***οὐ φιλοσόφος*?: The Significance of Philosophy to Fronto**

Thesis: Marcus Cornelius Fronto’s disavowal and hatred of philosophy has long been overstated. In this paper, I argue that while Fronto is not a philosopher, he uses philosophy to engage his student, Marcus Aurelius, in his rhetorical teachings. In doing so, Fronto can be seen to have a larger impact on Aurelius’ reign and philosophy than currently believed.

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| 1. | “Pius justly realized that such behaviour hardly befitted a future emperor, and so it was agreed between him and Marcus in 138 that the latter should stop behaving like a philosopher and accept the guidance of a man who could teach him the suitable conception of life. They decided on Fronto”.  (van den Hout 1999: viii-ix) | |
| 2. | ***Philosophis*** *etiam,* ***mirificis hominibus****, dicentibus sapientem virum etiam in Phalaridis tauro inclusum beatum nihilo minus fore, facilius crediderim beatum eum fore quam posse tantisper amburienti in aheno prohoemium meditari aut epichiremata scribere.*  (*ad Amicos* 1.15.2.4-5) | Also, although **philosophers**, **those wondrous creatures**, say that a wise man, even shut up inside the bull of Palarides, would be no less happy, I would more easily believe that he would be happy than that he, meanwhile, could reflect on poems in the burning bronze, or could write arguments. |
| 3. | *philosophi ipsi nonne diverso genere orationis usi sunt? Zeno ad docendum planissimus, Socrates ad coarguendum captiosissimus, Diogenes ad exprobrandum promptissimus, Heraclitus obscurus: involvere omnia,* ***Pythagora mirificus****: clandestinis signis sancire omnia, Clitomachus anceps: in dubium vocare omnia. quidnam igitur agerent isti ipsi sapientissimi viri, si de suo quisque more atque instituto deducerentur?*  (*de Eloquentia* 1.3.1-7) | Do philosophers themselves not use different kinds of speaking? Zeno is most clear for persuading, Socrates is most deceptive for arguing, Diogenes is most public for criticizing, Heraclitus is intricate: to involve everything, **Pythagoras is wondrous**: to make holy all things with hidden signs, Clitomachus is wavering: to call everything into doubt. So what would these wisest men themselves do, if they were drawn away from their own habit and custom? |
| 4. | *audivi te nonnumquam ita dicentem: “atenim cum aliquid pulchrius elocutus sum* ***placeo mihi*** *ideoque* ***eloquentiam fugio****.” quin tu potius illud corrigis ad mederis ne places tibi non ut id propter quod places repudies? nam ut nunc facis, alibi tu medicamenta obliges. quid tandem? si tibi placebis tibi pio aliquo cultu parentis, pietatem spernabere? places tibi cum facundus? igitur verbera te; quid facundiam verberas?* ***tametsi Plato ita diceret*** *itaque te compelleret: “o iuvenis,* ***periculosa est tibi praepropera placendi fuga****: novissimum namque homini sapientiam colenti amiculum est gloriae cupido; id novissimum exuitur.”* ***ipsi, ipsi,*** *inquam,* ***Platoni*** *in novissimum usque vitae finem Gloria amiculum erit.*  (*de Eloquentia* 2.9) | I have sometimes heard you speaking this way: “but when I have said something rather lovely, **I please myself** and so **I am avoiding eloquence**.” But why not rather correct this and heal it, so that you don’t please yourself, so that you don’t reject this because you are pleased by it? For as you are doing now, you are applying a remedy in the wrong place. Why? If you were pleasing to yourself because of some pious concern for your father, would you spurn piety? Do you please yourself when you are witty? Then beat yourself: why should you beat wit? **And even Plato would speak in this way**, and would compel you in this way: “O young man, **a sudden flight from pleasing things is dangerous for you**: the desire of glory is the last cloak for a man seeking wisdom; it ends last.” I say that **for even Plato himself**, glory was his last cloak up to the end of his life. |
| 5. | *Ἐγὼ δὲ ἐπανιὼν ποικίλα, ὦ ἑταῖρε, πρὸς ἐμαυτὸν ἐνενόουν, τὸ φιλόδοξον οἷόν τί ἐστιν ἀναλογιζόμενος,* ***ὡς μόνος οὗτος ὁ ἔρως ἄφυκτος καὶ τοῖς πάνυ θαυμαστοῖς εἶναι δοκοῦσιν****, οὐχ ὅπως ἐκείνῳ τἀνδρὶ καὶ τἄλλα ἐμπλήκτως καὶ ἀπονενοημένως βεβιωκότι καὶ οὐκ ἀναξίως τοῦ πυρός.*  (Lucian, *Peregrinus* 38) | While coming back I considered, friend, I wondered to myself what kind of a thing love of reputation seems, **that this love alone is inescapable even for those entirely considered to be excellent**, not only for that man living amazingly and desperately and who was not unworthy of the fire. |
| 6. | *novissimum namque homini sapientiam colenti amiculum est gloriae cupido*  (*de Eloquentia* 2.9.9-10)  *ὁ ἔρως ἄφυκτος**καὶ τοῖς πάνυ θαυμαστοῖς εἶναι δοκοῦσιν.*  (Lucian, *Peregrinus* 38) | |
| 7. | *erant quibus adpetentior famae videretur, quando etiam sapientibus cupido gloriae novissima exuitur*  (Tacitus, *Historiae* 4.6.1-2) | There were some for whom he seemed too eager for fame, since even for wise men the desire of glory dies last. |
| 8. | *ἦν δὲ ὁ Πλάτων πρὸς τῇ κακοηθείᾳ καὶ φιλόδοξος, ὅστις ἔφησεν· ἔσχατον τὸν τῆς φιλοδοξίας χιτῶνα ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτῷ ἀποδυόμεθα, ἐν διαθήκαις, ἐν ἐκκομιδαῖς, ἐν τάφοις,” ὥς φησι Διοσκουρίδης ἐν τοῖς Ἀπομνημονεύμασιν*  (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistoi* ΙΧ.507d.2-6) | Plato was also prideful about bad character, he used to say that “in old age we will shed the cloth of pride in death, in our wills, in our funeral processions, in our burials.” Thus the son of Dioscuros said in *The Memoirs.*” |
| 9. | *πολιτεία δὲ δημοκρατικὴ καὶ νόμιμος ἀνδρὸς εἰθισμένου παρέχειν αὑτὸν οὐχ ἧττον ἀρχόμενον ὠφελίμως ἢ ἄρχοντα καλὸν ἐντάφιον ὡς ἀληθῶς τὴν ἀπὸ βίου δόξαν τῷ θανάτῳ προστίθησι. τοῦτο γὰρ ἔσχατον δύεται κατὰ γᾶς, ὥς φησι Σιμωνίδης*  (Plutarch, *Fragments* 594) | After a man has been accustomed to rule a democratic and law-abiding city no less being ruled helpfully than ruling, truly reputation is a beautiful offering they give after life to the dead. For this in old age sinks under the earth, as Simonides says. |
| 10. | *at ego* ***sine istis artibus*** *omnem orationem absurdam et agrestem et incognitam, denique inertem atque inutilem puto. n****eque magis oratoribus arbitror necessaria eiusmodi artificia quam philosophis****. in ea re non oratorum domesticis, quod dicitur, testimoniis utar, sed* ***philosophorum eminentissimis****, poetarum vetustissimis, excellentissimisque, vitae denique cotidianae usu atque cultu artiumque omnium experimentis*. *quidnam igitur tibi videtur* ***princeps ille sapientiae simul atque eloquentiae Socrates****? huic enim primo ac potissimo testimonium apud te denuntiavi:* ***eone usus genere dicendi****, in quo nihil est oblicum, nihil interdum dissimulatum?* ***quibus*** *ille* ***modis*** *Protagoram et Polum et Thrasymachum et sophistas ceteros* ***versare atque inretire*** *solitus?*  (*ad M. Caesarem* 3.16.1.3-3.16.2.6) | But I think that **without these skills**, every speech would be absurd and common and confusing, and finally lazy and useless. **Nor do I think that skills of this kind are more necessary for speakers than for philosophers.** In this matter I will not use family testimonials of orators, as is said, but **the most famous of philosophers**, the oldest and most excellent poets, and finally the daily use and habit of life and the trials of all arts. Then how does **this prince of wisdom and eloquence at the same time, Socrates**, seem to you? I offer you the witness of that first and most able man: **Did he make use of this style of speaking**, in which nothing is tricky, and nothing at all is unclear? **With what ways** did he use **to spin and snare** Protagoras and Thrasymachus and other sophists? |
| 11. | ***Ὦ φίλε παῖ****, τρίτον δή σοι τοῦτο περὶ τῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιστέλλω, τὸ μὲν πρῶτον* ***διὰ Λυσίου τοῦ Κεφάλου, δεύτερον δὲ διὰ Πλάτωνος τοῦ σοφοῦ****, τὸ δὲ δὴ* ***τρίτον διὰ τοῦδε τοῦ ξένου ἀνδρός****, τὴν μὲν φωνὴν ὀλίγου δεῖν βαρβάρου, τὴν δὲ γνώμην, ὡς ἐγῷμαι, οὐ πάνυ ἀξυνέτου. γράφω δὲ νῦν* ***οὐδέν τι τῶν πρότερον γεγραμμένων ἐφαπτόμενος****, μηδὲ ἀμελήσῃς τοῦ λόγου ὡς παλιλλογοῦντος. εἰ δέ σοι δόξει τῶν πρότερον διὰ Λυσίου καὶ Πλάτωνος ἐπεσταλμένων πλείω τάδε εἶναι, ἔστω σοι τεκμήριον ὡς εὔλογα ἐξιῶ, ὅτι οὐκ ἀπορῶ λόγων. προσέχοις δ᾽ ἂν ἤδη τὸν νοῦν,* ***εἰ καινά τε ἅμα καὶ δίκαια λέγω.***  (*Additamentum* 8.1) | **O dear boy**, I send to you this third thing about these topics, the first one **from Lysias son of Kephalus**, **and the second from Plato the wise**, and this third **from a foreign man, a speech nearly of a barbarian**, but as I see it, the purpose is not completely unintelligible. I have written now, **laying hold to nothing of the previous writers**, so you might not abandon it as a repeated speech. If it will seem to you that this is longer than the ones already sent from Lysias and Plato, let it be a sign for you that I seek praises, because I am not at a loss for words. Pay attention now, **to whether I say new and just things.** |
| 12. | *Ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἔμοιγε ἐπ᾽ ὀλέθρῳ πρόσει οὐδὲ ἐπὶ βλάβῃ τινὶ ὁμιλήσεις, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ παντὶ ἀγαθῷ. καὶ ὠφελοῦνται γὰρ καὶ διασώζονται οἱ καλοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν μὴ ἐρώντων μᾶλλον, ὥσπερ τὰ φυτὰ ὑπὸ τῶν ὑδάτων. οὐ γὰρ ἐρῶσιν οὔτε πηγαὶ οὔτε ποταμοὶ τῶν φυτῶν, ἀλλὰ παριόντες οὕτω δὴ καὶ παραρρέοντες ἀνθεῖν αὐτὰ καὶ θάλλειν παρεσκεύασαν.*  (*Additamentum* 8.3.1-5) | But in my case, you will not be near to disaster, nor will you come near to any harm, but only every good. Beautiful boys are helped and preserved more by non-lovers, just like plants are by water. For springs and rivers are not the lovers of plants, but indeed being near and flowing by they prepare the plants to bloom and to grow. |
| 13. | *Ἕν τί σοι φράσω πρὸς τούτοις, ὃ καὶ σὺ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους* ***λέγων*** *παῖδας* ***πιθανὸς εἶναι δόξεις****. εἰκὸς δέ σε ἢ παρὰ μητρὸς ἢ τῶν ἀναθρεψαμένων μὴ ἀνήκοον εἶναι ὅτι τῶν* ***ἀνθῶν ἐστίν τι ὃ δὴ τοῦ ἡλίου ἐρᾷ*** *καὶ πάσχει τὰ τῶν ἐρώντων, ἀνατέλλοντος ἐπαιρόμενον καὶ πορευομένου καταστρεφόμενον, δύνοντος δὲ περιτρεπόμενον·* ***ἀλλ᾽ οὐδέν γε πλέον ἀπολαύει****, οὐδὲ εὐμενεστέρου πειρᾶται διὰ τὸν ἔρωτα* ***τοῦ ἡλίου****. ἀτιμότατον γοῦν ἐστιν φυτῶν καὶ ἀνθῶν οὔτε εἰς ἑορταζόντων θαλίας οὔτ᾽ ἐς στεφάνους θεῶν ἢ ἀνθρώπων παραλαμβόμενον. Ἔοικας,* ***ὦ παῖ****, τὸ ἄνθος τοῦτο ἐδεῖν ἐθέλειν·* ***ἀλλ᾽ ἔγωγέ σοι ἐπιδείξω, εἰ ἔξω τείχους πρὸς τὸν Ἰλισὸν ἅμα ἄμφω βαδίσαιμεν.***  (*Additamentum* 8.10-11) | I will show one thing to you beyond these, which thing **you should be persuasive in telling** the other boys. Likely you have certainly heard from your mother or from other caretakers that **of flowers there is one which follows the sun** and endures the things of lovers, lifting up when the sun rises, following as it goes, and setting back down when it sets, and turning itself when it sets. **But it does not benefit at all from the sun,** and it does not experience it as kinder because of its love. For it is dishonored of plants and flowers neither for festivities of festivals nor in the crowns of gods or men it is received. Perhaps, **boy**, you want to see this flower. **And I will show it to you, if outside the wall along the Ilissus we might walk together.** |

All translations are my own.

Text of Fronto from van den Hout 1988. Text of Lucian from Harmon 1936. Text of Tacitus from Moore and Jackson 1931. Text of Athenaeus from Olson 2008. Text of Simonides from Campbell 1991.

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