

Narrating Conversation – Narrating in Conversation: Narrative Strategies and Their Functions in Ancient Philosophic Dialogue

B04 (Strand “Narrating Ideas”)

Summary

Narratological studies of Greco-Roman antiquity have hardly treated philosophic dialogues because the representation of speeches seems at odds with narrative. Yet, dialogues are often narrated and narrative within characters' speeches is a key discursive strategy. Thus, this project theorizes narrative as a central feature of ancient philosophic dialogue for the first time. We hypothesize that narration in dialogue elucidates cross-cultural aspects of self-presentation and epistemology like autobiography and self-knowledge.

Narrated and Dramatic Dialogue: Plato, *Theaetetus* 143b5-7

“And as a matter of fact, I wrote the speech (*ton logon*) in this way, not with Socrates narrating to me in the way he was narrating (*Sōkratē diēgoumenon hōs diēgeito*), but conversing (*dialegomenon*) with the words with which he told me he conversed.”

Objectives

B04 investigates in its first phase Plato and Cicero's dialogues as the two most influential and sophisticated dialogue corpora of antiquity. Questions we ask include:

- (1) Does the choice of narrator influence the type of philosophical autobiographies given?
- (2) What inter- and intratextual connections are opened up by narrations in the dialogues?
- (3) How does an autobiographical narrative itself function as a type of argument?

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Richard Wilson (1713/14-1782): “Cicero, Atticus and Quintus at His Villa at Arpinum” (c. 1771-75). In Cicero's *De legibus*, the narration about the so-called oak tree of Marius starts the dialogue and the theoretical search for the best laws.

Work Packages

- (1) Peer-reviewed article providing the first general theory of narration in dialogue (PI).
- (2) Monograph comparing narration in Plato and Cicero (Postdoc).
- (3) International conference on narration in Plato and Cicero (PI and Postdoc).