

Apuleius *Socrates Africanus*?

Apuleius' Defensive Play

WERNER RIESS

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

This paper seeks to redefine the *communis opinio* that Apuleius regarded himself as a second Socrates, a *Socrates Africanus*.¹ While the similarities between Apuleius' speech in his own defense, the so-called *Apology*,² and the defense speech of Socrates, as it is rendered in literary form mainly by Plato and Xenophon, are indeed striking, there are also considerable deviations from the Platonic and Xenophontic models.

In this article, I will compare these similarities and contrast the differences. I will argue that the dissimilarities not only stem from the totally different context in which Apuleius' trial took place, but also from Apuleius' free and playful appropriation of literary genres and motifs typical of an erudite orator adhering to the literary and intellectual movement of the Second Sophistic. By aligning himself with Socrates to some degree and at the same time dissociating himself from him, Apuleius aims for ambivalence and, in response to Socrates' notorious irony, seeks to create that of his very own. In a highly sophisticated dialogue with the oration's literary role model, Apuleius skillfully transforms and adeptly contextualizes the idea of irony, thus making it a strategic tool in his hands.

In his unsurpassed interpretation of Apuleius' *Apology*, Helm already pointed to the speaker's elaborate playing with sophistic argumentation.³

¹ Tatum 1979, 105–134, 114; similar 119–122.

² This title is contested: see below, notes 15 and 16. Apuleius' *Apology* has attracted much scholarly attention in recent years. Hunink not only established a new Latin version of the text (1997a) and provided a detailed up-to-date commentary (1997b), but he also translated the text into English afresh (2001b). Hammerstaedt published a new German translation (2002b with notes) that now complements the older and widely used German translation by Helm 1977 (with notes).

³ Helm 1955, 98.

This observation deserves further treatment. Apuleius deliberately plays with diverse images of Socrates as provided by the classical tradition in order to enhance his own argument, to underline his Greek *paideia*, and to increase his symbolic capital with Claudius Maximus, the Roman governor presiding over the court case, and with his advisory board, thus bolstering his own position. In this way, playing becomes a forensic strategy which fulfills concrete functions that go far beyond the display of erudition and fanciful mastering of literary techniques. By revealing the social function of sophistic oratory,⁴ I hope to help open up Helm's static understanding of sophistic texture by suggesting a more dynamic model. Apuleius and his fellow sophists did not employ literary genres, tropes, and *topoi* for their own sake in a sterile literary world, but embedded and put them to use in situations of symbolic significance and refined communication.

I will read Apuleius' speech against the backdrop of contemporary literature, especially Greek sophistic literature and its preferred literary genres, the *apologia* and *melete*,⁵ both of which flourished during the second century CE. Viewed against this foil, the Apuleian text will gain additional levels of meaning hitherto overlooked, and Apuleius' literary achievement will emerge more clearly than before.

In doing so, I will look at macrostructures, at the overall image of himself that Apuleius tries to convey compared to the overall image of Socrates that can be inferred from Plato's and Xenophon's *Apologies*. Apart from these main texts of comparison, Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and *Symposion* as well as Plato's early Socratic dialogues will also be considered, specifically *Euthyphro*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*.

In the first half of this article, I will dwell on the similarities between the literary persona of Socrates⁶ and Apuleius' self-portrayal. In the second half, I will focus on the deviations from the Socratic model. A third section will assess Apuleius' closeness to the image of Socrates and determine the social

⁴ As postulated e.g., by Korenjak 2000, 38.

⁵ On the *melete*, cf. Reardon 1971, 99–119; Schmitz 1999, 71–77.

⁶ Plato's *Apology* is a literary rendering of the speech that Socrates might have delivered for his own defense. Plato never quotes Socrates verbatim and so it is unlikely that he did so in the *Apology*. That is why we have to talk about a Platonic Socrates (Slings 1994, 6–7). Vlastos 1991, however, tends to regard the *Apology* as an authentic documentation of Socrates' defense speech, because of Plato's claim to have been present at the trial (Pl. *Ap.* 38b). While Kahn 1996, 88–95 is willing to concede the relative historicity of the *Apology*, he emphasizes the fictional character of the genre of Socratic dialogue in general as it is shaped and used by Plato. There is a whole spectrum of opinions falling between these poles, but they are irrelevant to the thesis of this article.

and strategic function of Apuleius' irony as far as it is derived from his playing with Plato's and Xenophon's images of Socrates.

*I. Similarities between the Literary Persona of Socrates
and Apuleius' Self-Portrayal*

Apuleian scholars agree that in his *Apology*⁷ Apuleius stylizes himself as an innocent philosopher, as a second Socrates, by drawing a parallel at some level between his own trial and that of the Athenian philosopher.⁸ Like Socrates, Apuleius felt unjustly dragged to court by ignorant accusers. Like Socrates, Apuleius tried to make his audience believe that not only was his person at stake, but philosophy in general required his defense against rustic blockheads.⁹ In one instance, Apuleius is even quite specific with regard to Plato as his model. The Greek philosopher appears as the Latin orator's *magister vitae* and real advocate in his trial.¹⁰

But the extent to which this analogy is valid is a matter of debate. Helm and Harrison, to name just two, have observed in Apuleius' *Apology* a general tone of adopting a Socratic pose while at the same time admitting that not too much emphasis is to be placed on this phenomenon, given the fact that Apuleius only mentions Socrates in passing and has recourse to many more literary and philosophical models.¹¹ Schindel, however, has vehemently argued in favor of a close relationship between Plato's and Apuleius' *Apology* in recent years.¹²

First of all, Apuleius' whole speech can be understood metaphorically as the justification of philosophy versus the uneducated masses.¹³ In a Socratic

⁷ On the *Apology* as cultural document of the highest importance, cf. Bradley 1997.

⁸ Schenk 2002, 31–32, 41–42, 54–56, esp. notes 50, 52, and 53 on the comparison to Plato's *Apology*. On the Socratic pose, cf. Helm 1955, 101–102; Harrison 2000, 69.

⁹ Apul. *Apol.* 1,3; 3,5–6 clearly presents himself as the defender of philosophy, the reputation and dignity of which are at stake (cf. also Apul. *Apol.* 103,4). For a moment, he plays the part of Socrates in Plato's *Apology* (cf. Pl. *Ap.* 23e). Cf. Harrison 2000, 51; Habermehl 2002, 291.

¹⁰ Apul. *Apol.* 65,8. Cf. Harrison 2000, 50. On the close connection between rhetoric and philosophy during the Second Sophistic, cf. Anderson 1989, 118–123.

¹¹ Helm 1955, 101; Harrison 2000, 43.

¹² Schindel 1996; 2000.

¹³ Apul. *Apol.* 1,3: ... *quod mihi copia et facultas te iudice optigit purgandae apud imperitos philosophiae et probandi mei* ('with you as judge I have now been given the chance and opportunity to clear the name of Philosophy in the minds of the ignorant, and to jus-

pose, Apuleius insists that saving the honor of philosophy is more important than saving his own life.¹⁴ Second, Apuleius might have given the title *Apologia* to his defense speech. Although this title is not mentioned before 1469 in the Roman *editio princeps* by Giovanni Andrea De Bussi and is not attested in the surviving manuscript tradition, Schindel nevertheless believes that Apuleius called his speech *Apologia* to align himself with the Platonic tradition.¹⁵ According to Schindel, the attribution of the title *Pro Se De Magia*, the title that is generally preferred today, to the oldest manuscript F is not authentic either. The full title preserved in manuscript F might mirror a later subdivision into books. But Apuleius' intention cannot have been to subdivide his work. Moreover, manuscript F contains many mistakes in segmentation. Therefore, it is a somewhat doubtful source and cannot have been the basis for the *editio princeps*. The fact that Augustine and Jerome speak of *defensio* and its Greek equivalent whenever they refer to Apuleius' speech makes Schindel postulate an older manuscript that bore the title *Apologia*, a title that was adopted again in the *editio princeps*. Schindel cannot prove his thesis and has to work with many conjectures, it is true, but the discussion is ongoing and the possibility at least that Apuleius might have given the Platonic title to his speech cannot be ruled out entirely.¹⁶

Last but not least, the numerous parallels between Plato's speech of Socrates' defense and Apuleius' own speech are indeed striking. Strong dramatization, emphasis on stagecraft, the cross-examination of Meletus and Aemilianus, and the large amount of irony in both texts are further arguments in favor of a close connection between the Platonic model and Apuleius' version.¹⁷ Schindel dedicates a whole article to the traces of the Platonic *Apoloogy* that he sees preserved in Apuleius' *Apology* with regard to argumentation, tactics, motif patterns, self-representation, and fundamental outlook.¹⁸

I would like to expand on Schindel's thesis and point out even more similarities between Apuleius and his Socratic models. Details and overall

tify myself"). Carbonero 1977 draws a parallel between Apuleius' defense of philosophy and Cicero's defense of poetry in the figure of the poet Archia.

¹⁴ Apul. *Apol.* 103,3; Schindel 1996, 18.

¹⁵ Schindel 1996, 14, note 4; 1998. Against this view Hijmans 1994, 1712–1713, note 13; Hunink 1997a, 11, note 1; Harrison 2000, 42–44.

¹⁶ Schenk 2002, 23–24, note 1 gives a good summary of the discussion.

¹⁷ Schindel 1996, 24 and *passim*.

¹⁸ Schindel 2000. Schenk 2002, 56, note 53, however, puts Schindel's thesis into perspective. Apuleius does not convey the fiction of a real dialogue between defendant and plaintiff as Plato does. He summarizes his criticism: '*Die rhetorischen Mittel, die die Apologie und De magia gemeinsam haben, gehören zum üblichen Instrumentarium eines versierten Redners.*'

structure confirm the impression that Apuleius sought to connect his rhetorical persona closely to the literary figure of Socrates.

In three passages Apuleius directly refers to Socrates.¹⁹ He calls Plato his model in matters of poetry twice,²⁰ and quotes his master Plato in all of his writings except for the *Metamorphoses*.²¹ He regards himself as a *philosophus Platonicus*,²² a claim that was later accepted by Augustine, Sidonius Apollinaris, Cassiodorus, and Charisius.²³ Socrates became the victim of a kind of mistaken identity.²⁴ People thought of him as a sophist interested in the natural sciences. Apuleius, likewise, felt misunderstood in his philosophical identity. Both allegedly led a morally irreproachable life in public, open to the eyes of all.²⁵ Socrates was said to have used spells and potions like a prostitute to win friendship and love.²⁶ Apuleius was accused of practicing magic and having bewitched Pudentilla to become his wife.

Both Socrates and Apuleius present contradictory images of their own body. Socrates' appearance must have been provocative. All sources testify to his ugliness and lack of appropriate clothing.²⁷ At the same time, Xenophon does not tire of reiterating that Socrates never neglected his body and worked out regularly. According to Socrates, only a rigorous training of body and soul ensured good health.²⁸ This ambivalent relationship to one's own body is mirrored by Apuleius. Whereas the plaintiffs accuse Apuleius of his refined appearance and beauty, portraying him as a dedicated follower of fashion and eager to seduce Pudentilla with his fancy looks, the orator himself emphasizes the frailty of his body, exhausted by constant studies and travels. He neglected his own body to such a degree that his hair was in total disorder.²⁹ Apuleius does not provide us with a consistent picture of his phy-

¹⁹ Apul. *Apol.* 15,4–7; 18,7; 27,3. Cf. Döring 1979, 139, note 42; Schenk 2002, 55, note 50. But it must be noted that each time Socrates is quoted amidst other examples.

²⁰ Apul. *Apol.* 10,7; 11,5.

²¹ Schmutzler 1974, 97, 104.

²² Apul. *Apol.* 10,6; 39,1; Hijmans 1987, 416. Cf. the inscription ILAlg 2115 on a statue base erected by the *Madaurenses* in honor of an unknown *philosophus Platonicus*. This honorary inscription is commonly attributed to Apuleius. Cf. Harrison 2001a, 5, note 25.

²³ Harrison 2001a, 3, note 12 (with sources).

²⁴ Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 90.

²⁵ X. *Ap.* 11; *Mem.* 1,10. Cf. Harrison 2000, 56.

²⁶ X. *Mem.* 2,6,10; 3,11,16f. Cf. Theoc. *Idyll.* 2. On Socrates as magician, cf. Gellrich 1993/94.

²⁷ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 14, 22 (with sources). On the appearance and self-image of ancient philosophers in general, cf. Zanker 1995.

²⁸ X. *Mem.* 1,3,3; 1,6,7; 1,20,4; 3,12,2–8; 4,7,9; X. *Smp.* 2,17–19.

²⁹ Apul. *Apol.* 4,1–13. Cf. Harrison 2000, 53; Schenk 2002, 32–33, 45, 51.

siognomy and we may speculate that he imitates and plays with the ambivalence of Socrates' appearance.

In the consideration of overall structure, it is clear that in addition to congruencies in many motifs and details, Apuleius designed his whole speech as a grand metaphor echoing the speech of the Platonic Socrates. Socrates faced three main charges³⁰ that Apuleius seeks to re-model and apply to his own case.

1. Whereas Socrates was accused of *asebeia* and being an atheist,³¹ Apuleius had to confront charges of magic. Socrates claims that philosophers are always suspect of irreligiosity,³² Apuleius takes up this claim and even quotes examples (Anaxagoras and natural scientists, Epimenides and theologians),³³ although he probably did not have to face the charge of irreligiosity. 'Apuleius may use [this accusation] in order to align himself with the Socrates of Plato's *Apology*.'³⁴ Socrates defended himself by claiming that true religion is philosophy. Apuleius took up the same stance so that both were working to defend philosophy in general.

2. Socrates was accused of bringing in new and strange deities.³⁵ Apuleius was also indicted for worshipping a strange and frightening skeleton that turned out to be a statue of Mercury.

3. Whereas Socrates was accused of having seduced and corrupted youngsters by teaching them his own impious beliefs,³⁶ Apuleius was accused of having seduced and corrupted Pudentilla. The youngsters at Athens whom Socrates allegedly corrupted were thought to be gullible and naive. Apuleius' opponents also must have portrayed Pudentilla as gullible and naive. According to them, she fell prey to the magical machinations of a crazy, cunning, and vicious traveling intellectual. In contrast to this portrayal, Apuleius emphasizes her maturity, financial independence, and education.

Looking beyond Apuleius' *Apology*, the orator's affiliation with Platonic philosophy in general is an uncontested fact, and it seems only natural that Apuleius would follow Plato's footsteps wherever possible and appropriate. The North African sophist embraced Platonic philosophy and furthered its promotion by making it accessible to a Latin-speaking audience. The three

³⁰ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 30; Id. 2004, 79.

³¹ X. *Mem.* 1,1,1; X. *Ap.* 24b–26c; Pl. *Ap.* 18c; 24b; 26b–c.

³² Pl. *Ap.* 23d.

³³ Apul. *Apol.* 27,1.

³⁴ Harrison 2000, 64.

³⁵ X. *Ap.* 24–25; Pl. *Euthphr.* 3b; *Ap.* 24b; 26b; 26c.

³⁶ X. *Ap.* 10; 19; Pl. *Euthphr.* 2c–3a; *Ap.* 23d–e.

philosophical treatises attributed to Apuleius, *Peri hermeneias* (*De interpretatione*),³⁷ *De Deo Socratis*,³⁸ and *De Platone et eius dogmate*,³⁹ are ample evidence of his endeavor to make Plato accessible to Latin contemporaries. To this end, Apuleius translated Plato's *Phaedo* (frg. 9–10)⁴⁰ and the Aristotelian treatise *Peri kosmou* (*De mundo*).⁴¹

This close affiliation with Plato and his œuvre comes as no surprise. First-hand knowledge of Plato's dialogues was wide-spread in the Roman Empire of the second century CE. Aelius Aristides, for example, makes hundreds of allusions to Plato in his works. Like his sophistic colleagues, Apuleius must have had direct access to Platonic writings. He mentions twenty-two dialogues of the Greek master in his works, and it is clear from his studies that he did not use handbooks, but familiarized himself with Plato directly by reading his original treatises. In addition, Apuleius must have been intimately familiar with Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Xenophon.⁴²

In order to understand Apuleius' treatment of the Socratic model, I will now read his works against the backdrop of Socratic writings and their ancient reception. Socrates' trial was not unique. Many intellectuals of the classical era had to face charges of irreligiosity or atheism.⁴³ But the trial of Socrates certainly had the most far-reaching repercussions. Soon after his death, Xenophon and Plato, with different goals in mind, each wrote a more or less fictitious speech supposedly delivered by Socrates in his own defense. These two defense speeches served as archetypes and gave rise to a whole genre of Socratic *apologiai*, which started circulating soon after the versions of Plato and Xenophon. Only these two have come down to us, but Xenophon mentions several other apologies already in the introduction of his

³⁷ Cf. Hijmans 1987, 408–411, Dillon 1996, 311, and Sandy 1997, 222–223 on this important document of Middle Platonism.

³⁸ Hijmans 1987, 425–427; Sandy 1997, 191–213; Harrison 2000, 136–173; Harrison 2001b, 185–194. Harrison *ibid.* 195–216 provides a new English translation of the treatise. There is also a new German edition and translation of the text: Baltes – Lakman – Dillon – Donini – Häfner – Karfíková 2004. Cf. especially *ibid.* 13–42. Socrates' *daimonion* was well established as a literary topic before Apuleius: Harrison 2001b, 187. On the system of *daimones* in Apuleius, cf. Regen 1971, 3–83; Bernard 1994.

³⁹ Moreschini 1978, 51–128; Hijmans 1987, 427–428; Sandy 1997, 213–222; Harrison 2000, 174–180; 195–209. On the first four chapters, the so-called biography of Plato, cf. Schmutzler 1974.

⁴⁰ Harrison 2000, 23.

⁴¹ Moreschini 1978, 128–132; Hijmans 1987, 417, 428–430; Sandy 1997, 224–231; Harrison 2000, 174–195. On Apuleius' position within Middle Platonism, cf. Moreschini 1978; 1981; Donini 1979; Barra 1981; Mortley 1981; Dillon 1996, 306–338.

⁴² De Lacy 1974, 6–7; Hijmans 1987, 406, 417.

⁴³ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 19, note 60.

own work.⁴⁴ Lysias may have written a speech on Socrates' behalf, which he refused to deliver.⁴⁵ After 375 BCE Theodectes of Phaselis is known to have written a defense speech for Socrates. Later authors of Socratic *apologiai* include Demetrius of Phaleron, Theo of Antiocheia, Plutarch, Maximus of Tyre, Libanius,⁴⁶ and especially Lucian.⁴⁷ Apart from *apologiai*, Socrates' rich *Nachleben* can be easily traced in later Greek and Latin literature. Pseudo-epigraphic letters by Socrates and Xenophon, Seneca, Epictetus, early Christian martyrs, and apologetics all joined in creating a fictitious Socrates.⁴⁸

The second-century sophists loved role-playing. Whereas Latin audiences preferred fictional pleas, the so-called *suasoriae* and *controversiae*,⁴⁹ the favorite genre in the Greek-speaking East was the *melete*, 'a speech given in the persona of, or addressed to, a famous figure from myth or ancient history (from the classical period).'⁵⁰ It was during the Roman imperial era that the genre of *apologia*, performed as *meletai*, became extremely popular among traveling concert speakers in the Greek East. *Apologiai* not only evoked a 'Socratic hypotext,'⁵¹ but also served as a kind of autobiography and 'epideictic encomium,'⁵² thus being especially suitable for Second Sophistic declaimers. The star orators were expected to declaim these speeches in Attic Greek, a language that had long become obsolete.⁵³ The educated audience, trained to listen carefully to the archaic language, took great pleasure in these performances and felt as though they were a part of the larger cultural community of the Greek world. The social and political implications of these performances were enormous. By indulging in a glorious past, the

⁴⁴ X. *Ap.* 1,1.

⁴⁵ Cic. *de orat.* 1,54,231; D.L. 2,40.

⁴⁶ Lesky 1971, 562; Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 4, note 13; Slings 1994, 4.

⁴⁷ Whitmarsh 2005, 47, 80–81 characterizes Lucian as the master of apology. He wrote at least four apologies: 'Portraits,' 'Salaried Posts in Great Houses,' the 'Fisherman,' and the 'Double Accusation.' Cf. on Lucian, Jones 1986; Swain 1996, 298–329.

⁴⁸ Döring 1979, 18–42 (Seneca), 43–79 (Epictetus), 114–128 (pseudo-epigraphic letters by Socrates and Xenophon), 143–161 (early Christian martyrs and apologetics). Cf. Sandy 1997, 147. Schindel 2000, 443 mentions some of these authors briefly, but does not draw the necessary conclusions.

⁴⁹ Schmitz 1999, 72.

⁵⁰ Whitmarsh 2005, 20; similar *ibid.* 73, 85 and Schmitz 1999, 72, 75: '... being a sophist entailed the creation of a public persona in a histrionic display. For this creation to be convincing, it had to be accompanied by constant self-fashioning. ... sophistic declamations concentrated and intensified this aspect of theatricality.' Cf. also *ibid.* 78–79.

⁵¹ Whitmarsh 2005, 80.

⁵² *Ibid.* 79.

⁵³ On linguistic purism during the Roman Empire, cf. e.g., Swain 1996, 17–42.

listeners were reassured of their Greek identity.⁵⁴ At the same time, the highly educated orators made it abundantly clear to the humble masses attending these spectacles that their exclusion from the higher ranks of society and political power was justified on grounds of lacking a Greek education. Thus, education helped monopolize power in the hands of the rich elites and legitimize their rule. In fact, sophistic declamations helped stabilize the Roman social and political system.⁵⁵

To perform a speech in self-defense and align oneself as closely as possible to Socrates belonged to the standard repertoire of every respectable star orator. In particular Dio Chrysostom stylizes himself as Socrates in his thirteenth oration by allegedly having been wrongly charged by ignorant accusers.⁵⁶ Besides Socrates, he also uses Epaminondas as an example. In his Bithynian speeches, Dio articulates the accusation as analogous to the charge against Socrates and announces his own defense as modeled after the plea reported by Plato.⁵⁷ The audience must have taken great delight in perceiving this parallel between Socrates and Dio,⁵⁸ enjoying a kind of recognition scene that was not unlike similar experiences in watching dramas. Polemo, likewise, acted out the Socratic role-model.⁵⁹ Similarities between Apuleius' *Apology* and that of Apollonius of Tyana as transmitted in Philostratus have also been observed.⁶⁰ Maximus of Tyre treats the topic 'Whether Socrates Acted Well in Not Defending Himself.'⁶¹ Furthermore, a Greek rhetorical work of the second century analyzes Plato's *Apology*.⁶² Plato and his master

⁵⁴ Schmitz 1999. Research about the imperial Greeks' quest for Greek identity was partly triggered by Bowie 1974; 1982; 1989, who points out again and again to what extent the Greek sophists of the Roman Empire developed Greek literature further. Bowie makes a case against the exclusively historical and political role that Bowersock 1969 attributes to the sophists being active within the administration of the Roman Empire.

⁵⁵ These social and political implications of second-sophistic oratory have been fleshed out by Schmitz 1997, e.g., 45, 195–196, 232–234.

⁵⁶ Cf. Döring 1979, 113; Krause 2003, 141. On Dio Chrysostom in general, cf. Jones 1978.

⁵⁷ Krause 2003, 142.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 52.

⁵⁹ Philostr. *VS* 542; Sandy 1997, 147.

⁶⁰ Philostr. *VA* 8,7; Schenk 2002, 55; Habermehl 2002, 313–314 (with sources). Deremetz 2004 assumes that Apuleius was heavily influenced by Apollonius of Tyana, who had modeled his defense against the charge of magic after Plato's *Apology* of Socrates. According to this version, Apollonius was the most direct link between Plato and Apuleius. It is possible that Apuleius knew the speech Apollonius held before Domitian and that he derived some inspiration from it, but we can safely assume that Apuleius had direct access to Plato's *Apology*.

⁶¹ Max.Tyr. *Dialexeis* 3 (Hobein [ed.] 1910); cf. Sandy 1997, 147.

⁶² De Lacy 1974, 9, note 19; Sandy 1997, 147.

were so deeply rooted in the second-century educational canon that Dio considers them to be the fathers of rhetoric in general.⁶³

Given this background of performative literary practice, the wide circulation of Socratic writings, and Apuleius' in-depth knowledge of Plato and the historical figure of Socrates in general, it comes as no surprise that Apuleius, being charged with magic, seized the opportunity and stylized himself in the guise of Socrates.

But it is precisely because the *apologia* was a literary genre that Apuleius could feel free to play with it. It was part of the classical heritage and of the literary canon, from which a sophistic orator could freely borrow. Apuleius' occasional allusions to Socrates make this game more credible, but the numerous deviations from the Socratic model, on which the second part of this paper will focus, make it less likely that Apuleius had the idea of a full-fledged *melete* in mind when he wrote and performed his *Apology*. Can Apuleius' *Apology* be regarded as a *melete* at all? In spite of Apuleius' impressive knowledge of Greek and especially Platonic literature and the important role that Socrates plays in his defense speech, we have to bear in mind that Socrates is only mentioned briefly in Apuleius' *Apology* amidst many other intellectual figures of the past.⁶⁴ The role play of the *melete* required not only the orator as actor, but also attributed a certain role to the audience.⁶⁵ It would have been difficult for Apuleius' Latin-speaking North African audience to feel like an Athenian jury in 399 BCE. Unlike his contemporary Greek fellow-sophists, Apuleius was not concerned with his listeners' cultural identity, but rather with his own identity as a philosopher able to refute the charges of magic. In addition, there is no direct Greek predecessor or model we know of for Apuleius' speech.⁶⁶

2. Differences between the Literary Persona of Socrates and Apuleius' Self-Portrayal

Even a first, comparative reading of Plato's Socratic dialogues and Apuleius' defense speech reveals striking discrepancies between Apuleius' portrayed rhetorical persona and his model, the literary persona of the historic Socrates. Within the confines of this article, I will concentrate only on some major

⁶³ D.Chr. 18,13.

⁶⁴ Helm 1955, 101.

⁶⁵ Korenjak 2000, 59–60.

⁶⁶ Hunink 1997a, 23.

differences. As we will see, Apuleius only seeks a loose connection to Socrates, and he is careful not to identify himself too much with the Greek philosopher.

The most striking difference between Socrates and Apuleius is their very different notion of *sophia*. Socrates drew a sharp line between himself and his predecessors, the so-called Presocratics. It is probably true that Socrates had admired Anaxagoras of Clazomenae in his younger years,⁶⁷ but he ultimately abandoned the natural sciences⁶⁸ and embraced ethical questions concerning mankind. Many Athenians and especially Socrates' accusers did not perceive this decisive turn away from the natural sciences. Aristotle was one of the few to see that Socrates was only interested in ethics.⁶⁹ According to Meletus' indictment, Socrates was a sophist and an atheistic natural scientist.⁷⁰ Socrates vehemently denied interest in the sciences.⁷¹ According to Xenophon, Socrates thought that in-depth dealing with the sciences would lead to insanity.⁷² Moreover, according to Socrates, the sciences are only useful in so far as they fulfill concrete purposes, e.g., geometry is necessary to measure land.⁷³ It is the supreme task of the philosopher, however, to investigate the human soul and to be concerned with human wisdom.⁷⁴ For Socrates, *sophia* is equivalent to virtue (*arete*) and *phronesis*.⁷⁵ This insight into the good and the acceptance of the right scale of values imply the perfection of the soul, which is the most important thing of all.⁷⁶ Socrates' human wisdom is the 'antihybristic recognition of one's own limitations in wisdom'⁷⁷ and is encapsulated in his famous *dictum* that he knows that he knows nothing.⁷⁸ What he means is that he does not possess expert craft-

⁶⁷ Pl. *Phd.* 96a6–98b6; Aristid. *Or.* 45,21; D.L. 2,19,45; Ar. *Nu. passim*.

⁶⁸ Pl. *Ap.* 26d.

⁶⁹ Arist. *Metaph.* 987b1–2; Döring 1979, 3; Reeve 1989, 18–19.

⁷⁰ Pl. *Ap.* 18b7–c1; 19b4–c2. Aristophanes portrays Socrates exactly that way in his *Clouds*. Reeve 1989, 14–21, esp. 17–18.

⁷¹ X. *Mem.* 1,1,11–16; 4,7,6; Pl. *Phd.* 96a6–99d2; 99d4–5; *Ap.* 19a8–d7; 20d–e; 23d2–9; 26d1–e2; *Phdr.* 229c6–230a6; *Smp.* 6,6; cf. Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 17; Reeve 1989, 10.

⁷² X. *Mem.* 4,7,6.

⁷³ X. *Mem.* 4,7,2; similar with regard to astronomy: X. *Mem.* 4,7,4–5.

⁷⁴ X. *Mem.* 1,1,11–16; Cic. *Tusc.* 5,10. Cf. Harrison 2000, 148.

⁷⁵ Slings 1994, 15.

⁷⁶ Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 133.

⁷⁷ Reeve 1989, 32.

⁷⁸ Pl. *Ap.* 21a.

knowledge of virtue. He claims to have, however, a non-expert ethical knowledge.⁷⁹

Apuleius, on the contrary, blended religion, mystery cults, magic, and science in a manner typical of the eclectic and syncretistic second century CE. He was highly interested in the natural sciences,⁸⁰ boasted about his knowledge of natural phenomena, and his having written a treatise about fish.⁸¹ In *Apol.* 39,1 Apuleius is bold enough to claim that studying the natural sciences was fitting for a Platonic philosopher. In *Apol.* 41,7, he tries again to justify his experiments through referring to Plato, but his allusion to Plato's *Timaeus* is very free.⁸² In this passage, he also mentions Aristotle and for good reason.⁸³ With his interests in the natural sciences, Apuleius is clearly following Aristotle, Theophrastus, and the Peripatetic tradition.⁸⁴ In contrast to Socrates, who neither cared about the natural sciences nor wrote any scientific or scholarly treatises, Apuleius embraces a universal notion of the philosopher's mission that encompasses the natural sciences and medicine.⁸⁵ As far as we know, Apuleius was a prolific polymath with encyclopedic interests. Beyond his treatise on fish (*de piscibus graece et latine*) he wrote on questions of science (*quaestiones naturales*), astronomy (*astronomica*), botany and agriculture (*de arboribus; de re rustica*), medicine (*de medicinalibus*), and translated the mathematical treatise of Nicomachus of Gerasa (*de arithmetica*).⁸⁶ Apuleius was not satisfied with merely reiterating and compiling facts, but was committed to applying his knowledge. For instance, he 'verified Thales' calculation of the numerical ratio between the diameter of the sun and the circumference of its course.'⁸⁷

The fact that Apuleius does not conceal these activities in his speech, but rather boasts about them, means that he deliberately seeks to distance himself from Socrates. He needs the natural sciences to explain his dubious wheelings and dealings and refute the charges of magic. Apuleius' willingness to deviate from Socrates wherever necessary underscores the historicity

⁷⁹ Reeve 1989, 10–13, 32–40, 54, 58, 62.

⁸⁰ On Apuleius' interests in the natural sciences, cf. Helm 1955, 104; Le Bohec 1996.

⁸¹ *Apul. Apol.* 29–41; cf. Harrison 2000, 65–69.

⁸² Cf. *Pl. Ti.* 59d.

⁸³ Cf. *Apul. Apol.* 103,2.

⁸⁴ Habermehl 2002, 287; Schenk 2002, 52.

⁸⁵ Hammerstaedt 2002a, 17, 19 with a short list of all scientific Apuleian works. Schindel 1996, 21 points to the duty of the philosopher to engage in scientific research, thus undermining his own point of a close connection between Socrates and Apuleius.

⁸⁶ Hijmans 1987, 398; Harrison 2000, 6–32 with a full list of Apuleius' works (with indication of preserved fragments and testimonia).

⁸⁷ Hijmans 1987, 417–418.

of his speech. The distance from Socrates is remarkable and must have been easily recognizable to all educated people present at the trial.

The second major difference is the entirely different standpoint towards death. If we are willing to believe Plato, Socrates discussed in his speech various penalties for himself including imprisonment, a fine with imprisonment until payment could be made, and exile.⁸⁸ When he was finally sentenced to death, Xenophon and Plato agreed that he fully accepted death as unavoidable.⁸⁹ But the two authors give different reasons for his great tranquility. In Xenophon's version, Socrates is prepared to die because he wants to avoid the troubles of old age,⁹⁰ while in Plato's *Phaedo* he is calm because he believes in a life hereafter.⁹¹ Whereas Xenophon presents a rather defiant Socrates who provokes the judges,⁹² Plato's Socrates is calmer and more serene.⁹³ He addresses the topic of death explicitly and in detail, but the way he talks about the end of human life is never arrogant or disrespectful.⁹⁴ According to Socrates, fear of death is the pretense of wisdom.⁹⁵ Death is inevitably something good, because it is one of two things: either it is like a sleep without a dream or there is an eternal life and souls are removed to a different place. Both scenarios are positive.⁹⁶ Therefore, Socrates is not afraid of dying.⁹⁷ His accusers can have him executed, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Nevertheless, Plato's Socrates does everything to be acquitted.⁹⁸

Totally different is the tone in Apuleius' *Apology*. Full of self-confidence, even self-praise he does not even consider the possibility of being sentenced to death.⁹⁹ It is difficult for us to assess the implications of a charge of magic during the second century CE. Most scholars agree that Apuleius had to face charges on the basis of the *lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*,¹⁰⁰ which prescribed the death penalty for a person convicted on

⁸⁸ Pl. *Ap.* 37b–38b. Cf. Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 163.

⁸⁹ X. *Mem.* 4,8,2–3; Pl. *Ap.* 38e. In Pl. *Cri.* 43b; 52c, Socrates explains to his friends that the laws embody the city and fleeing therefore would be the greatest injustice of all.

⁹⁰ X. *Ap.* 6–9; 27; *Mem.* 4,8,1; 4,8,8.

⁹¹ Pl. *Phd.* 115d–e; 117c.

⁹² X. *Ap.* 1; 2; 18; 32.

⁹³ On Socrates' equanimity in the face of death, cf. Reeve 1989, 180–183.

⁹⁴ Pl. *Ap.* 28b3–d4. Cf. Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 121–122.

⁹⁵ Pl. *Ap.* 29a5–b7.

⁹⁶ Pl. *Ap.* 40c–41e. Cf. Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 175–178.

⁹⁷ Pl. *Ap.* 28b; 29b; 30c9–d6.

⁹⁸ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 6, 9.

⁹⁹ On Apuleius' 'triumphant tone,' cf. Hunink 1997a, 19; Id. 2001, 20.

¹⁰⁰ Dig. 48,8,1 (Marcian) (81 BCE).

the grounds stipulated in this law.¹⁰¹ Lamberti has come up with a fascinating but unproven thesis.¹⁰² She postulates a *senatus consultum* of about 50 CE, which explicitly targets magic (*maleficium*) as a crime distinct from the vague *veneficium*. According to this thesis, Apuleius was not tried under the provisions of the *lex Cornelia*, but rather under those of the later and more specific *senatus consultum*. But whatever the legal basis, the result would not change, for a condemned magician would still be executed.

On the opposite end of the discussion is Rives. According to him, the whole trial was about deviant religious behavior, not about magic as understood by the *lex Cornelia*.¹⁰³ If it is true that there was no charge of magic involved, in the traditional sense anyway, Apuleius would have been free enough to use this trial as yet another opportunity for self-display and self-representation, activities that were highly typical of a representative figure of the Second Sophistic. It almost seems as if this had been the case. Yet again, Apuleius remains elusive. Although he appears to be full of self-confidence and does not even consider the danger of being sentenced to death, which is of course part of his strategy, he does mention twice that his life is indeed at stake.¹⁰⁴ This tension between full awareness of his life being at risk and passing over this danger in almost complete silence has already been observed by Helm.¹⁰⁵ Apuleius knew that charges of magic, whatever the scope of the term's meaning at this time, could result in death. He could not deny this danger and even felt compelled to mention this topic twice, but it was his grand strategy to downplay this worst-case scenario, not to remind the judge of this "remote" possibility, and to convey the impression he was standing above those unjustified and base accusations. In contrast to Socrates, Apuleius was not willing to die; he did not want to play the victim and sacrifice his life in the name of philosophy. For this reason, Apuleius could not push his resemblance to Socrates too far. The role of the condemned Socrates was only useful to a limited extent.¹⁰⁶

More differences are to be found. Apuleius' argumentation partly hinges upon his definition of controversial terms. One of them is his alleged pov-

¹⁰¹ Hunink 1997a, 13; Id. 2001, 12.

¹⁰² Lamberti 2002, 342–349.

¹⁰³ Rives 2003 and in his contribution to this volume.

¹⁰⁴ *Apul. Apol.* 26,9: *in discrimen capitis*; 100,9: *capitis accusavit*. Cf. Lamberti 2002, 337, 347–348.

¹⁰⁵ Helm 1955, 86.

¹⁰⁶ Harrison 2000, 43.

erty,¹⁰⁷ a notion that Schindel only mentions briefly, but requires further investigation.¹⁰⁸ Socrates' poverty was authentic and self-imposed, because by not being a sophist he did not accept money from his followers.¹⁰⁹ Apuleius' poverty,¹¹⁰ however, is feigned. '[Socrates'] anti-materialistic, apolitical, and élitist sense of his life and thinking'¹¹¹ might apply to Apuleius' case as well, but his claim to poverty is untenable in the light of his education, his far-ranging travels, his family background, and his taking up of the provincial priesthood, which was an unpaid liturgy.¹¹² All these circumstances show that Apuleius never had to worry about his finances. By the time of the second century, the poverty of the philosopher had become proverbial¹¹³ and evoked positive associations.¹¹⁴ Moreover, this *topos* is in stark contrast to Apuleius' beauty and fancy appearance, which the plaintiffs criticize so harshly.¹¹⁵ One almost has the impression that Apuleius, despite opposing facts, could not do without the *paupertas*-motif in order to stylize himself as a philosopher. Once again we see to what extent ancient oratory was bound to rely on pre-shaped molds and *topoi*. In this particular case, the discrepancy between authentic Socratic and stylized Apuleian poverty must have been obvious to every listener of the speech. Apuleius was skilled enough to play with traditional *topoi* that did not actually fit his situation and thus create irony.

Socrates was always concerned with his own soul, that of his interlocutors and the Athenians in general. The soul was to become wise and good, a goal that required a strong moral and didactic impulse. Slings even calls the exhortation to philosophy one of the fundamental pillars of the Platonic *Apology*.¹¹⁶ Socrates painstakingly cared about *sophrosyne* (prudence) and

¹⁰⁷ Apul. *Apol.* 17–23. On poverty as a definitional problem, cf. briefly Schindel 2000, 449. On a more general level Vallette 1908, 129–157 and McCreight's contribution to this volume.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Stok 1985 and McCreight's contribution to this volume.

¹⁰⁹ Pl. *Ap.* 23b; 31c2–3; X. *Oec.* 2,2; 11,3; *Mem.* 1,2,1; comedies of Eupolis (PCG V fr. 386); Ameipsias (PCG V fr. 9); Ar. *Nu* 103; 175; 362; Ar. *Av.* 1282. Cf. Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 16, 22.

¹¹⁰ Hijmans 1987, 425, 435; Harrison 2000, 57–61.

¹¹¹ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 23 (addition by author of this article).

¹¹² Harrison 2001a, 2, 5. On Apuleius' provincial priesthood, cf. Rives 1994.

¹¹³ Cf. Schenk 2002, 33.

¹¹⁴ Cf. the *laus paupertatis* in D.Chr. 7. Cf. Krause 2003, 67–69.

¹¹⁵ Apul. *Apol.* 4. Whitmarsh 2005, 29–32 shows how important were dress, hairstyle, and physiognomics for star orators. Cf. Hahn 1986, 33–45 on the appearance and self-stylization of philosophers during the Roman imperial epoch. On Apuleius' beauty in general terms, cf. Vallette 1908, 42–46.

¹¹⁶ Slings 1994, 13–16.

arete (virtue).¹¹⁷ Apuleius, in contrast, never worries about these concepts in his speech. There is no didactic impetus in Apuleius' *Apology*. He only wants to defend himself by portraying himself as a philosopher and his opponents as ignorant barbarians. His digressions and ekphraseis are not supposed to teach, but to impress the audience and his judge, and display his own erudition.¹¹⁸ Apuleius' eagerness to show off his encyclopedic knowledge could not be more typical of a star orator of the Second Sophistic and clearly separates him from the fifth-century philosopher.

Neither Socrates nor Apuleius indulges in modesty in front of their judges,¹¹⁹ it is true, but Apuleius behaves differently from Socrates. Socrates provokes his judges, Apuleius does not. He tries to sway the whole audience and thus bring Claudius Maximus over to his side.

Whereas Socrates sacrifices in open daylight, Apuleius performs his odd rites in a friend's house during the night,¹²⁰ which was a scandal given the public nature of official Roman religion. Whereas Socrates disclaims rhetoric and claims to be a bad speaker and totally inexperienced in the law courts,¹²¹ Apuleius loves oratory and is proud to be an excellent public speaker.¹²² Whereas Socrates disregards well-established strategies of defense, Apuleius adeptly plays up to Claudius Maximus. Apuleius did not teach his own wisdom in the way that Socrates' opponents claimed he did.¹²³ Apuleius did not exert the technique of the *elenchus*, and he took great pleasure in posing as the all-round erudite who knows everything.

From a broader perspective, Apuleius' philosophical treatises may be further removed from the Socratic model than he himself may have thought. *De mundo* deals with the *cosmos* and natural phenomena,¹²⁴ topics foreign to Socrates. At first glance, *De Platone et eius dogmate* is Platonic, but in fact it is an 'admixture of Stoic and Peripatetic views which are presented as

¹¹⁷ X. *Mem.* 1,3,8; 1,5,1ff; 2,1; 4,3,1.

¹¹⁸ It should not be overlooked that this display of *paideia* is meant to be funny and mock the opponents. Anderson 1993, 172 rightly speaks of the 'playful use of *paideia*.' Cf. *ibid.* 199, 224.

¹¹⁹ On Socrates' modesty, cf. Slings 1994, 12–13.

¹²⁰ Apul. *Apol.* 57,2; 58,2.

¹²¹ Pl. *Ap.* 17d; 18a; Reeve 1989, 14–21. On this common *topos* in Athenian oratory, cf. Reeve 1989, 185.

¹²² Apul. *Apol.* 5.

¹²³ Pl. *Euthphr.* 3c. Socrates denies having ever taught, but he did have followers. Apuleius does not even touch this topic.

¹²⁴ Harrison 2000, 181–195.

Platonic.¹²⁵ Against Socratic tradition, it is also concerned with cosmology.¹²⁶

In sum, Apuleius' striking deviance from the literary genre of the *melete* can be explained by the trial situation at Sabratha. The critical and creative reception of a literary form speaks in favor of the historical authenticity of Apuleius' defense-speech, which was probably revised for publication, and weakens the arguments for a fictitious speech.¹²⁷ Were the speech fictitious only, Apuleius would have had more freedom to follow the rules of the *melete*.¹²⁸

3. *Playing with Socrates: Apuleian Irony*

Despite these many differences, there is no doubt that Apuleius admired Socrates and Plato. As we have seen, he considered himself a *philosophus Platonicus*. He may have called the speech in his own defense *Apologia*, thus explicitly referring to Plato's *Apology*, and he wrote a philosophical treatise on demonology (*De deo Socratis*). Finally, the *Apology* in particular is partly modeled after Plato's fictitious defense speech of Socrates.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* 196; cf. *ibid.* 195–209.

¹²⁶ *Apul. Pl.* 5, 190–12, 207. Harrison 2000, 198 offers a table of contents. Vallette 1908, 215–218 rightly speaks of a 'platonicien éclectique' (218).

¹²⁷ See Rives in this volume, notes 5–7 and in general Harrison in his contribution to this volume. Contrary Riemer 2006, Hunink in his contribution to this volume, note 32, and McCreight in his contribution to this volume, note 9. Similarly, Schindel 1996, 18–19 postulates the fictionality of the speech as it is preserved because of its supposed length of delivery of four to five hours, a weak argument given the fact that many long speeches were delivered in pre-modern times. Apuleius' *Apology*, as it is preserved, is fictional to Gaide 1993, too. But she does think that Apuleius performed a shorter, much simpler version before the proconsul of Africa. At a later stage in his life, Apuleius must have reworked and considerably augmented the speech for publication to take revenge on his enemies. Hunink 1997a, 26 and 2001b, 23 explains the fiction thesis further. In fact, quite a few ancient speeches were fictional in the sense that they were never delivered in front of the Athenian assembly of the people, e.g., Gorgias' *Defense of Palamedes* and his *Funeral Oration*, Isocrates 7 (*Areopagiticus*), 8 (*On the Peace*), 14 (*Plataicus*), or in front of a court jury, e.g., Isocrates 15 (*Antidosis*). Cf. Slings 1994, 3. Other cases are Cicero's *Oratio secunda* against Verres and perhaps Demosthenes' speech against Meidias. Hunink 1997a, 26–27; 2001, 23–24 is right to insist that we need an interpretation of Apuleius' *Apology* on a literary level. Nevertheless, the Socratic allusions that are interwoven in Apuleius' sophisticated literary texture are put to a concrete use and hence must have played a certain role in the trial.

¹²⁸ On the relationship between text and trial, cf. Hunink 1997a, 25–27.

Is Apuleius now a *Socrates Africanus*, *Platonicus*, *Xenophonticus*, *Lucianus*, or something else? How does Apuleius cope with the polyphonic Socrates-tradition? Plato's Socrates is very different from Xenophon's.¹²⁹ Unsurprisingly, the figure of Socrates is not stable within the Platonic œuvre either. In the wake of the development of Plato's thinking over the decades of his long life, Socrates appears differently in the early, middle, and late dialogues. Aristotle portrays yet another Socrates.¹³⁰

To pin Apuleius down to one specific image of Socrates would mean to diminish his reading and understanding of classical literature. Apuleius must have been familiar with the great variety of Socratic literature and differing images of Socrates.¹³¹ To him, this vast tradition was a quarry from which he could borrow the elements that were suited best to bolster his own argument. The Socratic theme had become a historical and literary topos during the 550 years between the historical trial of Socrates and Apuleius' own court case. On the surface, Apuleius stylizes himself as a *Socrates Africanus*, but given the very different circumstances of the trial, there are striking differences. Wherever he deviates from the Greek model, he does so deliberately to serve his own situation and cause. Apuleius was a master of artfully appropriating the past. He made use of it wherever possible, but also adapted it creatively to his own purposes wherever necessary.¹³² He not only transformed a theme of the Greek Second Sophistic by giving it a Roman flavor, but adjusted it perfectly well to a Roman context.¹³³ In this way, the past became a flexible tool of defense in Apuleius' hands.¹³⁴ Apuleius formed the classical model according to his own needs,¹³⁵ while at the same time showing off his superior education.

This noticeable contrast between the Socratic model and the second-century adaptation necessarily creates an underlying tone of subtle irony, probably perceived only by the upper-class educated elites, the so-called

¹²⁹ The differences between the Platonic and the Xenophontic Socrates are well presented by Brickhouse – Smith 2004, 70–71.

¹³⁰ Vlastos 1991, 103.

¹³¹ Apuleius has his very own reception and perception of Plato. In Apuleius' eyes, Plato is a saint embodying the all-Roman ideal of the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*: Hijmans 1987, 470. Philosophy is a certain lifestyle to Apuleius. Cf. Hunink 2001b, 15.

¹³² Creative imitation was encouraged and expected. Cf. Anderson 1993, 70, 72.

¹³³ Cf. Harrison's remarks on the *De Deo Socratis* (Harrison 2001b, 189).

¹³⁴ Cf. Sandy 1997, 49–88 on the cult of the past during the Second Sophistic.

¹³⁵ A good example for this practice is also D.Chr. 57 (on Nestor). Cf. Anderson 1993, 73. *Ibid.* 239: 'The sophistic chameleon can adapt to any circumstances and accommodate his ego wherever he chooses.'

pepaideumenoī, in the audience.¹³⁶ To these *pepaideumenoī*, above all the governor Claudius Maximus, his board of advisors, and some members of the urban aristocracy,¹³⁷ if present at the trial, the hidden subtext consisting of striking discrepancies between the Platonic/Xenophontic Socrates and Apuleius' rhetorical persona was easily recognizable.¹³⁸ The resulting irony was amusing and thus entertaining.¹³⁹ But Apuleius had more in mind than just tickling the ears of his audience when creating his specific form of irony.¹⁴⁰ I will return to the functions that Apuleius ascribes to irony below.

Apuleian irony is also created through semantic lacunae. One can also speak of the performance of omissions, e.g., Apuleius' general occlusion of the theme of death (see, however, above, note 104). Paradoxically, this kind of zero-performance is also eloquent and tells us a lot about Apuleius' self-perception and self-representation. The omission of the death-theme is a conscious dissociation from Socrates. By deliberately differentiating himself from Socrates through this omission, Apuleius defines and asserts himself as a philosophical individual, intimately familiar with, but also distinct from Socrates. In this way, *paideia* becomes a medium of self-definition.¹⁴¹ Apuleius uses his flexible appropriation of the Socratic role not only to define himself as a philosopher, but also to stage his *paideia* impressively.¹⁴² The performative character of this particular kind of *paideia* is publicly shown to be an integral part of *philotimia*, the eagerness to acquire honor and fame. And in fact, Apuleius takes advantage of his speech in self-defense and adeptly transforms it into a speech of self-praise, as is typical of Greek Second Sophistic *apologiai*, in order to enhance his own social prestige and standing with the Roman authorities.¹⁴³

Associating himself with and dissociating himself from Socrates means that Apuleius engages in a highly sophisticated play with the literary persona of the philosopher. As a consequence, he has, as a virtuoso of language, the

¹³⁶ On Apuleius as the typical *pepaideumenos*, cf. Anderson 1993, 83; Harrison 2000, 87.

¹³⁷ Korenjak 2000, 57.

¹³⁸ The *concilium* is mentioned four times in Apuleius' speech: Apul. *Apol.* 1,1; 65,8; 67,5; 99,1. Cf. Hunink 1997a, 18; 1997b, 10.

¹³⁹ Hunink 1997a, 18; 1998.

¹⁴⁰ Irony in the *Apology* has been briefly described by Helm 1955, 93–96.

¹⁴¹ Unsurpassed on *paideia* is Whitmarsh 2001, 90–129.

¹⁴² Cf. Korenjak 2000, 39.

¹⁴³ Cf. Borg 2004b, 8. Harrison 2000, 44 rightly observes that the *Apology* contains both stringent forensic argumentation and epideictic and didactic digressions for the sake of self-display and self-representation. Schindel 1996, 23 is right in arguing that the question of law (*Rechtsfrage*) has become a question of erudition (*Bildungsfrage*). Apuleius' *Apology* is just as little a primarily judicial plea as Plato's *Apology* of Socrates.

freedom to play with the *melete* genre and also to deviate from it where he deems it necessary. The game of similarity to and difference from Socrates even requires an equivalent game with the literary genre of *melete*. This means that Apuleius creates irony on a historical level, harkening back to Socrates, as well as on a contemporary, literary level with regard to the *melete* genre. We could also speak of a diachronic and synchronic irony. Hence, Apuleius' irony is twofold and at least as complex as that of Socrates. Through this specifically Apuleian irony on two levels, the Latin orator underscores his very own *paideia* and his claim to cultural power.¹⁴⁴ In occupying this superior position of cultural power, Apuleius monopolizes the discourse on magic and feels authorized to define the meaning of magic. Consequently, his rustic and ignorant opponents are barred from this sovereign position. Only Apuleius himself knows what magic is; according to his interpretation the stupid plaintiffs have no idea about it and confuse it with philosophy. The senatorial judge cannot help but believe Apuleius, because the orator plays his role as *pepaideumenos* perfectly well.¹⁴⁵ Once more, it is apparent to what extent this kind of rhetorical education based on the transmission of classical Greek history and myths was socially exclusive and to what degree public performances stabilized and perpetuated existing power structures.¹⁴⁶

In sum, Apuleius plays with the literary persona of the Platonic and Xenophontic Socrates by making erudite allusions to him and deliberately deviating from him. This refined playing with a fictive Socrates leads to a masterful play with the *melete* genre. The skillful display of erudition conveys the subtle, two-level irony resulting from these games. The performance of this particular *paideia*, including the long digressions and ecphraseis,¹⁴⁷ fulfills vital functions in the defense. All these elements of sophistication add up to a cultural code which the governor could not ignore.¹⁴⁸ Hence, the functions of Apuleian irony embedded in his *paideia* far exceed the aspect of

¹⁴⁴ Cf. Schmitz 1997, 194–196, 232–234.

¹⁴⁵ Anderson 1989; Id. 1993, 171–199 dedicates a whole chapter to the ‘Adoxa Paradoxa, the *pepaideumenos* at play.’ Referring to the governor and Apuleius, Anderson 1993, 227 finds a good formulation: ‘one *pepaideumenos* has adeptly recognized another.’

¹⁴⁶ Schmitz 1997, 45, 195–196, 233; Korenjak 2000, 40.

¹⁴⁷ While Rives emphasizes the importance of the form in which knowledge comes across in digressions and ecphraseis, Tilg detects a literary program in these very passages (both in their contributions to this volume).

¹⁴⁸ Defense and sophistic self-display go hand in hand. Therefore, I do not see the ‘tension between ... *sophisticus declamans* and the compelling urgency of defending himself ...’ (Sandy 1997, 173). Later, Sandy takes back this dichotomy (rightly as I think) by claiming that ‘Apuleius *sophisticus* and Apuleius *philosophus* are the same person’ (231).

amusing entertainment. In the hands of the star orator, irony becomes a weapon, an integral part of his defense strategy.¹⁴⁹

Socrates already knew about irony as a teaching and defensive tool. Most famous is his insistence on the fact that he did not know anything and, following the Delphic oracle, it was precisely this insight that made him the wisest of all men. Vlastos could prove on the basis of textual evidence that it was Socrates who initiated the semantic upward trend that the word *eironeia* underwent in Greek. Originally, it meant deceit and deceptive behavior. Some Platonic passages referring to Socrates, however, cannot be translated otherwise than with ‘irony.’ These are the earliest Greek passages that certainly speak of irony in our sense. Vlastos calls this kind of Socratic irony ‘complex irony,’¹⁵⁰ because it never compromised truth. Socrates’ irony had nothing to do with dishonesty. On the contrary, he held sincerity in highest esteem and was keen to defend himself effectively.¹⁵¹ Xenophon even goes so far as to paint his Socrates as a comic philosopher who took great delight in joking irony. In Xenophon’s *Symposion*, Socrates is proud of his trade of procurer (*mastropeia*).¹⁵² He wants to enter into a beauty contest with Critobulus,¹⁵³ and he states unequivocally that Antisthenes fell in love with him not because of his intellectual powers, but because of his body.¹⁵⁴

The orators of the Second Sophistic all learned from the Greek authors of the classical age. Dio Chrysostom extensively quotes Socratic irony.¹⁵⁵ Dio’s self-representation is based on his dissociation from Socrates. Dio alerts his audience to the fact that he knows that he uses Socratic irony and that he knows he is expected to do so.¹⁵⁶ A complex game on several levels is about to begin. We can observe a similar game in Apuleius. He clearly alludes to Socratic irony by both pretending to be Socrates and at the same time not doing so. Apuleius quotes the *melete* genre by pretending to perform a *melete* and then ostentatiously not doing so. In the end, Apuleius’ speech in self-defense is not a *melete*, but rather a sophisticated play with it.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Schenk 2002, 47. Harrison 2000, 87 emphasizes the constant mixture of forensic argumentation and strategy with epideictic digression. He also discerns humor as a forensic weapon (44). Most recently in a similar vein, cf. Masselli 2003.

¹⁵⁰ Vlastos 1991, 21–44, especially 31. Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 39–40 enumerates passages that testify to Socrates’ irony. Reeve 1989, XI, XIII, 184, however, does not discern any fundamental irony in Socrates.

¹⁵¹ Brickhouse – Smith 1989, 40–47.

¹⁵² X. *Smp.* 3,10; 4,56–64.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.* 4,19f.; 5,1–10.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 8,6.

¹⁵⁵ Krause 2003, 86–87.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 87.

By creating closeness to and distance from the Greek philosopher and the *melete* genre, Apuleius creates irony on two levels and thus comes nearest to Socrates. It is paradoxically in this ironic play with the Socratic model and in the complex association with and dissociation from the form of the *melete* that Apuleius' *Apology* becomes most Socratic.

Apuleius' rhetorical 'I' both is the *Socrates Africanus* and it is not. It is the versatile circus rider who will be forever elusive.¹⁵⁷ From this perspective, *Metamorphoses* 1,6 reads like a commentary on the *Apology*: *iam haec equidem ipsa vocis immutatio desultoriae scientiae stilo, quem accessimus, respondet*. ('Now in fact this very changing of language corresponds to the type of writing we have undertaken, which is like the skill of a rider jumping from one horse to another').¹⁵⁸ What Whitmarsh regards as typical of Second Sophistic writing, the 'balance of tradition and innovation,'¹⁵⁹ is also true of Apuleius' defense speech. The molds and the genres of *apologia* and *melete* are old; the way Apuleius deals with them and renders them Roman is new.

If we cannot even grasp the rhetorical 'I,' the literary persona of the author of an authentic defense speech, we will never be able to get a hold on the historical Apuleius. Asking "who was Apuleius?" means asking the wrong question. We can only probe into the self-representation of Apuleius' rhetorical 'I.' How does this rhetorical 'I' want to be seen in specific contexts? From this perspective, the blatant contradictions within one and the same speech should not irritate us. Unkempt hair and beauty, alleged poverty and the wealthy background of a widely-traveled star intellectual fit together well in this densely woven literary texture.

This observation is not only true for Apuleius, but holds true for other sophists as well.¹⁶⁰ With regard to Lucian, Whitmarsh speaks of the 'generic slipperiness of subject and author.'¹⁶¹ Lucian's 'I' is seen as 'devious' and 'elusive.'¹⁶² Dio Chrysostom is flexible and versatile enough in his self-construction so as to react differently to specific situations.¹⁶³

Apuleius' writings have to be seen in this context of Greek Second Sophistic literature. Once more, the highly literary character of Apuleius'

¹⁵⁷ In Whitmarsh's words: 'The genuine virtuosi were rule-breakers and paradigm-shifters.' (Whitmarsh 2005, 41).

¹⁵⁸ The translation is taken from Hanson 1989.

¹⁵⁹ Whitmarsh 2005, 87.

¹⁶⁰ On the versatility of sophistic literature, cf. Anderson 1990, esp. 109–110.

¹⁶¹ Whitmarsh 2005, 77.

¹⁶² *Ibid.* 82.

¹⁶³ Krause 2003, 25, 29, 152.

speech in self-defense,¹⁶⁴ as authentic as it is, could be clearly shown. Apuleius made full use of the possibilities that the Greek genres of *apologia* and *melete* offered, and in fact, his *Apology* is in line with its Greek counterparts. It is more than just a defense against the accusation of magic. It is the ultimate justification of Apuleius' whole life and lifestyle, his interests, and individual *paideia*.¹⁶⁵ In referring to all of these circumstantial aspects (on a historical and contemporary, literary level),¹⁶⁶ Apuleius' speech could not be closer to some Athenian defense speeches of the fourth century BCE. What Apuleius offers is nothing less than a stylized autobiography and epideictic self-praise of his elusive rhetorical 'I,' which was bound to create his very own eclectic and syncretistic *imago* of a *Socrates Africanus*.

¹⁶⁴ Hunink 1997a, 24; Id. 2001, 21–22, 24.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Whitmarsh 2005, 79–81 on the functions of Greek *apologiai*. Slings 1994, 6, 11 is opposed to the idea that Plato, in writing his *Apology*, wanted to offer a biography of Socrates. Later writers of *apologiai*, however, tried exactly to write autobiographies.

¹⁶⁶ Lanni 2006 examines from a legal perspective the procedural means by which Athenians of the fifth and especially fourth century BCE were able to take circumstantial aspects into consideration.