph. *Ant.* 783f *Ἔρως, ὃς ἐν μαλακαῖς παρεαῖς νεάνιδος ἐννευέεις*.

him sitting) and therefore more fitting than *ἔπεστιν*. But in the following verse the lack of vividness is better seen.

The graceful image *νέον ἥβης ἄνθος ἀποδρέψαντες*, which is created by means of traditional poetic terms,²² has in the other version been replaced by the abstract, colorless, and unpoetic words *νεότητος ἀπαντήσαντες*. They are almost a prosaic paraphrase. Further, the sentence has been transformed to provide a syntactically more comprehensible word order. Asklepiades joined the distich by a relative pronoun, depending on the object of the participial clause. This clause is followed by the enjambement of the vocative *ἔρασταί πρωτόβολοι*, a hint for the following exclamatory clause and as well separating it from its proleptic participle. This peculiarly compact, interlaced word order is simplified by the author of the "Platonic" version. Using the Homeric formula *ἄ δειλοί*²³ he begins the verse with the vocative. This phrase also sentimentalizes the thought: the torturing Eros and the flame turn the lovers to poor pitiable fellows. An emotional judgment has replaced an objective statement of experience. The end of v. 3 has become free. A pronoun referring to Archeanassa, however, was still needed. The author adds this to the verse end in the form of the remote pronoun *ἐκείνης*, not quite fitting in the mouth of a lover who at the very moment "has" Archeanassa. And finally the replacement of *ἔρασταί* by *ἐκείνης* transformed the epithet into *πρωτοπλόου*. The vocative has become genitive. The Homeric adjective has replaced the rare *πρωτόβολοι*.²⁴

A stylistic comparison suggests that the "Platonic" version is of lower quality, that all its peculiarities can easily be explained as derivative. There is no other explanation for *πικρός*. Furthermore, the matter of the epigram indicates quite certainly that the epitaph is its original form. As I have remarked above, the mention of the pleasures of love which the lovers of the young Archeanassa felt fits very well into the pattern of a sepulchral epigram. It is not good taste for a lover who a moment before praised himself proudly for possessing the old courtesan, an instant later to address his predecessors saying that they must have had a far more intensive relationship. Such a thought may please Rufinus in the Empire (AP 5.62); but only

²² Cf. Il. 13.484 *ἥβης ἄνθος*; Mimn. 1,4 D³; Theogn. 1069; Pind. *Pyth.* 4.158; 6.48 *ἥβαν δρέπων*; 9.110 *χρυσοστεφάνου δὲ οἱ Ἥβας καρπὸν ἀνθήσαντ' ἀποδρέψαι ἔθελον*.

²³ Cf. e.g., Il. 11.815.

²⁴ Cf. Od. 8.34f *νῆα . . . / πρωτόπλοον . . .*, and for the metaphor of a ship for a courtesan: see AP 5.204 (Mel.), a motif perhaps first in Alkaios (Page, *Sappho and Alcaeus*, p. 195).

reluctantly would we burden Plato with such an idea. Nor need we note that an ardent love epigram about a courtesan does not suit Plato, whose indifferent attitude to the female sex has been inferred from his dialogues.²⁵

All this indicates that the *erotikon* was composed after the *epitymbion* of Asklepiades. So it must have been written by somebody who in a tasteless fashion changed the voice of the tomb into a lover's voice and who replaced certain words with little appreciation for the artistic qualities of the poem. If this epigram could be ascribed to Plato, the philosopher was convicted of a love affair with an apparently famous courtesan. A malicious public eagerly heard this, and apparently this public tolerated also the boldness with which Aristippos declared an originally Asklepiadean poem, altered only in a few words, to be Platonic. Had the Asklepiadean epigram not been preserved by Meleager, it would not be possible to show so clearly that the *erotikon* is falsely ascribed to Plato. But on the whole there is unfortunately only a small part left of the epigrammatic production of the third century. Therefore we must consider it good fortune that the Archeanassa epigram reveals the tricky methods which Aristippos sanctioned and with which we must always reckon.²⁶

Because of the existence of the Asklepiadean Archeanassa epigram, only very few modern scholars, not least Bowra, believed in the Platonic origin of the derivative version.²⁷ But the two epigrams about Agathon and Alexis are generally considered as decisive proof that Aristippos also preserved erotic epigrams composed by Plato himself:

I

Τὴν ψυχὴν Ἀγάθωνα φιλῶν ἐπὶ χεῖλεσι ἔσχον·
ἦλθε γὰρ ἡ τλήμων ὡς διαβησομένη.

²⁵ Cf. R. Lagerborg, *op.cit.*, 13ff. U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* I, 37, regards him in his sexual orientation as one in whose life "niemals eine Frau hineinspielt, nicht einmal störend." He further observes (p. 49): "Daß das Weib dem Menschen Plato zeitlebens fremd geblieben ist, spüren wir überall." R. B. Levinson, *In Defense of Plato* (Cambridge 1953) 114 n.103 criticizes Wilamowitz for this conclusion made "from the dialogues, relying also upon the elegy on Dion traditionally ascribed to Plato, while neglecting the lines addressed to women (Diogenes Laertius III, 31-32)." But Levinson did not realize that Wilamowitz was not neglecting those lines, but had reasons to be convinced that they were not written by Plato, *cf.* nn. 27 and 47 *infra*.

²⁶ Comparable is Ps.-Simon. AP 7.508, composed as an epitaph by an unknown poet after Emped. frg. B1 D-K⁷, and slightly altered in the form of a demonstrative epigram attributed by Aristippos (D.L. 8.60) to Empedokles.

²⁷ U. von Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* II, 116, declared the "Platonic" version to be a forgery.

II

*Nūn, ὅτε μηδὲν ἄλεξις ὅσον μόνον εἶψ' ὅτι καλός,²⁸
 ὤπται καὶ παντῆ πᾶς τις ἐπιστρέφεται.²⁹
 θυμέ, τί μηνύεις κυσὶν ὀστέον; εἶτ' ἀνιήσει³⁰
 ὕστερον· οὐχ οὕτω Φαῖδρον ἀπωλέσαμεν;*

In the Agathon epigram one must because of the following ἐπὶ χεῖλεσι translate the participle φιλῶν “kissing.” This epigram refers to the idea that a kiss rises, so to speak, from inside the soul, which wishes to pass over to the beloved. The motif is also to be found, e.g., in epigrams of Meleager and Rufinus.³¹ There it is apparently the passionate kiss of love that has such power. So (unlike the Dion epigram) it is not possible to relate the Agathon epigram to mere spiritual friendship. There is a specifically pederastic coloring.

The Alexis epigram, too, is very easy to understand in this sense. The statement that a certain boy is fair, normally had a clear erotic connotation. The habit and its meaning are well known from inscriptions on Attic vases and from epigrams.³² In the Alexis epigram, the lover had said nothing but “ἄλεξις καλός.” Immediately everybody everywhere turned to him. With his words, which revealed a special interest in the boy, the ἐραστής has drawn everybody’s attention to him; and now there is the danger that they will entice Alexis away from him. In just the same way he had earlier lost another

²⁸ In v. 1 we must construe, as Bergk for the first time recognized, *nūn, ὅτε μηδὲν εἶπα ὅσον μόνον, ὅτι ἄλεξις καλός*, . . . “nunc, ubi nihil dixi nisi pulcher est Alexis, . . .” The phrase *μηδὲν εἶπα ὅσον μόνον* is a “contamination” of two expressions, *sc. μηδὲν εἶπα* (ἄλλο) ἢ . . . or *μηδὲν εἶπα ἄλλο, εἰ μὴ* . . . (= I have said nothing except) and *ὅσον μόνον εἶπα* (= I have only said). *ὅσον μόνον* has replaced ἢ or εἰ μὴ: “I have said nothing, only.” Instead of the logical hypotaxis we have an emotionally stressed parataxis. For a similar expression see *οὐδὲν ἄλλο ἄλλ' ἢ* . . . at KG 2.285 n.3 and Aesop. 1.1.8f Hausrath, where *οὐ μᾶλλον* . . . ὅσον . . . is a contamination of *οὐ μᾶλλον* . . . ἢ . . . and *οὐ τοσοῦτον* . . . ὅσον . . . For the elision *εἶψ'* cf. Call. Ep. 32.1; 40.5; 41.1 Pf.

²⁹ In v. 2 most editors read *πᾶσι περιβλέπεται* with c, Plan., and Apul.F. Diehl, however, reads *πᾶς τις ἐπιστρέφεται* with D.L. and Apul. After *ὤπται* the latter seems to be better; cf. Anacr. 98 D² *οὐκέτι Θρηϊκίης <παιδός> ἐπιστρέφομαι*, AP 12.153,2 (Ascl.) *εἰς ἔμ' ἐπιστρέφεται*, 5.48,6 (Ruf.) *τῆς λευκῆς καλάμης οὐδὲν ἐπιστρέφομαι*: “Everybody everywhere turns towards him, *sc. pays him attention*.” *πᾶσι περιβλέπεται* may have been inserted to avoid a change of subject.

³⁰ In v. 3 Bergk, Geffcken, and Waltz read *ἀνιήσει* with Apul. F (or Stephanus' *ἀνίηση*), Diehl and Beckby *ἀνιήσεις* with P, Plan. and D.L. The middle (“later you will feel pain”) is to be preferred to the active (“later you will cause pain”); cf. Theogn. 991f *Ἄλλοτέ τοι πάσχων ἀνιήσαι, ἄλλοτε δ' ἔρδων χαίρήσεις*.

³¹ See AP 5.14 and 171, Bion, Epit. Ad. 47, Gellius 19.11.

³² Cf. for an extensive collection of the material D. M. Robinson/E. J. Fluck, *A Study of the Greek Love-Names* (Baltimore 1937); and esp. compare AP 12.51 and 130.

beloved, Phaidros. But Wilamowitz and Waltz,³³ who regard Plato as the author of the poem, held that here *καλός* was used in the larger Platonic sense and that the verses do not refer to the relation between a lover and the beloved. According to Waltz the poem expresses the affection of a teacher for his pupil, whereas Wilamowitz concluded from the text that Plato shortly after Socrates' death had set his hope on Phaidros, but was disappointed. Wilamowitz explains: "Also Phaidros ist da Platon und seinem Kreis abspenstig gemacht worden, gerade dadurch, daß Platons Interesse für ihn die Konkurrenten neidisch machte, . . . ein wertvolles Zeichen dafür, daß Platon doch schon vor seiner Reise einen Kreis um sich hatte oder wohl besser einem Kreis von Sokratesjüngern angehörte." In any case, these rather forced interpretations share one trait with the pederastic view. Whether we have a relationship between a lover and his beloved or between a teacher and his pupil or between two members of the Socratic circle after Socrates' death, we must in any case imagine Phaidros as a person younger or conceivably contemporary with the speaker. This way it is reasonable that Phaidros raised hopes which later on were not fulfilled. Thus he could be spoken of as enticed away by competing philosophical or rhetorical schools or circles. Only thus is it sensible to complain of his loss in the way described by Wilamowitz.

But in Aristippos' opinion the Phaidros who is mentioned here is the same person known from *Symposion* and *Phaidros*. This identification has been accepted by everybody who in ancient or modern times ascribed this poem to Plato. This Phaidros, however, was born, as von Fritz has shown,³⁴ at the latest in 450 and died at the latest in the nineties of the fourth century, perhaps even before 401. That means he was about twenty years older than Plato and died either before Socrates or a few years afterwards at an age of about fifty. Plato was about thirty years old at this time. It is evident that this Phaidros cannot have been Plato's *ἐρώμενος*, and it is also unthinkable that he was his pupil or that Plato mentioned him at all in this way. Try to imagine what Wilamowitz' picture would have been like. It

³³ U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* I, 360, Waltz on *AP* 7.100.

³⁴ K. von Fritz, *RE* 19.2.1555ff, who after discussing the chronology adds: "Das Epigramm Platons, in dem ein Phaidros vorkommt, ist entweder trotz der Verteidigung durch Wilamowitz u.a. unecht, was bei weitem das Wahrscheinlichste ist, oder bezieht sich auf einen anderen Phaidros, da die Beziehung auf den um 20 Jahre älteren Phaidros nach dem Inhalt unmöglich ist."

becomes evident at once how grotesque his hypothesis is. The thirty-year-old Plato praises the promising "beauty" of the fifty-year-plus Phaidros. The latter, who was almost one generation older, at once attracts everyone's attention everywhere. Everyone looks at him and alas some clever philosopher or rhetor succeeds in enticing him to his own circle, leaving the saddened Plato lonely and unable to continue the philosophical education of the "fair" Phaidros. But Death soon would have terminated such endeavors. In short, if the epigram really was composed by Plato, it is impossible that it refer to the historically known Phaidros and to his relationship with Plato.

The Agathon epigram, which must certainly be understood as pederastic, has quite the same problem. Aristippos and his followers related this poem to the tragic poet, who makes a speech in Plato's *Symposion* about Eros. Lévêque has shown that he was born surely "dans les toutes premières années de la seconde moitié du V^e siècle," preferably 448-7.³⁵ Thus he assuredly was many years older than Plato (b. 427). And as it was always the older *ἔραστής* and not the younger *ἐρώμενος* who composed love-poems, Plato cannot have composed a love poem about the tragedian Agathon.

If therefore Plato is the author of the two epigrams, they can refer neither to an affair between Plato and this Agathon, nor to an affair (or any other relationship) between Plato and the "Platonic" Phaidros. If we take Plato's authorship for granted, there remain only two possibilities: either the epigrams do not refer to the individuals discussed above or they refer to a relationship with someone other than Plato.

Bowra believes the latter: "It is surely not surprising or improbable that Plato, who spent much of his life writing Dialogues with characters drawn from an older generation than his own, should early have written poetry about the men who belonged to it. He was fascinated by the circle of Socrates and spent his artistic life in recreating it; it is perfectly likely that the impulse which made him put it into his Dialogues asserted itself earlier in making him write poetry about its real or imaginary loves."³⁶ Against this attempt to save the authorship for Plato two objections must be made. First, Plato

³⁵ P. Lévêque, *Agathon* (Paris 1955) 28ff. He condemns (p. 53 n.2) the epigram as "l'œuvre d'un faussaire malhabile" written because of Agathon's speech in *Symp.* and ignoring the chronological difficulties involved.

³⁶ C. M. Bowra, *op.cit.* 396f; and earlier, J. M. Edmonds, *Elegy and Iambus II* (London 1931) 7 n.2.

intended with his dialogues not only to depict the circle of Socrates, but even more to show the dialectical process of philosophical thinking. Impressed by the personality of Socrates he created a picture of this unique man and gave testimony of the impulses coming from him. But he did not seek to fabricate love epigrams for Socrates or for men who belonged to his circle. Such epigrams about the real or imaginary love affairs of the older generation would not have had anything to do with the impulse which made him write his Socratic dialogues. Secondly, Bowra takes it for granted that erotic epigrams like these already existed as a poetic form in the generation before Plato or at least in his own. This, however, as shown above, is not true. And we are not to suppose that Plato invented this style of expression to recreate the loves of Socrates and his circle. Such a poetic form as the erotic epigram is not invented to describe the feelings of others, it expresses the feelings of the poets themselves in an artistically new way.

If Plato was the author of the epigrams, there would, therefore, remain only one possibility, namely that the two epigrams refer to two young men who are not further known and who had by chance the same names as the characters in the dialogues, that they had been either *ἐρώμενοι* or pupils of Plato, and that later on Aristippos pretended that they were the well-known Phaidros and Agathon. This would be a very improbable series of events and we are more reluctant to believe it because apart from these "Platonic" epigrams there is no indication for the existence of such poems before the beginning of the third century.

Because in the case of the Archeanassa epigram we caught Aristippos in the act of falsely attributing an epigram to Plato, there is all the more reason to suppose that here too Aristippos attributed two epigrams of later origin to the philosopher. The names Agathon and Phaidros were not so unusual that they could not have been found in two Hellenistic love epigrams as the names of two *ἐρώμενοι*. These names were apparently the principal reason why the epigrams were ascribed to Plato. For at the very moment, when Plato was said to be the author, the names naturally were referred to those historical persons; and Aristippos had the desired opportunity to publicize affairs between Plato and two Athenians who were known from his two "erotic" dialogues as enthusiastic speakers about Eros. The chronological difficulty did not disturb him. Agathon and Phaidros existed in his reader's memory as the two young men who had

appeared in *Symposion* and *Phaidros*. Furthermore, it seems that Aristippos referred the name Alexis, which also occurs in the second epigram, to the poet of middle comedy, born in 372, when Plato was 55 years old. For Diogenes, in writing ἀλλὰ μὴν Ἀλέξιδος, φασίν, ἐρασθεῖς καὶ Φαίδρου, must have had in his mind that poet, from whose works he had quoted on the page before certain verses dealing with Plato. It was certainly welcome that such a Platonic acquaintance was established not only to a tragic, but also to a comic poet.

We need not believe that the two epigrams were originally composed by a forger with the intention to attribute them to Plato. If such were the case, he probably would have made more specific allusions to the dialogues. Moreover, the author of the epigrams was surely a far better poet than the bungler who altered the Archeanassa epigram. In the case of these epigrams, however, we cannot determine whether they were ascribed to Plato after slight alteration or in their original form.

Bowra objected that, "if the epigrams were written by someone else than Plato, it is hard to see why they were not ascribed to him under his proper name." This would require the important epigrammatic production of the Hellenistic age as a whole to have been transmitted to us. But in fact our knowledge of this poetry depends almost entirely on the selection of the poets and poems which Meleager handed down to us in his *Stephanos*; and this was, as its name implies, simply an anthology. Although it is perfectly probable that the important position which Asklepiades occupies with his erotic epigrams in Meleager corresponds to the actual significance which he had as a founder of this genus of poetry, we must assume on the other hand that in the first half of the third century in Ionia and Alexandria there certainly existed more composers of erotic epigrams than Asklepiades, Poseidippos, Hedylos, and Kallimachos. By good fortune in the case of the Archeanassa epigram we have both, the original and the derivative. But we must not require that the other epigrams too, which Aristippos falsely ascribed to Plato, be handed down to us under the name of the original author.

Some scholars have argued, however, that the epigrams are "so wunderbar und so intim" that nobody else than Plato himself could be the author.³⁷ But such a literary judgment runs the risk of

³⁷ See J. Geffcken, *Griech. Literaturgeschichte* II (Heidelberg 1926) 31 n.19 and C. M. Bowra *loc.cit.*

overrating our two epigrams while neglecting the virtues of all the other epigrammatic production. As for their artistic quality, if we look at the style of the epigrams which Meleager has preserved from this period, we may easily credit them to a better poet of the third century.³⁸

But how could readers believe Aristippos, if the "Platonic" epigrams had simply been taken from collections of other poets? The Archeanassa epigram has proven that Aristippos had little integrity. If he was able to offer his readers an epigram of the famous Asklepiades slightly altered as Platonic, he may have mismanaged less known poets even more unscrupulously. We must also recall that at this period many anonymous collections of erotic and sympotic epigrams seem to have circulated.³⁹ If in his book Aristippos, referring perhaps to "oral tradition," ascribed forged epigrams to Plato but mingled them with authentic material, he would more easily have been believed. His public cared little for accurate biographical data. They preferred scandal and sensationalism. Contemporary biography rarely had interest in serious scholarship. Writers preferred to invent stories about the character and the private life of statesmen, poets, and philosophers rather than confess that they had found nothing. They did not merely resort to arbitrary combinations and inventions. Some even approved systematic fiction.⁴⁰ Once the epigrams were ascribed to Plato, they are likely soon to have become more widely known under his famous name and the true author would be forgotten. Later on only a special expert in the epigrammatic poetry of the third century could have detected the attribution. In short the fact that Aristippos (especially in later times) won the credulity of many readers ought not to surprise us.⁴¹

³⁸ U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon* I, 360 n.1, believed that the similarity between v. 3 of the Alexis epigram *θυμέ, τί μὴνύεις κισὶν ὀστέον*; and AP 5.56.7 (Diosc.) *ἀλλὰ τί μὴνύω κισὶν ὀστέα*; was proof of Platonic authorship. But even if Dioskorides had imitated this verse, this fact would not necessarily be enough. Dioskorides, who lived in the second half of the third century B.C., could very well imitate a phrase from an epigram of ca. 50 years before, which he may have known under the name of its real author.

³⁹ The erotic *ἀδηλα* of Meleager's *Stephanos* seem to be taken from such collections.

⁴⁰ Cf. F. Leo, *Die griech.-röm. Biographie* (Leipzig 1901) 102ff, esp. 124, 126.

⁴¹ The biography of Plato, however, from which the four preserved *vitae* are ultimately derived, seems to have ignored the epigrams of Aristippos. For according to this biography Plato composed dithyrambs and tragedies in his youth, but burnt all his poetic works on the advice of Socrates (Apul. *de Plat.* 1.2; D.L. 3.5; Olympiod. p. 384 Westermann; *Vit. Anon.* p. 392 Westermann). From this a later invention started which sought to fit the epigrams of Aristippos into the biography of Plato, saying that he had also composed love epigrams at the time when he wrote his tragedies, and it was only these epigrams that he

Two further epigrams require consideration, preserved also in Aristippos. Their background is the popular custom of throwing the beloved an apple as a sign of love:⁴²

I

*Τῶ μῆλω βάλλω σε· σὺ δ' εἰ μὲν ἐκοῦσα φιλεῖς με,
δεξαμένη τῆς σῆς παρθενίης μετάδος·
εἰ δ' ἄρ' ὁ μὴ γίγνοιτο νοεῖς, τοῦτ' αὐτὸ λαβοῦσα
σκέψαι τὴν ὥρην ὡς ὀλιγοχρόνιος.*

II

*Μῆλον ἐγώ, βάλλει με φιλῶν σέ τις· ἀλλ' ἐπίνευσον,
Ἐανθίππη· κἀγὼ καὶ σὺ μαραινόμεθα.*

The two epigrams articulate what the hurling of the apple already expressed without words. The first contains words which a lover might say while throwing the apple. The other pretends to be an inscription scratched into the apple itself. Here the same idea is compressed into a single distich. The point is sharpened. The apple symbolizes the girl's youth. It will fade soon as the girl herself. Both epigrams reveal sharp antitheses. The contrived word order is noteworthy.⁴³ Their common style implies that they have been composed as a pair by a single author. Pairs of epigrams varying the same theme were a vogue of Hellenistic poetry.⁴⁴

did not burn later on. Such a tradition is to be inferred from Gellius 19.11, who, quoting the Agathon epigram writes: "celebrantur duo isti Graeci versiculi multorumque doctorum hominum memoria dignantur, quod sint lepidissimi et venustissimi brevitatis. Neque adeo pauci sunt veteres scriptores, qui quidem eos Platonis esse adfirmant, quibus ille adulescens luserit, cum tragoediis quoque eodem tempore faciendis praeluderet." Compare Apuleius, *Apol.* 10: "cuius nulla carmina exstant nisi amoris elegia; nam cetera omnia, credo quod tam lepida non erant, igni deussit."

⁴² Cf. B. O. Foster, "Notes on the Symbolism of the Apple in Classical Antiquity," *HSCP* 10 (1899) 39ff, and Gow on Theocr. 5.88.

⁴³ In the first epigram the two imperatives *μετάδος* and *σκέψαι* as well as the two synonymous participles *δεξαμένη* and *λαβοῦσα* belonging to them are placed at the beginning and the end of the verses. In the monodistich we find the apple introducing itself and the vocative of Xanthippe set at the beginning of the verses. The important verbs *ἐπίνευσον* and *μαραινόμεθα* containing the request and its reason are found at the end of the verses. The personal pronouns occupy the same central part of each verse.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g., *AP* 5.7 and 150 (both Ascl.) and for these W. Ludwig, *MH* 19 (1962) 156ff. In our case only in one of the epigrams is there a proper name. That reminds us of pairs of Catullan poems where in one poem there is a proper name and a certain theme, in the other the same theme, but without a proper name. See e.g., 69, 71; 70, 72; and O. Weinreich, *WS* 59 (1941) 73, who postulates this technique also for the Hellenistic age, comparing *AP* 5.56 and 138 (both Diosc.).

There is a relevant poem of Asklepiades (AP 5.85):⁴⁵

Φείδη παρθενίης· καὶ τί πλέον; οὐ γὰρ ἐς Ἄϊδην
 ἔλθοῦς' εὐρήσεις τὸν φιλέοντα, κόρη;
 ἐν ζωοῖσι τὰ τερπνὰ τὰ Κύπριδος· ἐν δ' Ἀχέροντι
 ὄστέα καὶ σποδιή, παρθένε, κεισόμεθα.

This poem, too, is concerned with courting. The form is simpler. The vivid background of the apple is gone, the playful fiction of an inscription scratched into it, and the sudden point. Further, the style is on the whole plainer. Asklepiades shows no influence from the pair of "Platonic" epigrams. His simpler form is more easily earlier and he may have had simple popular models: e.g., οὐ χρῆ πολλ' ἔχειν θνητὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ' ἐρᾶν / καὶ κατεσθίειν· σὺ δὲ κάρτα φείδη.⁴⁶ On the other hand the "Platonic" pair does not require immediate dependence on the poem of Asklepiades. Because of its artistically more developed form, however, it is surely probable that it was rather composed after Asklepiades than one hundred years before him. In the love story of Akontios and Kydippe Kallimachos also used the possibilities offered by an inscription on an apple and made of it an even more efficacious point.

The second, decisive reason, why Plato must be denied authorship is again the person involved: Xanthippe. Here Diogenes does not explain why Aristippos quoted the epigram. But according to the habit of Aristippos it too must be considered quoted as proof for another affair of the philosopher. Xanthippe was not an extremely rare name. But when it appears with the names Agathon and Phaidros, we are led to identify it with the famous Xanthippe, the wife of Socrates. To implicate Plato in a love affair with a maiden, later to become the wife of his teacher, must have been the trump card of Aristippos. Of course, if Plato had actually written this epigram, the name would refer to an otherwise unknown girl named Xanthippe, but such a coincidence is at best improbable (cf. Agathon and Phaidros). Rather we must assume that Aristippos here too attributed an already extant epigram to Plato because of the proper name in it.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Cf. Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion*, 187f.

⁴⁶ PMG *Carm. Conv.* 913; cf. Theogn. 1299ff.

⁴⁷ In this case U. von Wilamowitz, *Hellenistische Dichtung* I, 131 n.1, assumes that the Xanthippe epigram was maliciously ascribed to Plato. J. Geffcken and J. M. Edmonds defend the authenticity.

Again, the actual author of the pair need not be blamed; he wanted only to provide two variations on a single theme, casting an apple, and coincidentally used this name in it. Together with the monodistich, which contained the desired name, Aristippos seems to have included also the companion epigram. Here also is a hint that Aristippos found both epigrams in the same collection.

Now there remain only the erotic epigram to Aster and its commemorative pendant:

I

*Ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς, ἀστὴρ ἐμός· εἶθε γενοίμην
οὐρανός, ὡς πολλοῖς ὄμμασιν εἰς σὲ βλέπω.⁴⁸*

II

*Ἀστὴρ πρὶν μὲν ἔλαμπες ἐνὶ ζωοῖσι ἔφως·
νῦν δὲ θανῶν λάμπεις ἔσπερος ἐν φθιμένοις.*

Aristippos, approved by Diogenes, concluded from the words *ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς* that Plato shared astronomical interests with the youthful Aster: (*φησιν*) *αὐτὸν Ἀστέρος μειρακίου τινὸς ἀστρολογεῖν συνασκουμένου ἐρασθῆναι*. Wilamowitz was intimidated. A romantic biography resulted: “Das zeigt uns den Lehrer, der von der Schönheit des Schülers ergriffen wird; sie sind bei astronomischen Studien und betrachten den Himmel. Der Schüler ist ganz bei der Sache: mit Begeisterung, mit Liebe schaut er zum Himmel empor, dessen Wunder ihm der Lehrer eben erschlossen hat. Die schöne Seele ist für die Schönheit der Wissenschaft gewonnen; aber eben darum hat der Schüler jetzt keinen Seitenblick für den Lehrer—der so gern die Augen auf sich gerichtet sähe, die nun dem Himmel in seine tausend Sternaugen blicken.”⁴⁹ One wonders. *Ἀστέρας εἰσαθρεῖς* means only that the beloved looks up to the stars at night, scarcely a unique situation. All else is fiction reverting to Aristippos, who seeks irresponsibly to force biography from a text which by itself is not relevant.

⁴⁸ U. von Wilamowitz, *Platon I*, 452, n.1 conjectured *ὄς... βλέπει* because of the “triviality” of the tradition. Our interpretation will show that *ὡς... βλέπω* is not trivial at all. A *ὡς*-clause in any case may be defended by such parallels as: AP 5.84 (An.) *ὄφρα με... χαρίση*, 15.35 (Theoph.), 12.142 (Rhian.) *ὡς ἄν... βάλα*, 190 (Strat.), Anacreont. 22 *ὄπως... βλέπης με*.

⁴⁹ U. von Wilamowitz, *op. cit.* 452f.

Further interpretation of the first epigram must start from two parallel Attic scolia, dating perhaps from the fifth century:⁵⁰

I

*Εἶθε λύρα καλὴ γενοίμην ἑλεφαντίνη,
καί με καλοὶ παῖδες φέροιεν Διονύσιον ἐς χορόν.*

II

*Εἶθ' ἄπυρον καλὸν γενοίμην μέγα χρυσίον,
καί με καλὴ γυνὴ φοροίη καθαρὸν θεμένη νόον.*

In the *Anthologia Palatina* the same motif is to be found in two anonymous erotic epigrams, also parallel:⁵¹

I

*Εἶθ' ἄνεμος γενόμην, σὺ δὲ δὴ στείχουσα παρ' ἀνγὰς
στήθεα γυμνώσαις καί με πνέοντα λάβοις.*

II

*Εἶθε ῥόδον γενόμην ὑποπόρφυρον, ὄφρα με χερσὶν
ἄρσαμένη χάριση στήθεσι χιονέοις.*

Compared with the older scolia these monodistichs show a refined form of the metamorphosis motif. The poet who there wanted to be a beautiful ivory lyre or a large and beautiful vessel of gold, here chose a rose or the wind. Precious, splendid, concrete objects have been replaced by light, tender, perishable, even fleeting things. The poems are no longer generic. The one addressed is specifically the beloved. The desire has become more expressly sensual. Details are more vividly conceived. The monodistichs still elude exact dating. That they are Hellenistic is clear.⁵²

If we compare the Aster epigram with the two monodistichs, we realize that the artistic form again has been further refined. Here the situation that produced the desire is described first: "You are looking up to the stars." Psychologically the desire is more spiritual. "I want to be next to her" has become "I want to see him." A quite new point is added to the epigram by the use of *ἀστήρ*, here the petname, not,

⁵⁰ PMG, *Carm. Conv.* 900, 901.

⁵¹ AP 5.83, 84.

⁵² Cf. also Theocr. 3.12ff *αἶθε γενοίμαν / ἄ βομβεῦσα μέλισσα καὶ ἐς τεὸν ἄντρον ἰκοίμαν;* AP 12.142, 4ff (Rhian.) *εἶην καὶ κίχλη καὶ κόσσυφος, ὡς ἂν ἐκείνου / ἐν χερσὶ καὶ φθογγὴν καὶ γλυκὴ δάκρυ βάλω.*

as Aristippos and Diogenes believed, a proper name. The word occurs surely as a proper name. But we miss the full sense of the epigram if we understand *ἀστήρ* thus. A fair man could already be compared by Homer with a star,⁵³ and Euripides employed this word metaphorically for the young Hippolytos.⁵⁴ Here the beloved is the “star” of his lover. Horace would have approved.⁵⁵ Now this “star” on the earth looks up to the stars of the sky. The lover then desires to be the sky. That implies first that he desires to be looked at.⁵⁶ The *ὡς*-clause gives *παρὰ προσδοκίαν* another reason: “that I may look at you with many eyes.” Just as for instance the sun is called *ῥμμα αἰθέρος*,⁵⁷ the moon *ἑσπέρας ὀφθαλμός*,⁵⁸ the stars here are called the eyes of the sky^{58a}. The lover wants to have eyes as countless as the sky to see nothing but the beauty of his “star.”⁵⁹ If the lover has become the sky, the beloved and his lover will regard each other, each of them being the “star” of the other. Undoubtedly this poem is the most beautiful and poetically most sophisticated among all variations of the old motif.

That Aristippos took the metaphorical *ἀστήρ* naively as a proper name confirms the second monodistich. The adjective *ἔωος* must be taken with *ἀστήρ*.⁶⁰ “As the star of the morning you formerly shone among the living.” This means “you were the fairest of all.”⁶¹ It was also a popular idea, occurring in Aristophanes, that one who died became a star in the heavens, and a later sepulchral epigram refers to the transformation of the deceased into the divine evening star.⁶² It was known that the morning and the evening star were the same,

⁵³ Cf. *Il.* 5.5 *ἀστέρ’ ὀπωρινῶ ἐναλίγκιον, ὅστε μάλιστα / λαμπρὸν παμφαίνησι λελούμενος Ὠκεανοῖο;* 6.401 *ἀλγικίος ἀστέρι καλῶ.*

⁵⁴ Eur. *Hipp.* 1122 *φανερῶτατον ἀστέρ’ Ἀθήνας;* AP 7.1.8 (Alc. Mess.) *Μουσάων ἀστέρα καὶ Χαρίτων.*

⁵⁵ Cf. Hor. *Carm.* 3.9.21 *sidere pulchrior ille.*

⁵⁶ The same desire occurs in Anacreont. 22.5f *ἐγὼ δ’ ἔσοπτρον εἶην, / ὅπως αἰεὶ βλέπης με.*

⁵⁷ Ar. *Nub.* 285; similar expressions in tragedies e.g., Soph. *Trach.* 102, Eur. *IT* 194; cf. *Secund. Sent.* 5 *οὐράνιος ὀφθαλμός* and L. Malten, *Die Sprache des menschlichen Antlitzes im frühen Griechentum* (Berlin 1961) 39ff.

⁵⁸ Pind. *Ol.* 3.20 (as interpreted by Farnell following Paley); cf. A. *Sept.* 390 *νυκτὸς ὀφθαλμός;* Eur. *Phoen.* 543; Ar. *Th.* 39.

^{58a} Cf. Eur. *Her.* 406 and Wilamowitz (*Il.*101), *Ion* 1078; Kritias frg. B. 25.33 D-K⁷ *ἀστερῶν οὐρανοῦ δέμας;* L. Malten, *op.cit.* 43.

⁵⁹ For a similar situation cf. Pind. frg. 87 S (156 T) and Fraenkel on A. *Ag.* 365 (*Il.*192).

⁶⁰ Cf. Eur. frg. 999 N² *ἔωος ἦνίχ’ ἱππότης ἐξέλαμψεν ἀστήρ.* For *ἐν ζωοῖσι* cf. AP 5.85.3 (Ascl.), Theocr. 4.42.

⁶¹ Cf. the simile in Pind. *Isthm.* 4.23f *ἀνεγειρομένα χρώτα λάμπει, Ἀοσφόρος θαητὸς ὡς ἄστροις ἐν ἄλλοις.*

⁶² Cf. Ar. *Pax* 832; IG XII.7.123 cited by Nilsson, *Griech. Religion* II, 474 n.4.

and playing with their identity is a recurring motif in Hellenistic poetry.⁶³ Thus in the "Platonic" epigram for the departed beloved we find the playful conceit that he, now shining as the evening star among the dead, had remained the fairest of all stars. In beauty he remained always the same, the star of Aphrodite.

This epigram was not a real epitaph, otherwise the conventional information about the dead would have been included. It is a commemorative epigram that might be applied to any fair beloved. Now one might suppose that after the death of his beloved the composer of the first epigram employed again the image of the star, recalling the epigram in which he had compared his beloved to a star. Platonic authorship thus defended would neglect the fact that the artistic form clearly belongs to the Hellenistic age. A Hellenistic combination of an erotic and a funeral epigram is easily explicable not from a biographical background, but by the common technique of varying a certain theme. The two epigrams seem to be variations of the theme "the star as a metaphor for the beloved." In the first this theme is connected with the old motif of metamorphosis desired by the lover, in the second with the idea of the deceased becoming a star and with the identity of the morning and evening star. That the same theme is treated first in the form of an erotic, next in the form of a funeral epigram is characteristic for just this period. For now verse inscriptions and sympotic and erotic poems in one or few distichs were regarded as equally belonging to the same genus of *ἐπιγράμματα*.⁶⁴ The technique of varying a theme reminds us also of the pair of epigrams that we have investigated above, where casting an apple was treated in two variations. The artistic interest in the star as a metaphor resembles in some respects the way in which the apple was used as a symbol. Moreover, both pairs show stylistic similarity: there are noteworthy antithetic and parallel structures between the hexameter and the pentameter. For such reasons it is more probable that the Aster epigrams were also falsely attributed to Plato (perhaps Aristippos had chosen them out of the same collection as the apple epigrams), than that we accept the Aster epigram as the sole erotic epigram which we have from Plato.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cf. R. Pfeiffer on Call. frg. 291; RE 7.1251ff; Reitzenstein, *Epigramm und Skolion*, 186.

⁶⁴ See *supra* p. 61. Reitzenstein, *ibid.* 91, has demonstrated that AP 12.135, a sympotic short elegy of Asklepiades, is the model for AP 5.199, a dedicatory epigram of Hedylos, equally designed for recitation at a symposium.

⁶⁵ V. Pisani, "Su un Epigramma attribuito a Platone," *Paideia* 6 (1951) 297ff, believes the

In summary we may say: Among all the epigrams which Aristippos ascribed to Plato, with all probability only the Dion epigram was composed by Plato himself. This one is also the only one which, if Plato is not its real author, because of its matter must have been written with intent to deceive. All the other poems were originally composed without reference to Plato—probably in the first half of the third century. Later, occasionally in slightly altered form, they were attributed to Plato by Aristippos.

A final suggestion is tentatively submitted, at first glance perhaps daring. We have seen that Aristippos quoted the epigrams to convict Plato of affairs with historically known contemporaries. Only the Aster epigrams are apparently an exception. Did Aristippos here merely intend to show that Plato had affairs with pupils in the Academy? Or was there perhaps an historical Aster, to whom Aristippos might wish to relate Plato? In Greek history only one prominent person was named Aster. He was that man who in 354 B.C., when Philip II besieged Methone, allegedly shot out an eye of the king with his arrow and was executed for his deed after the town had been conquered. The importance of the incident is apparent. The wound might easily have been fatal. The story therefore was often repeated by later historians, who embellished the event with the trappings of an anecdote.⁶⁶ Would it be possible that by the Aster epigrams Aristippos intended to implicate Plato with the near regicide? The text of Diogenes (*Ἀστέρος μαιρακίου τινὸς ἀστρολογεῖν συνασκουμένου*) seems at first to disprove it. But we must recall that Diogenes reproduced the text of Aristippos shortened and with omissions. For

second Aster epigram to be Platonic, the first either composed by Aristippos or falsely ascribed by him to Plato. He asserts: "il valore dei due epigrammi differisce di molto: mentre il secondo contiene una efficace immagine elegantemente espressa nella opposizione dei due versi, il primo è frigido nella concezione e povero nella esecuzione: né mi sentirei, già per motivi estetici, di attribuirli a uno stesso autore." The aesthetical condemnation of the first epigram which Pisani dogmatically provides requires no further refutation than what has been said above. The style of the epigrams does not separate them but rather shows that they are a pair. Pisani next holds that Plato composed the second Aster epigram to commemorate Ion of Chios. The "evidence" is the ephemeral and witty passage in *Ar. Pax* 832ff where the playwright—alluding to the common notion that the dead become stars—quips that Ion (recently deceased) has become the Morning star because he had composed in his lifetime a famous ode to it (see *PMG* 745). Plato took the joke from a play produced when he was 5 and skilfully twisted it to refer to Ion already shining as the Morning Star in his lifetime. Neither the assumed origin of the poem nor the sense that results have the slightest probability.

⁶⁶ See Schaefer, *Demosthenes und seine Zeit* II² (Leipzig 1886) 31; Kaerst, *RE* 2.1780; Jacoby on *FGrHist* 76 F 36 (Duris).

Aristippos the epigrams were only the beginning of his arguments. Diogenes never reveals why Aristippos quoted the Xanthippe epigram. Perhaps he cited the statement that Plato together with Aster studied astronomy, while omitting Aristippos' further explanations. *μειράκιόν τι* sufficed Diogenes. But we must not for this reason deny that Aristippos could have written that this Aster later wounded Philip.

If we accept this suggestion—it is no more than that—all the epigrams quoted by Aristippos show a tendency to establish Plato's love affairs with particular historical persons. They clearly divide into three groups. Two epigrams connect Plato with the world of literature. He loved the poet of tragedies, Agathon, the poet of comedies, Alexis, and the rhetor and companion of Socrates, Phaidros. Three epigrams establish relations between him and a woman, the old courtesan, Archeanassa, and the young Xanthippe, scandalously the later wife of his teacher. Finally, three epigrams show his relations to Dion and Aster, two figures of the political and military world. They distinguished themselves in different ways fighting against tyrannical rulers. They both died early an unnatural death. Thereupon Plato honored them with two epitaphs. Thus the identification of Aster with the notorious archer would fit extremely well into Aristippos' "Leporello's catalogue" of Plato's Don Juan adventures.

But whether we accept this last suggestion or not, in either case in the light of the discussion above Plato's name must be expunged from the history of the erotic epigram.

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