

THE GLAUCON OF PLATO'S *SYMPOSIUM*

It is not Plato's usual practice to introduce an anonymous interlocutor at the beginning of a dialogue, only to reveal his identity shortly afterwards – but inadequately, teasingly, at least for us today – yet such is the case in *Symposium*. The day before yesterday, the narrator Apollodorus tells some unnamed friends (172a), an acquaintance (γνωρίμων τις) called out to him on his way from Phalerum to the city, eager to learn of the get-together (συνουσίαν) of Agathon, Socrates, Alcibiades and others at the dinner-party (συνδείπνω) when they talked about *eros* (περὶ τῶν ἐρωτικῶν λόγων). A little later, scarcely fourteen lines in the *OCT*, he recalls how he corrected the acquaintance's misperception of the dinner-party's date, addressing him by name: how could 'Glaucōn' have imagined that it was a recent affair, πόθεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὃ Γλαύκων; (172c). Who – with enquiry limited to the Platonic texts – is this 'Glaucōn'?

"This Glaucōn", said Bury 1932, "is perhaps the same as the father of Charmides ... but probably not the same as the Glaucōn of *Republic*, though Böckh and Munk would identify the two". So too Stallbaum 1852 ("Distinguendus hic est a Glaucōne illo, Platonis fratre, qui in libris de Republica commemoratur") and Groen van Prinsterer 1823, 213. But the father of Plato's uncle Charmides, Glaucōn III (Nails 2002, 154), would be an improbable participant in the dialogue's frame conversation. The dramatic date of the dialogue proper (416) corresponds to the actual date of Agathon's first theatrical victory in the Lenaea (cf. Bury 1932, lxvi; Dover 1980, 8-10; cf. *TrGF* I 39 T 1), and a dramatic date of 401/400 for the frame conversation may then be inferred (the *terminus ante quem* being 399, the year of Socrates' death). Apollodorus tells 'Glaucōn' that the celebratory get-together took place when they both were 'still children', παίδων ὄντων ἡμῶν ἔτι (173a), and 'Glaucōn' observes that it was then evidently quite a long time ago (πάνυ ... ἄρα πάλαι, ὡς ἔοικεν). While it is not possible to assign a precise age range to 'παῖς' (cf. Golden 1985), the distinction drawn between παῖς, 'child' or 'boy,' and μειράκιον, 'adolescent,' in *Charmides* 154 may be useful: now an impressive μειράκιον, Charmides was no mean beauty even as a child, οὐ γάρ τι φαῦλος οὐδὲ τότε ἦν ἔτι παῖς ὢν (cf. Dover 1978, 85). We might guess reasonably that Apollodorus and 'Glaucōn' were about nine or ten years old in 416, too young to have been aware of Agathon's victory party, just as Hippocrates, eager to meet Protagoras, was still a child, ἔτι γὰρ παῖς, when the sophist visited Athens previously (*Prot.* 310e). 'Glaucōn', then, will have been born c. 425, a few years after the death of Plato's great-uncle Glaucōn c. 430 (cf. Nails 2002). Only by a glaring anachronism could the two be identical (cf. Rettig 1876, 59).

Identification of 'Glaucón' with Plato's brother, Glaucón IV (Nails 2002), has its advocates, past and present, including Munk 1857 and Boeckh 1874, cited by Bury 1932, Friedländer 1928, Moors 1987, Lamb 1925, Cotter 1992, Rowe 1998, Sansone 2017; for balanced appraisal, see Reale 2001, p. XXIV. Ideally, this identification will entail harmonious compatibility, between the dramatic date of the frame conversation in *Symposium* and the dramatic date of *Republic* in which Glaucón IV is present as a young friend of Socrates and an important interlocutor, along with his brother Adeimantus. Unfortunately, the dramatic dating of *Republic* is a difficult and contentious business, involving the chronologies of recognized participants, especially Lysias (albeit a *persona muta*) and his father Cephalus, at whose home in Piraeus the discussion takes place, and the date of a seemingly inaugural festival of the Thracian goddess Bendis, which brought Socrates and Glaucón down to Piraeus in the first place. Verlinsky 2014 chronicles the competing dates, ranging from the 440's to 430, advanced by, among others, Wolff 1799, Ast 1816, Stallbaum 1825, Hermann 1831 – all to be eclipsed by Boeckh's 1874 arguments for 411/0. The latter, along with 422/1 (Taylor 1960, 206), remains a preferred date today, although Verlinsky himself, after Hermann 1831 and Planeaux 2000, favours 430/29. Nails' 1998 suggestion, that the dialogue "was cobbled together and revised over decades", admitting two dramatic dates, 424 or 421 and 429/8, may be mentioned, and also Moors' 1987 iconoclastic conclusion that the dialogue is 'timeless', resistant to any precise dramatic dating. If our date of choice is 430/29, his brothers Glaucón and Adeimantus were considerably – perhaps twenty years – older than Plato, who was born c. 429, and Glaucón therefore cannot be the 'Glaucón' of *Symposium* (born c. 425). The same conclusion also must follow if the dramatic date is lowered to 422/1, when 'Glaucón' will have been a three or four year old *paidion*, or to 411/0, when he would have been an unlikely fourteen or fifteen year old interlocutor. Compounding that unlikelihood is Apollodorus' characterization of 'Glaucón' as a bloke at loose ends, just like himself before his association with Socrates, believing that any activity was preferable to the practice of philosophy, οἰόμενος δεῖν πάντα μᾶλλον πράττειν ἢ φιλοσοφεῖν (173a) – "a most unlikely belief for the interlocutor of the *Republic*" (Lampert 2010, 411).

Neither Plato's brother nor his great-uncle, then, is qualified for recognition as 'Glaucón' (cf. Robin 1966: "En fait ce n' est sans doute, ici, ni l'un ni l'autre"), and consequently we shall have to be content with Apollodorus' inadequately identified acquaintance – *unless* Plato intended to leave the acquaintance wholly unidentified, completely nameless. I submit that he did, that Γλαύκων at 172c, πόθεν, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ὃ Γλαύκων, is an ancient guess, a gloss on an original ὃ τᾶν. The author of the gloss was familiar with *Re-*

public, recognizing apparent echoes of its opening scenario in that of *Symposium*: Socrates on his way back to Athens yesterday from Piraeus ~ Apollodorus on his way to Athens the day before yesterday from Phalerum, each accosted at some distance from behind, Socrates by Polemarchus' slave ~ Apollodorus by an acquaintance (cf. Rowe 1998, 127). A guess that the acquaintance might be Glaucon, son of Ariston, prominently introduced as Socrates' companion in the first sentence of *Republic*, will have been encouraged by Apollodorus' account of his eagerness to learn of the ἐρωτικοὶ λόγοι at Agathon's party – for was not Glaucon of *Republic* the very definition of 'erotic man'? In a celebrated passage (474d), supporting his thesis that the φιλόσοφος desires all of σοφία, not just part of it (475b), Socrates tells him that he in particular, as an ἄνηρ ἐρωτικός, "un uomo esperto d'amore" (Vegetti 2006), should remember that *all* boys in the flower of youth, regardless of blemishes, in some way sting and excite the boy-loving lover, τὸν φιλόπαιδα καὶ ἐρωτικὸν ἀμῆτι γέ πηι δάκνουσί τε καὶ κινουῦσι (cf. Ludwig 2007, 218-19). Earlier (402e), Socrates allows that Glaucon has or has had a boy-love (παιδικά), imperfect in physical beauty but not in beauty of soul, and Glaucon himself may still have an *erastes* (perhaps Critias: Schleiermacher 1828, 537) who composed elegiacs on his and his brother's bravery in a Megarian battle (368a). Guessing that Apollodorus' erotically fascinated acquaintance and this erotic Glaucon were one and the same, the glossator entered ΓΛΑΥΚΩΝ above Ω ΤΑΝ. The gloss subsequently ousted ΤΑΝ (cf. Boter 2015 on possible intrusive glosses at 211c1 and 218d 6-7) – and the nameless acquaintance acquired a name *in saecula saeculorum*!

As for the assumedly restored ὦ τᾶν, this form of address (on which, see Dickey 1996, 158-60) may have remonstrative value, which will suit the present context since Apollodorus' question, πόθεν ...; ('How could you?') has a decidedly impatient ring to it; we may compare *Apol.* 25c, where Socrates presses Meletus for an answer, ὦ τᾶν, ἀπόκριναί. The frequent use of ὦ τᾶν in Comedy (with more than twenty occurrences in Aristophanes, e.g., *Frogs* 952, *Clouds* 1267, *Wasps* 373, *Birds* 12, *Lys.* 1163) will suggest that the address is at home in the sort of comedic banter engaged in by Apollodorus and his friends. Another comic touch in their bantering may be felt in the acquaintance's protest, μὴ σκῶπτ(ε), "don't mock me" (173a); cf. *Wasps* 1074, *Eccl.* 1005, *Frogs* 58, and especially *Clouds* 1267, μὴ σκῶπτέ μ', ὦ τᾶν. And of course the frame conversation opens with a report of the acquaintance's appellative (and probably risqué) joke (cf. now Sansone 2017), while even the title of the dialogue – if in fact it is Plato's very own – will attest to the author's comic 'intent' in *Symposium* (Cotter 1973). The acquaintance has no need of a name. He is a *type* of the comically erotically obsessed!

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ABSTRACT:

Prosopographical scrutiny suggests that 'Glaucón' at *Symp.* 172c is the name of neither Plato's brother nor his great-uncle, but may rather represent a reader's guess at the identity of an anonymous interlocutor; it will be an intrusive gloss on an impatient, comedic address by the narrator Apollodorus.

KEYWORDS:

Plato, *Symposium*, *Republic*, People in Plato, Glosses.