

The Philosophy of Apollonius of Tyana: An Attempt at Reconstruction¹

Carl O'Brien

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, CORK

Apollonius of Tyana was probably the second most famous holy man of antiquity, second only to his more illustrious *confère*, Jesus of Nazareth. While Apollonius in many ways is more of a shamanistic figure and miracle-worker than a philosopher, it is worthwhile to consider what his intellectual dispositions may have been, identifying in the process the obstacles preventing a more accurate appreciation of his philosophical beliefs and the influence that the accretions of the later Apollonius legend may have on any serious attempt at synthesising what few indications remain to us. Though there are several studies of Apollonius, they often focus more on his role as a charismatic holy man, such as Anderson's 1994 work.² Anderson's 1986 study on Philostratus also included an analysis of Apollonius as a philosopher and miracle-monger.³ Bowie's important work on tracing the historical figure of Apollonius manages to disentangle many of the later accretions to the Apollonius legend, which has great significance for attempts at outlining his philosophical stance.⁴ One of the few studies to reconstruct Apollonius' philosophy, including his metaphysics, and locate it within the intellectual context of the time, is that of Maria Dzielska.⁵ The trend in the latest research has been to focus less on reconstructing Apollonius' views or approaching the historical figure, than on appreciating Philostratus as a philosophical writer of some merit in his own right.⁶ It seems appropriate, therefore, to revisit the topic and to pose some

1. I am especially grateful to Professor John Dillon of Trinity College Dublin for suggesting numerous improvements to the original draft of this article.

2. G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist. Holy Men and their Associates in the Early Roman Empire* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994).

3. G. Anderson, *Philostratus. Biography and Belles Lettres in the Third Century A.D.* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

4. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978): 1672.

5. M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History* (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 1986).

6. D. Praet, "Pythagoreanism and the Planetary Deities: The Philosophical and Literary Master-Structure of the *Vita Apollonii*," in *Theios Sophistes. Essays on Flavius Philostratus' Vita*

tentative suggestions as to the central features of Apollonius' philosophy, while remaining fully conscious that the state of the evidence and the obscurity of history limit any attempt at drawing firm conclusions.

LIFE, WORKS AND SOURCES

The most famous (though not most reliable) source from antiquity is Flavius Philostratus' *Vita Apollonii*, a highly romanticised biography of the sage upon which the *Suda* entry on Apollonius was based. This was composed at the request of Julia Domna, wife of the emperor Septimius Severus, almost a century after the death of Apollonius. There are also some references in other writers, such as Cassius Dio or Origen.⁷ Another major source is the collection of letters, some edited by Philostratus, which he informs us were collected by the Emperor Hadrian, though the reality that many of these texts are probably forgeries undermines its utility. (This is particularly true for the letters criticising Euphrates or various Greek cities; as Bowie points out, the recipients would have no compelling reason to preserve or publish such documents.)⁸ Philostratus claims to have composed his *Vita* based on the memoirs of Damis, a student and associate of Apollonius, and author of a set of memoirs about the sage, though here it is uncertain even if Damis actually existed. He also states that he visited a temple dedicated to Apollonius' cult at Tyana and that he travelled to other cities which still recorded various traditions regarding the sage. Philostratus claims to have drawn upon the biography compiled by Maximus of Aegae; this treated of the youth of Apollonius and is in all likelihood the source for *VA* 7–17, which also deals with Apollonius' philosophical education.

Elements of the *Vita Apollonii* can easily be discounted for our purposes, since they resemble the genre of the ancient novel more closely than anything else. Indeed, the *Vita Apollonii* could be seen in its entirety as a novel, devoid for obvious reasons of the romantic/sexual elements (though the place of this is taken by the references to Apollonius' chastity). His trip to visit the Indian Brahmins, their munificent hospitality and automata parallel the Phaeacians of Homer's *Odyssey*. His more tepid reception by the gymnosophists of Ethiopia is also clearly a romanticised aspect of travel literature.⁹ His restoration of a dead girl to life is similar to Jesus' raising of

Apollonii (= *Mnemosyne* Supplements: Monographs on Greek and Roman Language and Literature, Volume 305), ed. K. Demoen & D. Praet (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2009), 283–320.

7. E.g., Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana*, 67.18.1f. or Origen *Contra Celsum*, 6.41. Origen does not quite approve of Apollonius, suggesting that he led philosophers astray with his magical powers.

8. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1691.

9. Indeed, it is not just a *topos* of ancient travel literature. The gymnosophists appear also in Umberto Eco's *Baudalino*.

Jairus' daughter.¹⁰ Bowie points out that while the division of a biography into eight books is highly irregular, it exhibits the same format as the novels of Achilles Tatius and Chariton.¹¹

Apollonius, though he, by all accounts, never seems to have had any difficulty in delivering speeches publicly, had the typical philosopher's distaste for rhetoric. We might accept this as plausible, though questioning whether his motives were truly disinterested. His concern seems to be, in part, due to the fear that the rhetoricians might steal his students. He "drove off his sheep whenever he found forensic orators approaching lest the wolves should fall on the flock."¹² His five year vow of silence, however, seems to smack more of the sort of act that might be attributed to the stereotypical Pythagorean saint. He also criticised Euphrates for associating with "sophists or schoolmasters or any other such sort of accursed people."¹³ This, in Philostratus' account at least, does not prevent his friendship with the sophist Scopelianus.¹⁴

Even some of the less sensational items suffer from credibility issues. Apollonius' visit to Vardanes, the king of Parthia, who reigned from 42–45 A.D., is beset by chronological problems. Of greater concern is the correspondence between Apollonius and Musonius Rufus, which is not supported by any external evidence and seems a likely fabrication. The most obvious question to consider is whether Apollonius was indeed a Neopythagorean. As Bowie has shown, Philostratus in his other writings does not show any particular preference for this philosophical group and therefore it would appear likely that this was part of the pre-Philostratean tradition.¹⁵ Given the contemporary intellectual background and his supposed philosophical allegiances, one would expect him to be part of the Middle Platonist milieu, though as Dillon points out, he is more of a prophet than a philosopher.¹⁶

EDUCATION, PYTHAGOREANISM AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SCHOOLS

Apollonius' philosophical education, according to the *VA*, began at fourteen in Tarsus, where he began to study with Euthydemus of Phoenicia, a rhetor.¹⁷ Finding too much in Tarsus distracting him from his studies, he

10. Cf. *Mk.*, 5.21–24, 35–43.

11. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1666.

12. *Vita Apollonii (VA)*, 8.22, trans. G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist*, 136.

13. *Epistolae Apollonii (Epp. Apoll.)*, 1. There are good grounds, however, for regarding the letter as a forgery, see above.

14. *VA*, 1.5; *Vitae Sophistarum*, 1.21 (515).

15. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1672.

16. J.M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. A Study of Platonism 80 B.C. to A.D. 200* (London: Duckworth, 1977).

17. *VA*, 1.7.

obtained his father's permission to move to the temple of Asclepius at Aegae. While there, he came into contact with teachers from the main philosophical schools: Platonists, Stoics, Aristotelians and Epicureans, before studying under the Pythagorean Euxenus of Heraclea, who, (according to Philostratus' account) if he was a good teacher, was less keen on leading his own life in accordance with the precepts of Pythagoreanism. At sixteen, he left Euxenus and decided to abstain from meat, living on dried fruit and vegetables, and though he regarded wine as clean, he avoided it on the grounds that it affected the balance of the mind.¹⁸

One of Philostratus' sources may have been Moiragenes' work τὰ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ τυανέως μάγου καὶ φιλοσοφου ἀπομνημονεύματα. The use of the word ἀπομνημονεύματα and the division of Moiragenes' work into four books suggests, as Bowie points out, that Moiragenes presented a Socratic Apollonius within a Xenophontic framework, like Arrian who was composing his *Discourses* of Epictetus at roughly this time. Both may have been using Xenophon's *apomnemonemata* as a model.¹⁹ Philostratus was certainly aware of Moiragenes' work, since he dismisses him on account of his ignorance, but this does not mean that he did not draw upon it.

Reitzenstein sees Philostratus' comparison of the Brahmins and the gymnosophists as reflecting an earlier version which portrayed Pythagoreanism as superior to Cynicism. The Brahmins, with whom Apollonius identifies, are demonstrated as possessing sophisticated higher order knowledge and a genuine concern for leading an ethically good life. The gymnosophists by contrast are naïve and prone to jealousy, both of Apollonius and of the technical and philosophical superiority of the Brahmins. They appear to have no real interest in an ethically good life, fearing that Apollonius will lure away one of their students and even a money-grubbing philosopher such as Euphrates is presented as being easily able to manipulate them. Externally, their nudity can easily be equated with the Cynics' rags. Reitzenstein further suggests that in Moiragenes' original version of this conflict, Pythagoreanism was pitted against other major philosophical schools and presented as emerging successfully. In the third century, when Philostratus was composing his account, such a confrontation would have had little point, in the face of the advance of Platonism and the retreat of other schools.

Apollonius is recorded by Philostratus as being on good terms with the Stoic Musonius Rufus and the Cynic Demetrius. His relationship with the Stoic Euphrates, though initially friendly, soon becomes strained. It is possible that this element derives from Moiragenes' history, rather than Philostratus', on the grounds that several of the letters record Apollonius' admonition of

18. *VA*, 1.8.

19. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1674f.

Euphrates (usually rebuking him for some form of money-grubbing activity). The question of whether both are independent witnesses to a tension between the two philosophers or one was fabricated on the basis of the other has been raised by Bowie.²⁰ For present purposes, the relevant issue is whether the dispute, if it did in fact take place, can shed any light on Apollonius' philosophy. Apollonius' friendly relations with Musonius suggest that his quarrel with Euphrates was more of a personal, rather than sectarian, nature; at least as it was envisaged by Philostratus and the author of the correspondence directed to him.²¹ Apollonius does not attack Euphrates' views, but rather complains that Euphrates fails to live up to what he professes. This traditional enmity with Euphrates may be a fabrication. Euphrates was a student of Musonius, with whom there is a (possibly fictitious) correspondence. Bowie suggests that Philostratus locates a Pythagorean Apollonius within a circle of Stoic philosophers where he did not actually belong historically.²² (There is no indication outside of the *VA* or the *Letters* that Apollonius actually was an associate of Musonius). Apollonius' friendship with Demetrius the Cynic is likewise suspect; Apollonius, from Philostratus' account, is reported as introducing Demetrius to Titus during the year when Demetrius was meant to have been banished.²³

ETHICS

Philostratus makes frequent reference to Apollonius' ethical stance. He never eats animal flesh, opposes animal sacrifice, and only wears linen clothes. It is perhaps the attribution of this feature to Apollonius that suggested to Philostratus the idea of representing Apollonius as a student of the Brahmins. Like Socrates, he went barefoot.²⁴ This extreme form of vegetarianism, though, could possibly have been attributed to him as an appropriate trait for a Pythagorean, though it is equally suitable for what appears to have been his primary role, that of a charismatic holy man. Apollonius' observance of the golden mean would seem to extend even to his literary style; he was opposed to excessive Atticising.²⁵ In an anecdote reported by Philostratus, he was stopped by a customs-official when leaving Mesopotamia and asked what he was taking out of the country to which he replied "temperance, justice, virtue, continence, valour, discipline," highlighting the virtues which he considered

20. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1676.

21. These letters must surely be fabrications, as mentioned above.

22. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1657.

23. *VA* 6.31–33. See E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1659.

24. One wonders how remarkable this really would have been in antiquity; twentieth-century Irish children often went barefoot and certainly not as the result of pretensions to Pythagorean philosophy.

25. *VA*, 1.17.

important, though it did not impress the official, who believed that he was trafficking female slaves.²⁶ His polite refusal of accommodation at the royal palace of Babylon, lodging instead with a private citizen, reinforces this view.²⁷ Unfortunately, both of these episodes take place in the section dealing with Apollonius' travels, the most obviously spurious section of the *VA*.

The same might be said of Apollonius' response to King Vardanes' summons only after fulfilling his religious duties.²⁸ The episode is reminiscent of one in the career of Aelius Aristides, with whom Apollonius' life (as presented by Philostratus) shares a number of interesting parallels, (quite apart from the fact that important sections of their careers are spent at temples of Asclepius). Aristides in *The Sacred Tales* describes a dream in which he is introduced to the Emperor Antoninus Pius, whom he refuses to kiss in accordance with court etiquette, claiming that it would be contrary to his religious beliefs, which the emperor gracefully accepts.²⁹ Not only that, there is an exact doublet of this episode in the biography of Aristides, composed by Philostratus:

The Emperor addressed him, and inquired: "Why did we have to wait so long to see you"? To which Aristides replied: "A subject on which I was meditating kept me busy, and when the mind is absorbed in meditation it must not be distracted from the object of its search." The Emperor was greatly pleased with the man's personality, so unaffected was it and so devoted to study. (Philostratus, *Vitae Sophistarum*, 2.9.2, trans. Wright).

Pernot suggests that Philostratus may have received the anecdote from Aristides' student Damianus of Ephesus.³⁰ The version he recounts in the *Vitae Sophistarum* is more extensive than that in the *VA*. It seems likely that Philostratus incorporated this incident into the life of Apollonius, though it was originally associated with Aristides. In the *VA*, Apollonius owes the beginning of his career to Asclepius; he initially acquires a reputation for wisdom after the god advises a young man to consult him concerning his condition.³¹

Apollonius adopted the Stoic notion of life as a competition for virtue in the excuse which he uses for not attending the Olympic Games. Upon the death of his parents, he renounced his inherited wealth, in favour of his elder brother and poorer relations, with Cynic disdain; this sort of legend had

26. *VA*, 1.20.

27. *VA*, 1.33.

28. *VA*, 1.35.

29. Aristides *Orationes*, 47.23; see *Or.*, 27.39; 47.38; 51.45.

30. L. Pernot. "Aelius Aristides and Rome" in *Aelius Aristides between Greece, Rome and the Gods*, ed. W.V. Harris and B. Holmes (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2008), 195–201. Pernot (181) notes that another version of this anecdote is to be found in *The Aristides Prolegomena*, ed. F.W. Lenz (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1959), 113f.

31. *VA*, 1.9.

already been associated with Crates of Thebes. Apollonius is more concerned with renouncing his wealth to aid his brother and poorer relations than simply disdain for material possessions, though Philostratus uses the opportunity for aggrandising his hero at the expense of other philosophers:

... since he [Apollonius] said that Anaxagoras of Clazomenae philosophised for cattle rather than for men in abandoning his fields to flocks and herds and that Crates of Thebes in tossing his substance into the sea did nothing useful for either man or beast.³²

Though Apollonius' beard marks him out as a philosopher, uncut hair is something which even the dubious Alexander of Abonouteichos can muster.³³

Apollonius in the *Vita* seems to have similar objectives to Socrates, improving the ethical stance of those he consorts with. He manages to cure his older brother of alcoholism.³⁴ This may well have been the case with the historic figure. Philostratus, however, models his philosopher very explicitly on the Socratic model. He is repeatedly presented as training Damis through the use of dialectic,³⁵ and there are verbal echoes of the Platonic dialogues.³⁶ The dialectic concerning painting at *VA*, 2.22 is reminiscent of its Platonic counterpart;³⁷ especially in the definition of painting as imitation. The comment that Apollonius had no wish to humiliate his student, as he "was not harsh in his refutations" also presents him in a Socratic light. Apollonius had strong views opposing popular entertainments in many of the cities which he visited, at least according to the manner in which he is presented by Philostratus. He condemns dancing,³⁸ reprimands the Athenians for enjoying gladiatorial shows in the theatre of Dionysos,³⁹ and criticises the Alexandrians for their love of horse racing,⁴⁰ though these all appear to be modelled on episodes from Dio (attributed by him to unnamed philosophers) and as such do not reveal anything about the stance of the historical Apollonius.⁴¹

32. *VA*, 1.13.

33. Lucian, *Alexander the False Prophet*, 11.

34. *VA*, 1.13.

35. E.g., *VA*, 2.5; 5.14.

36. E.g., τουργῶν ὑποβλέψας: *VA*, 1.12 picking up *Phaedo*, 117B. See E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1674 n.82.

37. *Republic*, X 595A–608B.

38. Cf. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1668f. *VA*, 4.21 echoes Dio Chrysostom *Orations*, 32.58f.

39. *VA*, 4.22, based on Dio Chrysostom *Or.*, 31.122 in which an unnamed philosopher (generally agreed to be Musonius Rufus) did exactly this.

40. *VA*, 5.26.

41. *VA*, 7.26 also echoes Dio Chrysostom *Or.*, 30.12—the idea that our houses are smaller prisons within the prison of the physical world. See E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1669.

The entire *topos* of the intellectual opposing more worldly pursuits can be found paralleled during the period when Philostratus was composing; we have Aelius Aristides' diatribes against those who frequented the bath-houses too often, referring to it as "the pleasures of swine," though he still decides to bathe immediately after expressing this comment.⁴² In Aristides' case, at least, it is apparent that his criticism is based on his resentment at what he viewed as competing forms of entertainment (witness his hostility to dancers).⁴³ Apollonius too is opposed to hot baths; he regards the people of Antioch as fortunate when the Emperor shuts them out of the bathhouse. The same motif is repeated again when, in reference to the Ephesians' desire to stone their governor because he does not heat their baths satisfactorily, the sage criticises them for bathing.⁴⁴ While this ties in with Apollonius' habitual stance against what he views as moral degeneracy, the criticism of bathing is a *topos* of the Second Sophistic.

POLITICS

Apollonius utters many statements which could be interpreted as anti-Roman. His letter against a Roman quaestor, admittedly, could be viewed as opposed to misgovernment, rather than attributed to anti-Romanism as such.⁴⁵ (The problem here is finding a suitable historical occasion when this event might have occurred).⁴⁶ The demonstration against the governor of Asia which Philostratus claims that he arranged, while a Euripidean tragedy which referred to tyrants was being performed, is in a similar vein.⁴⁷ The *Vita Apollonii* certainly portrays the sage as hostile to tyranny; at the Panathenaic Festival he mentions the hymns to the tyrannicides, Harmodius and Aristogeiton⁴⁸ and criticises Domitian's execution of Vestal virgins.⁴⁹ His criticism of the ending of autonomy for Greek cities could likewise be viewed as opposition to a specific Roman policy, rather than as hostility to Rome itself, and the same could be said for his opposition to Domitian's vine edict.⁵⁰ His opposition to the use of Roman names, though, seems to reveal resentment at Roman acculturation more forcefully.

The expulsion of one of Priam's descendants from his itinerant school on the instructions of Achilles' ghost reinforces this point, it is not just hellenocentric, but through the Trojan royal house's supposed connection to

42. *Hieroi Logoi*, 1.20–21.

43. Aristides *Or.*, 34.5 and 57.

44. *VA*, 1.16.

45. *Epp. Apoll.*, 30.

46. G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist*, 157.

47. *VA*, 7.5.

48. *VA*, 7.6.

49. *VA*, 6.42.

50. *VA*, 6.42.

the foundation of Rome, it becomes an anti-Roman act, though it seems to be more likely an embellishment on the part of Philostratus.⁵¹ Several hellenocentric/xenophobic elements are clearly the result of Philostratus, rather than Apollonius. For example, the Indian king Phraotes speaks Greek to Apollonius and apologises for being a barbarian.⁵² It only occurs to him to reclaim his father's throne after reading *The Children of Heracles*.⁵³ Apollonius refuses all gifts except the linen cloaks which he is offered, since they resemble the cloaks worn by the ancient inhabitants of Attica. The Indians stoop down to drink water from their goblets like animals,⁵⁴ and Apollonius claims that Phraotes does not owe his philosophical achievements to teachers, since it is improbable that there is anyone in India who could teach philosophy.⁵⁵ This is in spite of Apollonius' journey to India to benefit from the philosophical wisdom of the Brahmans and the emphasis on their philosophical ability throughout the biography. Since in the visit to India, we have clearly gone "through the looking-glass" in the description of the wonders of the East, the hellenocentrism of this section probably says more about Philostratus than it does about Apollonius.

Yet could part of Apollonius' hellenocentrism be actually true? Ambivalence towards Roman rule, if not quite an anti-Roman stance, can also be found in the orations of Aelius Aristides.⁵⁶ Apollonius' letters to Domitian, whether they are forgeries or not, seem to be tamer than the stance which Philostratus attributes to him in the *Vita*. Even those have the potential for an ambivalent interpretation: οὐ γὰρ θέμις αὐτὸς βαρβάρους ὄντας εἰ πάσχει⁵⁷ could, of course, be read either as "for since they are barbarians, it is not right that they should do well" or more pointedly as "it is not right that being barbarians they should suffer you lightly."⁵⁸

Perhaps Apollonius should not be viewed as hostile to Rome, but as opposed to what he regarded as the moral degeneracy of the Greeks of his day (and their Roman governors and administrators). There are frequent attacks on the degeneracy of various Greeks in the letters, though this is most likely directed from an ethical, rather than a partisan political, stance.⁵⁹ His criti-

51. *VA*, 4.12.

52. *VA*, 2.27.

53. *VA*, 2.32.

54. *VA*, 2.28.

55. *VA*, 2.29.

56. Aristides' relationship to Rome is complex; one might mention the dreams in which he fails to acquiesce in court etiquette before *two* Roman emperors (*Or.*, 47.23, *Or.*, 51.45).

57. *Epp. Apoll.*, 21.

58. G. Anderson, *Sage, Saint and Sophist*, 162.

59. E.g., *Epp. Apoll.*, 38–41; 56; 75–76.

cisms of Roman rule focus either on its greed⁶⁰ or ineffectiveness.⁶¹ Since he regards himself as working to advance the cause of mankind, his political activities reflect his ethical beliefs (as one would hope).⁶² Again, this would seem to mesh with his attack on Euphrates on personal grounds (though this quarrel seems to be very much a later addition to the Apollonius legend). Apollonius intervenes to quell *stasis* when he can. For example, he advises the Smyrnans during a period of civil strife, urging them to blend ὁμονοίας (concord) with *stasis* (factionalism).⁶³ The inhabitants should compete in their service to the state, though observing the law and agreeing on the need for children to be properly educated. Though his advocacy of the principle of specialisation (everyone should do what he understands best) is Platonic, the episode parallels Aelius Aristides' appeal *To the Rhodians On Concord* (*Oration* 25).

In many ways he is an agent of the Roman regime, as portrayed by Philostratus, advising Vespasian to seize imperial power and to appoint Greek-speaking proconsuls as a mechanism for fostering greater understanding between the ruling elite and the subject population. This role can be traced back to his quelling of *stasis* at Aspendus in Pamphylia during his five-year vow of silence. Due to a food shortage caused by corn speculation an angry mob are in the process of burning the Roman governor when Apollonius arrives. Without breaking his vow, Apollonius secures a respite for the governor and, by composing an indictment of the speculators, persuades the merchants to supply the corn which they have been hoarding:

The earth is the mother of all, for she is just, but you, because you are unjust, have made out that she is the mother only of you and if you do not stop, I shall not allow you to stay upon her. (*VA*, 1.15)

The entire interview with Vespasian at Alexandria seems contrived by Philostratus to enhance the status of his hero and further undermine the status of his rival Euphrates, who advises Vespasian poorly (within the context of the biography). Apollonius' vision at Alexandria of Vespasian's accession is probably just based on his supposed vision at Ephesus of Domitian's assassination, for which, at least, we do have an independent witness in Cassius Dio (67.18).⁶⁴ As this belongs to the mythical embellishments of the biography, it need not really concern us, but it does allow the argument that the privileged relationship with Vespasian (and Titus), which would be of great importance

60. E.g., *Epp. Apoll.*, 54

61. E.g., *Epp. Apoll.*, 30; 31.

62. E.g., *VA*, 8.8.

63. *VA*, 4.8.

64. See. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1662.

for understanding Apollonius' political stance, if it did exist, is developed by Philostratus to enhance Apollonius' significance. Bowie suggests that his denunciation of Vespasian, following the latter's withdrawal of liberty from the Greek cities, is merely a suitable pretext for Philostratus to conclude the privileged relationship with the emperor.⁶⁵

THEOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

Ironically for a "philosopher" more noted for his ethics, it may only be in relation to his metaphysics that we are on firmer ground. The actual extent of our evidence depends upon whether Apollonius was the author of a *Life of Pythagoras* (and whether any citations from this work can be identified). Porphyry in the *Vita Pythagorea* mentions Apollonius' version and Iamblichus at *De Vita Pythagorica*, 35, 254–64, refers to Apollonius' biography of Pythagoras as one of his sources. This biography is alluded to in Philostratus' version as the work Apollonius returned with upon his ascent from the cave of Trophonius.

There is the possibility that the Apollonius who was the source for Porphyry and Iamblichus is not actually the Tyanaean.⁶⁶ These arguments can be based on substance (e.g., Apollonius' rebuke to Xenocrates and Eudoxus for calling Apollo Pythagoras' father).⁶⁷ They can focus on discrepancies emerging from a comparison with the *VA*; Porphyry's Apollonius calls Pythagoras' father Mnesarchos while in the *VA* he is referred to as Mnesarchides.⁶⁸ (It should be noted that this is possibly Philostratus' error). There is also the linguistic argument; the presence of Hellenistic forms in Iamblichus' *VP* which seem unlikely to be the work of either Apollonius of Tyana (who is recorded as using Attic) or Iamblichus (though this is based on examining Iamblichus' style and his avoidance of *koine*).⁶⁹ Gorman suggests that the source of *VP* 71–73 and *VP* 256–57 is Aristoxenos' Περὶ Πυθαγόρου καὶ τῶν γνωρίμων αὐτοῦ.⁷⁰

Other sections of the *VP* are clearly the work of Iamblichus himself. For example, *VP*, 70 contains a description of a Neoplatonic metaphysical hierarchy. Whatever about the stylistic claims, it seems highly suspect that reference to τὸ νοητόν as a separate reality could come from Apollonius of

65. E.L. Bowie, "Apollonius of Tyana: Tradition and Reality," 1682.

66. E.g., P. Gorman, "The 'Apollonius' of the Neoplatonic Biographies of Pythagoras," in *Mnemosyne*, Fourth Series 38 (1985): 130–44.

67. P. Gorman, "The 'Apollonius' of the Neoplatonic Biographies of Pythagoras," 131.

68. *VA*, 8.7. P. Gorman, "The 'Apollonius' of the Neoplatonic Biographies of Pythagoras," 132.

69. So for example συναγροκοφισιν for συνηκοφισιν. There are other examples at V 254f. See P. Gorman, "The 'Apollonius' of the Neoplatonic Biographies of Pythagoras," 133.

70. P. Gorman, "The 'Apollonius' of the Neoplatonic Biographies of Pythagoras," 137.

Tyana; he is not a Neoplatonist, and he would fit more appropriately (on the basis of chronology) in a Neopythagorean/Middle Platonic milieu. Gorman's extensive analysis of Iamblichus' *VP* strongly suggests that Iamblichus was drawing upon multiple sources and so, despite the references to Apollonius in the text, the *VP* does not really help us in unearthing anything further regarding Apollonius.

Fortunately, there is an alternative source which, if authentic, would suggest a Middle Platonic theology for Apollonius of Tyana. Eusebius compares Apollonius' statements to those Porphyry makes concerning the First God at *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.13, before a citation which he claims is drawn from Apollonius' work on sacrifices. Eusebius has obtained this citation indirectly, he does not say that Apollonius of Tyana's theology was similar to that of Porphyry, but "it is said that similar statements are made by Apollonius."⁷¹ Porphyry's *De Abstinencia*, 2.30–34 repeats similar material and attributes it to a wise man, although this text is quoted by Eusebius at *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 3.3.11 and attributed to Apollonius.⁷² This presents a cogent argument in favour of the authenticity of the fragment, although there is the issue of a somewhat circular argumentation: how reliable a witness is Eusebius for the authenticity of this fragment, when he himself indicates that he never consulted the work from which it is taken? Philostratus claims that he did not know Apollonius' work, because it was written in Apollonius' native language (Syrian).⁷³ This would explain why Philostratus had not been able to access Apollonius' treatise, though he claims to have observed several exemplars on display at various temples.

Since this passage from Eusebius represents our greatest possibility for obtaining an authentic fragment, I shall quote it in full:⁷⁴

In this way, then, I think, one would best show the proper regard for the deity, and thereby beyond all other men secure His favour and good will, if to Him whom we called the First God, and who is One and separate from all others, and to whom the rest must be acknowledged inferior, he should sacrifice nothing at all, neither kindle fire, nor dedicate anything whatever that is an object of sense; for He needs nothing even from beings who are greater than we are: nor is there any plant at all which the earth sends up, nor any animal which it, or the air, sustains, to which there is not some defilement attached; but should ever employ towards Him only that better speech, I mean the speech which passes not through the lips, and should ask good things from the noblest of beings by what is noblest in ourselves, and this is the mind, which needs no instrument. According to this therefore we ought by no means to offer sacrifice to the great God who is over all. (*Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.13, trans. Gifford)

71. *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 4.12.

72. M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, 136.

73. Though Conybeare claims that it was Cappadocian, this is anachronistic. Dzielska points out that in the first century it was Middle Aramaic which was spoken in Cappadocia.

74. There is, of course, the question of *Epp. Apoll.*, 58, see below.

This fragment would locate Apollonius' theology within a Neopythagorean/ Middle Platonist framework. The First God is transcendent (separate from all others) and the terminology recalls Numenius of Apamea's First God. The other gods are inferior, just as Numenius claims that his First God is beyond Being. This is because both notions of God are based on the Pythagorean Monad.⁷⁵ The author hints at a Middle Platonic ontological scheme: there are beings who are greater than we are, but also inferior to the First God. Dzielska, following Taggart, suggests that this refers to the existence of daemons.⁷⁶ A strong element of Middle Platonic dualism can be identified.⁷⁷ Every element of the material world is impure. This is used to argue for the self-sufficiency of the First God: he has no need of anything from inferior beings.

Philostratus' account of the *Περὶ Θυσιῶν* and Apollonius' philosophical activity differs greatly from the Eusebius citation, which if it is authentic must surely come from the *Περὶ Θυσιῶν*. Here, I should raise the possibility that the *Περὶ Θυσιῶν* may not have been composed by Apollonius and just attributed to him in order to capitalise upon his reputation. Philostratus claims that the *Περὶ Θυσιῶν* is a work on the correct mode of sacrifices and that Apollonius in his visits to religious sanctuaries suggested suitable changes which might be made to cult and ritual, if the temple was Greek, and if it was barbarian, he inquired about the rituals carried out. Though Apollonius is opposed to blood-sacrifice, in the *VA* he places great stress on the proper observance of his own form of worship, including rituals which he has borrowed from the Brahmins. Apollonius in the *VA* prays to the sun, which Philostratus presents as a religious innovation. This is contrary to the religious belief suggested by this fragment. Far from recounting the correct mode of sacrifice, the writer suggests that all sacrifice is pointless, including first fruits, or incense (if this is how the reference to air is to be interpreted).⁷⁸ This indicates the limited awareness that Philostratus possessed of Apollonius' philosophy, or that his primary interest was the stereotype of a charismatic holy man, which could be easily inserted into what is really a work of travel literature, rather than an accurate historical portrayal. (I admit that it can also be validly argued that Philostratus in the *VA* composed a work with philosophical merits in its own right).

Dzielska proposes that this fragment of *Περὶ Θυσιῶν* is directly continued by *Epp. Apoll.*, 26.⁷⁹ This again points out the futility of offering sacrifices

75. Nicomachus of Gerasa and Moderatus of Gades portray God similarly.

76. M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, 141.

77. As exemplified by Plutarch or Numenius, for example.

78. M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, 141. See *VA*, 3.41.

79. M. Dzielska, *Apollonius of Tyana in Legend and History*, 143.

(which even atheists can do) and recommends instead the acquisition of wisdom and the practice of morality in order to please God. Though we can have no way of verifying its authenticity, one is reminded of *VA*, 5.20. A ship owner refused to convey Apollonius (on the grounds that he would be travelling with men of ill repute) and yet was conveying statues of the gods for sale, for which he was ridiculed by the Tyanaean. Both anecdotes reveal an opposition to a merely ritualistic form of religion.

Epp. Apoll., 84, Apollonius' consolation to Valerius⁸⁰ on the death of his son, is generally agreed to be pre-Philostratean in origin.⁸¹ If it was not composed by Apollonius himself, it may have been drafted by one of his students. Although it contains Stoic and Aristotelian elements, as Dzielska points out, its main thrust is Middle Platonist. The author counsels Valerius to bear in mind the immortality of the soul and that death is a passing from essence (ἐκ οὐσίας) into nature (εἰς φύσιν). A part of God is contained in humans and at death this divine substance is released. The notion of accepting the will of God certainly strikes a Stoic note, to be immediately followed by a Middle Platonic element in the claim that there is an order to reality, presided over by God.⁸² Valerius is advised to concentrate on the public good, providing orderly government to the cities under his control, rather than concentrating on his private grief.

PHILOSOPHICAL MESSAGES

While Eusebius deeply resented Philostratus' portrayal of Apollonius, (although he approved of the historical personage), there is a certain underlying elegance to Philostratus' construction.⁸³ One of Eusebius' objections was to the portrayal of Apollonius as a magician, exhibited, for example, by his ability to free himself of his shackles in prison, an episode which echoes Socrates rubbing his leg in the *Phaedo*.⁸⁴ There is also the interesting case of his student, Menippus, who wishes to marry a beautiful "vampire" or *emprousa*.⁸⁵ Apollonius denounces the bride at the wedding banquet, whereupon her servants and her possessions suddenly disappear.

While this episode fits neatly into the supernatural and miraculous character of the *VA*, it contains an obvious moral. In denouncing his student's involvement with a courtesan, Apollonius suggests that the woman will literally leech him and the disappearance of her wealth illustrates the student's

80. Usually identified with Valerius Asiaticus, proconsul of Asia.

81. E.g., Penella, Dzielska etc.

82. Cf. the ontological hierarchy alluded to in the Περὶ Θεσιῶν fragment (above).

83. *Contra Hieroclem*, 4–5.

84. *VA*, 8.38; Plato *Phaedo*, 60B. See G. Anderson, *Philostratus*, 140.

85. *VA*, 4.25.

realisation of the futility of pleasures of the flesh and material possessions. The satyr who is pacified with excessive amounts of alcohol reflects the philosophy of temperance and the golden mean which Apollonius advocates; the satyr represents the untamed bestial spirit which can be overcome by Apollonius' philosophy.⁸⁶ The most barbaric episode of Apollonius' career is his denunciation of a beggar as the cause of a plague at Ephesus, upon which a reluctant crowd (showing greater morality than Apollonius) are egged on by the sage to stone the unfortunate man to death. This could make sense from the perspective of an attempt to remove the source of an infectious disease, though it is difficult to reconcile with the portrayal of Apollonius as a holy man. The beggar's corpse resembles a large dog, proof to the crowd that Apollonius was correct (the beggar was actually a demon). Anderson suggests that the "dog" should be equated with "Cynic."⁸⁷ Perhaps this too is a philosophical allusion, referring to a debate in which Apollonius defeated a Cynic rival. That said, many of the episodes contain no philosophical echoes and are merely part of Philostratus' attempts to produce a sensationalising work.

CONCLUSION

Whatever philosophy Apollonius did possess, it is now problematic to extract from the romanticised tales that portray him more as a shamanistic figure, than anything else. There are, however, some tantalising indications which remain to us, and a coherent philosophical position can be cobbled together from indications in several sources. The obvious difficulty lies in distinguishing between a stance which Apollonius might reasonably have adopted and one which was foisted upon him because of its suitability to his Pythagoreanism or his (self-) presentation as a religious figure. Philostratus' *V*A also contains a number of Second Sophistic motifs and it is evident that episodes originally associated with other figures are transferred to Apollonius in his account. While Philostratus may preserve certain elements of the truth, based on elements of oral tradition which he has recorded, or some of the older letters, his *Vita Apollonii* is in so many ways a product of its time, rather than of Apollonius'. While his ethical stance is consistent with his Pythagoreanism, it is unclear which became attached to the tradition first: his views or his sect. While the tradition of Apollonius' Pythagoreanism probably predates Philostratus, it is not even beyond dispute that this is historically accurate. Apollonius' philosophical stance has become a *mélange* of later accretions and it is only in relation to his metaphysics that any real possibility of identifying the philosophy of the historical figure has emerged, limited though this possibility is.

86. *V*A, 1.27.

87. *V*A, 4.10.

