

Relating to Others, Relating to Oneself: Virtue and Intersubjectivity
in Menander's *Dyskolos*

David Konstan and Susan Lape, among others, have discussed civic preparation as an overarching theme in New Comedy (Post 1960; Barigazzi 1965; Konstan 1995; Haegemans 2001; Lape 2004; Traill 2008). In this paper I contribute to this discussion by emphasizing the *psychological* and *interpersonal* growth of the stock 'young man in love'. I examine the plot of the *Dyskolos*, arguing that Sostratos changes over the course of the play in respect of (a) his *degree* of awareness of others' subjectivity, and (b) the *kind* of relation between his and others' subjectivity.

As the *Dyskolos* opens, Sostratos realizes that, being in love, he does not know what action will benefit him (ἀλλ' οὐ ράιδιον / ἐρῶντα συνιδεῖν ἐστι τί ποτε συμφέρει (76-77)). His friend Chaeareas does understand action (καὶ φίλον καὶ πρακτικὸν / κρίνας μάλιστα (56)), so Sostratos calls on him for help. The friends' conversation ends with the conclusion that Sostratos' inability to act arises from his ignorance of Knemon's *feelings* about him (125), suggesting the *narcissistic* character of erotic love (in the senses of Freud and de Rougemont; cf. Rosivach 1998).

Indeed, Sostratos at first blames his former helper, the slave Pyrrhias, for Knemon's ill-feeling (138-142). Sostratos thus does not allow agency to Knemon, even as he does grant Knemon a minimal degree of subjectivity. When Knemon first appears, however, Sostratos accounts for Knemon's ill-feeling by observing that Knemon simply does not like people (οὐ πάνυ φιλάνθρωπον (147)). In contrast to the explanation Sostratos advanced earlier, the first face-to-face encounter between lover and blocking figure presents Knemon's misanthropy as something *not* entirely caused by Sostratos or his agents. This concession of both feeling and

agency to the blocker represents a major step toward Sostratos' awareness of others' independent subjectivity.

Sostratos' initial judgment of Knemon, however, remains a crude and unspecific stereotype, as if Sostratos, like Menander (Diogenes Laertius 5.36), had read Theophrastus' *Characters*, and recognized Knemon's loud self-locution as an index of the *dyskolos* type. Sostratos first recognizes another *individual* subjectivity during his first on-stage interaction with the girl (189-205): he acts, not only for himself, but also for her (ἐγὼ σοί), because she wants to get water (199-200).

In the remainder of the paper I extend these first three interactions' presentation of Sostratos' interpersonal growth as *increasing intersubjective competence*. Finally, I argue that this competence counts as equally familial and democratic-political virtue, thereby uniting political and domestic *eros* in the *ethos* of the newly mature young man.

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