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WISDOM FOR SALE? THE SOPHISTS AND MONEY

HÅKAN TELL

PLATO CONSTANTLY ACCUSES the sophists of teaching for money.¹ For example, in the *Hippias Maior* (282c–d), Sokrates elaborates a distinction between the wise men of old, who did not think it right to charge fees, and the sophists of his own day, who all made huge profits from their instruction. This comparison is not incidental; it is absolutely integral to Plato's characterization of the sophists and their practices. But why is money so important as a distinguishing trait? Is it merely a descriptive term reflecting a historical fact—the sophists were the first to charge money for wisdom—or is it possible to discern other motivations as well? It is my contention that scholars have not paid sufficient attention to how redolent of disparagement and bias is the close association of the sophists and their *sophia* with money and fees.² This paper will explore some possible connotations this connection carried in antiquity. I will also develop reasons why Plato adopted it as basic to his portrayal of the sophists.

I will proceed first by considering the pervasiveness of the juxtaposition of the sophists and fees in the Platonic tradition,³ and then turn to other genres and writers. Of particular significance are the attitudes represented in comedy and Isokrates, since these sources, to varying degrees, are independent of Platonic influence. Is it possible to detect a consistent attitude vis-à-vis the

I would like to thank a number of friends and colleagues for their helpful criticism: especially Mark Griffith, Bill Scott, John Zaleski, and *CP*'s anonymous referees.

1. The word sophist will be used in two different ways in this paper. It will first refer to the group of practitioners of wisdom who, mainly through Plato and Aristotle, have come down to us as "the sophists," i.e. Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodikos, Hippias, et al. The other meaning refers to its employment as a label of abuse applied to unnamed individuals onto whom a set of unflattering characteristics is projected, characteristics that are then criticized, as in, for example, Isokrates' *Against the Sophists*. What makes the use of the term sophist so challenging is its contested status: Aristophanes, for example, labels Sokrates a sophist, a practice that is anathema to Plato. Isokrates, on the other hand, calls Solon, Empedokles, Ion, Alkmaion, Parmenides, Melissos, Zeno, Protagoras, and Gorgias sophists. As opposed to the tidy classifications in the accounts of modern scholars, there seems to have been no one, unchallenged understanding of what or who the sophists were in antiquity. Unfortunately, I will not be able to deal with the polyvalence of this term here; this is a project that I will attempt elsewhere.

2. David Blank (1985, 3) is one of the exceptions to this trend: "The testimonia referring to the fees, wealth, and mode of life of the sophists are tinged with both envy and disgust. They are extremely difficult to interpret, both in specific and in their general tendency."

3. By the Platonic tradition, I mean to imply two (not necessarily mutually exclusive) groups of writers: those who for the most part agree with Plato's characterization of the sophists, such as Xenophon and Aristotle; and those whose accounts of the sophists seem to be derived directly from the first group, such as Philostratos, Olympiodoros, and Themistios.

sophists in these non-Platonic writers that corroborates the traditional characterization of them as a group of practitioners of wisdom set apart by the practice of teaching for pay? Finally, I will broaden my exploration to include other ancient juxtapositions of money and *sophia*, in an attempt to identify additional groups of *sophoi* that were criticized for charging money. Can we identify parallels to our sophistic material that will help us understand better the Platonic predilection of focusing on money and fees?

I will argue that teaching for pay was not a neutral labeling but a highly inflammatory charge to which all *sophoi*, to one degree or another, were susceptible. We need to allow for a split between historical reality—about which we often know very little—and the way that that reality was expressed. A fee can be described as a gift or a bribe, but the practice of charging money can also go without comment. The language surrounding monetary transactions in antiquity is notoriously difficult to assess. Of particular sensitivity is the language surrounding *sophia* and the commodification of wisdom. Indeed, a favorite way to undermine the authority of a *sophos* (or of public figures in general) was to suggest that they had monetary motivations and were driven by greed. We need to read the accusations—which is really what they are—against the sophists of exacting fees in light of these considerations.

I

First, then, let us consider what the Platonic tradition has to say about the sophists' practice of accepting money for instruction. Although, as Blank concludes, Plato never explicitly has Sokrates condemn the sophists for taking money,⁴ the Platonic corpus is full of satirical diatribes against their pecuniary aspirations.⁵ Few passages capture these sentiments as well as the beginning of *Hippias Maior* (282d–e), where Sokrates remarks that Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodikos all earned a lot of money from their wisdom (*sophia*). To which Hippias answers:

Sokrates, you know nothing of the beauties of this. For if you knew how much money I have made, you would be amazed. I will not bring up everything, but after coming once to Sicily I earned much more than 150 minas in a short time, despite the fact that Protagoras was in town (he was famous and older than me); and from one really small place, Inykon, I made more than 20 minas. And after I went home with this money, I gave it to my father, so that he and the other citizens should be amazed and astonished. I rather think I made more money than any two sophists together.⁶

4. Blank 1985, 6.

5. *Lach.* 186c, *Meno* 91b, *Prt.* 310d, 313c, 349a, *Grg.* 519c–d, *Hp. mai.* 281b–283b, *Soph.* 223a, 224c, 226a; citations from Corey 2002, 189 n. 4.

6. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted. There is little reason to doubt the authenticity of *Hippias Minor*, especially since it is mentioned by Aristotle in *Metaph.* 1025a6–13 (see Friedländer 1964, 2: 146). With the *Hippias Maior* it is a different story: it was first condemned as inauthentic in 1816 by Friedrich Ast, a student of F. Schleiermacher, who disputed the authenticity of *Alcibiades I*. Few scholars would uphold the verdict of Ast today, when there seems to be a general consensus that it is a genuine Platonic dialogue. See Woodruff 1982, 93–105, with bibliography, for a discussion of the issue of authenticity; but see also Kahn's review of Woodruff (1985, esp. 267–73) and his detailed argument for inauthenticity. For Schleiermacher's condemnation of *Alcibiades I*, see Denyer 2001, 14–26.

Similar attitudes can be found in the *Sophist* (223b). There the visitor, when giving a definition of the expertise of the sophists, describes it as belonging to the money changer's trade (νομισματοπωλικῆς), since it is a chase of rich and prominent young men (νέων πλουσίων καὶ ἐνδόξων γιγνομένη θήρα).⁷ This juxtaposition of sophists and fees is ubiquitous in Plato; Harrison has collected some thirty passages where the two are mentioned in conjunction, and he argues that this association is essential to Plato's portrayal of the sophists:

Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that he is almost incapable of using the term sophist without at the same time making some explicit reference to this professionalism. And it comes as no surprise when this professionalism looms larger than any other element in each of the definitions of the sophist which appear in the dialogue of that name.⁸

It should be clear that if Plato is not condemning the sophists outright for taking fees, he is also not using a value neutral language when describing their practices. Far from it: they are often portrayed as more interested in procuring material rewards for their services than in worrying about the intellectual content or effect of their *sophia*. And this hostile attitude is picked up and further elaborated by Xenophon and Aristotle. In the *Cynegeticus* (13.8–9), for example, Xenophon asserts that:

The sophists speak to deceive and write for their own profit [κέρδει], and they never benefit anyone in any way. There neither was nor is there any wise man among them, but each one of them is content to be called a sophist, which is a reproach, at least among prudent men [παρά γε εὖ φρονούσι]. I thus recommend that you shun the precepts [παραγγέλματα] of the sophists, but that you do not dishonor the arguments [ἐνθυμήματα] of the philosophers. The sophists hunt young and wealthy men [πλουσίους καὶ νέους θηρῶνται], while the philosophers are common [κοινοί] to and friends with all; they neither honor nor dishonor the fortunes of men.

The phrase πλουσίους καὶ νέους θηρῶνται echoes the line νέων πλουσίων . . . θήρα of the *Sophist* quoted above, and the thematic content of the passage—that the sophists prioritize money over wisdom and are thus undeserving of serious intellectual consideration—is perfectly in line with Platonic sentiments. Aristotle's expression in the *Sophistici elenchi* (165a22) makes the same connection: "The sophist is a trafficker [χρηματιστής] in what seems to be, but is not, wisdom [σοφία]." In the *Memorabilia* (1.6.13), Xenophon employs a parallel strategy of asserting and then condemning what he sees as an inherent connection between money and wisdom (the latter predicated on the former) among the sophists. But this time he adds an extra layer of opprobrium by expanding on the cultural implications associated with offering one's personal qualities for sale:

7. I agree with E. L. Harrison (1964, 191 n. 46), who remarks that, although this is a reference to "the cristical type of sophist . . . it makes little difference whether he is a genuine successor of Protagoras or merely a degenerate Socratic: he is still a true sophist in the Platonic sense, i.e., he teaches rhetoric and makes money out of it"; cf. *Soph.* 231d, where the first definition of the sophist is given: νέων καὶ πλουσίων ἔμισθος θηρευτής, "hired hunter of wealthy young men."

8. Harrison 1964, 191 and n. 44.

Among us [παρ' ἡμῖν]⁹ it is considered that there is a good and a shameful way to dispose of one's beauty and wisdom. If a man sells his beauty to any one who wants it, he is called a prostitute [πόρνων], but if he befriends someone he knows to be a noble and good lover [καλὸν τε κάγαθὸν ἐραστήν], he is thought of as prudent [σώφρονα]. And in the same way we call those who sell their wisdom to anyone who wants it "sophists," just as if they were prostitutes [ὥσπερ πόρνους],¹⁰ whereas a man who befriends and teaches all the good he can [ὅτι ἂν ἔχῃ ἀγαθόν] to someone he knows to have a good natural disposition, he is considered to do what befits a good and noble citizen [καλῶ κάγαθῶ πολίτῃ].

Here Xenophon establishes a thematic sequence consisting of wisdom, money, and prostitution, in which the interference of the intermediary phase—money—runs the danger of corrupting and even conflating the things of the mind with the sphere of the body.¹¹ This is, of course, exactly the opposite trajectory of what we are wont to see in Plato.¹² In the *Symposium* and *Alcibiades I*, for example, ἔρωσ is limited to using the physical as an initial stepping stone only to climb the philosophical ladder and ultimately reject the body in favor of the mind, thus gradually transforming itself from a physical sexual desire directed at a specific individual to a generic nonphysical love of the beautiful.¹³ By reversing this trajectory and by introducing the concept of intellectual promiscuity, Xenophon invites us to appreciate the contentiousness of his portrayal of the sophists. In this antagonistic depiction the mention of teaching for money is crucial in allowing the association of sophistic *sophia* with the body and, ultimately, with prostitution. Read in this way, teaching for pay takes on a more sinister facet than has previously been recognized and paves the way for the successive ubiquitous complaints of the speciousness of sophistic wisdom.

The fourth-century C.E. philosopher Themistios is a testament to the enduring power of the Platonic tradition. When trying to clear himself of accusations of being a sophist, he invokes Plato's definition in the *Sophist* (231d): "According to the first in the list of arguments [καταλόγου τῶν λόγων] that Plato established with respect to the sophists, to be a sophist means charging the young and wealthy men [νέων καὶ πλουσίων] for any form of instruction [ἐφ' ὅτῳ δὲ σχήματι παιδείας]" (*Or.* 23.289d). Themistios understands Plato's definition of sophist to include anyone who teaches for pay, regardless of the content of the instruction: "But this is what I say: we shall consider receiving wages from the young men [νέων] for any instruction [ἐφ' ὅτῳ δὲ μαθήματι], whether it be serious or frivolous, as sophistical [σοφιστικόν], if we are to follow the argument [of Plato]" (*Or.* 23.290b).¹⁴ In

9. For the meaning of παρ' ἡμῖν, see Morrison 1953 and Pendrick 2002, 229.

10. ὥσπερ πόρνους was deleted by Ruhnken and then Sauppe.

11. For an exploration of the mind-body division in Plato, see Robinson 2000.

12. This observation is indebted to L. Kurke's discussion (unpublished manuscript) of the philosophical trajectory from the body to the soul in *Alcibiades I*.

13. See Ferrari 1992 for a fuller account of the role of ἔρωσ in Plato.

14. In reaching the conclusion that anyone who teaches for pay is a sophist, Themistios refers to Plato's *Protagoras* (316d–317a), where the athletic trainers Ikkos from Taras and Herodikos from Selymbria are outed as sophists, since this was their true identity, despite their attempts to hide under the veil of athletics

Themistios' mind, then, the exclusive criterion for distinguishing a sophist hinges on whether he charges money for instruction. Considerations of intellectual content (e.g., rhetoric vs. dialectics, relativism vs. idealism) are of less relevance than this formal characteristic. To Themistios, just as to Sokrates in the passage from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* quoted above, the pecuniary focus of the sophists inevitably disqualifies them from being serious philosophers and relegates them to the sphere of the body. Themistios highlights the difference between himself, who improves both the body and the mind of his students, and the sophists, whose focus is exclusively on the body: "But if he should care for the body [σάρκος] while plotting against the mind [τῇ διανοίᾳ], he would be a sophist and impostor [ἄλαζών]" (*Or.* 290c). The sixth-century C.E. Platonic commentator Olympiodoros brings the significance of the theme of teaching for pay into focus in his comments on a passage in Plato's *Alcibiades I*. At 119a4 Sokrates says that Pythodoros and Kallias became wise by associating with Zeno, and that they each paid him a hundred minas (ἐκάτερος Ζήνωνι ἑκατὸν μνᾶς τελέσας). "Why," writes Olympiodoros, "did Zeno exact a fee, if he was a philosopher?" He goes on to speculate about possible reasons: to accustom his students to despise money, to assist the poor by taking from the rich, and so forth. The assumption, or so it seems, is that philosophy is incompatible with teaching for money, and Olympiodoros consequently concludes that Zeno "pretended to take money without taking it" (91–92 Westerink). Why the hesitancy on the part of Olympiodoros to accept this characterization of Zeno in *Alcibiades I*? What would it entail? To Gregory Vlastos, there is no doubt what it means: "To so represent him [Zeno] is to portray him unmistakably as a professional sophist."¹⁵ It is likely that Olympiodoros reached similar conclusions and that that is the reason for his consternation. In this instance, teaching wisdom for pay is shorthand for designating someone as a sophist (Zeno is never explicitly called sophist in Plato¹⁶). Vlastos faced a dilemma: either he had to accept the depiction of Zeno as a sophist by Plato—which would radically question Zeno's traditional inclusion in the canon of the Presocratic philosophers—or else he had to reject the *Alcibiades I* as inauthentic:

Now if this is what Zeno had been in fact, how could we account for the portrait in the *Parmenides*? Do we not know Plato's veneration for Parmenides, his scorn for sophists as hucksters of pseudo-wisdom and pseudo-virtue? Even if we were to think of that portrayal as pure invention, this would not mitigate the difficulty: even in a fictional setting, why should Plato have cast a *sophist* in the role he gives Zeno there—that of Parmenides' faithful disciple and intimate friend, erstwhile boy-love, now travelling-companion and fellow-guest in the home of an upper-class Athenian? On just these

out of fear of public hatred. Themistios goes on to say that Plato so designated them because they made money from young men (ὅτι ἐχρηματίζοντο ἀπὸ τῶν νέων), but this is not the emphasis of Protagoras' speech. Instead, he focuses on his ability to educate men better than their own relatives and acquaintances. The issue of remuneration is ignored in Protagoras' speech.

15. Vlastos 1975, 155.

16. Isokrates (*Helen* 2) calls him a sophist, along with Protagoras, Gorgias, and Melissos.

grounds, I submit, the historical veracity of this text in the *Alcibiades I* would be highly suspect.¹⁷

As representatives of the Platonic tradition, both Olympiodoros and Vlastos found it puzzling, even impossible, to accept as sincere the designation of Zeno as teaching for pay by Plato, since, as Vlastos points out, it is equivalent to labeling him a sophist. And so they devised different strategies to circumvent this dilemma: Olympiodoros postulated hidden motivations for Zeno's behavior, while Vlastos challenged the Platonic authorship. To both, teaching for pay had become synonymous with being a sophist, even though Plato himself never explicitly made that connection or used the word sophist in connection with Zeno.

What I have attempted to indicate thus far is that there is a remarkable unity of attitudes in the representations of the sophists in the Platonic tradition. As a whole, the tradition exhibits a thematic emphasis on money over wisdom, on body over mind—in stark opposition to the Platonic valorization of the intellect. More than anything, though, the lasting effect, as exemplified by Xenophon, Themistios, Olympiodoros, and Vlastos, is that the definition of sophist became based on a formal characteristic—teaching for pay—rather than on intellectual content. The next step in our investigation will be to turn to Old Comedy and Isokrates to see if this unanimity of attitudes concerning the sophists is reflected there as well.

II

Did Plato's predecessors and contemporaries single out a distinct group of *sophoi* based upon their practice of teaching for money? If so, did this group of *sophoi* coincide with the Platonic sophists? In his influential article, Blank undertakes to "summarize 'popular' complaints about the sophists' accumulation of wealth." He concludes that, "the Athenians seem to have thought that the sophists charged outrageous fees."¹⁸ In his view, then, the complaints directed at the sophists go well beyond Platonic criticism; whatever traces of resentment we can discover in other genres and authors—mainly Old Comedy—seem to support Plato's hostile characterization.

17. Vlastos 1975, 156. A little later (p. 157), he revisits the issue of the dialogue's inauthenticity and writes: "Can the case against the reliability of this particular testimony be made to rest on more specific grounds? It can: First and foremost among these I would place the clash of this Zeno-sophist of our text with the figure portrayed elsewhere by Plato as Parmenides' right-hand man." But—as one of *CP*'s anonymous readers astutely pointed out—there is a case to be made that the two portrayals of Zeno in *Alcibiades I* and *Parmenides* are not necessarily incompatible. To begin with, in *Prm.* 128b–e Zeno says that he wrote his book in a youthful competitive spirit and that it was later published through unauthorized copying. This seems to imply that to Plato Zeno's work was predominantly eristic in nature and had more affinities with the sophists than with legitimate philosophers. In *Phdr.* 261b–e it is presumably Zeno who is intended by the epithet "the Eleatic Palamedes" whose rhetorical skill is such that "his listeners will perceive the same things to be both similar and dissimilar, both one and many, both at rest and also in motion" (trans. Gill and Ryan [1997]). This portrayal reinforces the picture from *Parmenides* that to Plato Zeno's work was predominantly eristic in character, and it does not seem entirely unlikely to think that Plato regarded him as a sophist. The question remains why the Zeno-sophist portrayal would be considered incompatible with his characterization as "Parmenides' right-hand man."

18. Blank 1985, 1 and 3. See also his useful compilation of relevant testimonia, pp. 25–49; cf. Nestle 1975, 455–76.

Before accepting Blank's conclusions, however, let us review his testimony. What sources does he draw on outside the Platonic tradition?¹⁹ The relevance of this exercise is to allow us to identify evidence of popular discontent that is independent of Plato. Such evidence, in turn, will help us assess the presence of hostile sentiments among other segments of the population. In short, can we justifiably talk about resentment of the sophists for venality outside the Platonic tradition?²⁰

In surveying the ancient sources based upon which Blank asserts the existence of a popular discontent with the sophists, I have chosen to divide the material into five sections. I first turn my attention to Plato's predecessors and contemporaries in Old Comedy (1) and Isokrates (2). Next, I will consider the evidence found in Philostratos (3). Finally, I will deal with two groups (4–5) of predominantly later sources that offer testimony regarding the 100 mina fees of Zeno, comments on Protagoras and Gorgias, and miscellaneous remarks about the sophists and fees.

Following Wilhelm Nestle,²¹ Blank quotes liberally from the comic fragments to illustrate attacks on the sophists and their avaricious dispositions. But his treatment is often problematic; for example, when referring to Eupolis' *Kolakes*, he translates fragment 175 K-A as: "neither fire nor spear nor sword could keep sophists from coming to dinner" (p. 5), though there is no "sophists" in the Greek (οὐ πῦρ οὐδὲ σίδηρος / οὐδὲ χαλκὸς ἀπείργει / μὴ φοιτᾶν ἐπὶ δεῖπνον). Storey offers a radically different interpretation of this passage, one where the sophists have no place at all: "I suspect it comes from the parodos, when the chorus of *kolakes* enters. The chorus would be describing their own abilities."²² Furthermore, Blank assigns Protagoras as the speaker of fragment 172, although there is no evidence to support the view that the chorus consisted of sophists or indeed had anything to do with sophistic practices.²³ Storey has recently argued that such associations are mistaken: "these *kolakes* do not sound the least bit sophistic in fr. 172; they are expert spongers, and it is that picture that Eupolis is exploiting

19. Blank's reconstruction of popular discontent with Protagoras, Prodikos, Hippias, and Thrasymachos is based exclusively on Plato and thus needs no comment. As for Eupolis' attack on Protagoras in *Kolakes* (frag. 157 K-A) for being "the *aliterios* who speaks nonsense about the heavenly phenomena while eating the things from the ground," this has nothing to do with Protagoras' fees or monetary ambitions; it pokes fun at the discrepancy between his unworldly intellectual pursuits and earthly desires (for a discussion on how to translate *aliterios*, see Storey 2003, 185–87).

20. The following survey will be based on the sources collected in Blank 1985. I have occasionally left out a testimonium from Blank's list, or included an additional item. For the most part, however, I have attempted to adhere closely to his list of sources.

21. Nestle 1975, esp. 455–76.

22. Storey 2003, 191

23. Blank 1985, 6. Storey translates the fragment in the following way (2003, 17): "We shall now describe to you the life which the spongers lead. Hear first that we are clever men in every way. First we have a slave attending us, mostly someone else's, but a little bit mine as well. I have two good cloaks and putting on one or the other I head off to the Agora. When I see some fellow there, not too bright but very rich, I am all over him at once. Whatever this rich man utters, I praise to the skies and I stand there struck, pretending to enjoy his words. Then we go our various ways to dine off another man's bread. There the sponger must come out with many witty things immediately or be chucked out the door. I know that's what happened to Akestor (used to be a slave); he made a really bad joke, and the slave took him outside with a collar round his neck, and handed him right over to Oineus."

here.”²⁴ Blank also incorrectly represents Plato Comicus as criticizing the sophists’ greed,²⁵ when his remark is in fact limited only to Antiphon’s φιλαργυρία.²⁶ He further writes that in *Astrateutoi* (frag. 36, K-A) Eupolis “referred to the sophists who spent their time ‘in the nicely shaded walks of the god Akedemos.’” But here, too, Blank seems to be mistaken:²⁷ “the associations of the Academy c.420 are surely those of athletics rather than intellectuals.”²⁸ Finally, Blank’s assertion that the chorus of Eupolis’ *Aiges* “was comprised of goats representing sophists,” seems equally unwarranted.²⁹ Blank’s use of comedy as evidence of popular discontent against the sophists seems dubious. Indeed, there appears to be little evidence to support the claim that the sophists were systematically attacked in Old Comedy for their intellectual shortcomings and avaricious practices. So, what are the sentiments expressed about the sophists in comedy?³⁰ As Carey observes, Aristophanes’ rivals appear to have shown little interest in them as individuals:

Perhaps one of the most surprising aspects of the fragments of Old Comedy is the paucity of references to some of the most illustrious thinkers of the late fifth century. Gorgias, Prodikos, Hippias, and Thrasymachos are ignored in the fragments of Aristophanes’ rivals. . . . But in contrast to the presence of Sokrates in the fragments of old comedy the silence is so striking that one is inclined to suppose that relatively little attention was paid to the major sophists as individuals.³¹

Far from singling out a distinct group of people as sophists, Old Comedy seems to use σοφιστής as a derogatory epithet applied to a broad category of intellectuals. As Carey argues, the word “sophist” is used in a general sense, and does not refer to any consistent group of individuals. The sophists “are presented more as an example of a familiar social nuisance (or in the case of Sokrates as an example of unworldly folly) than as a new and sinister corrupting force.”³²

Isokrates also offers numerous testimonia regarding the sophists and instruction for pay. What makes him a critical source is his contentious relationship with Plato. He and Plato disagreed vehemently about the role and content of education, and the wide discrepancies in their understanding of φιλοσοφία are well documented in modern scholarship.³³ Isokrates, then,

24. Storey 2003, 192.

25. Blank 1985, 5 (my emphasis): “The sophists’ reputation for greed grew along with the bank balances. Plato the comic poet mentions *their* greed (φιλαργυρία).”

26. Plato Com. *Peisandros* 110 K-A = [Plut.] *X orat.* P. 833c: κεκομψόηται δὲ (sc. Ἀντιφῶν) εἰς φιλαργυρίαν ὑπὸ Πλάτωνος ἐν Πεισάνδρῳ.

27. Blank 1985, 5. Nestle (1975, 459), too, thinks that the mention of Akademos is meant to refer to a crowd of philosophers and sophists.

28. Storey 2003, 78.

29. Blank 1985, 5. See Storey’s discussion of the play (2003, 67–74).

30. There is considerably more interest devoted to Sokrates’ person in Old Comedy. For references and discussions, see, for example, Dover 1989; Patzer 1994; Imperio 1998; Carey 2000; Whitehorne 2002; Edmunds 2006.

31. Carey 2000, 427. Protagoras is mentioned by Eupolis in *Kolakes*, frags. 157–58 K-A.

32. Carey 2000, 430.

33. For one of the most recent significant treatments of Plato’s and Isokrates’ differing views on φιλοσοφία, see Nightingale 1995 with bibliography. For philosophy as a contested term, see, in addition to Nightingale 1995, Wardy 1996, 94–96; and Ober 2004, 26–27.

just like the authors of Old Comedy, has the potential of offering us a view of the sophists that is independent of Platonic influence and sentiments.

In the *Antidosis* (220) he asserts that the income of a sophist is contingent upon the moral development of his students: the better the student, the larger the earnings. He describes the successful students as “noble, honorable and wise . . . and held in great esteem by their fellow citizens” (καλοὶ κἀγαθοὶ καὶ φρόνιμοι . . . καὶ παρὰ τοῖς πολίταις εὐδοκμοῦντες). This characterization strikes a different tone from what we find in the Platonic dialogues, where the very possibility of teaching someone to be καλὸς κἀγαθός for a fee is problematized. In the same speech (155), in an effort to downplay the rumored gains of the sophists, Isokrates mentions that Gorgias—in his view the most successful of the sophists—managed to leave behind only a thousand staters despite his dedication to money making. It is only at the beginning of *Helen* (2–3) that Isokrates identifies particular individuals as sophists. He speaks disparagingly of their intellectual activities and criticizes them for “caring for nothing else but to make money off of the youth” (χρηματίζεσθαι παρὰ τῶν νεωτέρων, *ibid.* 6). But the individuals whom Isokrates singles out as sophists in *Helen* differ significantly from the Platonic sophists: Isokrates names Protagoras, Gorgias, Zeno, and Melissos.³⁴ Elsewhere he also refers to Solon, Empedokles, Ion, Alkmaion, and Parmenides as sophists,³⁵ and he appears to allude to Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws* as sophistical works in a dismissive remark in *To Philip* (12).

Leaving the issue of the discrepancy between the Platonic and Isokratean sophists aside,³⁶ we can conclude that Isokrates’ sophists diverge in significant ways from the Platonic ones. In fact, most of the Isokratean sophists are treated as respectable philosophers in Plato. Moreover, in direct opposition to Plato, Isokrates does not seem to see the issue of teaching for pay as a necessary corollary of the use of the word sophist; only twice does he mention particular individuals as sophists and remark on their habit of teaching for pay. When he discusses sophists and their fees elsewhere, he never identifies particular individuals. In *Against the Sophists*, for example, he complains about those who set themselves up as teachers of the young. They are, he writes, themselves in need of instruction and should thus pay rather than accept fees.³⁷

In the Platonic tradition, the sophists are portrayed as greedy peddlers of specious wisdom who are not ashamed to brag about their outrageous earnings. In fact, the unsympathetic picture of the sophists in this tradition could

34. Whom does Plato label as sophists? The list is short: Protagoras (*Cra.* 391b; *Prt.* 311e, 313c, 314c, 314e, 317b, 317c, and 357e), Gorgias (*Meno* 95c; *Ap.* 19e; *Hp. mai.* 282b), Prodikos (*Prt.* 314c, 357e; *Ap.* 19e; *Symp.* 177b; *Lach.* 197d; *Eryxias* 399c; *Euthydemus* 277e), Hippias (*Prt.* 314c, 349a, 357e; *Ap.* 19e), Euthydemus and Dionysodoros (*Euthydemus* 271c, and 288b), and Mikkos (*Lysis* 204a).

35. Isokrates uses the word thirty-three times: *Helen* 2 and 9; *To Philip* 12–13 and 29; *To Demonicus* 51; *Bus.* 43; *Paneg.* 3 and 82; *To Nicocles* 13; *Panath.* 5 and 18; *Antid.* 2, 4, 148, 155, 157, 168, 194, 197, 203, 215, 220–21, 235, 237, 268, 285, and 313; *C. soph.* title, 14, and 19; frags. 8 and 17.

36. An issue that I intend to pursue elsewhere. For stimulating discussions on the matter, see Sidgwick 1872 and Morrison 1958.

37. *C. soph.* 13.13; cf. 13.7 and 13.9; see Too 1995, 156–61, for a discussion of the stratification of the targets of Isokrates’ invective.

arguably be said to be a result of their characterization as avaricious intellectuals with wildly inflated notions of their own self-worth, including their claims of deserving their high fees. Isokrates offers a more nuanced critique. In *Against the Sophists* (4) he points to the discrepancy between their practices of charging high fees while publicly downplaying the importance of money: “They say that they have no need for money, dismissively referring to wealth as worthless silver and gold [ἀργυρίδιον καὶ χρυσίδιον τὸν πλοῦτον ἀποκαλοῦντες], but in their desire for a small profit they promise to make their students all but immortal [μικροῦ δὲ κέρδους ὀρεγόμενοι μόνον οὐκ ἀθανάτους ὑπισχνοῦνται τοὺς συνόντας ποιήσειν].” In Isokrates, then, there is a distinction between what the sophists say and do: their official position is to dismiss the value of money—presumably in line with dominant social norms—while privately pursuing monetary gains. What upsets Isokrates is that they deviate from their publicly stated position. In contrast to Plato’s one-dimensional picture of sophistic greed, this Isokratean portrayal of the sophists acknowledges two points about teaching for pay: one that the sophists themselves publicly promote (disregard for money), and one that attracts Isokrates’ censure (greed). Far from openly announcing their high fees, the Isokratean sophists are careful, at least rhetorically, not to violate the propriety of the social norms by presenting themselves as engaged in money-grabbing practices. It seems very unlikely that they would publicly endorse the practice of offering instruction for money or describe the teacher-student relationship as an economic rapport between producer and consumer.

Isokrates himself offers an instructive example of how to negotiate the tension between charging fees without attracting public opprobrium for greed.³⁸ As Yun Lee Too has shown, “he prefers to present the teacher-student relationship as an extension of a friendship (*philia*) or a guest-host relationship (*xenia*).”³⁹ She goes on to point out that Isokrates frequently “describes his pedagogy as a form of civic service,” and that he refers to the advice that he offers in his writings as gifts.⁴⁰ Isokrates embeds and carefully frames any discussion of what could be described as economic transactions in the language of friendship and reciprocity. The fees, then—together with the instruction itself—are represented as disinterested gifts presented out of a sense of gratitude (*χάρις*),⁴¹ not as a contractual compensation for rendered services. By adopting the language of friendship and guest-host relationship Isokrates skillfully resists seeming to commodify his *sophia* and simultaneously ensures that his practices appear decorous and safely situated within the social practices of the elite.

38. He is reported not to have charged Athenian citizens, only students from abroad (see Forbes 1942, 20; and Too 1995, 109). This claim seems to be based on Isokrates’ remark in *Antidosis* 39, where he states that all his wealth has come from abroad (ἐμοὶ δὲ τὰς εὐπορίας . . . ἐξῴθεν ἀπάσας γεγεννημένος).

39. Too 1995, 110; *ibid.*: “In several works he insists that by offering counsel to certain individuals he is continuing the friendship which he had with their fathers (cf. *Ep.* 5.1; *Ep.* 6.1). He specifically asks the addressees of *Epistle* 6 to consider the epistle as *xenia*, as a token of guest-friendship (4).” For the importance and relevance of the institution of *xenia*, see Herman 1987.

40. Too 1995, 109–11; p. 111: “In the prefaces to *To Demonikus* and *To Nicocles* Isokrates characterises the advice he gives to his addressees as a gift (*dōron*, *To Demonikus* 2; *dōrean*, *To Nicocles* 2).”

41. For the importance of *χάρις* in Isokrates, see Too 1995, 109; for *χάρις* in the orators, see Ober 1989, 226–236 with bibliography.

Isokrates' self-presentation offers us an interpretive model to understand the complicated and often contentious language surrounding teaching for pay. He is preoccupied with making sure that no one mistakes his students' fees as merely fees—an economic price on his *sophia*—but that they be understood as motivated by gratitude and reciprocity. It seems clear—given Isokrates' vehement emphasis—that there were others who disputed his characterization and accused him of greed and banausic professionalism.⁴² Many *sophoi* engaged in similar rhetorical strategies to represent their own practices as embedded in networks of gratitude and serving the common good.⁴³ These rhetorical justifications were motivated by the frequent invectives against the monetary—and thus moral—integrity of *sophoi*.⁴⁴ What makes this a particularly difficult subject to address, however, is that we have a very limited understanding of what the actual economic situation was with respect to teaching for pay in the ancient world.⁴⁵

We will explore the invectives against a variety of *sophoi* for teaching for pay in the next section. For now, let it suffice to establish that Isokrates does not consistently single out specific individuals whom he labels sophists and accuses of teaching for pay. When he does identify particular individuals as sophists, however, they are at a strong variance with the Platonic sophists. He often leaves the objects of his invective vague and unspecific, as in *Against the Sophists*. This has led scholars to ask who the sophists are that Isokrates attacks.⁴⁶ Too has suggested that this vagueness is motivated by the genre of invective: "Invective, as a discourse, produces stereotypes and so it has a tendency to efface the distinctive differences between the individuals it targets. It tends to lump its victims together into broad, readily identifiable classes, transforming them into something 'other' to be dismissed."⁴⁷ In *Against the Sophists*, Isokrates seems to be using the sophists as foil in order to articulate his own intellectual position. He lumps them all together as an amorphous group that he can attack with impunity. Indeed, this practice resembles closely Carey's description of Old Comedy's utilization of the label sophist in respect to a broad type of *sophoi* as "an example of a familiar social nuisance"⁴⁸—an indistinct group of people onto whom a number of unattractive qualities can be projected, qualities that can then be

42. For an exhaustive discussion of *banausia*, see Nightingale 1995, 56–59, esp. n. 93; see also eadem 2004, 123–27.

43. See Kurke 1991, 85–107, for Pindar's employment of the language of *ξενία* and *χάρις* in respect to his patrons and audience.

44. The most obvious example of such attacks is perhaps Aristophanes' treatment of Sokrates in the *Clouds* and the defense mounted by the Platonic tradition; cf. Owen's excellent discussion (1986) of "Philosophical Invective."

45. When it comes to Plato and Aristotle, for example, who both accuse the sophists of taking fees, we have only vague ideas of how they financed their schools: "Very little is known about the financial aspect of either school. Plato accepted gifts of money from Dion, Dionysios, and others (*Epistle* 13). There is similar evidence that support from Alexander the Great was one of the means by which Aristotle's school was able to carry on some of its more elaborate research" (Lynch 1972, 83); see Forbes 1942 for a general discussion of the evidence of teaching for pay in antiquity.

46. For a discussion of the objects of Isokratean invective in *Against the Sophists*, see Too 1995, 161–64.

47. *Ibid.*, 160–61.

48. Carey 2000, 430.

criticized. As far as Isokrates is concerned, then, his characterization of the sophists deviates in significant ways from the Platonic version: many of those he labels as sophists are considered philosophers in Plato; teaching for pay is not a necessary quality of a sophist; the sophists are often used as an indiscriminate group of people, much like what we see in Old Comedy.

Let us next consider Philostratos, since he provides numerous testimonia on sophistic instruction for pay. How independent is he of the Platonic tradition? He mentions the fees of Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodikos, and Hippias, but seems largely to be rehearsing Platonic sentiments. For example, just as he relates that Protagoras was the first to converse for a fee (μισθοῦ διαλέγεσθαι πρῶτος εὔρε), he goes on (VS 1.10) to mention Plato and allude to *Protagoras* 349a where Sokrates describes Protagoras as openly calling himself a sophist and as being so confident in his ability as a teacher of excellence (ἀρετή) that he was the first to deem it right to charge a fee for this (πρῶτος τούτου μισθὸν ἀξιῶσας ἄρνησθαι). When talking about Gorgias' high fees for teaching Polos, he quotes directly from *Gorgias* (467b), where Polos is Sokrates' interlocutor (VS 1.13).

In the introduction to the *Lives of the Sophists* (482–83), Philostratos writes that Prodikos went from city to city with his Herakles fable and gave a paid lecture (ἐμισθοῦν ἐπιδείξιν), and he adds that he “charmed the cities like an Orpheus” (θέλγων αὐτὰ τὸν Ὀρφέως . . . τρόπον), a phrase that appears to be borrowed from Plato's description of Protagoras in *Protagoras* 315a (κηλῶν τῇ φωνῇ ὥσπερ Ὀρφεύς). Furthermore, his description (VS 1.12) of Prodikos' habit of “searching out the young nobles [εὐπατρίδας] and those from wealthy homes” because of his weakness for money (χρημάτων . . . ἥττων) echoes Plato's definition of the sophist as “a paid hunter of wealthy young men” at *Sophist* 231d (νέων καὶ πλουσίων ἐμισθοῦς θηρευτής). Finally, when addressing Hippias' desire for money (VS 1.11), he mentions Hippias' visit to Inycum in Sicily, narrated in *Hippias Maior* 282e, and adds that Plato mocked its citizens. It seems safe to say, then, that Philostratos offers little evidence about Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodikos, and Hippias that can justifiably be classified as independent of Plato. Indeed, his discussion of the sophists' fees appears deeply informed by the Platonic dialogues, which he often paraphrases or directly quotes.

Finally, we need to consider two clusters of evidence: one that deals with the 100 mina fees and one that contains miscellaneous remarks on the sophists and teaching for pay. In 1975 Vlastos protested against what he saw as the uncritical scholarly acceptance of ancient testimonia claiming that Zeno, Protagoras, and Gorgias charged 100 mina fees.⁴⁹ This is a group of five testimonia that is often referred to as evidence for the sophists' practice of teaching for pay. Vlastos contrasted these references with earlier sources (mainly Plato and Isokrates) and concluded that the 100 mina fee was a fantastic sum “fished up” by later writers.⁵⁰ G. B. Kerferd, writing in 1981,

49. Vlastos 1975, 159, esp. n. 114. Zeno: *Pl. Alc.* I 119a; Protagoras: Diog. Laert. 9.52, schol. *Pl. Resp.* 600c Greene; Gorgias: Diod. Sic. 12.53.2, *Suda*, s.v. “Gorgias.”

50. Vlastos 1975, 160.

adopted a more agnostic stance and acknowledged that we know close to nothing about the actual circumstances regarding the fees, such as the length of the course or number of students.⁵¹ This evidence looks suspiciously standardized, and I agree with Vlastos' assessment that the lateness of the testimonia and their uniform agreement on the 100 mina fee detract from their validity as compelling sources on the sophists' fees. In contrast to Vlastos, however, I am reluctant to seek to establish actual historical amounts based on Plato and Isokrates as a corrective to the 100 mina figure. I suspect that the figure originates from Plato's *Alcibiades I*. As evidence for teaching for pay, this group of testimonia offers little of value.

There is a group of miscellaneous references to the sophists and teaching for pay. Diogenes Laertios (9.50) records that Protagoras and Prodikos declaimed speeches (λόγους ἀναγινώσκοντες) for which they charged fees. The very next sentence begins with a reference to Plato's *Protagoras*, so it seems reasonable to suspect that Diogenes is drawing on Plato, perhaps having *Cratylus* (384b2–6) in mind, where we hear of Prodikos' variously priced lectures. Diogenes relates an anecdote (9.56) of how Protagoras quibbled with a student over a fee.⁵² In this group of testimonia we also find Themistios' remarks about how Protagoras, Gorgias, and Prodikos used to advertise their wisdom as just another thing for sale (*Or.* 23.296b–c; cf. 289c–d). We have already seen Themistios' indebtedness to Plato and how derivative his information about the Platonic tradition seems to be. Finally, Athenaios (3.113d–e) mentions in an offhand remark that Blepsias made more from his erudition than both Protagoras and Gorgias. These miscellaneous remarks do not amount to much in terms of offering independent evidence of the sophists' practice of teaching for pay. Blank's argument for the existence of popular discontent with the sophists' fees—a discontent that Plato taps into, but does not articulate—seems unsupported. Many of the later sources seem simply to recycle the negative sentiments of the Platonic tradition, while Plato's predecessors and contemporaries diverge in significant ways from his depiction of the sophists.

The clear majority of the sources attesting to the sophists' habit of teaching for pay are derived from the Platonic tradition. Furthermore, Plato's testimony is not a value-neutral description of a historical phenomenon, as it has often been treated, but a highly negative portrayal. It should be understood as an example of what G. E. L. Owen has labeled "philosophical invective." We are familiar enough with how invectives operate in such genres as iambic poetry, comedy, and oratory, but personal abuse in philosophical writing has rarely been studied. In the words of Owen (1986, 357): "if we had been considering the orators and not the philosophers it would have seemed no more than a commonplace that there are stock forms of abuse in fourth-century invective, conventional slanders which can be employed with little or no care for the facts." In the final section I will shift from philosophical texts

51. Kerferd 1981, 27.

52. This story was also retold by Roman authors; for discussion and references, see Forbes 1942, 18, esp. n. 45.

to attacks on *sophoi* for selling wisdom in other genres.⁵³ I will pay special attention to analogies between the treatment of *sophoi* elsewhere and of the sophists in Plato. The ambition is to understand better Plato's unswerving focus on the connection between sophists and teaching for pay.

III

In what other contexts can we trace slander (διαβολή) against *sophoi* for venality? G. E. R. Lloyd has called attention to how the author of the *Sacred Disease* charges his rivals with fraud (2.1–10) and of being desirous of gain (βίου δεόμενοι, 4.17).⁵⁴ The epithets he uses to describe his opponents are μάγοι ("quacks," "wizards"), καθαρθαί ("purifiers"), ἀγύρται ("charlatans," "beggar priests"), and ἀλαζόνες ("impostors").⁵⁵ In discussing the relevance of this passage, Lloyd emphasizes the discrepancy between the vigor of the attacks and self-assurance on the part of the author, on the one hand, and the actual differences of treatment promoted by the author and his opponents, on the other:

[T]he testimony of *On the Sacred Disease* would tend to run counter to any thesis to the effect that the undermining of magical beliefs follows an increase in the control that could be exercised over the areas of experience to which the beliefs in question related. It is striking that our chief critical text deals with a topic—epilepsy—where the author himself, so far from having any effective means of treating the disease, was—we should have said—just as helpless as the charlatans he attacked.⁵⁶

In the *Sacred Disease* the author directs charges of greed against fellow medical practitioners,⁵⁷ and together with these charges he attaches accusa-

53. What precisely did the Greeks mean by wisdom (*sophia*), and whom did they look to as experts (*sophoi*)? Kerferd notes that wisdom (*sophia*) was initially connected with the poet, the seer, and the sage, and that their knowledge was not one pertaining to a particular skill, "but knowledge about the gods, man and society, to which the 'wise man' claimed privileged access" (1981, 24). This knowledge, in turn, was divinely inspired—always pertaining to content; and the content in question was education (*paideia*)—the turf par excellence of *sophistai* or *sophoi*: "They are such not in virtue of techniques or special skills, but in virtue of the content of their thinking and teaching, their wisdom or *Sophia*" (ibid., 28; cf. Gernet 1981, 357). Rather than trying to find fixed, though changing, definitions of *sophia*, I would suggest that we allow for appropriations and contestations as natural dynamics of the development of the term. Indeed, any attempt to trace and determine rigid definitions would concomitantly undermine the possibility for an approach sensitive to such cultural processes. Thus, rather than proceeding from the meaning of *sophia* to the successive establishment of the category of *sophos*, we would perhaps arrive at a better understanding if we turned this formula on its head and explored *sophia* precisely through the category of *sophos*: whoever could authoritatively claim a position as *sophos* and be well received and regarded in this capacity, that person's expertise would be an illustrative example of *sophia*, regardless of how well (or not) this expertise fitted with any standard definition of the term.

54. Lloyd 1979, 16–17. For practitioners of medicine as *sophoi* and members of the Greek wisdom tradition, see, e. g., Lloyd 1979 and Thomas 2000. There is a strong link between wisdom and healing in figures such as Epimenides, Empedokles, and Alkmaion. For examples of doctors as *sophoi* in Plato, see, for instance, *Lysis* 210a, *Euthydemus* 280a, *Theages* 123d–e, and *Epin.* 976a. All references to the *Sacred Disease* refer to the edition of Jones (1923).

55. We need to be careful not to maintain or assign exact meanings to these terms of abuse. They are generally employed in reference to anyone singled out for strong censure; cf. Lloyd's (1979, 56) comments regarding the practice of accusing one's rivals of practicing magic or of being magicians in the *Hippocratic Corpus*: "The connotations and denotations of these terms are not fixed (any more than those of 'charlatan', ἀλαζών, were); rather they are used of what particular writers happen to disapprove of."

56. Lloyd 1979, 49.

57. As to the identity of those opponents, see Lloyd 1979, 37–49.

tions of quackery and charlatanism. Based on our knowledge of the medical practices and treatments, however, we know that there is a sharp discrepancy between the “argumentative weaponry”—where differences are stressed—and the actual “empirical content”—where significant overlaps existed.⁵⁸ Indeed, on the empirical level the differences seem far less absolute than the rhetorical positioning would lead a reader to believe.⁵⁹ The chief thrust of the rhetorical argumentation seems to be devoted to undermining rival views. Presumably this was a two-way street: just as the author of the *Sacred Disease* accused his opponents of fraud and greed, so they would retort with similar accusations.⁶⁰ It thus seems reasonable to assume that the allegation of greed in the *Sacred Disease* is closely linked to the larger rhetorical strategy of undermining the authority of the opponents, and that the invectives of quackery work in tandem with this challenge. In the Hippocratic corpus, the accusation of greed thus seems to yield little information about the historical practices of doctors. Instead, it is part of a stock repertoire of invective directed at opponents in an attempt to undermine their claims to *sophia*. This is a theme familiar from comedy, where attacks against *sophoi* for greed are also frequent.

Aristophanes’ portrayal of Sokrates and his disciples in the *Clouds* closely mirrors the Platonic treatment of the sophists. Sokrates and his followers are said to teach success in speech if they receive pay (ἀργύριον ἢν τις διδῶ, 98), and this monetary arrangement is referred to three more times in the course of the play (lines 245–46, 876, and 1146).⁶¹ But this is not the only exchange of wisdom for money ridiculed in comedy, and the charge is not limited to Sokrates and his followers. We see similar caricatures aimed at seers in the *Birds* (958–91) and the *Peace* (1045–1126). In these plays diviners appear on stage claiming to possess useful divine knowledge, but we soon learn that they are more interested in procuring gifts for themselves in return for prophecies.⁶² This arrangement of wisdom (*sophia*) for money or gifts is similar to the exchange between Strepsiades and Sokrates in the *Clouds* as well as the sophistic practices portrayed in the Platonic tradition.

Seers in particular seem to be portrayed as possessing qualities that are usually associated with the sophists.⁶³ To begin with, the connection between *sophia* and divination was strong in antiquity. Seers held a prominent position in the Greek wisdom tradition and were often referred to as both σοφοί⁶⁴ and

58. The formulations are those of Lloyd (1979, 125).

59. For examples of overlaps, see Lloyd 1979, 39–45.

60. For evidence of the animosity between practitioners of temple medicine and doctors, see Lloyd 1979, 46.

61. Sokrates (*Ap.* 19c) refers to Aristophanes’ representation of him in the *Clouds* as slander (διαβολή).

62. Aristophanes stages a χρησμολόγος in the *Birds* and a μάντις in the *Peace*. “A μάντις is one who interprets divine signs: a χρησμολόγος is one who has a store of oracles” (Platnauer 1964, 154); see also Mikalson 1991, 92 and n. 118 for bibliographical references.

63. This is, of course, not to ignore the similarities (more commonly noted among scholars) between seers and poets: “Now poets and seers were closely related, as both were dependent on kings, were inspired, led itinerant lives, were often represented as blind, and pretended to possess supernatural knowledge” (Bremmer 1996, 102). On seers, see Burkert 1983 and 1985; Roth 1984; Smith 1989; Mikalson 1991; and Dillery 2005.

64. The treatment of Teiresias in the *Bacchae* and *Oedipus Rex* is paradigmatic: he is repeatedly called σοφός (Eur. *Bacch.* 178–79, and 186; Soph. *OT* 484; cf. Kalchas in Eur. *IT* 662 and Soph. *Aj.* 783, and seers

σοφισταί.⁶⁵ They also exhibit similar social practices to those of the sophists; like them, many had an itinerant status and interacted almost exclusively with the elite. Jan Bremmer has explored the social position of the seer in Archaic Greece, and notes that those who figure in our sources “belonged to the highest aristocracy.”⁶⁶ Mark Griffith likewise has called attention to tragedy’s portrayal of Teiresias “as a long-standing and integral member of the Theban political community” who never interacts with “lower-class characters.”⁶⁷ In the *Republic* (364b–c), Plato offers an unflattering portrayal of how seers (ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες) come to the doors of the rich (ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας) to persuade them that they possess a god-given power (δύναμις) that, at little expense (μετὰ συμκρῶν δαπανῶν), they can put at the disposal of their wealthy patrons.⁶⁸ This description bears strong resemblances to the Platonic account of the sophists’ gravitation toward the houses of the wealthy.⁶⁹

But similarities between sophists and seers are not limited to formal characteristics. G. M. A. Grube detected a significant intellectual indebtedness to the sophistic movement in the Euripidean portrayal of Teiresias in the *Bacchae*, and he posited that there were other such “theological sophists” active in fifth-century Athens: “There must have been many seers and prophets in fifth-century Athens, theological sophists who clung to the orthodox belief in gods with all but human forms and personality, but who were intelligent enough to know that they must make some concessions to rationalism.”⁷⁰ Building on Grube, Paul Roth has explored the intellectual indebtedness of fifth- and fourth-century seers to their surrounding intellectual environment, and he has persuasively argued for strong overlaps.⁷¹ Just like sophists, then, seers are represented as practitioners of wisdom ready to sell their *sophia* to anyone interested in paying for it, and their avarice is viciously criticized. The treatment of the Theban seer Teiresias in tragedy is exemplary of this development, and I will consider it next in an effort to appreciate better the typological characteristics of the censure against seers.

Teiresias is repeatedly referred to as σοφός⁷² and is welcomed on stage as a well-disposed and potentially salutary figure. When he first appears in

in general in *Rhes*. 65–66). In *OT* 298–99, Teiresias is also referred to as the man “in whom alone of mortals the truth is rooted by nature.” For a discussion of the early Greek wisdom tradition, see Guthrie 1971, esp. 27–32; and Kerferd 1976.

The necessity to split Teiresias’ competence in the *Bacchae* into two (as does Mikalson [1991, 95 and 147])—one pertaining to mantic expertise and one pertaining to traditional qualities of the wise man—is thus unnecessary; the figure of the seer was ipso facto that of a wise man.

65. Hdt. 2.49; Ar. *Nub.* 331–34; Dio Chrys. xxxii.39; references from Kerferd 1950, 8. For the “sophistic” qualities of Teiresias in the *Bacchae*, see Roth 1984; and Smith 1989.

66. Bremmer 1996, 97; cf. 100.

67. Griffith, forthcoming.

68. Cf. *Leg.* 909b, where Plato accuses religious experts of being willing to use their expertise to wreak havoc on individuals, homes, and cities for the sake of money (χρημάτων χάριν). For a discussion of the Greek conception of magic and the use of the terms ἀγύρτης and μάντις in Plato’s *Republic*, see Graf 1997, esp. 20–29.

69. Kallias’ house in *Protagoras* and Kallikles’ in *Gorgias*. Plutarch (*Per.* 36. 2) also chronicles Perikles’ association with known sophists, especially Protagoras.

70. Grube 1961, 404, quoted from Roth 1984, 60 n. 4.

71. Roth 1984.

72. For references, see n. 64 above.

Oedipus Rex, for example, he is heralded by Oidipous as possessing omniscient powers and as being the sole savior of the state, in whose hands they all are (ἐν σοὶ γὰρ ἔσμέν, 314). After Teiresias' initial refusal to share his divinely inspired information (φάτιν, 323), Oidipous gently prods him by pointing out that his unwillingness to share his knowledge is not a grateful gesture vis-à-vis the city that nurtured him (οὐτε προσφιλῆ πόλει / τῇδ', ἥ σ' ἔθρεψε, 323–24). Oidipous' strategy consists in emphasizing the bonds of kinship and mutual dependency that exist between them, so as to compel the seer to volunteer his information. When Teiresias finally speaks out and reveals that Oidipous is indeed the murderer of Laios, Oidipous quickly discards any remaining notions of affinity and accuses Teiresias of conspiring against him with Kreon. He goes on to add that Teiresias has eyes only for profits but is blind in respect to his art (ἐν τοῖς κέρδεσιν / μόνον δέδορκε, τὴν τέχνην δ' ἔφω τυφλός, 388–89). There is thus a complete reversal of the initially cordial reception: Teiresias goes from being a savior to an impostor and quack (μάγος and ἀγύρτης, 387–88).⁷³ In connection with this emotional turnaround, Oidipous introduces the accusation of greed.

In *Antigone*, Kreon directs a similar accusation of venality at Teiresias. Initially, however (993), Kreon stresses that he has always in the past followed Teiresias' advice, and that he can testify to the benefits of doing this from personal experience (ἔχω πεπονθὼς μαρτυρεῖν ὀνήσιμα, 995). When it becomes clear to Kreon that the advice that Teiresias gives—that he allow a proper burial for Polyneikes—goes against his own creed, he lashes out at him (1035–36) and complains that he has been bought and sold and exported long ago (ἐξημπολήμαι κακπεφόρτισμαι πάλοι) by the race of seers; and a little later (1055), he exclaims that the whole breed of seers is money-loving (τὸ μαντικὸν γὰρ πᾶν φιλάργυρον γένος). Just as in the passage from *Oedipus Rex* quoted above, the charge of greed is triggered by the failure of communication: only when Teiresias fails to deliver what Oidipous and Kreon have reasons to expect from a trusted and valuable adviser do they resort to attacking his credibility by accusing him of greed. The same pattern is repeated in the *Bacchae* (255–57), where Pentheus accuses Teiresias of having introduced Dionysos as a new divinity to give himself more opportunities to observe the birds and to charge fees for interpreting burnt offerings.⁷⁴

Teiresias, then, is introduced as a privileged adviser to the rulers. He is revered for his wisdom and is thought of as well disposed to the leaders and the community he serves. In *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone* he is invited to help bring resolution to the affliction that the polis is currently undergoing. When Teiresias provides information that is perceived as unbeneficial to the ruler and the polis at large, the offended party retorts by invalidating his

73. It is of particular interest that Oidipous chooses to call Teiresias an ἀγύρτης and μάγος here. The author of *On the Sacred Disease* (1.10–12 G.) uses the same words to attack all who assert that the sacred disease is divine (he adds καθαῖται and ἀλαζόνες to the list), and Plato employs ἀγύρτης at *Resp.* 364b–c to brand seers as greedy peddlers of fraudulent religion.

74. Already in the *Odyssey* (2.186), Eurymachos scolds Halitherses for his interpretation of a bird portent and charges him with trying to procure gifts for his own household.

sophia by charging him with greed. By implication, if his answer complied with the expectations of his interlocutors and were seen as beneficial, no such charge would be levied against him. What is so titillating about the initial encounters between Teiresias and Kreon in *Antigone* and Teiresias and Oidipous in *Oedipus Rex* is that they offer us a glimpse of what an unproblematic interaction might look like.

To judge from his cordial reception, we can infer that Teiresias' advice was well received and advantageous in the past, and that his socially elevated position indeed depends on his previously successful guidance. As opposed to comedy, tragedy does not convey an exclusively negative picture of seers as butts of abuse, but tends instead to focus on the breakdown in communication, when cordiality turns into invective. The reversal of attitude is motivated by a failure of proper interaction, and the charge of greed aims to undermine the authority of the *sophos*. The charge, then, or so one can reasonably assume, is not informed by a historical reality—all seers were greedy and all too willing to sell their wisdom for money—but by the rhetorical strategy of attacking one's opponent's weakest point. The allegation of greed and bribery accomplishes precisely that: it undercuts the authoritative position of the *sophos* by implying that he has ulterior motives. The regularity with which the invective of greed is directed at seers in comedy and tragedy suggests that this was a *topos* familiar to the audience.

I suggest that we use the findings from the *Sacred Disease*, comedy, and tragedy as an analogy to the charges against the sophists for teaching for pay in the Platonic tradition. There are important overlaps and thematic continuities in the way the accusations of venality are treated in these authors and genres. First, the charge often occurs as part of a more general invective discourse, coupled with abusive and derisive epithets such as ἀλαζών, ἀγύρτης, and μάγος.⁷⁵ Second, its force is mainly destructive, aiming to undermine the authoritative claims of the opponents. Finally, it does not seem to be motivated by an ambition to establish actual historical differences in social practices; rather it is an expression of what Lloyd calls the “argumentative weaponry” of the accusers.

In political oratory, charges of bribery are legion, but few would mistake rhetoric for reality in this context.⁷⁶ It is my contention that we need to allow for a similar split in the representation of seers in comedy and tragedy and, by extension, of the sophists in the Platonic tradition. Our knowledge about the factual details regarding fees and monetary rewards for instruction is very scant, but the treatment of Teiresias in tragedy offers us an interpre-

75. Plato's treatment of the sophists deviates from this pattern, since he avoids the epithets ἀλαζών, ἀγύρτης, and μάγος in conjunction with his criticism of their practice of charging money. But his satirical portrayal of them as hunters of the young (*Soph.* 221–23) and as retailers in wisdom (*Prt.* 313d) leaves little doubt that his remarks belong to an abusive context (for more examples, see discussion in section I above); Plato seems to be more concerned in his choice of epithets with emphasizing the trend toward unchecked commodification of wisdom among the sophists—a fact that Xenophon's likening them to prostitutes perfectly illustrates (*Mem.* 1.6.13).

76. For discussions of bribery and the many inflated charges found there, see, e.g., Taylor 2001a and 2001b; Harvey 1985; MacDowell 1983; and Perlman 1976.

tive framework for understanding the shift from a potentially unproblematic and successful interaction to an aggressive emphasis on money and intellectual fraud.⁷⁷ Although Plato's characterization of the sophists (or the comic treatment of seers) shows no interest in this shift of attitude but focuses exclusively on invective, the motivation for the abusive treatment remains comparable: to deflate the intellectual credentials of the opponents and, concomitantly, to boost one's own claims to *sophia*.

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77. The practice of charging money seems to have been common among poets, artists, and doctors; for references and discussion, see Kerferd 1981, 25; and Lloyd 1987, 92 n. 152.

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