

The Academy in Athenian Politics and Society – from its founding in the 380ies until its downfall in 87/6

At the beginning of his description of Athens, in his work *On the Cities of Greece*, written at some unknown point during the third century BC, the perieget Heracleides Criticus confronts the ‘travelling reader’ with a disappointment: When approaching Athens coming from Eleusis via the Sacred Way, one would be delighted by a pleasant road and a cultivated countryside, all in all a pleasant scenery. The city itself, however, would be a bitter disappointment at first glance – in fact, such a disappointment that the stranger, coming to Athens for the first time, might even doubt that he is in the ‘famous city of Athens’: The city, the ‘lighthouse of the *oikumene*’, would present itself as dry and inadequately supplied with water, and, due to the age of the city, with narrow and winding roads. Yet, after a short time, the stranger would be beyond all doubt and sure to be in Athens – because: „There you will see the most beautiful things on earth: a large and impressive theatre, a magnificent temple of Athena, something out of this world and worth seeing, the so-called Parthenon, which lies above the theatre; it makes a great impression on beholders. There is the Olympieum, which though only half-completed is impressively designed, though it would have been most magnificent if completed. There are three gymnasia: the Academy, the Lyceum and the Cynosarges; they are all planted with trees and laid out with lawns.” The fact that Heracleides lists these three gymnasia alongside with the theatre of Dionysus, the Parthenon and the Olympieum as those characteristics, which remove the disbelieving stranger’s doubts to indeed be in Athens, suggests, that they are not quoted because they were *loci amoeni* of physical exercise and military training; they would have hardly been popular and admirable enough, to be mentioned alongside the astonishing sights mentioned above. Further comments of Heracleides confirm this assumption: „There (*i.e.* in Athens) are festivals of many kinds, there is intellectual amusement as well as recreation by various philosophers.” In other words of the perieget: „There is much leisure, there are permanent spectacles.” Thus, for Heracleides and his intended readers in the third century the three Athenian gymnasia were, on the one hand, places which were associated with philosophising, and on the other hand, philosophers constituted an integral part of the Athenian cityscape.

Even if Heracleides’ description was occasionally awarded a “timeless character”, this text is still a piece of evidence, which has to be seen in the historical context of the third century BC.

The timelessness, awarded to the statement of the texts, can rather be understood as a reflex of a specific image of Athens: that of Athens as a ‘city of philosophers’, how it was phrased by the thirteenth-century Arabian scholar Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘a in his lemma on Aristotle in his *Sources of Information about the Generations of Physicians* and which might possibly have found its most famous implementation in Raphael’s fresco *La scuola di Atene* in the Stanza della segnatura in the Vatican palaces.

The aim of the following remarks, however, is not an analysis of a specific and powerful image of Athens connected with philosophy. Instead, it is about a historical examination of the position of a specific philosophical institution, namely the Academy and its members, in Athenian politics and society. Hence, the internal history of the Academy, apart from its foundation, will at most play a secondary role in what follows. The investigation period of this plan stretches from the founding of the Academy by Plato in 387/6BC until Sulla’s ‘sacco di Atene’ in 87/6 BC, which was also an incisive event for the history of the Academy. That such an undertaking in the given context cannot be a continuous ‘thick history’ covering three hundred years, is self-evident. Therefore, the aim of the following remarks is clearly restricted and can be outlined in the following way: by means of several case studies the position of the Academy and its related philosophers in Athenian politics and society will be portrayed in its essentials against the backdrop of historical developmental processes from Classical until late Hellenistic times.

Such an undertaking can be considered as particularly worthwhile, because not only philosophical texts and sources of biographical nature – such as the ones penned by Philodemus or Diogenes Laertius – are available, but also some fragments of the Middle and New Comedy, a few passages from political and juridical rhetoric, and four inscriptions. Both, the fragments of the comedies and the speeches, and the inscriptions partially mirror the public discourse about the Academy and its related philosophers – that means they reflect a part of those possible statements which were uttered by the Athenian public. The sources of the public discourse, dealt with in this context, are characterised by the following structural entity: While the statements in the fragments of the comedies and speeches should aim at the approval of the majority of the intended audience, and thus had to at least be situationally plausible, inscriptions reflect, in the case of *psephismata*, statements with evidentially majority appeal or, in the case of private inscriptions, expectable, socially acceptable statements in the public space. The situation is different, however, with the statements about the position of philosophers in politics and society in biographies of philosophers, which are

'life stories' in the literary field in the true sense of the word, which follow their own, genre-induced rules. As for this reason utterances in biographies of philosophers are constructed by means of specific patterns according to the intention of the authors, the fundamental value of the source of biographies of philosophers has to be considered as minor with regard to the question of interest in the given context.

I. Setting the scene: Plato's establishment of a philosophical school

It might be astonishing that there are no explicit statements to be found in the surviving ancient sources about Plato's establishment of a philosophical school in the Academy, especially with regard to the importance ascribed to this act until today. Thus, not even the founding date of the Academy in around 385 BC can be determined with certainty, although it can with good reasons be set in 387/6. However, far more important than the exact founding date and the manner of the act of foundation are the historical context and the intellectual environment, in which Plato established a philosophical school within the Academy.

When Plato founded a philosophical school at the time when the so-called King's Peace was concluded to end the Corinthian War in 387, which, for the time being, put an end to Athens' hegemonic ambitions, reawakened after the overwhelming defeat in the Peloponnesian War, he did something which, in his time, was by no means effusive, but which could actually be described as *à la mode* in the decades after the end of the Peloponnesian War: He brought an institution into being, which functioned as insemination and maintenance of 'intellectual skills'. In contrast, however, to the other known school foundations, there is in the case of Plato, if not an authentic but a doubtlessly well-informed contemporary pseudo-, 'Ego-Document', the *Seventh Letter*, written in the late 350s, which gives at least indirectly some indication of the backgrounds of the establishment of a philosophical school in the Academy, even if the author in no way mentions the foundation of the school itself. Hence, Plato, who descended from 'Athenian Propertied Families' on both his father's and mother's sides, had, at not even thirty years old, a twofold 'Damascus experience', which prevented him from pursuing a life plan, which was to be expected with regard to his social origin, and which he initially aimed at himself: However, the tyranny of 'the Thirty' in 404 and 403, of which a number of people of Plato's environment were members, and the death sentence of his teacher Socrates in 399 in the still young, newly reconstructed democracy led to Plato refraining from attempting to play an active role in Athenian politics. This 'story of initiation' in the Platonic

Seventh Letter is a ‘nice story’, and it can be considered as an early example of a ‘story of conversion’ which later in the genre of ancient philosopher biographies became a central structural element of a philosophical life. Like the later ‘stories of conversion’, the *Seventh Letter* may contain true trace elements. However, it is in the nature of things, that especially regarding the motivation of the actors one has to bring to account a strong wish for elaboration, which is due to the author’s intention. In the case of Plato and his ‘conversion to philosophy’ this means: The impact of the tyranny of ‘the Thirty’ and Socrates’ way of death were, without any doubt, of fundamental importance for Plato’s decision to lead a life apart from the active politics in Athens. Nevertheless, this is not or not primarily so because he had recognised, especially based on these events, what a morally questionable breed of people was active in politics, but rather because he himself was stigmatised by his connections to ‘the Thirty’ and Socrates and his environment. This can be illustrated in an instructive way by means of a passage from Aeschines’ speech *Against Timarchus*, given in 346, which makes references to the ‘case Socrates’. There it says: „So then, men of Athens, you put Socrates the sophist to death, because it was found that he had taught Critias, one of the Thirty who overthrew the democracy.” When, even half a century after Socrates’ death, Aeschines could still update his ‘case’ by means of revealing the ‘truest case’ of accusation and conviction as a valid argument in a forensic speech, how much more did Plato in the 390s and 380s have reasonably to fear, not to be able to succeed politically in Athens? That Plato’s ‘care of the self’ was even greater directly after Socrates’ death and not only limited to his career becomes apparent in his leaving Athens for an unknown time and proceeding first to Megara for his ‘apprenticeship’ and then probably to a ‘grand tour’ in the Mediterranean world which is hard to reconstruct.

Since the second half of the 390s Plato had begun to make a name for himself as a philosopher in Athens by doing something that a number of other people from the former environment of Socrates also did: He wrote *Sokratikoi logoi*. This form of literary production has to be understood as, to the highest degree, an agonal and polemic discussion in the deploying philosophical field, in which Socrates’ former ‘followers’, by drawing on the resource Socrates, had a contest in respect of ‘pegging out claims’. However, Plato not only exercised with a deadly pen in the inner-Socratic quarrels, but in the same way he also distanced himself and his conception of philosophy from ‘rhetorical sophistic’, of which Isocrates, a former companion of Socrates, too, was one of the most important exponents. He founded a school for rhetoric around 390, and presented a totally different conception of

philosophy from Plato. By establishing a philosophical school in the environment of the area of the Academy after the return from his first journey to Sicily in 388/7, Plato did something which in principle is not considered as a novelty, but indeed as well-established practice. This is also true for the choice of a *gymnasion* as a place for philosophical teaching: For example, Socrates liked philosophising in the Lyceum, Antisthenes had instructed his pupils in the Cynosarges since around 400, and Plato himself had occasionally been teaching in the *gymnasion* of the Academy before his first journey to Sicily. However, it is the institutional organisation of the school routine by means of promoting identity and social practices that differentiates Plato's school foundation from other, earlier foundations of schools in Athens. To these belonged for example altars for the Muses and Apollo at which sacrifices were performed together in the private grounds of Plato which were situated close to the areas of the Academy; to celebrate school events and *symposia*; the infrastructural development of a consistent place for the school as well as the creation of the archetype of the so-called type A of the portrait of Socrates.

Recent research has correctly established that the Platonic Academy was not, neither during Plato's lifetime nor in the following centuries, a political cell, which pursued its political agenda, namely the realization of Platonic theorems on politics and state in the practice of the Greek world of states of the fourth century. Such an assumption would be contrary to a crucial characteristic of Greek philosophy: namely that of the radical isolation of the world of *theoria* from the practical environment, the consequence being that to philosophical concepts the intention of realisation did structurally not appertain neither from the perspective of their producers nor on the part of the recipients. However, it would be wrong to see in the Academy only a community worshipping the *bios theoretikos*, whose members had renounced every form of political activity. Indeed, members of the Academy from Plato to Philo of Larissa's pupil Antiochus of Ascalon were rather involved in political activities – not, however, in order to put philosophical theories into practice, but due to specific personal and political constellations, which usually were determined by social origin, friendships or the inclusion in 'networks'. Exemplarily the little-known case of Menedemus of Pyrrha, recently powerfully presented by Denis Knoepfler, might be pointed to. Menedemus, who, like Heracleides Ponticus was defeated by Xenocrates in 339/8 in the fight for the succession of Speusippus, had been honoured in Delphi in a proxeny decree from 326/5 for unknown, yet doubtlessly political reasons.

II. Laughing on Plato: The Academy on Stage

With the statement that Plato had been turned into ridicule by the comic poets, Diogenes Laertius is introducing a longer text passage in his *Life of Plato*, which consists of the enumeration of a whole range of comedy fragments, which make fun of the founder of the Academy. Apart from Diogenes Laertius it is Athenaeus, who in the *Learned Banqueters* is quoting a number of comedy fragments which involve the Academy. These fragments show that Plato and his disciples attracted Athenian public attention to a considerable degree in the decades after the foundation of the Academy, so that it was promising for comedy poets to deal with the members of the Academy.

Since the days of the Old Comedy, ‘intellectuals’ had been part of the furniture of Attic comedy, with the ‘character’ of the philosopher enjoying great popularity by the authors and thus also by the audience. For the shaping of the ‘character’ of the ‘philosopher’ in comedy the figure of Socrates had been central. Thus, the comedy poets could already draw on a ‘construction kit’ for the members of the Academy in order to appropriately stage them as ‘laughing stocks’. A central element for this was the unworldliness ascribed to the philosophers and the eccentricity of their discussions, which to a certain extent make the philosophers appear as inhabitants of Cloud cuckoo land. This aspect can be demonstrated exemplarily in a fragment by Epicrates: „(A.) What about Plato and Speusippus and Menedemus? What’s occupying their time nowadays? What deep thoughts, what sort of speculation is under investigation at their establishment? Give me an insightful account of these matters, if you’ve come with any knowledge of them, by Earth! (B.) I know enough to give you a clear report about this; because during the Panathenaic festival, I saw a herd of young men in the exercise grounds of the Academy, and I listened to unspeakably strange discussions.” The unworldliness of the philosophers comes along with a propensity for arrogance ascribed to this species, which expresses itself in a specific facial expression, the contraction of the brows, and can be learned from a short fragment of Amphis’ comedy *Deximenides*: „O Plato, all you know is how to frown with eyebrows lifted high like any snail.“ A different element for the presentation of philosophers on the stage of comedy, which is strongly connected with arrogance, was an elitist habit which manifested itself in expensive clothing, neat hair and beard style and affected body control. By means of two fragments by Ephippus and Antiphanes this can be explicitly demonstrated; firstly, the partially corrupt fragment from Ephippus’ *The Shipwreck Victim*: „Then a sharp young man stood up, someone from the Academy who’d studied with Plato and was driven by the need for

Brysono-Thrasymachian-money-grubbing, an individual familiar with the trick and incapable of saying anything unconsidered. His hair was carefully trimmed with a razor; his beard hung carefully down, heavy and untrimmed; his feet were carefully set in sandals with twisted straps of equal length around his shins; his chest was carefully wrapped in a heavy robe; and he leaned his handsome frame on a staff and made a speech composed, in my opinion, by someone other than himself: “Men of the land of Athens.”” The following equally partially corrupt dialogue fragment is taken from Antiphanes’ *Antaeus*: “(A.) Sir – who do you think this old man is? (B.) He’s Greek, by the looks of him: a white mantle, a nice little gray cloak; a small, soft felt cap; an elegant staff; a secure table. Why should I go on at length? I think I’m seeing the Academy itself, pure and simple.” It becomes evident which type of person should be evoked in the theatre audience by means of such a characterization when consulting a text passage from Theophrastus’ *Characters*: At midday he goes out with his cloak arranged about him, hair cut to a moderate length, fingernails expertly trimmed and struts along intoning speeches like this:” The type characterised in this way is none other than the oligarch.

Assuming that it was one function of comedy to mock famous people, not primarily in order to attack them, „but rather to mark them out as transgressing norms and, thereby, to validate these very norms in front of the largest group of citizens imaginable“, then the given passages show that, from the perspective of the Athenian *polis*-public academic philosophers were considered with a high degree of scepticism because they could be considered as not affine to the norms of the cosmos of democratic Athens. The following thoughts provide the opportunity to further develop these thoughts by means of an instructive example.

III. Something to do with the Academy, too: The so-called Law of Sophocles and the philosophers’ exodus from Athens

“Is this the Academy? Is this Xenocrates? May the gods confer many blessings on Demetrius (i.e. Poliorcetes) and our legislators, since they’re telling these people who are able to bestow verbal power on our young men – or so they say – to get the hell out of Attica!”

At the beginning of the year 306, the Athenian audience listened to these verses in Alexis’ comedy *The Knight*. Its content cannot even be deduced rudimentarily. However, it is beyond doubt what this fragment alludes to: namely to the ‘Law of Sophocles’ passed by the

Athenians in 307/6. This law, which goes back to the petition of an otherwise unknown Sophocles, purported that no philosopher should be allowed to run a school in Athens without permission from the council and the public, and it led to an exodus of the philosophers from Athens ‘to hell’.

In the summer of 307, Demetrius Poliocreates succeeded, by order of his father Antigonus Monophthalmus, in regaining – according to the slogan – *autonomia* and *eleutheria* for the Athenians by being able to expel Demetrius of Phalerum, who had been governing Athens for a decade by order of Cassander and based on Macedonian weapons. At an appearance during the first popular assembly of 307/6, Demetrius Poliocreates proclaimed, apart from a number of benefactions, the restoration of the *patrios politeia* in Athens. The changed political circumstances not only led to a high political activity of the Athenians, but also to a reckoning with actual and supposed collaborationists of Demetrius of Phalerum. From the perspective of democratic and anti-Macedonian partisans, one group almost inevitably had to become the focus of attention in this context after the expulsion of Demetrius of Phalerum: the philosophers. This happened by no means because Demetrius had been “the first actual governing ‘philosopher king’”, who had tried to realise his philosophical theories during his one decade-long ‘reign’ in Athens. This picture of Demetrius as a philosopher-statesman putting philosophy into practice is a literary invention – and it is basically going back on the Phalerean himself, who, after 307/6, tried to portray himself in a number of apologetic texts as a failed philosopher king, and thus partially tried to react to the allegations made against him in 306/5 and to change their meaning. Nevertheless, Demetrius’s connection to philosophy, which becomes especially apparent in his friendship with Theophrastus, since 322 Aristotle’s successor as head of the Peripatus, is the key-point for an explanation of the ‘Law of Sophocles’. Its reason in a Thucydidean sense lies in a notion which was very powerful in Athens in the second half of the fourth century: That is, the picture of the philosopher as oligarch with a philo-macedonian attitude, which led to the philosophers being stigmatised *per se* as enemies of the democracy and enemies of the *polis*. Against this background it can be explained that it was possible in the politically heated atmosphere of 307/6 to pass a law in Athens, which was directed against all philosophers as ‘Fifth column’ of the Macedons (and thus as the enemies of a democratic constitution), and which was perceived by those as a massive threat to life and limb. How present all of this was in Athenian public can be seen by Alexis directly taking up the topic in the comedy *The Knight*, which had been performed only a few months or weeks after the decree of the ‘Law of Sophocles’.

Now one can argue that the earlier developed scenario may explain why the Academy is brought into play by Alexis, but it does not explain why the former academic scholar Xenocrates, deceased since 314/3, is mentioned, who supposedly left the Academy only once a year on the occasion of the Dionysia, in order to attend the theatre play in the Athenian city centre. However, one can point out three reasons for Xenocrates' mention: Firstly, Xenocrates had written a treatise *On Kingship* and dedicated it to Alexander, which is why he could be suspected of Philomacedonism. This accusation was even more plausible when considering that Xenocrates not only dedicated a text to Alexander, but also may have had personal relations to Antipater. These contacts qualify him for the second reason, which made him look negative in the situation of 307/6: Xenocrates, namely, not only was a member, next to Phocion, Demades and Demetrius of Phalerum, of the embassy to Antipater, which, from an Athenian point of view of the year 307/6 could hardly be evaluated in a positive way, and which after Athens's defeat in the Hellenic War in the summer of 322 should negotiate the terms of the unconditional surrender, but by doing so he also gave an apparently dubious performance on the political stage, which in literary tradition led to an interpretation-struggle hard to portray due to the nature of the sources. And finally, there is a third reason to be pointed out as to why Alexis mentions Xenocrates in *The Knight*: A speech given shortly after by Demochares shows perfectly clearly that in the Athenian public in 307/6 and 306/5 every philosopher could be brought in, who even just in the slightest way could be used in order to portray those as a group of politically highly untrustworthy subjects.

IV. The Academy in Demochares' 'accusation against the philosophers' – the imagination of a political-philosophical horror picture show

Only one year after the 'Law of Sophocles' had been passed, an otherwise unknown Philo, who had once belonged to the environment of Aristotle, brought a procedure against the law in the popular assembly, in order to get it annulled because it was against the law. With this request Philo succeeded: The 'Law of Sophocles' was annulled and his petitioner was sentenced to pay five talents.

In the course of the proceedings, Sophocles gave a pleading, which Demochares, nephew of the Athenian hero of freedom and anti-Macedonian leader Demosthenes as well as convinced opponent of Demetrius of Phalerum had written for him. Of this pleading, which Aristocles of

Messene called a prosecution speech against the philosophers, some fragments have survived, which are directed against Socrates, Plato and some of his pupils as well as against Aristotle. These fragments show the argumentation's direction of impact very clearly: it is about the disqualification of the philosopher as a member of the *polis*. Thus the accusations against the philosophers, invoked by Demochares, are those of philomacedonism, betrayal of the *patriis*, the pursuit of tyranny and its establishment, and a lack of bravery in war – this is the 'classical' repertoire of the political battle rhetoric in fourth century Athens. In the fragments, there are three pupils of Plato by means of whom it is demonstrated what reprehensible subjects the members of the Academy are: namely, Euaion of Lampsacus, Timolaus of Cyzicus and Chaeron of Pallene, who pursued tyranny in their respective homelands. Only Chaeron succeeded with his striving and acted in the way a tyrant did in the long established imagination of the Greeks: he expelled the best among the citizens, let the former slaves have the goods of their expelled former owners and forced their wives to marry their former slaves. However, Demochares does not leave it at that topical accusation, but rather makes it into a both perfidious and brilliant accusation. That is to say, he establishes a relation between Chaeron's actions and the Platonic philosophy: Chaeron's action is led by the 'good *Republic*' and the *Laws* going directly against all the norms and laws. In this argument might have lain the impetus for Demetrius of Phalerum to portray himself in his apologetic works as a failed philosopher king *à la Plato*.

Although it was not granted to the speech written by Demochares to be successful and the Law of Sophocles was annulled – probably because the opposing party put forward an argument, which after 307/6 was of great strength as well: the *patrios politeia* – the fragments show nevertheless that it seemed promising to the speaker and his speechwriter to present the philosophers of 'each couleur' as a politically dangerous group. In order to do this, the philosophers had to be perceived by the Athenian public as a distinct group which was composed of different individuals and groupings. Demochares's argumentation implies that (at least) Plato and his followers could be perceived as a form of a *hetaireia* among the philosophers.

V. From Socrates' cup of hemlock to the philosophers' 'return from hell' – Philosophers (from Plato's Academy) in Athenian society and politics in the fourth century

Although Plato and the members of the Academy did not act politically as a group neither in Athens nor anywhere else and one cannot recognise a consistent line in their political activities, that is, the Academy was not a ‘political power’ in fourth century Athens, Plato and his followers could basically still be perceived by the Athenian public of the fourth century as politically suspicious and having a norm-deviant behaviour. This perception was based on a number of actions, social practices and statements: Firstly, Plato’s alienation from political daily life in Athens had to make him and his followers appear as bad citizens with regard to the ideology of the *polis* Athens; secondly, the amalgamation in the Academy could remind of the creation of a *hetairia*; thirdly, the establishment of a network of ‘international’ hospitalities reaching far beyond Athens’s borders as well as the scope of action likewise reaching far beyond Athens’s borders could evoke doubts about the entrenchment in the *polis* Athens; fourthly, the good relationships with monarchs such as Sicilian tyrants, tyrants of Asia Minor and Macedonian kings could without much argumentative effort be interpreted in a negative way and thus the philosophers could be branded as friends of tyrants; fifth, the social origin of the overwhelming majority of the philosophising men from upper classes of Greek cities could lead to them being accused by the Athenian public of having a democracy-hostile attitude; this aspect could, sixthly, be supported in public perception both by distinguished forms of habits and an expensive style of clothing and hairstyles of the philosophers, as well as, seventhly and finally, by displaying ‘conspicuous leisure’ in the form of practicing philosophy. All of this, however, is not only true for Plato and his followers, but for all philosophers in Athens.

The potentially precarious situation of the philosophers manifests itself especially powerfully not only in 399 and 307/6, but also in Aristotle’s flight from Athens after the death of Alexander the Great in Babylon became known to the public, and in the charges of *asebeia* brought against Theophrastus in 318/7. This makes it perfectly clear: In times of great political uncertainty and – in the three later cases – in the context of a *stasis*-constellation the anxiety concerning the philosophers could be politically exploited for far-reaching actions.

Having said this, one might rightly ask oneself what constituted the attractiveness of the philosophers and what led to numerous – principally, but not exclusively young – men from the upper classes of Greek cities opting for a normally shorter, but sometimes also longer or even permanent stay in a philosophical school in Athens.

Before investigating this question, one ought to turn one's attention to the Academy in Hellenistic Athens as reflected in several inscriptions. For the history of the philosophers and of the Platonic Academy in Athens did by no means end with the exodus in 307/6, but continued with the return of the philosophers to Athens in the following year, and with the foundation of the Epicurean Garden in 305/4 as well as with the start of Zeno's teaching in the Stoa in the heart of Athens in 301/0.

VI. An unknown Pergamenian pupil of the Academic scholarch Euandrus of Phocaea: A fragmentary, but typical curriculum vitae of 'a dutiful son' of the Hellenistic civic upper classes

In a decree from 193/2, which survived only fragmentarily, the Athenians honoured a man who rendered outstanding services to Athens. This statement sounds fairly unspectacular – and yet, the said honorary decree is an epigraphic source which in research gained a considerable degree of attention; not without good reason. The one to be honoured is a man whose name is unknown, and who already through his ancestors had a relation of *eunoia* with the Athenians. By his hometown, probably Pergamum, he was dispatched to the festival of the Panathenaea, and he decided not to return to his *patris* after the celebration, but to stay in Athens for a while in order to apply himself to a philosophical *paideia*, which is described as the best of all ways of life. During this time, the honoree had something, which due to the condition of the text cannot be further specified, to do with the pupils of a Euandrus, who, as widely assumed for good reasons, can be identified as the Academic scholarch Euandrus of Phocaea. However, the honoree was not only concerned with philosophy in Athens: He rather also took part in a defence of Athens, which probably was the one against the Macedonians in 200 at the beginning of the Second Macedonian War. With this war a further merit of the unknown honoree is associated, without it being able to be labeled for sure: he espoused for Attalus I to prove compliant with the Athenians; this courtesy might have to do with Athenian prisoners of war.

What makes this fragmentary Athenian decree so interesting and paradigmatic? First of all, this decree is on the one hand the earliest epigraphic evidence from Hellenistic Athens that can be associated with the Academy; on the other hand, it is the earliest epigraphic evidence from Athens in which philosophy is explicitly and unambiguously connoted in a positive way. What is more, this inscription is a revealing evidence for 'doing philosophy' as a social praxis of a specific social class: The honoree, who, due to the mention of his ancestors' benefits for

Athens and as *theoros* of his hometown, is socially located in its local upper class, was equipped with the necessary resources to stay in Athens for the study of philosophy. This decision by no means however meant that he turned away from all political proceedings – indeed, he rather participated in Athens’s defence and represented Athenian interests in front of Attalus I – in a way, that could be expected from a man of his social background. As this action was socially to be expected, it was not associated by the Athenians with philosophical theorems or maxims for acting. However, it shows how profitable those ‘study stays’ of young men from the upper classes of Greek cities in Athens proved to be for the Athenians in the short-, middle-, and long-term. Nevertheless, that does not have to do with the Academy specifically: The fact that, on the one hand, with the Phocaeans Euandrus, Telecles and the Pergamenian Hegesinus three consecutive scholarchs came from the Attalid orbit, and on the other hand, the Attalids had increasingly been striving towards Athens since the late third century, is only due to historical contingency, but not to a however natured contentual coincidence of academic school-history and Athenian-Attalid relations.

VII. The grave epigram for Telecles of Phocaea – an Academic scholarch from a private point of view in a ‘cemeterial public’

In 167/6, the scholarch Telecles of Phocaea died after having built a ‘diarchy’ with Euandrus of Pergamum in the scholarch’s office of the Academy for 40 years. Almost nothing is known about his life and work. Yet, Telecles is the only philosopher in Athens from Classical and Hellenistic times, for whom a grave epigram survived fragmentarily on stone.

There are three contentual points that can be learned from the surviving text. Firstly, there is talk of those who pursue the peak of wisdom; secondly, the fame of Telecles did not sound quietly from the Academy among the Athenians; and thirdly, Telecles had a son named Seleucus, who took care of an appropriate funeral.

This grave epigram emphasises Telecles’s belonging to the Academy as well as his exposed position in it; his time in office as a scholarch however, is not mentioned in the surviving text. The frame of reference of Telecles’s fame was not only the school of Platon: It rather ran through from the Academy to the Athenians. Thus, it could be thematised in the grave epigram that the fame of the scholarch gained on the philosophical field was also clearly perceptible in the noise of the *polis* – and remained after Telecles’s death by means of reading

aloud the epigram by the intended reader. However, the Academy and the *polis* Athens were two autonomous communicative entities, and a specific relation between Athens and the Academy respectively – more generally – between Athens and philosophy is not expressed in the epigram. In contrast to all the other epigraphic evidences from pre-Roman Imperial Athens, who are connected with philosophers, the explicit mentioning of a philosophical school shows that it was important to Telecles – or rather to his son as commissioner of the epigram – to record in the funeral-epigrammatic presentation of the dead that the deceased was a member of the Academy and that it was his primary social frame of reference. In all the other known epigraphic evidences from Hellenistic Athens, be it honorary inscriptions, an *epidosis*-list or dedicatory inscriptions, the belonging to a specific philosophical school does not play a role – if it is at all explicated that the person was a philosopher or a person connected with philosophy.

VIII. The Academic scholarch Carneades of Cyrene and the so-called philosophers' embassy to Rome – the Athenian point of view

One of the greatest successes of Athenian foreign policy in the middle of the second century BC was doubtlessly the philosophers' embassy to Rome in 155. Mostly, this embassy, composed of the Academic scholarch Carneades of Cyrene, the Peripatetic scholarch Critolaus of Phaselis and the Stoic scholarch Diogenes of Babylon, was the centre of scholarly attention due to an alleged scandal, which did not have anything to do with the actual spirit and purpose of the embassy: namely the philosophic lectures of the 'Great Three' – and here especially of Carneades – in front of an urban Roman audience. In the current context, however, it is all about the Athenian point of view.

In consequence of a military invasion into the territory of the adjacent Boeotian *polis* Oropus, the Athenians were sentenced to pay the immense penalty of 500 talents by a conciliator, the Achaean *polis* Sikyon, appointed by the Roman Senate at the request of the Oropians. The philosophers' embassy succeeded in reducing this sum to 100 talents. The gratitude of the Athenians was accordingly great. And here, an only short private dedicatory inscription on a basis comes into play, which says that the Sypalettians Attalus and Ariarathes dedicated a seated statue of Carneades of Azenia. Having assumed for a long time in research that the two dedicatees were the later Pergamenian king Attalus II and the later Cappadocian king Ariarathes V, it is now beyond doubt that they rather are two brothers belonging to the

Athenian upper class. As can be learned from the dedicatory inscription, Carneades, originated from Cyrene, held Athenian citizenship at the time of the dedication. That he – as well as Critolaus of Phaselis and Diogenes of Babylon – gained it as a reward for the successful work for the embassy is more than a plausible assumption. Apart from this honour by the *polis* of Athens, there is the said private honour with a seated statue, which can be dated between 155 and approximately 135 and whose portrayal survived in several copies from Roman Imperial times. While the conferment of the citizenship followed due to the political achievements of Carneades, the seated statue, in contrast to its dedicatory inscription, did not refer to the Athenian citizen, but to the philosopher, as seated statues were a typical way of representing philosophers in Hellenistic times.

The emphasis of Carneades's political achievements for Athens was probably connected with his representation as a philosopher in Olympia: There namely is a surviving but little known fragment of an epigram to the Peripatetic scholar Critolaus of Phaselis, in which his erudition and his commitment for Athens are praised. It is not certain, but at least a plausible assumption that the fragmentary epigram is the remains of an Athenian dedication, with which, on the one hand, the three scholars were praised for their achievements in the Oropian matter in front of an pan-Hellenic audience by means of seated statues, and with which, on the other hand, the Athenians manifested their foreign-policy success.

IX. ‘...and perseveringly spent their time the teaching of the philosophers in the Academy’ – or: No longer ‘rite de passage’ to an Athenian citizen, but socialization to a ‘man of the world’. The Attic epheby after 123/2

For a long time, the Attic epheby had functioned for young Athenian men to do a two year long, very militarily shaped service for the *polis*. This initially obligatory service, serving the social integration into the Athenian community of citizens, had changed during the course of time and became a voluntary one-year-long service of young men from the Athenian upper class. Around the middle of the 120s non-Athenians were also allowed in the Attic epheby and the content of the epheby was expanded with the aspect of *paideia*: For 123/2 then, there is for the first time epigraphic evidence not only for non-Athenian ephebes, but also documented for the first time is the participation of the ephebes in the lessons of a certain Zenodotus, probably a Stoic philosopher, in the Ptolemaeum and in the Lyceum, as well as

the participation in the instructions of all the other philosophers in the Lyceum and in the Academy.

The participation of the epebes in philosophical lectures is documented over a number of decades until 39/8 – even though, due to the body of source material, it is impossible to say in which ways the participation of the epebes in philosophical lectures was institutionally organised. It can, however, be stated with certainty that it was not the aim to instruct the epebes only in one philosophical school, but rather in as many as possible. It was, therefore, not about a specific philosophical knowledge, which should later on be available to the Epebians, but rather about general knowledge of philosophy. This is not surprising but is in accord with the then long established practice of young men from the urban upper classes of the Mediterranean world to stay in Athens for a while and acquaint themselves with philosophy.

X. World history, local history and history of philosophy: The dusk of the Academy in the shadow of the Peripatetics Athenion, Apellicon and the Epicurean Aristion – and the Pontic king Mithradates VI and the Roman consul Sulla

In his dialogue *On the Ends of Good and Bad Things*, written in 45, Cicero imagines a walk in Athens he is doing on an afternoon in 79 with his brother, a cousin and two friends, when he used to listen to Antiochus of Ascalon in the Ptolemaeum. The destination of the walk was the grounds of the Academy which were derelict following Sulla's 'sacco di Atene' – and there the Roman friends remember the first four scholarchs of the Academy and its former glory as an 'intellectual' *lieu de mémoire*.

At the beginning of the 80s, Philo of Larissa, then scholarch of the Academy, as well as other philosophers, had left Athens. This new exodus of philosophers from Athens had political reasons, but these did not originally have anything to do with the philosophers, even if some of the philosophers like the Peripatetics Athenion and Apellicon, and the Epicurean Aristion belonged to the protagonists of the political battles of this time. Indeed, since the end of the 90s, the inner situation in Athens had been very tense, which is considerably due to the conflict between pro-Roman and anti-Roman, resp. anti-Roman and pro-Mithridatic partisans. To leave Athens in this stasis-like situation seemed to be a good choice for many a philosopher, who believed to have a good alternative – for the history of philosophy this

leaving of Athens meant an important step on the way to the ‘decentralisation of philosophy’. Also the academic scholar Philo decided to head for Rome, where he had favourable benefactors, and he died at an old age in Italy in 85/4. However, stasis was not only in Athens those days, but also within the Academy: Between Philo of Larissa and his pupil Antiochus of Ascalon a bitter struggle ensued for the orthodoxy within the Platonic school.

Even when the academic teaching came to an end in this place after three centuries, at the latest with the destruction of the Academy during the siege of Athens by Sulla in 87/6, neither philosophising in general had ended in Athens – which becomes especially clear with the Ephebian inscriptions –, nor philosophising in reference to Plato – one may think of the lessons by Antiochus of Ascalon in the Ptolemaeum in the early 70s. In contrast to 307/6, the philosophers were not challenged as a group.

XI. The Academy in Athenian history and society between 387/6 und 87/6 – anything special?

This tour de force about the role of the Academy in Athenian history and society from its establishment by Plato to its temporary end through Sulla’s devastations on the grounds of the Academy during his siege of Athens had inevitably to remain broad-brush. However, a few concluding remarks should serve not to recapitulate the findings, but to locate them in a broader context.

First of all, it has to be stated that the history of the Academy actually cannot be sensibly presented without a basic regard to the other philosophical schools, the philosophers and philosophy in late-Classical and Hellenistic Athens. Only when considering these aspects, it can be shown that the Academy, despite several specifics, is not a ‘special case’ in Athenian history and society, but rather fits into the overall picture of the philosophers and philosophy.

Not just since Socrates’s days had the preoccupation with philosophy above all been a social practice of people who had the necessary resources of money and time available, in order to carry out something which was of no specific immediate utility: ‘doing philosophy’ was a pastime of the upper classes of the Greek cities and served essentially to demonstrate ‘conspicuous leisure’. Thus, the social meaning of philosophising consists, on the one hand, in distancing the upper classes from other social classes, and on the other hand, in positioning

the members of the upper classes themselves within their own peer group. This exactly substantiates the attractiveness of temporary philosophising: In the fourth century namely, the social capital claimable through philosophising was estimated to be higher than the political discredit. What had changed in Athens in the sequel until the late Hellenistic time was not the practice of philosophising, but especially the public acceptance of the philosophers. This change is motivated in a historical process, which was, with the increasing dominance of the public discourse, shaped by the norms of the local elites. This development can also be portrayed in Athens – and the Athenians used the resource ‘philosophy’ for foreign-policy issues. However, the self-conception of the *polis* of Athens, manifesting itself in the public discourse, had never been that of the ‘school of Hellas’. The external perspective on Athens looks very different though. It is namely said in a decree of the Amphictionic League from around 120, in which privileges of the Athenian *technitai* are confirmed, and which was published in Delphi and on the Athenian Acropolis, that the Athenians were the cause and beginning of all that is good among the people, and that they led them from a beastly way of life to a civilised form of life, and that the Athenians accepted the laws of humanity and education from the gods and distributed them among the Greeks.