

# Novel Ways of Being Philosophical

or

## A Tale of Two Dogs and a Phoenix

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*Are our novels philosophical?*

Philosophers, like anyone else, can write novels. They can also write novels in some way to expound a philosophy. Sartre did this with *Nausea* and it is at least not absurd to claim that Apuleius did so with the *Golden Ass*. We are however quickly led into a field where we need to clarify what we mean by ‘philosophy’ or even ‘philosopher’. Nowhere is this clearer than in the *Wikipedia* article on ‘Philosophy and literature’,<sup>1</sup> which struggled (at least at the time of consultation) under the enormous burden of supposing that we all know what philosophy is and observed, *en passant*, that ‘other novels considered to contain philosophical content include:

- Joseph Conrad: *Heart of Darkness*
- Fyodor Dostoevsky: *Crime and Punishment*
- Homer: *Odyssey*
- James Joyce: *Ulysses (novel)*
- Franz Kafka: *The Metamorphosis*
- Milan Kundera *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*
- Thomas Mann: *The Magic Mountain*
- Iris Murdoch: *The Sea, the Sea*
- Marcel Proust: *In Search of Lost Time*
- William Shakespeare: *Hamlet*
- Leo Tolstoy: *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*
- Sergio Troncoso: *The Nature of Truth*

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_and\\_literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_and_literature), as consulted in September 2006.

– Robert M Pirsig: *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.<sup>7</sup>

It is a startling list resulting from a very open interpretation of what constitutes philosophical content. Open but not necessarily mistaken.

We could list Greek novels in this way, and propose that they too have philosophical content:

- Chariton, *Callirhoe*
- Dictys of Crete, *Diary of the Trojan War*
- Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesiaca*
- Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Cleitophon*
- Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe*
- Heliodorus, *Aethiopica*

How reasonable would such a claim be? A first observation should perhaps be that, whatever is wrong with viewing all these texts as philosophical, it is doubly wrong with Dictys of Crete. There can be few texts *less* philosophical than Dictys and it is important to see why, because in so doing we begin to understand why the ideal romances are in fact, in a reasonable sense, philosophical.

### *Dictys of Crete*<sup>2</sup>

*Thesis: Dictys' Diary is not in any sense philosophical. Evidence: its genre.*

From the point of view of the narrator, and indeed from the point of view of some later readers, Dictys was an actual eye-witness to the Trojan War, the crucial source for those distant events. In comparison, from this point of view, Homer was a poet and obscures the real historical and political events that underlie his account. Scholars of the first century A.D., like their predecessors in the emerging tradition of commentary, did their best to counter the distortions that Homer had introduced into the record. But without the rediscovery of the text of Dictys in A.D. 66, following the exposure of Dictys' tomb in an earthquake, it would have been impossible to advance beyond reasonable speculations about individual incidents. Now finally an entire history of the war at Troy had been recovered, one that made sense.

From our point of view the text is, of course, bogus: Dictys did not exist and, even if he had existed, he did not write it. The text does, however, remain a historical reconstruction, if a speculative one. We can dispense here

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<sup>2</sup> This discussion of Dictys starts from Dowden forthcoming (a). This deals with the question of date, the distribution of material between books, and the relationship to the Latin translation by Septimius.

with the question of how this text, or any history, comes to interest readers. All that matters is that the text is not actually a novel,<sup>3</sup> but rather an exercise in rationalisation, very close in method to Thucydides' *archaiologia*.

Dictys' *Diary* differs from the 'ideal' novel in that we have no human sympathy with any of the characters: they are only a matter of record. Though occasionally we may learn, for example, of Paris' involvement of the whole house of Priam in his own personal *scelus*,<sup>4</sup> and though Achilles may rightly complain that Paris and Deiphobus tricked him to his death,<sup>5</sup> surprisingly little emotion is vested in these passages; even by the standards of history we are little engaged. Thus if the *Diary* is not a novel, it is perhaps not even history: it is somewhere between a document and a strung-together set of philological reconstructions of the events that make up history. If the characters matter little to us, and there is little to take away that might impact on our lives, the scope of the plot too is unrevealing: the plot is pure Epic Cycle, involving a quick account of the lead-up to the war, an account of the war, and then four books (6–9) dealing with aftermath and loose ends. Possibly the most exciting material is the death of Odysseus at the hands of Telegonus, a rationalisation of Eugammon of Cyrene's *Telegony*, complete with premonitions and a starring role for dream-interpreters.<sup>6</sup> Although Odysseus is the focus of our interest for a while (in the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> book of the Greek original), the account does not promote a view of life or, for instance, deal with questions of the trustworthiness of divination or the folly of man in disbelieving it. Rather, an entirely understandable mistake is made in the interpretation of Odysseus' dream: it *did* foretell Odysseus' death at the hands of his son, but he was not to know that the son in question was Telegonus rather than Telemachus, whom he had understandably relegated to a margin and kept under house arrest. This is very unfortunate, but such things happen.

### *Xenophon of Ephesus*

*Thesis: Xenophon's Ephesiaca is in a real sense philosophical. Evidence: Anthia in the pit (4,6).*

Xenophon of Ephesus, for all the criticism that is made of him, is a significantly more meaningful author than Dictys. From beginning to end we are

<sup>3</sup> Merkle 1989, 54–55.

<sup>4</sup> Latin version 1,5.

<sup>5</sup> *FGrH* 49F7a.

<sup>6</sup> *FGrH* 49F10.

committed to Habrocomes and Anthia, young and vulnerable people of good class. And their values, lifestyle, and ethical choices reflect a consistent *bios*, a proposed model of living which the novel consciously commends to its readers.<sup>7</sup>

Many passages could illustrate this point, but a striking one is the closing tableau of Bk.4, an iconic confrontation with death: Anthia and the Pit.<sup>8</sup> The questions posed by this confrontation are only resolved by the no less iconic story of the fisherman Aegialeus and his mummified wife at the beginning of Bk.5. This remarkable sequence of images must not fall victim to a merely melodramatic reading of Xenophon: there is indeed thematic content, which here rises from the subliminal propaganda for bourgeois life.

‘Anthia and the Pit’ plays out against the conception of justice in a bandit community, something paradoxical and thought-provoking by nature. The bandits of Xenophon have their own values and their own sense of right and wrong. The values of bandits are distorted, in our eyes to the extent of parody, but the lives of those who do not understand the good will always be of this type. Values held within a system that is, overall, wrong inevitably find their place in an absurd parallel universe. As bandits serve to indicate an extreme of the unacceptable *bios*, they are particularly inclined to key philosophical negatives: sex, drink, and violence. This is the *bios lēstrikos*, a life which can be taken up as a matter of choice; Thyamis commends it to Theagenes as a temporary solution until he can reach a better one.<sup>9</sup> Thyamis himself is only temporarily a brigand, and so is Hippothous. So this is for some a choice, a temporary solution, a liminal stage until something better can be found. ‘Pouriathos was a shepherd, and then he went over to the *bios lēstrikos*.’<sup>10</sup> For economically depressed communities, it can however become a way of life: ‘the Phlegyai, inhabiting Gyrtion, led a thoroughly lawless and *lēstrikos bios* and ... committed serious injustice’.<sup>11</sup> To become a bandit is more than selecting a career in a (dis)service industry: it is an ethical choice of lifestyle. By definition, to do so you must become an outlaw, and abandon the standards of *nomos* and of *dikē*, of law and justice.

Xenophon’s hero and heroine meet and confront the *bios lēstrikos* not only because it is exciting and dangerous (the melodrama motive) but also for the acute moral conflicts it raises. The bandit Anchialus had given way to

<sup>7</sup> For the concept of *bios* relative to the novel, see Dowden 2005.

<sup>8</sup> 4,6.

<sup>9</sup> Hld. 7,5,5.

<sup>10</sup> Eutropius *Breviarium* 4,16.

<sup>11</sup> Pherecydes *FGrH* 3F41e.

unbridled *erōs*, sexual passion,<sup>12</sup> and attempted to rape Anthia, a virgin of good standing in a civilised community, the 14-year-old leading maiden, ‘daughter of Megamedes and Euhippe, local people’.<sup>13</sup> Anthia had, it will be noted, raised the sword and indeed struck him, but it was his impulse to fall on her that caused the sword to deliver a mortal blow. In this way Anchialus paid ample ‘justice’ (*dikē*) for his ‘wicked instinctive desire’ (*ponēras epithymias*) and the scene is designed to show the operation of divine justice.

This scene is, however, now re-read by Hippothous in accordance with the values of the *bios lēstrikos*:

Hippothous for his part was distressed over Anchialus and decided on an even harsher penalty. So he gave orders to dig a large, deep trench and throw Anthia in it with two dogs beside her, to make her pay dearly for her daring. The robbers obeyed, and she was brought to the trench. The dogs were huge and particularly fearsome-looking Egyptian hounds. When they threw them in, they shut the trench with large planks and piled earth on top – the Nile was not far away – and put one of the robbers, Amphinomus, on guard.<sup>14</sup>

Hippothous, as leader of the bandit community, must decide on the punishment for Anthia, who has murdered Anchialus, a fellow-bandit (i.e. citizen). In this *polis*, as is customary in Greek law, a number of penalties are proposed. But Hippothous, recognising his responsibility as leader, and because he is pained at the death of Anchialus, devises a ‘greater punishment’. Anthia now, in the *imaginaire*, is somewhere between criminals sent to die at the claws and jaws of beasts in the amphitheatre and Antigone shut up to die in a burial chamber for an act of righteousness. She is consigned to the world of death and the chthonic violence of two dogs.<sup>15</sup> The *bios lēstrikos* appears to be in the ascendant and its goals implemented.

This scene in Xenophon clearly exercised an influence on the novel tradition and in particular on Lucius of Patrae. At *Onos* 25 the bandits propose various options for the killing of (the unnamed) Charite and the ass. At Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses* 6,31 this is coloured in more juridical and deliberative language: they consult *de nostra poena suaque vindicta* (‘on the penalty we set and the punishment she undergoes’), and maybe the suicide of the old

<sup>12</sup> 4,5,4.

<sup>13</sup> 1,2,5.

<sup>14</sup> 4,6,3–4; trans. G. Anderson in Reardon 1989.

<sup>15</sup> Dogs: cf., e.g., Nilsson 1967, i.724.

woman (*Onos* 24) corresponds in some way to the death of Anchialus. Back in Bk.4 of the *Metamorphoses*, there is a strong institutional feel to the bandit community, as there also is later in Heliodorus (where the issue is not so much what to do with Charicleia as who should get her and with what right).<sup>16</sup> Justice and decision-making in a failed community raise questions of the extent to which such communities might be seen as satire of human justice altogether. The Hippothous of Xenophon may be the Creon of Sophocles' *Antigone* in a new mythology that figures human justice as an imperfect imitation of divine justice.

In this new version of the *Antigone*, Anthia is not left to die. The death-scene has an internal reader, the bandit Amphinomus:

Now he had already fallen in love with Anthia, so that he now felt all the more sorry for her and sympathised with her plight. So he found a way of keeping her alive and stopping the dogs from molesting her; every so often he would remove the planks from over the trench and throw in bread, give her water, and so keep her spirits up.<sup>17</sup>

Amphinomus is distinctly more successful than Apuleius' Aristomenes or Thelyphron,<sup>18</sup> both internal readers, the one ineffectually protecting his comrade Socrates from mortal peril, the other failing to protect the corpse which he is assigned, like Amphinomus, to guard. Both of Apuleius' figures fail in their lives because they fail to read the significance of the text. Amphinomus, by contrast, is somewhat initiated by the experience of observing death acted out.<sup>19</sup> Sucked into this initiatory mindset, he himself is converted to human sympathy, something alien to the *bios lēstrikos*, and conversely an important part of the good Xenophontic life; this is not unlike what we saw long ago when the dying *paidagōgos* was anguished, despite his terminal condition, at what the future held for his more important masters. The polarities are critical to this scene: savagery/sympathy; violence/gentleness; wild/tame; death/life.

Finally, his initiation by now biting deep, the guard calls upon Anthia to 'be of good cheer' (*tharreïn*), a central concept in some mystery ideologies, though also a frequent marker of the anxieties it is the function of these nov-

<sup>16</sup> Hld. 1,19–21.

<sup>17</sup> X. Eph. 4,6,5.

<sup>18</sup> *Met.* 1,5–19 and 2,21–30.

<sup>19</sup> Observed in characteristic colours by Merkelbach 1962, 107–108, e.g., *Grube und Gefängnis entsprechen einem Prüfungsort im Mysterienhaus*.

els to articulate.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, the sacral overtones of this scene are strong, even if we decline to go as far as Merkelbach does:

‘the Watcher speaks words of comfort to the initiand and offers him bread and water. In this way reference is made to a sacramental meal that takes place in the “Underworld”.’<sup>21</sup>

Maybe indeed this is too much, but all the same the scene is very much staged, very much a tableau, and Merkelbach’s observations have their place in the intertext.<sup>22</sup>

Even the dogs have something to tell us:

By feeding the dogs he prevented them from doing her any harm; soon they were tame and docile. But Anthia thought about herself and her current plight. ‘What perils! What a revenge!’ she exclaimed. ‘To be shut in a ditch as a prison, with dogs – and even they are not nearly as fierce as the robbers. I share your own fate, Habrocomes, for you were once in the same straits; and I left you in prison in Tyre. If you are still alive, then my plight is nothing; for some day, perhaps, we shall be together; but if you are already dead, it is in vain that I struggle to live, and in vain this man, whoever he is, is taking pity on my miserable life.’ She kept mourning and moping in this vein; and so there she was, shut in the trench with the dogs, while Amphinomus kept consoling her and pacifying the dogs with his feeding.<sup>23</sup>

Why exactly have the dogs become tame? Because the guard felt sympathy for Anthia. And why did he feel sympathy for Anthia? Because, with her beauty, she has had an influence on him, one which has led not to rape but to *pity*. Thus apprehension of her beauty has had a civilising and moralising effect, and the responses of others to that beauty throughout the novel are rather reminiscent of the varieties of response to *erōs* in Plato’s *Symposium*. The guard’s moral standards have been raised, or he has been reminded of his better self, by an apprehension of the good and the truly beautiful.

<sup>20</sup> Merkelbach 1962, 100 and esp. 107–108. On the word *θαρρῆν* see Dowden forthcoming (b).

<sup>21</sup> Merkelbach 1962, 108 (my translation).

<sup>22</sup> On how Merkelbach’s views may be accommodated within current analysis of the novel, see Dowden 2005, esp. 31–34.

<sup>23</sup> X. Eph. 4,6,6–7.

As for Anthia, she is trapped below, in a hostile environment, trying to understand the significance of her situation and what meaning her life has. This she does through melodramatic monologue. Turning again to the cultural intertext, or maybe to the *imaginaire*, this is the sort of dynamic that would be exploited by the Valentinians in the case of the fallen Sophia Achemoth or by Apuleius with the fallen Psyche, where somehow the significance of the life of the questing female is dependent upon the male partner who remains above. Like a goddess of the mystery religions, Demeter or Isis, there is some sense that they have experienced a prototypical, comparable suffering which gives meaning to your suffering and the salvific hope that you can escape it. Plutarch tells us in his *Isis and Osiris* that Isis made the mysteries for people who found themselves in the same travails that she had had.<sup>24</sup> But there is also an obvious philosophic reference: a prisoner in a pit, cut off from a real world, is not far from a prisoner in Plato's Cave: 'consider men who (are) as it were in a cave-like dwelling underground...'.<sup>25</sup> If the Xenophontic scene is felt as meaningful, these are the sorts of images that would manufacture meaning for educated readers, who were the only readers Xenophon could have.<sup>26</sup>

### *Heliodoros*

*Thesis: Heliodoros' Aethiopica is particularly philosophical. Evidence: the opening scene of Bk.6.*

The second half of Heliodoros' novel opens with a number of scenes exploring limited characters. These limited characters are a remarkable feature of the *Aethiopica*: in other ancient narratives, there are failed characters, and others who do not count for much other than colour and décor, but in Heliodoros there is a real interest in those who have aspirations but do not have the moral fibre to make the hard decisions and lead the life of quality. I am thinking here of Thisbe, a Charicleia for an ordinary world, and of those in her ambit, namely Nausicles and, above all, Cnemon.<sup>27</sup> Bk.6 contributes much to this agenda.

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<sup>24</sup> 361d–e.

<sup>25</sup> Pl. R. 7,514a–517d.

<sup>26</sup> On the level of literary care, note Ruiz Montero 2003, esp. 58–60.

<sup>27</sup> The first real attempt to understand the significance of Cnemon and Thisbe, as limited characters, was Morgan 1989.

Some curious incidents occur at the start of the sixth book. Almost immediately, Calasiris, Cnemon, and Nausicles set out to find Theagenes, an apparently easy mission, when a crocodile crosses their path. As so often in Heliodorus, what now matters is how the internal audience reads this event. For Nausicles it is just an everyday event: he does not read it at all. For Calasiris it has a significance and must be understood: it bears on their mission. But Cnemon panics and nearly runs away; indeed he has not even exactly (*akribōs*) perceived what it was: for him it was only a *skia* ('shadow'), with more than a hint of Plato's Cave.<sup>28</sup> This is another iconic scene: for Nausicles there is no mission; for Calasiris there is a meaningful mission that, with the help of the divine and with sufficient endurance, may be accomplished. Cnemon's failure is, however, special: he has neither the intellect nor the resolve to achieve the mission, though he has a sense of what the mission is and a dim apprehension of its difficulty. Nausicles laughs at Cnemon, but soon stops laughing when he encounters a name known to the other two, that of Thisbe. For he, like Cnemon, is a Thisbe-worshipper, whereas Calasiris, we recall, had fled Rhodopis<sup>29</sup> – and the love of Theagenes for Charicleia is qualitatively different, an example of *sōphrosynē*, as Philip the Philosopher tells us.<sup>30</sup>

Once Cnemon has told his tale of Thisbe, another curious scene presents itself (6,3). It is an unnamed acquaintance of Nausicles, in a huge hurry and carrying, as we discover, a 'Nilotic' flamingo, a *phoinikopteros*. It is at first sight a bizarre scene, a narrative convenience to let us know that Theagenes is no longer with the Persian general Mitranes, decorated with some rather self-indulgent and rather comic local colour. Yet on examination, it is closely related thematically to the main action and casts light on it.

So far I have used the word 'mission'. Now it is time to come clean:

Every skill and every pursuit – and that includes both actions and choices (*proaireseis*) – apparently aims at something good. So people have been right to define the Good as that at which everything aims.<sup>31</sup>

Aristotle proceeds to describe the nature of targets or ends (*telē*) and how there is a hierarchy of targets and how there might be an ultimate target for

<sup>28</sup> Pl. *R.* 7,515a–516c.

<sup>29</sup> Hld. 2,25; cf. Philip the Philosopher in A. Colonna, *Heliodori Aethiopica* (Rome 1938), 367, testimonium XIII.52. For a degree of validation of Philip's method, see Hunter 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Philip the Philosopher, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1,1.

the sake of which all intermediate targets are aimed at.<sup>32</sup> So how does the teleology of Nausicles' acquaintance work? Immediately, he is seeking a *phoinikopteros*, and he has achieved that mission. But he has sought this bird on instructions (*kata prostagma*, we might say, in the religion of Isis) from his mistress Isias of Chemmis,<sup>33</sup> to whom he is remarkably devoted. Nausicles, he says, knows full well 'that at present all my energies are devoted to one aim, namely to attend to the instructions of Isias of Chemmis'. Thus his principal *telos* is unquestioning and frenetic service of his mistress, though oddly with some consciousness of his role and some sense that it is ephemeral ('at present'; *to paron*). His servitude to her recalls the impact of the witch Meroe on Socrates in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*,<sup>34</sup> or the stance of an elegiac love poet before his *domina*. It is, in philosophical terms and in the terms of this novel, a false goal, a *bios* wrongly directed. It has, in a sense, taken away his manhood, as Circe would have taken away Odysseus' if he had let her.<sup>35</sup> Worse than that, the degraded nature of the goal is visible in the degraded nature of the task at hand. Why a flamingo? The answer may lie in Nausicles' apparently casual and jocular remark that at least his acquaintance had been sent for a *phoinikopteros* ('phoenix-wing', i.e. a flamingo) and not an actual *phoenix* (6,3).<sup>36</sup> The immediate point, as Morgan observes,<sup>37</sup> is the difficulty of sourcing a phoenix, given the 500-year frequency of its appearance and the fact that it doesn't exist. But the phoenix is a vibrantly significant creature. Even Achilles Tatius could not resist a rhapsodic description of the phoenix as a triumphal close for his third book following the apparent resurrection of Leucippe.<sup>38</sup> There is no greater symbol of the triumph of life over death. A *phoinikopteros* may have the plumage (*ptera*) of a phoenix but it is not a phoenix: it is a failed phoenix and stands in relation to the phoenix itself, one might say, as Thisbe stands to Charicleia. Also, it is Nilotic whereas the phoenix is, as Nausicles tells us, Ethiopian or Egyptian. As Achilles tells us, it is Ethiopian in life and Egyptian or Nilotic in death. So in this scene the flamingo can be read as a symbol of the failure to leave the lower levels of existence and achieve the Ethiopian *telos*, which is the goal of Charicleia's journey and which is a triumph of life over

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 1,2.

<sup>33</sup> Association of Isis and Osiris myth with Chemmis: Pl. *Is. et Os.* 356d; temple of Apollo there, decorated with phoenixes, plus an association with Isis, Hdt. 2,156.

<sup>34</sup> Ap. *Met.* 1,7–9.

<sup>35</sup> Hom. *Od.* 10,301.

<sup>36</sup> Hld. 6,3.

<sup>37</sup> In Reardon 1989, 475 n.154.

<sup>38</sup> Ach. Tat. 3,25.

death; and Nausicles' friend enacts the failure to achieve this ultimate *telos* through the choice (*proairesis*) of a false *telos*, that of servitude to erotic desire. This is not a long distance from the images presented by Apuleius and indeed the teleology of Apuleius, except that, as I have argued elsewhere, Egypt is for Heliodorus a halfway house: Ethiopia is the *telos*.<sup>39</sup>

Interestingly, it is Nausicles who now restores their sense of mission, observes the need to redefine the mission, and observes (or claims comfortingly to have observed?) the hand of god in the appearance of his flamingo-bearing friend (*ouk atheei*, 'not without god').<sup>40</sup> He is a practical man, and it is his practical-mindedness that drives the banquet scene where the paths of different *bioi* finally diverge.<sup>41</sup>

Nausicles has set up the banquet with ulterior motives, to get Cnemon to stay and marry his daughter.<sup>42</sup> The link to the *Odyssey* is fairly clear. Nausicles is Alcinous, who would have been perfectly happy to have Odysseus marry Nausicaa and stay in Scheria and provide the means for them to live comfortably.<sup>43</sup> However, an Odysseus who stayed would be like an Aeneas that said 'No, thank you' to Mercury and stayed in Carthage. What matters is to complete the mission, life's mission, for which the journey of Odysseus was a standing allegory. In Heliodorus, Odysseus undergoes a sort of Freudian fragmentation or segmentation. Cnemon is the Odysseus who stays; Charicleia is the true Odysseus who goes on. Presently Charicleia and Calasiris will both be Odysseus disguised as a beggar.

But Nausicles is only partly Alcinous. Unlike Alcinous, he has made life choices too: he will help our heroes in any way – but only so long as he is here. For it is now the sailing season and he leads the *bios emporikos* ('the merchant's life').<sup>44</sup> Though he has a dash of *Thisbe-erōs* (sexual passion) in him, his principal *telos* is *ploutos* (wealth),<sup>45</sup> as when he in effect sold Charicleia to Calasiris.<sup>46</sup> Aptly, Calasiris wishes him the favour of Hermes 'of Profit' (*Kerdōios*). He will return to Greece, the diametric opposite of Charicleia's quest. They are now at the crossroads, and Calasiris affects not to know which way Cnemon will turn.<sup>47</sup> Cnemon's reply is masterly: he ex-

<sup>39</sup> Dowden 1996, esp. 280–283 ('The grading of the world and its inhabitants').

<sup>40</sup> Hld. 6,4,2.

<sup>41</sup> Hld. 6,6–8.

<sup>42</sup> Hld. 6,6,1.

<sup>43</sup> Hom. *Od.* 7,313–314.

<sup>44</sup> Hld. 6,6,3.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Arist. *Nic. Eth.* 1,2.

<sup>46</sup> Hld. 5,12–15.

<sup>47</sup> Hld. 6,7,2.

pounds a philosophy of *tychē* ('chance/fortune'), of a world without purpose, sense, or security:

O wheel of human fortune, you are forever turning, never stable! Many men have suffered on many occasions from the delight you take in making misfortune ebb and flow so violently, but none more than I ... Which way should I turn? What ought I to do? Am I to abandon Charicleia before she has been reunited with Theagenes? ... If we were assured of finding him, efforts spent in the expectation of success would be efforts well spent. But on the other hand if the future is uncertain and merely holds yet more misfortune, then it is also uncertain what end there will ever be to my wanderings. Why do I not crave forgiveness from you and from the gods of friendship and, at long last, begin to think about returning to my homeland and my family? Particularly as, thanks to one of the gods, it seems, such an excellent opportunity has presented itself.<sup>48</sup>

Despite his sense that he has some obligations to Charicleia, that he is avoiding the morally correct decision, it is in the end all bluster and Charicleia herself has identified the real driving motive, the *telos*: it is marriage to Nausicles' daughter, to this latter-day Nausicaa. There is no point in holding Cnemon to the insincerity of helping them: in a rather surprising judgment, Charicleia thinks of him as 'no longer a seemly or wholly trustworthy travelling companion' (tr. Morgan). In any case, it is not his *bios*.

### *Conclusions*

Novel, perhaps by its nature, expounds patterns of life. These patterns underlie Greek ethical philosophy. Through various alterities – bandits and foreigners in power – those values can be stated, tested, and promoted. Heliodorus is more philosophical than Xenophon because he is more clearly aware of the challenges involved in leading the good life and has an idea of the supererogatory nature of the truly good life; Cnemon and Nausicles are wonderful inventions giving sense to the ethical struggle of their superiors.

A novel may be closer to, or further from, specific philosophical views, and closer at some points than at others, but the degree to which there was a common, and rather systematised, view of the good life and a shared *imaginaire* makes it difficult for any author writing about lives not to be philoso-

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<sup>48</sup> Hld. 6,7,3–6.

phical. If Dictys is not, it is because actually he is not writing about lives. But Xenophon is: his characters and Heliodorus' select, and aim at, targets. The worse characters aim at wealth by whatever means, or cannot prioritise anything over food, drink, and sex. The most memorable image, therefore, of the pursuit of exoteric goods is the image of the bandit. It was Heliodorus' achievement to find life beyond bandits and to establish a more realistic middle ground of limited moral success and limited moral vision. The reader is perhaps in more danger of being Cnemon or Nausicles than of being a conventional Xenophontic bandit. But even there, there is hope, as Hippotous' sense of friendship matures and as even Amphinomus, a humble warder, perceives true beauty.

### *Bibliography*

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