

DIALOGIC FORMAT OF PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA'S
DE ANIMALIBUS

by

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ABSTRACT: This contribution examines Philo of Alexandria's *De animalibus*, paying particular attention to its dialogic format and considering it within the broader context of the development of the genre of the dialogue in antiquity. It argues that as an early imperial-period text, composed probably around 50 CE, *De animalibus* is of considerable importance to our understanding of transformations in ancient dialogue in the post-classical period.

Philo of Alexandria's dialogue *De animalibus* (= *De anim.*), extant only in Armenian, has drawn little interest from scholars of Greek and Latin literature. It has been read almost exclusively by Philonic specialists and by scholars working on the ancient debate on animal rationality, who have focused mostly on Philo's sources of animal *exempla* and on the philosophical provenience of the arguments presented in the dialogue. There is little awareness of the existence of *De anim.* even among scholars whose work focuses on prose of the imperial period and on the genre of the dialogue. Suffice to say that Philo is not discussed in HIRZEL's *Der Dialog*¹, a comprehensive study of the genre in antiquity, although his *De anim.*, as an imperial-period dialogue composed before Plutarch (who is sometimes perceived as responsible for the revival of the Platonic format²), is of considerable importance to our understanding of the development of this literary form.

The aim of my contribution is to discuss *De anim.* with particular attention paid to its dialogic format and to consider it within the broader context of the development of the ancient genre of the dialogue. There is very little dialogic literature extant from the period between Plato and Xenophon on the one hand, and Plutarch and other imperial period authors (such as Dio Chrysostom, Lucian, Philostratos) on the other. Certainly, some of the Pseudo-Platonic dialogues were composed in this period, but they are notoriously difficult to date; moreover, they constitute a very particular sub-category of the dialogue (Socratic dialogues

¹ HIRZEL 1895.

² E.g. SEDLEY 1999: 149; PADE 2007: 45.

modelled on Plato, possibly composed by members of the Academy)³ and should not be considered as representative of the general development of the genre after Plato. We know that the dialogue form was used by some Hellenistic period philosophers – chiefly by followers of Plato, by Aristotle and his school, but also by Epicurus (who composed a *Symposium*) and some of the earlier Stoics (Ariston, Persaios, Herillos, Sphairos)⁴; we also know that certain innovations were introduced (such as the authorial preface and the introduction of an author as one of the main speakers)⁵. Cicero in his dialogues makes use of these later developments and his texts can, to some extent, testify to changes the genre of the dialogue had undergone in the Hellenistic period; however, Cicero himself adapted the dialogic genre to his Roman audience's needs and tastes, and the extent of these adaptations remains unclear⁶. Considered from this perspective, *De anim.* is of particular importance as an heir to the post-classical dialogic tradition and a link between Hellenistic and imperial period dialogues.

Today there are two main translations of Philo's text: AUCHER's translation into Latin, published in 1822, and TERIAN's translation into English, published in 1981⁷. TERIAN's translation is particularly helpful, as he provides *De anim.* with generous annotations, discusses obscure passages, and points out divergences between his and AUCHER's understanding of the text, which makes Philo's work more accessible to classical scholars than before. My paper is of necessity based on two presumptions: firstly, that the Armenian text, though at times obscure and difficult to interpret, is a relatively faithful translation of Philo's Greek (as scholars working on Armenian versions of Philo's works tend to assume)⁸; secondly, that TERIAN's translation is an accurate rendering of the Armenian. It should be remembered, however, that the text before us is merely an approximation of Philo's original dialogue, which imposes certain limitations on my study

³ Some common features of the Ps.-Platonic dialogues include: the presence of Socrates (apart from the *Demodokos*) and characters known from Plato and other Socratics (Alcibiades, Critias, Theages, Chairephon etc.), brevity, a preoccupation with typical Socratic themes (virtue, wealth, justice, political ambition, etc.), the imitation of openings and settings of Plato's dialogues. Some of these texts might have been intended for school use.

⁴ For Stoics, see SEDLEY 1999: 149 (he suggests that Zeno condemned the dialogue form, which led later Stoics to avoid it). WHITE (2010: 371) rightly observes that the titles of works (e.g. in Diogenes Laertios) are unreliable indications of their formats (cf. Seneca's *Dialogi*).

⁵ For the development of the dialogue between Plato and Cicero, see HIRZEL 1895: vol. I, 272–421; RUCH 1958: 39–55.

⁶ Cicero's use of a dialogue form is discussed by e.g. HIRZEL 1895: vol. I, 457–552; RUCH 1958; SCHOFIELD 2008.

⁷ AUCHER 1822; TERIAN 1981. There is also a French translation by TERIAN (TERIAN 1988, *non vidi*).

⁸ For a general discussion of Armenian translations of Philo, see MANCINI LOMBARDI, PONTANI 2011. For the translation of *De anim.* in particular, see TERIAN 1981: 9–14.

(in particular, detailed linguistic and stylistic analyses are impossible to conduct) and makes some of my conclusions conjectural.

PHILO'S *DE ANIMALIBUS* AND ITS DIALOGIC FORMAT

As a dialogue, *De anim.* is a remarkable exception in the *corpus* of Philo's works: apart from it, we know of only one other text of his in dialogue form, namely the fragmentarily preserved *De providentia* (= *De prov.*), dedicated to the question of divine providence⁹. The Armenian translation of *De prov.* consists of two books; only book II is in the form of a dialogue¹⁰. Together with *Quod omnis probus liber sit* (extant in Greek) and *De aeternitate mundi* (partially preserved in Greek), the two dialogues belong to Philo's philosophical writings, firmly rooted in the Greek philosophical tradition, with little or no references to Judaism and the Bible. In both *De anim.* and *De prov.* II, Philo is an interlocutor and argues against the views of a character called Alexander, who is identified by scholars with Tiberius Julius Alexander, Philo's apostate nephew¹¹. Both dialogues uphold certain Stoic doctrines which are consistent with Judaism: the irrationality of animals in *De anim.*, and divine providence in *De prov.* II. The dating of *De anim.* and *De prov.* II is controversial, but recent scholarship tends to date both works to the later period of Philo's life, possibly to around 50 CE¹².

Let us turn to the dialogic format of *De anim.* While Philo's Platonic inspiration behind the choice of the genre is manifest (as I will discuss in detail below), yet this is not a Socratic dialogue. Philo makes use of the format of a dramatic dialogue – i.e. a dialogue without narration – in order to present two opposing views on whether animals possess reason. These views are expressed in two speeches – by Alexander and by Philo – and reflect a dispute between two philosophical schools (Alexander's position is aligned with that of the New Academy,

⁹ *De prov.* is extant only in lengthy fragments preserved by Eusebios and in an Armenian translation. Both the Armenian version and Eusebios' Greek are to be found in AUCHER 1822 (with a Latin translation), and the fragments of *De prov.* from Eusebios also in COLSON 1941. *De prov.* was translated into German and French, but the translations of the portions extant in Armenian are based on AUCHER's Latin: FRÜCHTEL-GUNZENHAUSEN 1964 and HADAS-LEBEL 1973. For a discussion and comparison of the Greek and Armenian text of *De prov.*, see OLIVIERI 2011.

¹⁰ Book I of *De prov.*, preserved in the Armenian translation, may be an abridgement of the original. It is not clear whether this part of the text was a treatise from the beginning, or a dialogue which lost dialogic format in transmission (so WENDLAND 1892: 38). There have been attempts to reject Philo's authorship of *De prov.* I altogether (cf. DIELS 1879: 1–4).

¹¹ On Philo's family and his nephew Alexander, see e.g. SCHWARTZ 2009: 12–14.

¹² However, different representations of Alexander in the two dialogues (more favourable in *De prov.* II than in *De anim.*) suggest that *De anim.* was composed later than *De prov.* II. For a discussion of the two dialogues, see TERIAN 1981: 1–63; TERIAN 1984.

while Philo defends a Stoic doctrine¹³). In this respect *De anim.* resembles some of Cicero's dialogic works (such as *De finibus*, *De natura deorum*, *De divinatione*), in which philosophical arguments of different provenience, put in the mouths of Cicero and his friends, are juxtaposed and argued for and against. Similarly, several of Plutarch's dialogues – *Adversus Colotem*, *Non posse*, in a less direct way *De sollertia animalium* – are engaged in the refutation of arguments formed by philosophers (Epicureans, Stoics) of the Hellenistic period.

Unlike Cicero's and Plutarch's dialogues, however, *De anim.* does not explicitly associate views represented by interlocutors with particular philosophical traditions: neither Stoics nor Academics are mentioned in the text as we have it (there is only one passing remark concerning the Pythagoreans in *De anim.* 62). This reluctance to name specific philosophers and schools is consistent with the character of the text – with the rhetorical flavour of Alexander's speech, which constitutes the greater part of the dialogue, with the overall simplicity of the dialogue, and with the strong moralizing undertone of Alexander's speech (manifest in recurrent references to human depravity, which is contrasted with the chastity of animals – men fall short of animals with respect to self-restraint in food, drink, and sex; they yield to the pleasures of the stomach, are enslaved by food and drink, lead dissolute and adulterous lives which are sometimes even contrary to nature). The target audience of *De anim.* might have been envisioned in the figure of Lysimachos, a youth in the course of his education, and the simplicity of the dialogue may be due to it being tailored to the needs of a young audience¹⁴.

A dramatic dialogue with a contemporary setting, *De anim.* depicts a conversation held by two interlocutors, Philo and his great nephew Lysimachos. The third key figure is Alexander, who, besides being a nephew of Philo, is also an uncle and the father-in-law of Lysimachos¹⁵. Alexander is not present during the reported conversation, but his speech is read out in the course of the dialogue. The inclusion of the author himself as a principal, authoritative speaker is believed to be an Aristotelian development¹⁶. Cicero and Plutarch also sometimes

¹³ For a discussion of the philosophical arguments presented in *De anim.*, see TAPPE 1912; TERIAN 1981: 49 f.; for a detailed examination of the debate on the rationality of animals in antiquity and beyond, see SORABJI 1993. MANSFELD (1988: 81–84) discusses Philo's views on animals as presented in *De anim.* in the context of Philo's Judaism and his Bible interpretation.

¹⁴ Cf. also a conclusion drawn by MANSFELD (1988: 84) that *De anim.* “only enters the outer orbit of Philo's thought, that connected with literal interpretation”.

¹⁵ For a discussion of Alexander and his relationship to both Philo and Lysimachos, see TERIAN 1981: 25–28.

¹⁶ Cf. Cic. *Ad Att.* XIII 19: “Quae autem his temporibus scripsi Aristotéλειον morem habent, in quo ita sermo inducitur ceterorum ut penes ipsum sit principatus”. For a discussion of the presence of the figure of Aristotle himself in his dialogues, see HIRZEL 1895: vol. I, 292–294; RUCH 1958: 40–43; as RUCH observes, however, in another passage (*Ad fam.* I 9, 23), Cicero says that *De oratore*

include themselves among the interlocutors in their dialogues, though not always in a dominant position¹⁷. Like Philo, Cicero and Plutarch also include their family members and friends as characters in dialogues.

Philo's dialogue has a tripartite structure. First, there is an introductory conversation between Philo and Lysimachos, which provides background information about the occasion and the interlocutors and sketches the relationships between them. The exact time, place, and surroundings of the conversation are not specified, which leaves much to the reader's imagination. Next, Alexander's speech is read aloud; it constitutes the lengthiest, middle section of the dialogue. The speech argues that animals possess *logos* (which Alexander divides into two kinds, uttered *logos*, i.e. speech, and *logos* located in the mind, i.e. thought or reason)¹⁸ and contains a plethora of examples of animal habits and behaviours¹⁹.

Alexander's speech is followed by the third part of the dialogue, which, except for two short comments by Lysimachos, is dedicated entirely to Philo's refutation of his nephew's arguments. The figure of Philo is provided with an unmistakable air of authority here²⁰. There is no encouragement for a discussion and shared exploration: Lysimachos does not ask any questions nor express any concerns, nor does Philo invite him to do so²¹. Again, Philo might be following the Aristotelian dialogic model here, in which, according to Cicero (*Ad Att.* XIII 19), the speech of others (*sermo ceterorum*) is introduced in such a way that

is composed "Aristotelio more", though Cicero is not a character in the dialogue. For Aristotle's dialogues in general, see LAURENTI 2003.

¹⁷ Cf. e.g. Plutarch's *De E apud Delphos*, in which Plutarch narrates a discussion in which he took part as a very young man. For Cicero's presence in his dialogues, both in his interventions as a character and in the prefaces, see SCHOFIELD 2008: 74–84.

¹⁸ On the distinction between uttered *logos* (λόγος προφορικός) and inner *logos* (λόγος ἐνδιάθεος), see Porph. *Abst.* III 2; also TERIAN 1981: 125; SORABJI 1993: 80.

¹⁹ There is a great overlap of the material and arguments between imperial-period texts on animals (such as Philo's *De anim.*, Plutarch's texts on animals, Aelian's *De natura animalium*, Porphyry's *De abstinentia*), probably a result of their authors' shared use of Hellenistic-period sources (paradoxographical collections, compendia of animal-world *exempla*, zoological and philosophical works on the behaviours and nature of animals), though one should not rule out the possibility of imperial-period authors influencing one another (in particular Aelian and Porphyry might have drawn from Plutarch). For a (frequently speculative) discussion of possible sources and relations between ancient texts on animals, see e.g. WELLMANN 1891a; WELLMANN 1891b; WELLMANN 1892; DICKERMAN 1911; TAPPE 1912; more recently, MÜLLER 1975: 307–311; BOUFFARTIGUE 2012: XXXVI–LII. Some parallels between animal stories by different authors can also be found in TERIAN's commentary (TERIAN 1981, mostly parallels between Philo and Plutarch) and in DICKERMAN 1911.

²⁰ For Philo's authoritative stance, cf. RUNIA (1986: 97) on Philo's *persona* in *De prov.* II: "It is perhaps no coincidence that snippets of the conversation remind us of the sage (here Philo!) taking his seat among the contentious philosophers and resolving the dispute".

²¹ In this respect *De anim.* differs significantly from *De prov.* II, which favours discussion rather than authoritative exposition.

the *principatus* – the principal part, the preeminence, possibly the authority – is given to the author himself (*penes ipsum sit*)²².

The section dedicated to Philo's refutation of Alexander is considerably shorter than Alexander's speech (it amounts to about one third of it); taken together, the speeches may be conceived as presenting an argument *in utramque partem*, which Cicero, particularly fond of arguing both sides of a question, associated with Aristotle²³. But there is no scepticism in *De anim.* and the two arguments – Alexander's and Philo's – are presented within the conversation between Philo and Lysimachos in a way that does not leave any doubt about which one is right. It is noteworthy that Alexander is in the spotlight a lot in the dialogue: his speech occupies about seventy percent of the text, a lot for an argument that the author disagrees with (by comparison, in *De prov.* II Alexander's objections to the concept of divine providence, interspersed throughout the text, constitute about one third of the dialogue). There are several possible reasons, both intra- and extra-dramatic, for such a structure of the dialogue. Within the dramatic setting, the relative brevity of Philo's refutation may be interpreted as a sign of his general dismissiveness toward Alexander's speech; or may be a result of Philo's conviction that a handful of examples suffice, as they make the whole matter clear by way of analogy (*De anim.* 80). As for extra-dramatic justification for devoting two-thirds of the dialogue to a contested position, it is possible that Philo considered the material contained in Alexander's speech – the animal *exempla* – as having some educational merit. This is suggested by Philo's remark in *De anim.* 73, where he agrees to the educational usefulness of animal stories: they are easy to grasp, memorable, and appealing to young people²⁴. If interpreted correctly – and Philo's refutation provides the "right" interpretation of several of Alexander's examples – they are indicative of the amazing work of nature.

PHILO'S *DE ANIMALIBUS* AND PLATO'S *PHAEDRUS*

One of the most interesting features of *De anim.* is that, while arguing for the position aligned with Stoic philosophy, the dialogue is closely modelled on

²² Though as HIRZEL (1895: vol. I, 293) observes, we do not have a clear understanding of how exactly this *principatus* of the author was displayed in Aristotle's dialogues. See also above, n. 16.

²³ LONG 2006: 299–304 (he believes that Cicero does not refer to Aristotle's methodology in his dialogues). In his discussion of Cicero's dialogues, GIGON (1959: 150 f.) distinguishes dialogues structured according to the principle of *in utramque partem dicere* (aporetic) and of πρὸς θεοὺς λέγειν (elenctic).

²⁴ Plutarch's *De sollertia animalium*, in which the two young men deliver speeches filled with stories about animal behaviours, provides a great illustration of the use of animal-*exempla* in an educational setting.

Plato's *Phaedrus*²⁵. The *Phaedrus* was one of the most popular of Plato's dialogues in Philo's times, read widely not only by philosophers, but also by teachers and students of rhetoric²⁶. In *De anim.*, as in the *Phaedrus*, a speech of an absent character (of Lysias in Plato, and of Alexander in Philo) is read out and then argued against. Lysimachos is characterized by Philo in a manner reminiscent of Phaedrus and of Socrates (or, to be exact, of Socrates' ironic pose): he is always "eager to hear new things" and filled with "love for learning and hunger for truth" (*De anim.* 5, 76, cf. *Phdr.* 228 A–C, 236 E), ready to postpone whatever duties he has in order to listen to Philo (*De anim.* 76, cf. *Phdr.* 227 B). Alexander's speech makes a visible impression on him: as Philo observes, Lysimachos kept nodding his head and was "absorbed as bacchanals and corybants" during the reading (*De anim.* 73, cf. *Phdr.* 234 B). Yet, contrary to Phaedrus, Lysimachos, while apparently moved by the speech, is not completely persuaded by it: he has some objections to Alexander's argument and believes that it is against obvious evidence (*De anim.* 2).

Philo, then, peruses the structure of the first part of the *Phaedrus* in order to assign specific roles to the dialogue's characters. Alexander is substituted for Lysias, Lysimachos occupies the place of Phaedrus, and it is left to Philo to step into the shoes of Socrates. Alexander's speech, which parallels the speech of Plato's Lysias, is more of a rhetorical display than of a philosophical argument. It moves Lysimachos, but is far removed from the truth and real learning. Philo criticizes Alexander for coming merely to "entertain a relative with useless words designed to tickle the ears" (*De anim.* 3); we also learn that Alexander was unwilling to answer Lysimachos' objections (*De anim.* 2). As a result, Alexander's speech is defenceless, bereft of its father, as Philo observes after the speech has been read out:

The affection of a father or of a mother for their children is unequalled. Even honest, wise, and knowledgeable parents blend with their words an indescribable affection when they relate their experiences to those who listen. They add quite a few nouns and verbs. That is fine and appropriate, you say. But from the interpreter's point of view, I admire your method. You appeared to present the subject much as the author himself would have presented it by reading. It seems to me that you have not omitted anything.

(*De anim.* 74)

²⁵ As observed by TERIAN 1981: 111. For a list of correspondences between *De anim.* and the *Phaedrus*, see TERIAN 1981: 265–271 (though I do not find all the parallels listed there persuasive). For Philo's references to Platonic dialogues in general, see lists of parallels in BILLINGS 1919: 88–103 and COHN, WENDLAND 1926: 19 f.; the lists testify to the importance of the *Phaedrus* for Philo. For a slightly later (2nd c. CE) reception of the *Phaedrus*, see TRAPP 1990; of Plato in general, DE LACY 1974.

²⁶ The popularity of the *Phaedrus* in rhetorical circles is attested to by citations in rhetorical treatises such as Aelius Theon's *Progymnasmata* or Ps.-Hermogenes' *On forceful speaking*. Dionysios of Halikarnassos names the *Phaedrus* one of Plato's most celebrated dialogues (τῶν πάντων περιβοητώτων) and discusses it as an example of the elevated style (*Dem.* 7, 2).

The passage is somewhat obscure, yet the connection of *De anim.* with the *Phaedrus* suggests that in the original Greek Philo alluded to Plato's metaphor of an author as a parent to his text (cf. *Phdr.* 275 E, where Socrates says that a written text needs its father's support, τοῦ πατρὸς ἀεὶ δεῖται βοηθοῦ). Alexander, the father of the text, had a chance to discuss his arguments with Lysimachos and support them, but his unwillingness to do so left his speech bereft of a parent and defenceless. Alexander's lack of interest in discussing his arguments with Lysimachos justifies Philo's refutation of his nephew's speech behind his back.

By drawing the link between Alexander and Plato's Lysias, Philo might also have aimed to denigrate Alexander's speech as contrary to common sense. Lysias argued against common sense when he maintained that one should grant favours to a non-lover rather than to a lover, as Socrates wittily pointed out (*Phdr.* 228 D: "I wish he would write that you should give your favours to a poor rather than to a rich man, to an older rather than to a younger one!"). Alexander, on the other hand, argues that animals have reason; to Lysimachos, his argument seems to be against obvious evidence (*De anim.* 2), and for Philo against sound learning (*De anim.* 75).

By imitating the structure of the *Phaedrus*, Philo, as I have observed, steps into the shoes of Socrates. He is concerned only with the truth and is going to thoroughly and critically examine Alexander's position (*De anim.* 75). Yet, he does not imitate the *persona* of Socrates, his humour and irony, but is a figure of authority, direct and straightforward. His refutation of Alexander's arguments takes the form of a continuous speech which goes through several of his opponent's points and examples. Remarkably, as he argues against ascribing reason and virtues to animals, Philo is concerned that his demonstration that animals are imperfect and inferior to men might be understood as a criticism of nature (*De anim.* 100) and of "the sacred mind" (77), and therefore as sinful and sacrilegious. This, again, as observed by TERIAN²⁷, is reminiscent of the *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates felt compelled to deliver a second speech after he realized that the first one was offensive to the gods and impious, ἀσεβής (*Phdr.* 242 B–D). However, while in the *Phaedrus* both the speech of Lysias and the first speech of Socrates are said to be offensive to the gods, in *De anim.* Philo has enough prudence to steer his speech in a safe direction. This use of the motif of impiety is an instance of a creative adaptation of a Platonic motif, as the underlying understanding of divinity and of the offence committed against it (or, in the case of Philo, potentially committed) differs in the case of the two dialogues.

Philo's use of the *Phaedrus* as a model is remarkable, particularly if we remember that *De anim.* was composed around 50 CE at the latest, i.e. before the supposed "revival" of the dialogue in the hands of Plutarch. Though the loss of the Greek text of *De anim.* does not allow us to evaluate the full extent of the

²⁷ TERIAN 1981: 186, 206.

interplay between Philo's dialogue and the *Phaedrus* – in particular it is impossible to conduct comparisons of the stylistic and verbal layer – we can see that Philo skillfully makes use of mimetic strategies familiar to scholars of slightly later imperial period prose. He imitates the structure of the first part of the *Phaedrus* (the reading of a speech of an absent character followed by a counter-speech by one of the interlocutors); he distributes the roles of and draws the relationships between the interlocutors in line with the Platonic model – and thereby indirectly supplements their characterization; and he imbues *De anim.* with numerous Platonic allusions. He uses the *Phaedrus* selectively, choosing and highlighting elements which he finds particularly fitting. As a *mimesis* of a Platonic dialogue, *De anim.* bears a resemblance to such later texts as, for instance, Plutarch's *De genio Socratis* and *Septem sapientium convivium* (both modelled on the *Phaedo*), *Amatorius* (modelled on the *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*), Dio Chrysostom's *Charidemus* (imitating the *Phaedo*), or Athenaios' *Deipnosophists* (which is interwoven with allusions to both the *Phaedo* and *Symposium*); but also is reminiscent of Cicero's emulation of Plato in several dialogues²⁸. This is not to say that all these texts rework their models in the same manner (one of the challenges of mimetic practice was to do it in an imaginative, attention-grabbing way) or for the same purpose (by imitating Plato, an author may intend to signal his philosophical affiliation, to bolster his authority, to locate himself within a particular literary tradition, to rethink and rearrange Plato's ideas, and finally to criticize Plato and to fill the Platonic matrix with new ideas which "correct" him). In *De anim.*, Philo makes use of the Platonic frame and enhances his own authority by putting himself in the place of Socrates, while at the same time undermining the standing of Alexander by depicting him as a new Lysias. Although he fills this frame with a wholly new theme – the question of the rationality of animals rather than love – he manages to touch upon some crucial themes of the *Phaedrus* such as the distinction between philosophy and rhetoric, represented in *De anim.* by Philo and Alexander respectively.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Let me summarize the results of my discussion of the format of *De anim.* The theme of the dialogue, its arguments and philosophical concepts are influenced by a debate between philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period, with a Stoic position favoured by Philo. The interlocutors include the author himself – an authoritative figure, upholding a dogmatic position (which distances him from, for instance, Cicero's scepticism) – and a member of his family. There is little

²⁸ For the presence of Plato in Cicero, see DE GRAFF 1940; for Cicero's emulation of Plato's dialogues and their scenery, see LONG 2006: 290 f.; for Cicero's *De oratore* as a response and emulation of Plato's *Phaedrus*, see STULL 2011.

interest in Socratic dialectic and *elenchus*. A continuous discourse is preferred to the question-and-answer format. The contested argument – that animals possess reason – gets ample space in the dialogue, although it is refuted by Philo in the final part of the text. There is a strong influence, at least in Alexander’s speech, of rhetoric and of popular philosophical literature of a moralizing character. Finally, while Philo argues for a doctrine of Stoic providence, he uses the Platonic genre and emphasizes his Platonic allegiance by means of imitation of and allusions to the *Phaedrus*. This is consistent with Philo’s philosophical position, which draws from both Middle Platonism and Stoicism²⁹; however, Philo’s Stoic position in *De anim.* is noteworthy in the context of the emphatically Platonic format of the dialogue.

Composed a century after Cicero’s dialogues and a few decades before Plutarch’s, Philo’s *De anim.* resembles them in many respects. It is reasonable to assume that the features shared by *De anim.* and a number of dialogues by Cicero and Plutarch are indicative of the development of the genre – or, to be precise, of a specific branch of the genre³⁰ – in the Hellenistic period rather than being the authors’ own innovations. These shared features include the presence of an author and his friends as interlocutors in the dialogue, a contemporary setting, a preference for *oratio continua*, an engagement in the polemics of post-classical philosophical schools, the modelling (to a greater or a lesser extent) of dialogic conversations and interlocutors on Platonic dialogues and characters, and imbuing reports of contemporary philosophical discussions with Platonic reminiscences.

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²⁹ As REYDAMS-SCHILS (2008: 169) observes, “the scholarly debate over whether Philo should be considered a Stoic or a Platonist has been going strong since Lipsius, in the seventeenth century”. The literature on the topic is abundant; see e.g. DILLON 1996: 139–183 and contributions in ALESSE 2008.

³⁰ A typology of post-classical dialogic literature is a topic requiring a separate treatment.

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