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## Re-inventing an old tradition: the 'Old Academy' of Antiochus of Ascalon

### 1. *Antiochus at the Ruins of the Academy*

In one of the most evocative introductions to his dialogues, in the last book of *De Finibus*<sup>1</sup>, Cicero describes how he and his interlocutors, his brother Quintus, Marcus Piso, T. Pomponius Atticus and Cicero's cousin Lucius visit the spot of Plato's Academy, while on a grand educational tour to the Greek world in 79 BC; in stark contrast to the gloomy reality resulting from the Roman siege of the city, which had led to the closure of the philosophical schools (as a consequence of Athens' involvement in the Mithridatic War), Athens appears there as an idealised space, the birthplace of the greatest politicians, poets, rhetoricians and philosophers, whose scenes of action (although deserted) offer a reminiscence of glory and inspiration for the Roman youth: Phalerum brings to mind the great rhetorician Demosthenes, whereas the, by that time, deserted Academy, makes one remember Cicero's favourite, Carneades, and the legendary debates he held on that spot many decades before<sup>2</sup>. As Cicero puts it:

*Multa in omni parte Athenarum sunt in ipsis locis indicia summorum virorum*  
Cicero, *Fin.* 5.5

In every quarter of Athens the mere sites contain many mementoes of the most illustrious men.

Athens thus appears at the beginning of the first century BC to be on the map as an educational destination, but more as a 'landscape of memory', rather than of original intellectual production. The return to the past illustrated by Cicero in the preface to the last book of his *De Finibus* becomes more suggestive, if we consider that the book is dedicated to the exposition of the ethical theory of Antiochus. The latter was teaching at the

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<sup>1</sup> *Fin.* 5.1-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Fin.* 5.4.

Ptolemaum, another gymnasium of Athens, at the time when Cicero visited the city with his companions in 79 BC<sup>3</sup>. Antiochus is presented as the most important teacher of philosophy at Cicero's time<sup>4</sup>; even he, however, is looking back to the past, matching the attitude of Cicero and his companions. His 'Old Academy', claimed to represent the ancient tradition, for which Athens was becoming so popular among the Roman elite, and not a new direction of thought. Thus, what was 'new' about Antiochus was precisely that he was looking backwards: he was the first philosopher to break the institutional continuity of Plato's school by challenging the authority of its last scholarch, Philo of Larissa, and attempting a resurrection of an earlier tradition from which his predecessors were considered to have diverted. The testimonies, as the following one from Sextus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, refer to this movement as a 'fifth Academy' following the 'Middle Academy' of Arcesilaus, the 'New Academy' of Carneades and the controversial fourth Academy of Philo:

Ἀκαδημαῖαι δὲ γέγονασιν, ὡς φασὶ<ν οἱ> πλείους [ἦ], τρεῖς, μία μὲν καὶ ἀρχαιοτάτη ἢ τῶν περὶ Πλάτωνα, δευτέρα δὲ καὶ μέση ἢ τῶν περὶ Ἀρκεσίλαον τὸν ἀκουστὴν Πολέμωνος, τρίτη δὲ καὶ νέα ἢ τῶν περὶ Καρνεάδην καὶ Κλειτόμαχον· ἔνιοι δὲ καὶ τετάρτην προστιθέασι τὴν περὶ Φίλωνα καὶ Χαρμίδαν, τινὲς δὲ καὶ πέμπτην καταλέγουσι τὴν περὶ [τὸν] Ἀντίοχον. S.E. *PH* 1.220

According to most people there have been three Academies—the first and most ancient that of Plato and his school, the second or middle Academy that of Arcesilaus, the pupil of Polemo, and his School, the third or New Academy that of the school of Carneades and Cleitomachus. Some, however, add as a fourth that of the school of Philo and Charmidas; and some even count the School of Antiochus as a fifth.

The main rationale for Antiochus' move, and the reason why he is listed in Sextus as initiating a new phase of Academic history, was that the school since the Academic Sceptics took over had taken a false direction: contrary to the claims of Philo and his predecessors reaching down to Arcesilaus (who took over the school in 270 BC), the 'real' Academy, according to Antiochus, did not renounce the possibility of knowledge and thus

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<sup>3</sup> *Fin.* 5.1.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Luc.* 113.

was not committed merely to sceptical enquiry, as Arcesilaus and his followers using the example of Socratic practice advocated. The sceptical Academy had undergone significant changes as well: Arcesilaus, the first scholarch after the school's sceptical turn, had denied the possibility of knowledge altogether. Carneades advocated a soft form of scepticism, probabilism, which allowed extensive argument in favour of particular positions, which were judged according to their persuasive power. Philo, at least in the theses he formulated while in Rome, conceded that some kind of knowledge (*katalēpsis*) was possible<sup>5</sup> but he refused that one needed, or could formulate, a criterion for it; the description of the Sosus episode in Cicero's *Lucullus* suggests that for this position Philo sought Platonic authority, proposing perhaps a new reading of Plato along such lines<sup>6</sup>. For Antiochus this was not a defensible (or even coherent) position and thus, once there was no real institutional commitment between him and Philo, seized the opportunity and advocated a dogmatic theory, which he now presented as the true Academic tradition— and a viable way to defend *katalēpsis*.

The fact that this revival movement took place away from Athens, when Antiochus sought to escape the imminent Roman siege of the city<sup>7</sup>, is indicative of the quest for new orientations on the part of Greek-speaking intellectuals during this era, and the ensuing 'decentralisation' of philosophical activity away from its birthplace<sup>8</sup>. In search for a new role, Antiochus went into the service of the Roman general Lucullus<sup>9</sup>, as an advisor and perhaps mediator for the contacts of his Roman patron with the Greek-speaking local

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<sup>5</sup> Our most important testimony is S.E. *PH* 1.235: Οἱ δὲ περὶ Φίλωνά φασι μὲν ἐπὶ τῷ Στωικῷ κριτηρίῳ, τοῦτέστι τῇ καταληπτικῇ φαντασίᾳ, ἀκατάληπτα εἶναι τὰ πράγματα, ὅσον δὲ ἐπὶ τῇ φύσει τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτῶν, καταληπτά.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Tarrant (1985:44).

<sup>7</sup> Antiochus' reaction to the 'Roman books' of Philo, as presented in Cicero's *Lucullus*, may plausibly be regarded as the first expression of Antiochus' new orientation. By contrast, Gucker (1978:20) suggests that Antiochus expressed his dissident views already at the beginning of the 90s BC, while a member of Philo's school.

<sup>8</sup> D. Sedley (2003:31) refers to this as the 'epoch-making change that philosophy underwent in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC'. Another case of a philosopher who moved to Rome during this period is the Epicurean Philodemus, see Sedley (2003:35). Panaetius in the previous generation had already created strong bonds with the Scipios (s. Cic. *Luc.* 5), which were sustained through frequent visits to Rome.

<sup>9</sup> S. *Luc.* 4: eum (sc. Antiochum) secum et quaestor habuit (sc. Lucullus) et post aliquot annos imperator.

communities in the East<sup>10</sup>. It is from Alexandria in 87 BC, following Lucullus<sup>11</sup>, that he responds to Philo's so-called Roman books<sup>12</sup> and, through a treatise entitled *Sosus*<sup>13</sup>, for the first time openly challenges the Academic identity as represented by its institutional head.

Assuming that the promotion of the ancient tradition took place after Antiochus was already in the service of Lucullus, and had acquired a name in the Roman elite, the importance assigned to the ancestry of his views in Cicero gains in significance. The *auctoritas* of the ancients<sup>14</sup> had considerable value in a society, which presented the 'customs of the forefathers' (*mores maiorum*)<sup>15</sup> and their *exempla* as a constant point of validation; the notion of *auctoritas* itself had particular political connotations and associations with the power of the Senate (and thus not surprisingly Cicero is keen to use it in passages which bear the influence of Antiochus)<sup>16</sup>. Moreover, Greek *paideia* (including philosophy as an essential tool) was becoming important symbolic capital and sign of power and influence, serving the Ciceronian ideal of *humanitas*, of the cultivated citizen of the republic. This was, after all, an important reason why Cicero undertook the writing of philosophical treatises and the huge task of translating and introducing Greek philosophy to Rome in the first place. The Antiochean spokesman again in the preface to *De Finibus* is eager to underline the educational role of his movement in the service of the training of the aspiring Roman political elite; the whole speech has a didactic character addressed to the young cousin of Cicero, Lucius. In this respect, it is suggestive that Antiochus underlines

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<sup>10</sup> Plutarch in his Life of Lucullus (42.3) refers to the philosopher as his 'friend and companion' (φίλον... καὶ συμβιωτὴν). According to the testimony of Cicero (*Luc.* 61), Antiochus died in the company of Lucullus during a campaign in Syria. The evidence from Philodemus' *Index Academicorum*, col. 34 (s. Brink 2007:89) also states that Antiochus spent most of his life in Rome and the eastern provinces in the service of generals and died in Mesopotamia following Lucullus. For the role of Greek-speaking intellectuals as advisors to the Roman elite, see Glucker (1978:24) and Crawford (1978:203).

<sup>11</sup> *Luc.* 11.

<sup>12</sup> In *Acad.* 11, we find the reference to two books of Philo, who reached Antiochus in Alexandria.

<sup>13</sup> *Luc.* 12.

<sup>14</sup> S. e.g. *Fin.* 4.44.

<sup>15</sup> For a direct comparison between the ancient philosophers and the Roman forefathers, see *Fin.* 4.62.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Sedley (1997:111): 'Yet it is this Latin word which, by combining the notions of leadership, ownership, prestige, and validation, most informatively conveys the commanding status that the founder (the *auctor*) of a Greek philosophical system held in the eyes of its subsequent adherents'.

the contribution of the 'ancients' not only to philosophical theory<sup>17</sup> but also to the development of rhetoric, something which would make the school particularly suitable as a propaedeutic to statesmanship<sup>18</sup>:

*Ex eorum enim scriptis et institutis cum omnis doctrina liberalis, omnis historia, omnis sermo elegans sumi potest, tum varietas est tanta artium, ut nemo sine eo instrumento ad ullam rem illustriorem satis ornatus possit accedere. ab his oratores, ab his imperatores ac rerum publicarum principes extiterunt. Cic. Fin. 5.7*

Not only may you derive from their writings and teachings (sc. of 'the ancients') all liberal learning, all history, every choice form of style, but accomplishments in such variety that no one without such equipment can be properly prepared to approach any task of any distinction. From this school sprang the orators, from this school the generals and the governors of states.

## 2. Antiochus' Platonic 'disciplina'

It is time now to turn to the identity of the ancient tradition that Antiochus aimed at reviving. The credo of Antiochus' school relied on a 'genealogical' argument from succession (*diadochē*), which postulated the oral transmission of doctrine through master-pupil relationships; according to that, philosophy which had its starting point in Plato was transmitted through the equally authoritative channels of the followers of Plato in the Academy (including Speusippus, Xenocrates, Crantor down to the dissident Arcesilaus who turned the Academy to scepticism) and the Peripatos (including Plato's pupil Aristotle and Theophrastus); the successors of Theophrastus reaching from Strato, the pupil of Theophrastus, down to Diodorus, the pupil of Critolaus, are presented in Antiochean passages as merely a degenerated shadow of the originators of the Lyceum—both on matters of style and philosophical acumen—and are thus excluded from Antiochus' canon<sup>19</sup>. One of the 'programmatic' passages of Antiochus in Cicero reads as follows:

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<sup>17</sup> See especially *De Orat.* 1.43.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. also *Fin.* 5.74.

<sup>19</sup> *Fin.* 5.13-14.

*in qua, ut dicere Antiochum audiebas, non ii soli numerantur, qui Academici vocantur, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, Crantor ceterique, sed etiam Peripatetici veteres, quorum princeps Aristoteles. Cic. Fin. 5.7*

Among the 'Old Academy' are to be reckoned, as you heard Antiochus say, not only those who are called Academics, Speusippus, Xenocrates, Polemo, Crantor and the rest, but also the ancient Peripatetics, whose chief is Aristotle.

This inclusive reading of the Platonic tradition might strike us as odd; in this lies also the difficulty of comparing Antiochus with the Platonist movements, which followed, i.e. the so-called Middle Platonism: nowhere, is Antiochus attempting to recover the teaching of Plato himself as more authoritative than that of his successors<sup>20</sup>. Rather, Antiochus claimed that in order to understand Plato one should study him through the Academico-Peripatetic tradition that he left behind him, a tradition characterized, according to him, by unity and consistency. As Varro puts it, echoing Antiochus<sup>21</sup>:

*Platonis autem auctoritate, qui varius et multiplex et copiosus fuit, una et consentiens duobus vocabulis philosophiae forma instituta est Academicorum et Peripateticorum, qui rebus congruentes nominibus differebant. Cicero, Acad. 1.17*

Starting with Plato, a thinker of manifold variety and fertility, there was established a philosophy that, though it had two appellations, was really a single uniform *system*, that of the Academic and the Peripatetic schools, which while agreeing in doctrine differed in name.

The emphasis is here on the creation of a coherent set of doctrines, a *certa formula disciplinae*, as Cicero puts it in the *Academica*; other formulations used in this sense in relation to Antiochus' understanding of the ancient tradition are *ars philosophiae*, *ordo rerum* and *descriptio disciplinae*<sup>22</sup>. This attempt at systematization is shown in the way the philosophy of the 'ancients' is taken in Varro's presentation of the Antiochean system in Cicero's *Academica* to fit into the standard Hellenistic tripartition of the philosophical

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<sup>20</sup> Later Platonists either incorporated Aristotelian ideas but only, explicitly, in the service of recovering Plato's doctrine, or some of them like Numenius and Atticus adopted an explicitly hostile stance towards Aristotelianism, see Numenius apud Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* xiv.5.8; *ibid.* xi.1.2; xv. 4.6 ff.; 5.3.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Luc.* 15.

<sup>22</sup> Cicero *Acad.* 1.17

discourse into physics, ethics and dialectic (logic)<sup>23</sup>. It is instructive to compare the ascription of a threefold philosophical system to the 'ancients' with a passage from Sextus whose main idea resembles strongly the Antiochean views as found in *Acad.* 1:

πλὴν οὗτοι μὲν ἔλλιπῶς ἀνεστράφηται δοκοῦσιν, ἐντελέστερον δὲ παρὰ τούτους οἱ εἰπόντες τῆς φιλοσοφίας τὸ μὲν τι εἶναι φυσικὸν τὸ δὲ ἠθικὸν τὸ δὲ λογικόν· ὧν δυνάμει μὲν Πλάτων ἐστὶν ἀρχηγός, περὶ πολλῶν μὲν φυσικῶν, [περὶ] πολλῶν δὲ ἠθικῶν, οὐκ ὀλίγων δὲ λογικῶν διαλεχθεὶς· ῥητότατα δὲ οἱ περὶ τὸν Ξενοκράτη καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ Περιπάτου, ἔτι δὲ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς ἔχονται τῆσδε τῆς διαιρέσεως. S.E. *Adversus Mathematicos* 7.16

These thinkers (sc. Xenophanes and Archelaus), however, seemed to have handled the question incompletely, and, in comparison with them, the view of those who divide philosophy into Physics, Ethics, and Logic is more developed. Of these Plato is *potentially* the originator, as he discussed many problems of physics and of ethics, and not a few of logic; but those who most explicitly adopt this division are Xenocrates and the Peripatetics, and also the Stoics.

In Sextus' testimony, it is stated that Plato was potentially the originator of the division of philosophy into three branches (δυνάμει μὲν Πλάτων ἐστὶν ἀρχηγός), since he discussed many issues pertaining to physics, ethics and dialectic. However, the source adds that the division was in the most explicit way (ῥητότατα) made by the followers of Xenocrates (οἱ περὶ τὸν Ξενοκράτη) and of the Peripatos (οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ Περιπάτου): thus, whereas clearly Plato was the starting point, his successors philosophically improved on his input—something which implicitly justifies studying his thought through them. The members of the Stoa (ἔτι δὲ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Στοᾶς) are added as those who followed the two above groups in making the same division; but in any case their role is underplayed. The inclusion of both Academics and Peripatetics alongside Plato as precursors of an idea found also in the Stoics, points to Antiochus as a source of the text in Sextus. It would be hasty to assume, though, that Antiochus merely projected a Stoic classification onto the 'ancients'. The Peripatetic provenance of a threefold division of the philosophical *logos* receives support

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 1.19-33.

from Aristotle's *Topics* 1.14<sup>24</sup>: there, Aristotle gives instructions on how to select and collect ethical, physical and logical statements and *doxai* for use in debate, suggesting a threefold distinction of the philosophical discourse as well. Also, in one of his fragments, Theophrastus classifies the *Timaeus* as the 'physics' of Plato<sup>25</sup>, showing that the process of systematization of Platonic philosophy into distinct domains of enquiry had begun already within the Peripatos. Antiochus could thus be under the influence of such Peripatetic views, themselves also representative of the old tradition, as he understood it, when ascribing the threefold classification of philosophy to the 'Old Academy'.

In the case of ethics, the unity of the tradition was taken to be based on a shared catalogue of doctrines and classifications, such as what is the *telos*, the 'goods' and 'which things are to be sought and avoided'<sup>26</sup>. In a passage which echoes Antiochean ideas in Cicero, the idea of a 'life according to nature' is ascribed to Polemo, the last scholarch of the Platonic school before its sceptical turn, but it was, according to Antiochus, before him expressed by Aristotle as well (who was of course in agreement with Theophrastus on the issue) something which allegedly proves the unity of 'Old Academy' and the Peripatos:

*Polemoni et iam ante Aristoteli ea prima visa sunt, quae paulo ante dixi. ergo nata est sententia veterum Academicorum et Peripateticorum, ut finem bonorum dicerent secundum naturam vivere, id est virtute adhibita frui primis a natura datis. Fin. 2.34*

Polemo, and also before him Aristotle, held that the primary objects (sc. of desire) were the ones I have just mentioned. Thus, arose the doctrine of the Old Academy and the Peripatetics maintaining that the ultimate Good is to live in accordance with nature, that is to enjoy the first natural supplies with the use of virtue.

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<sup>24</sup> Aristotle, *Top.* 105b19-21: ἔστι δ' ὡς τύπων περιλαβεῖν τῶν προτάσεων καὶ τῶν προβλημάτων μέρη τρία· αἱ μὲν γὰρ ἠθικαὶ προτάσεις εἰσὶν, αἱ δὲ φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ λογικαί. This corresponds to the order of presentation of Antiochean philosophy by Varro in *Acad.* 1.

<sup>25</sup> Theophrastus, Fr. 230 FHS&G.

<sup>26</sup> S. *Acad.* 1.18: idem fons erat utrisque et eadem rerum expetendarum fugiendarumque partitio. In *Ibid.* 22, this classification is explicitly attributed to the Peripatetics: *Ita tripartita ab his inducitur ratio bonorum, atque haec illa sunt tria genera quae putant plerique Peripateticos dicere. id quidem non falso; est enim haec partitio illorum; illud imprudenter, si alios esse Academicos qui tum appellarentur alios Peripateticos arbitrantur.*



Polemo is taken here, according to the 'transitive' view of authority that Antiochus represents to stand for the entire Platonic tradition. The fact that evidence regarding his writings and philosophical doctrines is extremely thin suggests that he was mostly dedicated to oral teaching. The passage shows that Antiochus was willing to read Polemo, or supplement him, through Peripatetic assumptions about nature as the basis of ethical evaluation—such assumptions are fully developed in the last book of Cicero's *De Finibus*, a book which is explicitly signalled as Peripatetic<sup>27</sup>. Perhaps such assumptions about the role of nature supplied a sort of justification for views on which both Academics and Peripatetics were in principle in agreement, such as the principle of a 'life according to virtue'; a justification, which seemed to be relevant to the philosophical agenda set by Stoicism, where ethics was founded on nature as well.

Another way of interpretation of the Platonic tradition by Antiochus may be detected in physics, where an active and passive principle, the two *archai* that Antiochus postulates for the explanation of the physical reality, can be taken to express both the Divine demiurge and the passive 'material' which the Demiurge shapes in the *Timaeus*, but also the Aristotelian principles of form and matter. The account is carefully crafted at such a general level as to be able to express both Platonic and Peripatetic ideas:

*De natura autem ita dicebant (sc. veteres) ut eam dividerent in res duas, ut altera esset efficiens, altera autem quasi huic se praebens, eaque efficeretur aliquid. in eo quod efficeret vim esse censebant, in eo autem quod efficeretur tantum modo materiam quondam. Cicero, Acad. 1.24*

In the domain of physics, they (sc. the ancient philosophers) divided nature into two principles, the one being the active, and the other the passive, out of which under the influence of the active force something comes to be. The active principle they deemed to be a force, the one acted upon a sort of matter.

An interpretation of the Platonic ideas along these lines was probably supported by the writings of Peripatetics themselves, who attempted to systematize Plato's views for

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<sup>27</sup> For the idea that the views of Polemo were the same as Aristotle's, see also *Fin.* 5. 14: antiquorum autem sententiam Antiochus noster mihi videtur persequi diligentissime, quam eandem Aristoteli fuisse et Polemonis docet. The sole evidence in Polemo's fragments of an attempt to offer a foundation of ethics in nature is a reference by Clement (Fr. 97 Gigante) to Polemo's books 'On Life According to Nature' (περὶ τοῦ κατὰ φύσιν βίου).

doxographical purposes; Theophrastus, like Antiochus, reduces the story of the *Timaeus* to a two-principle scheme for the sake of codifying the Platonic views on physical enquiry<sup>28</sup>— such a systematisation results significantly in separating the realm of the transcendent Ideas from Plato's 'views on nature':

ὁ μὲντοι Θεόφραστος τοὺς ἄλλους προϊστορήσας “τούτοις, φησίν, ἐπιγενόμενος Πλάτων, τῇ μὲν δόξει καὶ τῇ δυνάμει πρότερος τοῖς δὲ χρόνοις ὕστερος καὶ τὴν πλείστην πραγματείαν περὶ τῆς πρώτης φιλοσοφίας ποιησάμενος, ἐπέδωκεν ἑαυτὸν καὶ τοῖς φαινομένοις ἀνάμενος τῆς περὶ φύσεως ἱστορίας· ἐν ἧ̄ δύο τὰς ἀρχὰς βούλεται ποιεῖν τὸ μὲν ὑποκείμενον ὡς ὕλην ὃ προσαγορεύει πανδεχές, τὸ δὲ ὡς αἴτιον καὶ κινουὺν ὃ περιάπτει τῇ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τῇ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δυνάμει.” Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physica* CAG t.9 p.26.5-15 Diels=Theophrastus Fr. 230 Fortenbaugh et al.

Theophrastus, however, after giving his account of the other (natural philosophers), says: “After these came Plato, before them in reputation and ability though after them in date. He concerned himself chiefly with metaphysics, but also attended to phenomena, taking up the enquiry concerning nature; here, he wished to make the principles two in number, one underlying (things) as matter—and this he calls ‘receptive of all things’; the other being cause and source of movement, and this he attaches to the power of god and of the good”. (Trans. Fortenbaugh et al., 1992)

On the other hand, the fundamental critique against the Platonic Ideas, which is found in Aristotle's writings is familiar to Antiochus, but he isolates it as one of the elements, which threatens the unity of the ‘old tradition’, and should thus be excised<sup>29</sup>: Antiochus' own opinion was that, *pace* Aristotle, some interpretation of the Platonic Ideas was compatible with the system of the ‘ancients’ and could be accommodated therein—however, not in the domain of physics but in the epistemology<sup>30</sup>.

This systematic organization of the philosophical discourse, imposed on the Platonic tradition, was the outcome of the quest for the creation of a methodologically consistent philosophical system, which could easily be transmitted and compared. The

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. the discussion of this passage by B. Inwood in Sedley (2012:214).

<sup>29</sup> *Acad.* 1.33.

<sup>30</sup> See *Acad.* 1.30: mentem volebant rerum esse iudicem, solam censebant idoneam cui crederetur, quia sola cerneret id quod semper esset simplex et unius modi et tale quale esset (hanc illi ἰδέαν appellabant, iam a Platone ita nominatam, nos recte speciem possumus dicere).

quest for a coherent system was encouraged by the *Zeitgeist* as well: an additional appeal of Antiochus' enterprise resulted from the bridging of differences and the presentation of Greek philosophy (at least its major strands, i.e. with the exception of Epicureanism) as a unitary field of knowledge, a repository of accumulated wisdom, rather than as a constant questioning and controversy (*controversia*) for which the Greek philosophers had made a name in Rome. In an anecdote cited by Cicero in the first book of *De Legibus*, the Roman proconsul Lucius Gellius is said on his arrival to Athens to have gathered together all philosophers and asked them to finally 'reach an agreement and not waste their lives in argument'<sup>31</sup>, offering his help for reaching a compromise. Cicero himself is ironical about this misunderstanding of what philosophy is about! In some cases, philosophical controversy formed a prejudice against Greeks in general, as in the remarks of Crassus in *De Orat.* 1.47:

*Verbi enim controversia iam diu torquet Graeculos homines contentionis cupidiores quam veritatis.*

Controversy about a word (sc. the orator) has long tormented those Greeklings, fonder as they are of argument than of truth.

The famous episode of Carneades' appearance in Rome as member of an Athenian embassy in 155 BC is also indicative of the possible disquieting effects of philosophical dialectic for the Romans; according to reports of the episode, the sceptic had in accordance with the principles of the New Academy on the first day praised justice, and on the second spoken against it; Philus' report in Cicero's *De Re Publica*, which is based on this speech, suggests that Carneades included in it a lesson on *Realpolitik* which proved the Roman aspirations for empire as incompatible with the principles of justice<sup>32</sup>. This was a legendary episode that constantly reminded Romans (at least the conservative among them) of the

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<sup>31</sup> *Leg.* 1.53: Quia me Athenis audire ex Phaedro meo memini, Gellium familiarem tuum, quom pro consule ex praetura in Graeciam uenisset <esset>que Athenis, philosophos, qui tum erant, in locum unum conuocasse ipsisque magno opere auctorem fuisse, ut aliquando controuersiarum aliquem facerent modum. Quodsi essent eo animo ut nollent aetatem in litibus conterere, posse rem conuenire, et simul operam suam illis esse pollicitum, si posset inter eos aliquid conuenire.

<sup>32</sup> See especially *Rep.* 3.24.

subversive power of philosophy and might suggest why Antiochus was eager to dissociate himself from the sceptic tradition and offer an alternative *system* with a Platonic pedigree, once he had the opportunity to do so.

### 3. *Antiochus' Peripateticism*

Going back to Antiochus' philosophical choices, it is plausible to assume, in the light of the above-mentioned suggestions, that if he attempted to restore the school of Plato to its true tradition (i.e. its pre-sceptical phase), then he did it by connecting it with Peripatetic teaching, which was taken, not only to be compatible with, but also to systematize and further develop the (alleged) Platonic doctrines, in line with Hellenistic philosophical developments. Even if this did not result in a 'historical' reading of Plato, according to our contemporary standards<sup>33</sup>, we have no reason to assume that for Antiochus himself placing Plato on a par with Aristotle and Theophrastus constituted a sort of betrayal; assuming that Plato was a dogmatist, Antiochus' stance was rather suggestive of a certain belief in philosophical progress, a belief which was taken to be compatible with the conviction that Plato had laid down the foundations for everything that followed upon him in all branches of philosophy.

If the hypothesis of a Peripatetic influence on Antiochus is correct, then an obvious question arises as to how did Antiochus come in contact with Peripatetic ideas. Such a Peripatetic teaching can be taken to have been known to Antiochus from his original allegiance, the circles of the 'New Academy', where the Peripatos was frequently used by the Academic sceptics in their dialectical arguments against the Stoics and Epicureans: in Diogenes Laertius we read that Clitomachus, the pupil of Carneades was well versed in all three sects, the Academy, the Peripatetics and the Stoics<sup>34</sup>. Thus, whereas the Peripatetic school had declined after Theophrastus, who was a major figure in the Hellenistic

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<sup>33</sup> Or even according to the standards of a 'Platonist' like Plutarch, who attempts to read *Platonem ex Platone*, s. especially his work *De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo*.

<sup>34</sup> D.L. 4.67.

philosophical scene, Peripatetic arguments most likely survived in an indirect way in the debates of the Academic sceptics<sup>35</sup>. Through the mouth of Carneades, such arguments proved their vigour and, to put it into the New Academy's own terms, their 'probability' or 'reasonableness'<sup>36</sup> by way of resisting dialectical challenges. The step towards adopting these persuasive views as 'true' proved to be a small one, once Antiochus decided to re-establish Academic identity for himself, after Philo's failure to defend a coherent sceptic position with regard to *katalēpsis*. Especially, on the domain of epistemology, the reliance of the Peripatos on intuition and its less stringent criteria, in comparison with Stoicism, for the acquisition of knowledge could escape the pre-dominantly anti-Stoic Academic critique; Philo's critique of dogmatic epistemology was after all tailored against the Stoic definition of *katalēpsis*. Thus, Antiochus could show to the sceptics that he was led to the approval of the 'ancients' by virtue of their argumentative force and not (merely, at least) by opportunism, as Cicero claims in an *ad hominem* argument against Antiochus in his *Lucullus*<sup>37</sup>.

It is from the Peripatos that we have also the only solid evidence for Antiochus' first-hand engagement with texts; in Antiochean passages in Cicero, there is a clear reference to the esoteric and exoteric works of the Peripatetic school, to works of Theophrastus and a vague reference to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, falsely attributed to Nicomachus himself<sup>38</sup>; the latter might have come to the hands of Antiochus through Lucullus' library, which was probably enriched with important acquisitions after the Roman conquest of Athens<sup>39</sup>. The existence of such heterogeneous Peripatetic material left room for *diaphōnia*, which Antiochus, as becomes clear from relevant passages in Cicero, was eager to accommodate: thus, he stresses the internal unity of the Peripatetic teaching

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Cicero's *ND* 1.11 on the requirement that the 'New Academic' can argue both for and against *all* schools.

<sup>36</sup> The two terms translate *πίθανον* and *εὔλογον*.

<sup>37</sup> S. *Luc.* 69-70: numquam a Philone discessit, nisi postea quam ipse coepit qui se audirent habere. Unde autem subito vetus Academia revocata est? nominis dignitatem videtur, cum a re ipsa descisceret, retinere voluisse. quod erant qui illum gloriae causa facere dicerent, sperare etiam fore ut i qui se sequerentur Antiochii vocarentur. For a similar critique, cf. Plut. *Cic.* 4.1-2.

<sup>38</sup> S. *Fin.* 5.12.

<sup>39</sup> S. Plut. *Luc.* 42 and the allusions in Cic. *Fin.* 3. 7-10.

despite the difficulty to offer consistent doctrines on a number of issues, which seem to have remained inconclusive in the writings of the school.

A case in point is the role that external factors play in *eudaimonia*: whereas Aristotle remained unclear on the exact relationship between virtue and external goods, Theophrastus in his work *On Happiness* went so far as to deny that the virtuous person can be happy, if fortune is unfavourable. This allowed the view that a vicious person may possess a degree of happiness if in favourable circumstances, assuming that the notions of happiness and misery are symmetrical— but Theophrastus was not willing to grant this. Antiochus attempts, in the last book of *De Finibus*, to formulate a more coherent position for the old tradition by introducing into his ethics the differentiation between *vita beata* and *vita beatissima*: virtue is both necessary and sufficient for happiness (since the latter consists essentially in actions and the 'aiming' at goods), but the availability of external goods (which is subject to fortune) guarantees a higher degree of happiness; this is a position that Antiochus ascribes to Aristotle himself with a vague reference to the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

*quod maxime efficit Theophrasti de beata vita liber, in quo multum admodum fortunae datur. quod si ita se habeat, non posit beatam praestare vitam sapientia. Haec mihi videtur delicatior, ut ita dicam, molliorque ratio, quam virtutis vis gravitasque postulat. quare teneamus Aristotelem et eius filium Nicomachum, cuius accurate scripti de moribus libri dicuntur illi quidem esse Aristoteli, sed non video, cur non potuerit patri similis esse filius. Cic. Fin. 5.12*

This effect is produced especially by Theophrastus' book *On Happiness* in which a large influence is allowed to fortune, though if his statements were true, wisdom would not have the power to ensure happiness. This is in my opinion a softer and more delicate view than is required by the power and dignity of virtue. So let us stick to Aristotle and his son Nicomachus, whose carefully written treatise on morals is indeed reputed to be by Aristotle, but I see nothing to prevent the son from having been like the father.

The choice that Antiochus makes on the issue, i.e. to guarantee the sufficiency of virtue for a happy life, does not constitute an arbitrary collection of different views but answered to real dialectical challenges advanced by the Stoics; his aim was to formulate, using tools

from within the tradition (however, curiously, no use is made of views expressed in Plato's works on this point), a clear position on a topic which was of dialectical relevance, in a way that it would dissolve the appearance that his favoured school, the Peripatetics, were torn between incompatible positions, and thus inferior to the Stoic school which had a clear (and uncompromising) view on the matter.

Here again, historical circumstances seem to have played a role. The advocacy of Peripatetic identity by a former Academic had become easier after the disintegration of the philosophical institutional landscape in Athens, and when no one else was there to claim the title of the 'Peripatetic' for oneself. Critolaus is the only one in the row of Theophrastus' followers who is taken seriously by Antiochus as an opponent, since he in some sense 'returned' to the ancients as well<sup>40</sup>, but he was already dead by the time Antiochus initiated his movement; his pupil Diodorus, the last Peripatetic for whom we have evidence of activity on Athenian soil at the end of the second century BC, by introducing absence of pain into his conception of the final end was regarded as heterodox and thus not a viable opponent. Another Peripatetic philosopher in Rome, Staseas of Naples, who was the house philosopher of M. Piso and according to the testimony of Cicero expounded a rather different view of the system, than Antiochus did<sup>41</sup> (perhaps following the line of Critolaus that Antiochus wanted to attack) was far away to be a threat, and did not claim the Platonic tradition for himself as did Antiochus. The lack of an authoritative edition of Aristotle, which was made, allegedly, at the end of the first century BC by Andronicus of Rhodes supported such a pluralism of views<sup>42</sup>.

On the other hand, the confrontation with the Stoic school played a pivotal role for the development of the 'Old Academic' system: the attempt at coherence was largely a reaction to the standards set by the systematic philosophy *par excellence* in the Hellenistic

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<sup>40</sup> *Fin.* 5.14: Critolaus imitari voluit antiquos, et quidem est gravitate proximus, et redundat oratio, ac tamen <ne> is quidem in patrii institutis manet. Diodorus, eius auditor, adiungit ad honestatem vacuitatem doloris. hic quoque suus est de summoque bono dissentiens dici vere Peripateticus non potest.

<sup>41</sup> *S. Fin.* 5.8; 5.75.

<sup>42</sup> The *diaphōnia* on the role of externals for happiness to which Antiochus alludes in *Fin.* 5.12 resulted from reading Theophrastus' *On Fortune* and the *Nicomachean Ethics* of Aristotle (esp. 1100b22-1101a8), where Aristotle seems to differentiate between the *eudaimon* and the *makarios*.

period, namely to Stoicism, and it was clear that Antiochus in his polemic attitude towards the school aimed to challenge the role of the Stoics as the only representatives of an ethics based on the intrinsic value of virtue and a positive epistemology<sup>43</sup>. Late Stoics themselves were largely abandoning the contra-intuitive views of the first period of the school, affirming civil morality and the status quo, and thus gaining considerable popularity in Rome. This development was triggered by the critique of the sceptical Academy on the basis of Peripatetic theses, and, under this pressure, some of the Peripatetic ideas were addressed by the Stoics themselves<sup>44</sup>. Against them, Antiochus attempted to show that their theses could be found in their 'original' form in the writings of the ancients, thus making their school itself a redundant *correctio* of the ancient tradition<sup>45</sup>; on this issue, as in others, Antiochus could be following again the 'New Academic' teacher Carneades, who was the first to argue (as part of his anti-Stoic critique) that the difference between Stoics and Peripatetics is merely terminological<sup>46</sup>: once a convinced Peripatetic, Antiochus could use this critique for his own purpose in the defence of the 'old tradition'. Antiochus, through his defense of an inclusive reading of the Academico-Peripatetic tradition, could also combat those Stoics who saw in Plato a great inspiration—most, notably Panaetius<sup>47</sup> and Posidonius<sup>48</sup>—, and who attempted perhaps to vindicate him for the Stoic tradition<sup>49</sup>. Varro, reporting Antiochus, stresses the fact that Zeno, himself a pupil of Polemo, decided to depart from the Academy and create his own school; in opposition to Zeno's 'heresy', there is a conscious exaggerated attempt in Antiochus to show that the last generation of

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<sup>43</sup> Since Zeno, the founder of the Stoic school, was himself a pupil of Xenocrates and Polemo (s. D.L. 7.1), the Stoics could also claim an 'Academic' pedigree for themselves, thus rivaling Antiochus.

<sup>44</sup> See the remarks on Panaetius and Posidonius as 'Aristotelising' in Cicero. The Stoic account of ethics in Cicero's *De Finibus* 3 is characteristic of a new form of presentation of Stoic ethics, which took shape most probably under the influence of Academic attacks on the basis of Peripatetic premises.

<sup>45</sup> On the presentation of Stoicism as a mere *correctio* of the 'Old Academy', see *Acad.* 1.43: *horum esse autem arbitror, ut Antiocho nostro familiari placebat, correctionem veteris Academiae potius quam aliquam novam disciplinam putandam.*

<sup>46</sup> *S. Fin.* 3.41. The Antiochean spokesperson uses the same argument in *Fin.* 5.22.

<sup>47</sup> S. especially *Fin.* 4.79: *Panaetius nec acerbitatem sententiarum nec disserendi spinas probavit fuitque in altero genere mitior, in altero illustrior semperque habuit in ore Platonem, Aristotelem, Xenocratem, Theophrastum, Dicaearchum, ut ipsius scripta declarant.*

<sup>48</sup> Posidonius is attested to have commented on Plato's *Timaeus* in *S.E. Math.* 6.93.

<sup>49</sup> S. also the relevant discussion of Bonazzi in Sedley (2012:315).



Platonic pupils in the pre-Arcesilean era were 'diligent defenders of the doctrines that they had received from their predecessors', and, thus, the true guardians of the Platonic philosophy, which the late Stoics aimed at reviving<sup>50</sup>. This anti-Stoic aspect of the 'Old Academy' runs counter to the picture of a predominantly 'Stoicizing' Antiochus, which is prevalent in scholarly literature<sup>51</sup>.

In light of the assumptions presented, we may, by contrast, ascribe to Antiochus the belief that Peripatetic philosophy could incorporate Platonism and 'disarm' Stoicism, resulting in a unified front of Greek philosophy against the 'obscene' Epicurus. This could show that Greek philosophy was not in the hands of the sceptics torn between different, mutually exclusive positions, but could escape *diaphōnia* and offer a reliable tool of education, but also secure guidance for life.

Finally some remarks on the fate of the school: the movement of the 'Old Academy' was short-lived, although Antiochus' 'inclusive' view of the ancient tradition exercised a significant influence, which was transmitted through Cicero and Varro to Augustine and beyond. With the appearance of new intellectual centres and the creation of libraries in Rome<sup>52</sup>, Antiochus' dialectical defence of the 'ancients', which enabled an inclusive understanding of Platonism and, we may add, a Peripatetic reading of Plato, was superseded by the meticulous study of the ancient texts heralding the production of commentaries and exegetical works as the primary philosophical activity. The two most known pupils of Antiochus, Cratippus of Pergamum and Aristo of Alexandria were, perhaps under the pressure of arising competing interpretations of Plato<sup>53</sup>, forced to abandon the denomination of the 'Old Academy', and to proclaim themselves openly as

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<sup>50</sup> *Acad.* 1.34: post eos Polemo et Crates unaque Crantor in Academia congregati diligenter ea quae a superioribus acceperant tuebantur.

<sup>51</sup> Most notably, see Frede M. (1999: 776): 'But the picture of Plato's doctrine which he sc. Antiochus developed is one heavily coloured by Stoicism'. Cf. Annas (1993: 180). Hostile sources, such as S.E. *PH* 1.235 have contributed as well to the presentation of Antiochus as a Stoic.

<sup>52</sup> According to a story transmitted in Strabo xiii.1.54 and Plut. *Sulla* 26, the Aristotelian 'esoteric' treatises were bought by Apellicon around 100 BC and after the capture of Athens, Sulla took them to Rome and they became part of his library. The Greek grammarian Tyrannion worked on them, until Andronicus undertook a new edition of the Aristotelian text.

<sup>53</sup> This is a development associated with Eudorus of Alexandria.

Peripatetics; this is the evidence we have from Philodemus' *Index Academicorum*<sup>54</sup>. Cratippus, who became the teacher of Cicero's son, does not use the name of the 'Old Academy' anymore. And after the 40s BC, we find no recorded trace of the school of Antiochus, a period which might coincide with the editorial activity of Andronicus of Rhodes.

As part of this new shaping of philosophical identity, the denominations 'Academic' and 'Peripatetic', the collective names, which were still used by Antiochus gradually gave their place to those of 'Platonists' and 'Aristotelians'<sup>55</sup>, suggesting that philosophy was now centred on the fixed, written words of the two 'towering' masters, and not on the dialectical confrontation and comparison of their views with those of other schools, as it is still the case for Antiochus' treatment of the 'ancients'. Through a renewed close reading of Plato the attempt to understand him through Peripatetic schemata could be resisted as well and other methods of systematization, which could do justice to the Platonic metaphysics were sought. Most of this activity took place away from Athens. Although, Antiochus' 'Old Academy' prepared the ground for these exegetical movements, it stands alone as a 'post-hellenistic' phenomenon, which bridged Plato and Aristotle together under the banner of the latter and not the other way around: in the following centuries, Aristotle was recruited by philosophers who claimed to convey Plato's philosophy but, this time, in the service of the 'divine Plato'.

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<sup>54</sup> Col. 35, *Index Acad.* (PHerc. 1021). For a new reading of the fragments, see Blank (2007).

<sup>55</sup> For a mapping of this development, see Glucker (1978:206-25).

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