The Fossilized Meaning of *Chreia* as Anecdote

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Abstract

The Hellenistic and early Imperial evidence of χρεία (*chreia*) in the sense of anecdote is summarized with the aim of completeness. The special rhetorical sense of this common Greek word is discussed, and a new explanation of the semantic derivation is offered: it is suggested that the sense of anecdote derives from the earlier sense of dealings rather than utility. The proposal that Metrocles or the Cynics invented the micro-genre of *chreiai* is strongly criticized. It is to the Socratics more generally we should look for its origins, if the genre must be supposed to have originated among philosophers, which is not certain.

Keywords


The common word χρεία (*chreia*), which had a rich semantic field already on its first appearances in archaic Greek, had dwindled by the late Middle Ages into an inglorious euphemism for 'latrine', only to disappear altogether in modern Greek. Yet, from early imperial times up to and throughout the Byzantine period, *chreia* continued to be used in the sense of 'anecdote' in the rhetorical handbooks known as *progymnasmata*, a sense that has received a fair amount of recent scholarly attention. A number of claims have been made for the *chreia* in this sense: that it is a Cynic invention, that it is a basic pericope of the
synoptic gospels and thus shows Cynic influence, that it is rather a much older practice in fact deriving from the classical school of Isocrates, that the name may be explained in terms of usefulness. It is the contention of this article that the educational practices associated with chreia as anecdote do not precede the mid to late Hellenistic period; that this technical sense of the word was already a Hellenistic fossil by the time of the extant treatises known as pro-
gymnasmata, being only rarely found outside of the confines of the grammar school after the first century, excepting authors who cite titles of or quote from Hellenistic works; that it did not originate as a synonym for apothegm but had become one by late antiquity. I will propose a new explanation of its etymology, connecting it more to the sense of familiar usage and conversation than to the more commonly assumed sense of utility or usefulness. I will assemble whatever evidence I have found for this sense of chreia outside its use within rhetorical education. I will argue both against tracing the chreia to specifically Cynic origins and for more generally viewing it as a Socratic phenomenon, if, indeed, the usage had philosophical origins, which I do not regard as proven. Finally, I will suggest a basic time-frame for its usage. What I will not do at length is to discuss the chreia in the progymnasmata for reasons presently to be explained.1

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1 The lexica I consulted were LSJ, Beekes (Brill’s Etymological Dictionary of Greek), Lampe (Patristic Greek), Montanari, Sophokles (Roman and Byzantine Greek), Stephanus. For specific discussions of the rhetorical sense of chreia, see: Colson 1921; Gerhard 1909, pp. 247-253; Gigon and Hommel 1965; Gow 1965, 12-15; Hollerbach 1964; Kindstrand 1986, 223-224, 229-242; Lausberg 1960, 117-1121; Schissel 1933; Trouillet 1979 (especially good); von Wartensleben 1901. There are fewer discussions of the related terms χρεία, γνώμη, ἀπόφθεγμα together. Useful are: Kindstrand 1986, 221-224; Overwien 2005, 28-35; Russo 1997; Searby 1998, 13-20; Searby 2007, 1-8; Stenger 2006. Morgan 2007 deals with proverbs, maxims, and chreiai (exempla), primarily as evidence for popular morality, though she does analyze the terminology to some extent, and refers to much relevant literature. With regard to recent interest, see e.g. essays on Cynic rhetoric in Branham and Goulet-Cazé 1996; Luzzatto 2004 on the school of Isocrates; the important study of Criboire 2001; the not very well informed article by Robbins 1985 (influenced by Crossan’s aphorism-spouting Jesus). For a well-referenced critique of Jesus as a “Cynic wordsmith” of aphoristic wisdom in the works of F.G. Downing, Burton Mack and Crossan, see Wright 1996, 35-74. A recent example of a discussion of the Greek terminology within biblical studies (with some inaccuracies) is Moeser 2002, 57-72. For an older but standard presentation of chreiai as a basic category of pericope within the Bultmannian school of form criticism, see Sanders and Davies 1989, 146-162.
1 By Way of Introduction

The context in which this article has arisen is my editorial work on the *Gnomologium Vaticanum* and related collections of *apophthegmata*. Although in that edition I will not deal with the contents of this article in any depth, I will deal more extensively with related topics, such as the terms ἀπομνημόνευμα (apomnēmoneuma), γνώμη (gnōmē) and ἀπόφθεγμα (apophthegma) as well as the *progymnasmata* tradition, which this article will, for reasons of economy, only treat in reduced fashion (but see n. 8 and § 6 on apothegm). Many relevant scholarly works that could be but are not cited here may in all likelihood be found cited there. In that edition, ‘apothegm’ is my preferred translation for the type of saying known as *chreia*. Here, however, I render it as ‘anecdote’, not merely because this has become quite standard among English-speaking scholars, but also because it serves as a reminder that the rhetorical and literary effects of the ancient *chreia* may be profitably compared to those of the modern anecdote. Strictly speaking, anecdote better renders the *apomnēmoneuma* of which the *chreia* may be considered a sub-category and thus *chreia* as known from the grammarians is better described ‘concise anecdote’; as will be seen I regard *apomnēmoneuma* and *chreia* as probably synonyms in their earlier use. I will not dwell on the meanings of either *gnōmē*, *apophthegma* or *apomnēmoneuma*, admitting that clearcut boundaries cannot be easily defined at least for *chreiai*, *apophthegmata* and *apomnēmoneumata*. However, the distinction between *chreiai* or *apophthegmata* and *gnōmai* is quite consistent over time, though there may be occasional exceptions.

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2 For *Gnomologium Vaticanum*, see Sternbach 1887-1889. My edition should be published in 2018 under the title *The Sayings and Maxims of the Greeks in Writings from the Greco-Roman World* (SBL). *An Edition of the Gnomologium Vaticanum and related collections*. The word *chreia* does not appear in the titles of medieval collections. The contents are described as *gnōmai* and *apophthegmata*, classifications also common in antiquity.

3 A few examples from works in my bibliography: “A *chreia* is a one-sentence anecdote” (Sedley 1998, 126); “anecdote (*chreia*)” (Heath 2002-2003, 132); “the *chreia* or anecdote is an instructive saying” (Penella 2011, 81). The list could be easily expanded to include a large number of English-speaking scholars who render *chreia* by anecdote.

4 For a good treatment of the anecdote in contemporary literary theory that connects it with Francis Bacon on the apothegm, see Silver 2011. Cf. also Moeser 2002, ch. 1.

5 Basically a *gnōmē* is an impersonal maxim; a *chreia* or *apophthegma* (the two being equivalent by the later period) is a saying attached to some person or character with at least a modicum of narrative. On *apomnēmoneuma*, see Patillon 1997, LVII-LIX, and Patillon 2008, 221 n. 19. On apothegm see n. 8 and § 6.
It is at the outset important to note how little we know of the origins of *chreia* as anecdote, whether it was particularly associated with one philosophical school more than others, exactly when and where rhetorical exercises involving *chreiai* originated, or how much this exercise influenced the synoptic evangelists. In one way it is easy to define and discuss *chreia* as anecdote, since grammarians or rhetoricians of the imperial period have already done so for us in their handbooks of rhetorical instruction (*progymnasmata* or preliminary exercises). They inform us that the *chreia* is a concise anecdote (*apomnēmoneuma*) recalling words or actions or both, appositely (εὐστόχως) attributed to a specific person (πρόσωπον). A maxim (*gnōmē*) can be turned into a *chreia* simply by attributing it to some person. It is called *chreia* because it is χρειώδης (*chreiōdēs*), that is useful, or βιωφελής (*biōphelēs*), that is beneficial, for life, or at least for the most part *chrēsimon* (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον χρησίμου τινὸς ἕνεκα, ps.-Hermogenes 3.1). A *chreia* found in several *progymnasmata* and medieval *gnomologia* is this: Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ τῶν Μακεδόνων βασιλεύς, ἐρωτηθεὶς ὑπὸ τινος ποῦ ἔχει τοὺς θησαυρούς, Ἐν τούτωι, ἔφη, δείξας τοὺς φίλους (‘Alexander the King of the Macedonians, asked by someone where he kept his treasures, said “In these”, pointing to his friends’).6 This may serve as an example typical for its length, form and content.

Permit me to introduce a thought experiment: if we did not know anything of the *chreia* from Imperial Age rhetoricians, what would we make of the books of *chreiai* attributed to various Hellenistic authors, titles along with excerpts of which we find in writers such as Diogenes Laertius, Athenaeus and Stobaeus? We would simply have to rely on our knowledge of the ordinary meanings of *chreia* and try to connect the dots. This will be my methodology here: I will try to avoid taking the *progymnasmata* as a starting point and will first look at the etymology of the word itself (§ 2), and then at the evidence for its specialized meaning outside of the *progymnasmata* (§§ 3-5). Only then will I return to the grammarians in § 6, albeit briefly, since the interested reader can find a number of valuable, recent studies on them elsewhere.7 My goal is to contribute to a broader contextualization of the *chreia* by summarizing all the evidence for its usage in a single paper. This will also lead me to deal with the alleged Cynic origins of the *chreia* in § 7, and to suggest a basic time-frame for its development in my concluding remarks.

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6 See further § 6 below. The Alexander *chreia* is no. 4 in the catalogue of *chreiai* in Hock and O’Neil 1986; it is found in, among others, Theon 100.11-13 (when referring to Theon, I refer to Spengel’s numbering as used in Patillon’s edition). See Hock and O’Neil for full references.

The Etymology

Unlike ἀπόφθεγμα (‘utterance’), there is nothing in the core-senses of chreia that naturally connects it to anecdote or saying. The usage thus begs an explanation, and already the late antique grammarians came up with one that is generally repeated today: it somehow derives from ‘use’ or ‘usefulness’. I think we can do better than this.

As in the case of words like χάρις (‘favor, thanks’), there is an in-built reciprocity of meaning in χρεία that invests it with a complex array of meanings, apparent on its first occurrences in Theognis, Pindar, the tragedians, Hippocratic treatises, Thucydides, Xenophon and Plato. The ordinary senses of the noun can be classified under two headings: need (neediness, necessity, want, lack, demand, request, requirement) and use (utility, service, equipment, business). Both Hans-Rainer Hollerbach and François Trouillet regard ‘need’ (Latin egestas) as the dominant semantic value from which the sense of ‘use’ (usus) derived; this conclusion is based on a hypothetically reconstructed progression of concepts beginning with a state of indigence or lack. Χρεία is undoubtedly equivalent to ‘need’ (want, lack, necessity) in such phrases cited by LSJ as χρείας ὕπο, φαρμάκων χρεία, ἵν᾽ ἔσταμεν χρείας, χρείᾳ πολεμεῖν (A. Th. 287, Pr. 481; S. OT 1443, OC 191). Already in Aeschylus χρεία appears in the sense of request or requirement (Pr. 700, Ch. 481), a sense also found in Thucydides (1.33, 37).

Yet the two earliest instances of χρεία are placed by LSJ under the sense of ‘use’ (advantage, service): χρείης εἵνεκα μηδεμίης (Thgn. 1.62), χρείαι δὲ παντοίαι φίλων ἄνδρών (Pi. N. 8.42). Although I would argue that even here the meaning of ‘need’ is more in the forefront, there is room for doubt. The earliest instances in prose (Antipho, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon) exemplify both senses (‘need’, ‘use’). First in Antipho we also find χρεία designating ‘familiarity’ (relationship,

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8 The noun ἀπόφθεγμα (apophthegma, apothegm) comes from the verb ἀποφθέγγομαι but is attested before it. The unprefixed, root verb is, of course, φθέγγομαι (‘utter a sound’), and that is about as early as can be, appearing frequently in Homer. The unprefixed noun φθέγμα (‘sound, utterance, saying’) is attested first in Pindar (e.g. P. 8.31) and the tragedians (e.g. S. OC 1623, E. Hipp. 648). Having gone through most if not all the instances of the verb ἀποφθέγγομαι in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae database, I conclude that the verb is consistently used to underlie an authoritative speech act, calling attention to a particular individual’s dramatic statement. On the noun see § 6.

9 It does not occur at all in epic nor in Herodotus. In this article we cannot address the whole semantic web of words related to χρή, nearly all of which, of course, are very elastic in sense. There is as yet no accepted account of its etymology.

10 Cf. Trouillet 1979, 44f.
dealings, intercourse): τῆς χρείας τῆς ἐμῆς καὶ τῆς Λυκίνου (Herodes 5.63). Several times χρεία is combined with κτῆσις as though equivalent to ἀπόλαυσις ('enjoyment, fruition'), e.g. in the phrase πρὸς φίλων κτῆσίν τε καὶ χρείαν in X. Mem. 2.4. Given the early appearance of the various nuances of the two principal meanings, a convincing argument, at least to my mind, is found in Georges Redard's valuable study on χρὴ and χρῆσθαι. There he describes the core meaning of the verb as a seeking to use (recourse), and affirms that this core meaning explains the other ordinary senses. At least this accounts for what we experience as a semantic divergence in its earliest instances.

Given these basic senses, how did chreia develop the specialized meaning of 'anecdote'? One possibility is that chreia comes from a phrase like χρεία τῶν λόγων ('the employment of words', cf. LSJ s.v. III 2 who cite Pl. Sph. 239d, Plt. 272d). However, this is not only too facile but also too general: we would still have to explain why 'use of words' came to signify this anecdotal form in particular. As noted above, later grammarians hold that it is called χρεία because it is χρειώδης (chreiōdēs), 'needful, serviceable, useful'. Why the noun would have been chosen instead of an adjective to designate useful sayings is difficult to understand: why should the usage be called 'usage par excellence' (χρεία κατ᾽ ἐξοχήν) because it is more 'useful for many purposes than the other exercises' (μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων πρὸς πολλὰ χρειώδης), the way Homer is called the 'poet par excellence' among many poets (καθάπερ καὶ Ὅμηρον πολλῶν ὄντων ποιητῶν κατ᾽ ἐξοχήν τούτων μόνον καλεῖν εἰώθαμεν ποιητήν)? These writers were writing hundreds of years after the anecdotal sense of chreia originated and after the chreia itself had been domesticated for school use, but their etymology has more or less steered modern interpretations.

Kurt von Fritz suggests that the sense of 'useful saying' was likely formed on the analogy of χρεῖαι ναυτικαί ('ship tackle', i.e. equipments). One problem with this is that the only example in Greek literature of χρεῖαι as equipment, as far as I can see, is the very one cited by LSJ from Ael. VH 2.10, an author himself writing hundreds of years after the first appearances of chreia as anecdotal

12 See Redard 1953, 109-110 where he sums up his findings.
13 I have not actually seen this explanation insisted on in any scholarly discussion, although von Fritz 1932 mentions χρεία ὀνομάτων in passing, only to reject it.
14 Theon 97.7-10. Theon has a special reason to underline its excellence; see § 6.
15 E.g. even in the fine study by Brancacci 1996 of the anecdotes of Diogenes in Pap. Vindob. G 29946; cf. p. 410: “il termine χρεία deve aver designato in origine una breve narrazione ... di un contenuto morale.”
16 Von Fritz 1932, 1484.
saying. Following up on the reference to Aelian, Trouillet explains the etymology thus: once it rendered the concept of utility, χρεία came to designate the useful thing itself, and it is within this register that χρεία developed in the vocabulary of rhetoric, acquiring the specialized sense of "a saying or action endowed with utility".\(^{17}\) So we are back to ‘usefulness’ as the etymological explanation. Not every scholar, however, has been satisfied with this. In his edition of the fragments of Machon’s Chreiai, useful for knowledge of various sexual positions but perhaps not in the sense intended by the grammarians (cf. § 6 below), A.S.F. Gow does mention Aphthonius’ explanation that chreia is so-called because it is chreiōdēs, but still feels that the name chreia “seems very odd and a more convincing explanation would be welcome”.\(^{18}\) William G. Rutherford also held that “the derivation of the rhetoricians cannot be accepted” and made the attractive suggestion that it more probably comes from being a remark πρὸς τὴν χρείαν \((ad\ hunc\ usum\ or\ just\ ad\ hoc)\), an apposite remark.\(^{19}\) Yet πρὸς τὴν χρείαν, the earliest examples of which I find in Aristotle, seems never to be used to describe remarks; usually the phrase means something like ‘as needed’.

I propose instead a derivation related to the sense of ‘intercourse’ and ‘familiar dealings’, attested already in the fifth century as noted above. Redard suggested that the core meaning of χρεία is a ‘seeking to use’, for which we may compare the English ‘recourse’. According to OED, ‘recourse’ is earliest defined as a turning to for help, which develops into ‘access to help’, ‘dealings, communication’, ‘source of help’, etc. English has no one word that covers both

\(^{17}\) Trouillet 1979, 53: “Aprè s avoir traduit le concept d’ ‘utilité’, χρεία a servi à désigner ce dans quoi il prend forme, c’est-à-dire ‘ce qui est doué d’utilité, une chose utile’. Ainsi chez Elien χρείαι ναυτικαί \((\text{VH 2.10})\), ce sont ‘les agrès’,—tout ce qui est utile à la manoeuvre d’un navire ... A l’intérieur de ce registre la fortune de χρεία s’est opérée dans le vocabulaire de la rhétorique.” This is also how the sense of latrine developed.

\(^{18}\) Gow 1965, 12 n. 3. I would note that even Nicolaus of Myra, the latest author of progymnasmata, does not seem at ease with the traditional explanation of the name. He writes: Εἴρηται δὲ χρεία, οὐχ ὅτι καὶ τἆλλα προγυμνάσματα οὐκ ἐκπληροῖ τινα χρείαν, ἀλλ’ ὅτι ἢ τῷ κοινῷ όνόματι κατ’ ἑξοχήν ὡς ἰδίων τετίμηται ὡσπερ Ὀμηρὸς ὁ ποιητὴς καὶ Δημοσθένης ὁ ρήτωρ, ἢ ός ἔπι τὸ πλεῖστον ἐκ περιστάσεως τυχος καὶ χρείας τὴν ἀρχὴν αὐτῆς ἔχρησα τις \((59-64)\). Hock and O’Neil 1986, 254 translate: ‘It is called ‘chreia’ not because the other progymnasmata do not satisfy some need (χρεία), but either because the chreia has been singled out with a common name as though it were a proper noun because of its excellence, just as Homer is referred to as Poet and Demosthenes as Orator; or because in the beginning someone used it (χράομαι) especially in response to some situation and need.’

\(^{19}\) Rutherford, \textit{A Chapter in the History of Annotation}, London 1905, 28. The reference comes from Colson 1921, 150; I have not been able to get a hold of Rutherford’s book.
need and use, but we can understand that such a multivalent word could acquire the sense of interchange or dealings. In fact *chreia* often means simply ‘intercourse, dealings or meeting’ in non-specialized Greek, overlapping in sense with ὁμιλία (*homilia*). Although *homilia* developed from a word meaning ‘crowd’, a comparison of the entries for *homilia* and *chreia* in standard lexica reveals several overlappings in meaning: ‘intercourse’ (also of a sexual kind), ‘conversation’, ‘familiar usage’, even simply ‘usage’ (e.g. αἱ τῶν λέξεων ὁμιλίαι, ὁμιλίαι φωνῆς). The sense of conversation and familiar usage eventually acquires a narrower, rhetorical sense in both cases, ‘anecdote’ in the case of *chreia*, ‘sermon’ or ‘lecture’ in the case of *homilia*. In some authors I have found *homilia* and *chreia* juxtaposed in the same phrases, apparently as synonyms. A few examples are: εἰς πᾶσαν ὁμιλίαν ὡς εἰπεῖν καὶ χρείαν ἀσφαλῆς (‘safe so to speak for all usage and intercourse’, Socraticorum epistulae, ed. M.I. Parente, ep. 25.1); εὔνοιαν δὲ καὶ χρεία καὶ ὁμιλία καὶ παιδιὰ πολιτικῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐπάγεται (‘familiar usage and dealings and sport among civil men leads to good-will’, Plu. Moralia 660A); αἱ δὲ ἐν ποσὶν ὁμιλίαι καὶ χρείαι ἀπολείπονται τῶν τεχνῶν (‘ordinary usage and practice fall short of the arts’, Max.Tyr., Dissertationes 17.3); one might also adduce ὁμιλίας χάριτι καὶ πολιτικάς χρείαις ἐτέρων λειτούμενος (‘falling short of others in graceful conversation and social skills’, Plu. Mar. 32).

Chreia in Book-Titles

We proceed now to look at occurrences of *chreia* as anecdote apart from the *progymnasmata*, beginning with its use in titles, the earliest evidence we have for this sense of the word. Titles of written works became increasingly important in the Hellenistic Age, keeping pace with the development of libraries, as well as increasingly more inventive than previously. Authors began to give more thought to the titles of their works, and, we may confidently assume,
librarians established certain titles which later became standard. Hellenistic titles similar to *Chreiai* are *Ὑπομνήματα* (‘reminders’ or ‘commentaries’) and *Διατριβαί* (more ‘pastimes’ than ‘diatribes’): these are words beginning with a more general sense that became technical through subsequent centuries of use. I submit that my proposed etymology of ‘familiar dealings’ fits well within the general context of Hellenistic book-titles, but I cannot pursue this at greater length here.

Unlike *gnōmai* and *apophthegmata*, *chreiai* (with one odd exception) does not appear in titles after the Hellenistic period, despite the use of rhetorical handbooks featuring the *chreia* throughout the Imperial period and Middle Ages. In the following list of occurrences in titles, I have aimed at completeness:

i. Χρεία πρὸς Διονύσιον, ἄλλη ἐπὶ τῆς εἰκόνος, ἄλλη ἐπὶ τῆς Διονυσίου θυγατρός (D.L. 2.84, first list of Aristippus’ books; see below on the singular usage)

ii. Χρειῶν τρία (D.L. 2.85, Sotion’s list of Aristippus’ books)

iii. Χρειῶν α´ (D.L. 5.81, list of works of Demetrius of Phalerum)

iv. Ἂ.Εκάτων ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις (D.L. 7.172 ,7.26 ,6.95 ,6.32 ,6.4)

v. Μετροκλῆς ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις (D.L. 6.33)

vi. Σωτίων δ´ ἐν τῷ ἑβδόμῳ ταῦτα μόνα φησι Διογένους ἐγνἶα ... Χρείας ... (D.L. 6.80)

vii. Ζήγων δ´ ὁ Κιτιεὺς ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις (D.L. 6.91)

viii. Χρειῶν δ´ (D.L. 7.36, works of Persaeus)

ix. Χρειῶν ια´ (D.L. 7.163, works of Ariston of Chios)

x. Περί χρειῶν (D.L. 7.175, works of Cleanthes)

xi. Μάχων δ´ ὁ κωμῳδιοποιὸς ἐν ταῖς ἐπιγραμμέναις Χρείαις (Athenaeus 13.577d, etc, cf. below §4)

xii. ἐκ τῶν Δίωνος Χρειῶν in Stobaeus (listed below)

xiii. ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλους Χρειῶν in Stobaeus (listed below)

Here the earliest author to whom books of *chreiai* are attributed is Aristippus, the pupil of Socrates; the latest, Dio Chrysostom according to Stobaeus.

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22 One example of this may be Xenophon’s *Apomnēmoneumata* (*Memorabilia*), for Xenophon himself gives no hint of such a title in this or other of his works.

23 These three works (συγγράμματα) of *chreiai* may or may not be the equivalent of the three *chreiai* mentioned in the first list of Aristippus works (no. i). In the other occurrences in D.L. we would take this to mean three volumes of *chreiai*, not three separate *chreiai*.

24 I note that Michel Narcy translates this as *Mots* rather than *Chries* in *Diogène Laërce* 5.82 (in Goulet-Cazé 1999). The transliterated word is elsewhere used by the other translators as well as by Narcy himself.
Hecaton according to Diogenes Laertius. When we read that three books of *chreiai* are attributed to Aristippus, we do not know whether Aristippus is being claimed as author of the books or subject; if the former, then Aristippus is the earliest writer to whom books of *chreiai* are attributed. The same ambiguity holds in other cases, for example, that of the Cynic Diogenes in D.L. 6.80.25 Here we need to exercise judgment: both Aristippus and Diogenes have a great number of anecdotes attributed to them, so the books of *chreiai* in their case are more probably *chreiai* about them rather than composed or compiled by them, though the singular usage in D.L. 2.84 points toward Aristippus as author (cf. § 7). Stoics are the best represented philosophers in the list: Zeno, Persaeus, Ariston, Cleanthes and Hecaton are all Stoics, although the title attributed to Cleanthes was surely not a collection of *chreiai* but a treatise about *chreiai* in one of the senses of the word. The surprising ‘*Chreiai* of Aristotle’ appears several times in Stobaeus.26 These *chreiai* are not sayings of Aristotle but of others, including some junior contemporaries of Aristotle. We may be dealing with a simple confusion of Aristotle for Ariston; the Aristotelian commentator Elias does refer a saying to Aristotle ἐν ἀποφθέγμασιν (CAG 18.1 In Porph. Isag., p. 21) that is elsewhere attributed to Gorgias but is also excerpted from the *Homoeomata* (*Similes*) of Ariston in Stobaeus (3.4.109).27 The *Chreiai* of Dio is the sole post-Hellenistic title, if indeed we are dealing with Dio Chrysostom, an exact contemporary of Plutarch (see below).

4 Excerpts from Collections of Chreiai

Leaving this survey of titles, we now proceed to what we can say about *chreiai* from the quotations of collections expressly entitled *chreiai*. When we examine Athenaeus’ extracts from the *Chreiai* of Machon (see no. xi in § 3), whose

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25 Bastianini 1992, 107 sees the early “collection” of anecdotes (the word *chreia* does not appear) in Pap. Vindob. 29946 as a possible testimony to the *Chreiai* of Metrocles, which, he suggests, is the same work as that which Sotion attributes to Diogenes, being *chreiai* of Diogenes collected by Metrocles.

26 Cf. Searby 1998, 77-84; Ranocchia 2011, 361-369 (who does not relay the argument of Searby accurately).

27 Or it may be a case of a collection beginning with sayings of Aristotle, though, again, none of the (hypothetical) initial Aristotle sayings appear in Stobaeus. Another possibility is that it refers to a Peripatetic collection that was mistakenly ascribed to Aristotle himself, possibly the *chreiai* of Demetrius of Phalerum or the *apophthegmata* of Callisthenes under the name of *chreiai*. It is at any rate more difficult to explain Stobaeus’ consistent mistake of Aristotle for Ariston with no variants than Ranocchia 2011, 361-369 allows.
floruit may be placed around 250 BC,\textsuperscript{28} we find that they tend to be quite a bit longer than the chreiai in the progymnasmata and likewise longer than most of the ones in my medieval gnomologia: they are not concise, one-line anecdotes. Moreover, they are not moralizing sayings but may simply be classified as urbane anecdotes of varying length like Xenophon’s apomnēmoneumata (‘recollections’) of Socrates; many of them involve courtesans with a number of explicit sexual jokes, others involve parasites and musicians. After a series of ribald sayings involving a courtesan named Mania, Athenaeus remarks: καὶ ἄλλων δὲ ἑταιρῶν ἀπομνημονεύματα ὁ Μάχων συνήγαγεν (‘Machon gathered recollections of other courtesans as well’, 13.579de). Athenaeus thus equated chreiai with apomnēmoneumata.\textsuperscript{29} To hazard a guess based on the fragments, Machon probably arranged his chreiai by main speaker (e.g. Mania, Stratonicus, Gnathaena), since Athenaeus tends to quote them in series. To save space, I will only offer one quite brief example involving a musician:

‘Ο χροιματοποιὸς Δωρίων ποτ’ εἰς Μυλῶν ἐλθὼν κατάλυσιν οὐδαμοῦ μισθωσίμην εὑρεῖν ἐν τεμένει καθίσας τιν, ὁ πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν ἦν κατὰ τύχην ἱδρυμένον, ἰδὼν τ’ ἐκεῖ θύοντα τὸν νεωκόρον, “πρὸς τῆς Ἀθηνᾶς καὶ θεῶν, τίνος, φράσον, ἐστίν ὁ νεώς, βέλτιστε, φῆσίν, οὔτοσίς;” ὁ δ’ εἶπεν αὐτῷ “Ζηνοποσειδῶνος, ξένε.” ὁ Δωρίων δὲ “πῶς ἂν οὖν ἐνταῦθ’, ἔφη, δύναιτο καταγωγεῖον ἐξευρεῖν τις, οὗ καὶ τοὺς θεοὺς φάσκουσιν οἰκεῖν σύνδυο;”\textsuperscript{30}

The musician Dorion visited Mylae once and was unable to find a room for rent anywhere. He sat down in a sacred precinct that happened to be located before the gates, and when he saw the person in charge of the temple making a sacrifice there, he said: “By Athena and the other gods—tell me, sir: whose temple is this?” The man said to him: “It belongs to Zenoposeidon, stranger.” And Dorion said: “How could anyone find a place to stay here, where they say that even the gods share a house?”

Like many of Machon’s chreiai, this is a short conversation involving a question and answer, although not all the fragments exhibit such a form, so typical of many later chreiai; yet nearly all of them do offer snippets of conversation within a briefly described setting. None of them are obviously moralizing or

\textsuperscript{28} Gow 1965, 7.

\textsuperscript{29} For a not dissimilar usage, cf. Plu. Cat.Ma. 7: ἡμεῖς δὲ τῶν ἀπομνημονευομένων βραχέα γράψομεν. After this follows a long series of chreiai, which he concludes in ch. 9 with the words: τὸ μὲν ὄν τῶν ἀπομνημονευόμενων γένος τοιοῦτόν ἔστιν.

\textsuperscript{30} Ath. 8.337c-d (Gow fr. 8), translation S.D. Olson (Loeb Classical Library).
involve instructions on how to live, so they cannot be called useful (chreiōdēs) at least in that sense, though they might be seen as useful for enlivening one's conversation or providing a writer with raw materials. Of course, it is possible that Machon—a comic poet—meant the title chreiai ironically, that is, if the genre was already perceived as moralizing, but Machon must still be placed early in the tradition, being in fact a junior contemporary of Metrocles, its alleged inventor (see § 7), so the ironical reference seems unlikely. Machon's chreiai are, at least, examples of witty conversation or ‘familiar dealings’.

Excerpts in the anthology of Stobaeus (ed. Wachsmuth and Hense) from explicitly so-called collections of chreiai come from either the Chreiai of Aristotle or the Chreiai of Dio (translations are my own):

A. Ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοτέλεως Χρειῶν

i. 3.5.42 Γέλων ο Σικελίας τύραννος σαπρόστομος ἦν. ὡς οὖν τῶν φίλων τις εἶπεν αὐτῷ, ὑφριζέτο τῇ γυναικί ὅτι οὐκ ἐμήνυσεν αὐτῷ· ἢ δὲ ἔφη, “ὡμην γάρ καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ὀμοίως ὧκειν τό στόμα.”

Gelon, the tyrant of Sicily, had mouth rot. When one of his friends told him so, he grew angry at his wife because she had not informed him. She, however, said “But, I thought every man’s breath smelled like that.”

ii. 3.7.29 Ἀνάξαρχος ὁ φυσικός, εἰπόντος αὐτῷ Ἀλεξάνδρου ὅτι “κρεμῶ σε”, “ἀπείλει τούτοις” ἔφη “τοῖς πολλοῖς· ἐμοὶ δὲ οὐδὲν διαφέρει ὑπὲρ γῆς ἢ κατά γῆς σήπεσθαι.”

When Alexander said to Anaxarchus the natural philosopher, “I shall hang you”, Anaxarchus replied, “Keep your threats for hoi polloi. As for me, I do not care whether I rot above ground or under it.”

iii. 3.7.30 Γοργὼ ἡ Λακεδαιμονία Λεωνίδου γυνή, τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς ἐπὶ στρατείαν πορευομένου, τὴν ἀσπίδα ἐπιδιδοῦσα εἶπεν “ἑκάτατα ἢ ἐπὶ ταύτας”.

The Spartan woman Gorgo, Leonidas’ wife, handed the shield to her son who was going off to war and said to him, “With it or on it.”

iv. 3.29.70 Λᾶσος ὁ Ἑρμιονεὺς ἐρωτηθεὶς τί εἴη σοφώτατον, “πεῖρα” ἔφη. Lasus from Hermione was asked, “What is the highest wisdom?” “Experience,” he said.

v. 3.29.90 Δημοσθένης ἐρωτηθεὶς “πῶς τῆς ῥητορικῆς περιεγένου;” “πλέον” ἔφη “ἐλαιον οἴνου δαπανήσας.” Demosthenes was asked, “How did you reach the peak of your profession as an orator?” He said, “By spending more money on lamp oil than on wine.”
vi. 4.1.144 Δημοσθένης ὁ ῥήτωρ ἔφη πόλεως εἶναι ψυχήν τοὺς νόμους· “ὡσπερ γὰρ σῶμα στερηθὲν ψυχῆς πίπτει, οὕτω καὶ πόλις μὴ ὄντων νόμων καταλύεται.”
Demosthenes the orator said that laws are the soul of the city-state, for “Just as a body bereft of its soul collapses, so too perishes the city with no laws.”

vii. 4.15b.31 Ζήνων ὁ Στωϊκὸς φιλόσοφος ὄρων τινα τῶν γνωρίμων ύπό τοῦ ἀγροῦ περισπώμενον εἶπεν “ἐὰν μὴ σὺ τοῦτον ἀπολέσῃς, οὐτός σε ἀπολέσει.”
Zeno the Stoic philosopher, seeing a disciple of his worrying about his land, said to him, “It will be the riddance of you, if you don’t get rid of your field.”

viii. 4.31c.91 Ἀνακρέων ὁ μελοποιὸς λαβὼν τάλαντον χρυσίου παρὰ Πολυκράτους τοῦ τυράννου, ἀπέδωκεν εἰπὼν “μισῶ δωρεάν, ἥτις ἀναγκάζει ἁγρυπνεῖν.”
Anacreon the lyric poet received a talent of gold from Polycrates the tyrant, but he returned it to him, saying “I hate the kind of gift that keeps me up at night.”

ix. 4.50b.83 Ἀλεξίς ὁ τῶν κωμῳδιῶν ποιητής, ἐπειδή τις αὐτὸν ὄντα πρεσβύτην ἑώρα μόλις πορευόμενον καὶ ἠρώτα “τί ποιεῖς” , ἔφη “κατὰ σχολὴν ἀποθνήσκω.”
Someone saw Alexis the comic poet making his way with great difficulty due to his advanced age and asked him, “What are you up to?” Alexis answered, “I’m dying at a leisurely pace.”

x. 4.51.28 Γοργίας ὁ ῥήτωρ ἠδη γηραιὸς ὑπάρχων ἐρωτηθεὶς εἰ ἡδέως ἀποθνήσκοι, ἡδιστα” εἶπεν “ὥσπερ δὲ ἐκ σαπροῦ καὶ δέσποντος συνοιχιδίου ἀσμένως ἀπαλλάττομαι.”
Gorgias the orator, when he was already an old man, was asked if he would be content to die. “Quite content,” he said, “just as glad as I would be to move out of rotting and leaky tenement.”

B. Ἐκ τῶν Δίωνος Χρειῶν

i. 2.31.89 Ἀθηναίοις ἐρομένοις, ὅπως λῷον ἄν ἄντοις γίγνοιτο, ἔχρησεν ἡ Πυθία· εἰ τὸ κάλλιστον εἰς τὸ δεξιὸν οὖς τῶν παιδῶν ἐντιθέναι βούλεται· οἱ δὲ τρήσαντες αὐτὸ χρυσίον ἐνέβαλλον, ἠγνοήσαντες, ὅτι τὸν φιλόσοφον λόγον ἔμισσε.
The reply of the Pythia to the Athenians’ question how they might improve their situation was: “Deposit your finest possession in the right ear of your children.” They pierced the children’s ears and put
a piece of gold in it, not understanding that the priestess meant philosophical discourse.

ii. 3.7.28 Λάκαινα γυνὴ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς ἐν παρατάξει χωλωθέντος καὶ δυσφοροῦντος ἐπὶ τούτῳ “μὴ λυποῦ, τέκνον” εἶπεν “καθ’ ἕκαστον γὰρ βήμα τῆς ίδίας ἀρετῆς ύπομνηματίσθη.”

When her son came home lame from battle and upset about it, a Spartan woman said, “Do not be sad, my son, that your virtue is commemorated at every step.”

iii. 3.13.42 Τὴν ἐπιτίμησιν ὁ Διογένης ἀλλότριον ἀγαθὸν ἔλεγεν εἶναι. Diogenes used to call censure a good belonging to another.

iv. 3.34.16 Τῶν συνόντων τις μειρακίων Διογένει, ἐρωτώμενος ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐσιώπα· ὁ δὲ ἔφη “οὐκ οἴει τοῦ αὐτοῦ εἶναι ταὶ λεκτέον καὶ πότε, καὶ τίνα σιωπητέον, καὶ πρὸς τίνα;”

When one of the lads hanging around Diogenes, asked a question by him, remained silent, Diogenes said “Don’t you think it is the same thing to know what and when to speak and what and concerning what to be silent?”

Most of the ten selections from the ‘Chreiai of Aristotle’ have direct parallels in the progymnasmata or in medieval gnomologia, and all of them would fit in.31 Despite their alleged attribution to Aristotle, these chreiai, although mentioning a couple of philosophers, can only by a long stretch of the term be called philosophical chreiai. B.ii, iii and iv from the ‘Chreiai of Dio’ resemble anecdotes found elsewhere; B.i sticks out stylistically as an historical example of the misunderstanding of an oracle; it is coined on a passage in a genuine oration of Dio Chrysostom, which appears to confirm the attribution in Stobaeus and gainsays conjectures of any mistake for a ‘Chreiai of Diogenes’.32 That said, it does not confirm the authorship of Dio himself, for the title may simply refer to chreiai collected by someone else from the diatribai of Dio.

We have already seen the term chreia in book titles in Diogenes Laertius.33 With one exception the titles tell us nothing about the form or content. The exception really is an exception, for we find chreia in the singular with

32 D.Chr. Orat. 32.3: τοῦ γὰρ Ἀπόλλωνος εἰπόντος, εἰ δέλουσιν ἅνδρας ἁγαθούς ἐν τῇ πόλει γενέσθαι, τὸ κάλλιστον ἐμβάλλειν τοῖς ῥά τῶν παίδων, οἱ δὲ τρήσαντες τὸ ἄλλο χρυσίον ἐνέβαλον, οὐ συνέντευξι τοῦ θεοῦ. Not noticing this passage, Rose 1863, 612-613 argued that Dio was a mistake for Diogenes in Stobaeus, but Dindorf included them in his edition of the fragments of Dio Chrysostom. See also Fuentes González 2011, 406-407.
33 The best survey of the chreia in D.L. is still that of Kindstrand 1986.
qualifying prepositional phrases in the first list of Aristippus’ works (D.L. 2.84): Χρεία πρὸς Διονύσιον, ἄλλη ἐπὶ τῆς εἰκόνος, ἄλλη ἐπὶ τῆς Διονυσίου θυγατρός.34 The sense of anecdote may be doubted here, and perhaps that of transaction or petition is intended. However, if chreia as ‘anecdote’ is intended, then it better fits my proposal that chreia originally represented a conversation rather than the concise anecdote of the progymnasmata, since the only thing these titles tell us is that these chreiai must have been long enough to stand alone, not unlike the longer apomnēmoneumata of Xenophon.35

In one of the three occurrences of chreia as anecdote apart from book titles, Diogenes tells us that Arcesilaus ‘used to bring up’ the chreiai of Aristippus (προεφέρετο τὰς Αριστίππου χρείας, D.L. 4.40). The verb προφέρω here can be taken to mean ‘cite’ (as one cites in excuse or defense of something), and we may assume that it refers to citing the numerous sayings elsewhere attributed to Aristippus rather than the chreiai attributed to him in the lists of works, unless these be in some sense equivalent.

Diogenes Laertius offers these extracts from chreiai collections expressly so called:

i. κρεῖττον ἔλεγε, καθά φησιν Ἑκάτων ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις, εἰς κόρακας ἢ εἰς κόλακας ἔμπεσεῖν· οἱ μὲν γὰρ νεκροὺς, οἱ δὲ ζῶντας ἐσθίουσιν. (D.L. 6.4)

“Better,” Antisthenes used to say, according to Hecaton in the Chreiai, “to fall to crows than to flatterers. The former consume dead men, the latter living ones.”

ii. φωνήσας ποτέ, “ἰὼ ἄνθρωποι,” συνελθόντων, καθίκετο τῇ βακτηρίᾳ, εἰπών, “ἀνθρώπους ἐκάλεσα, οὐ καθάρματα,” ὡς φησιν Ἐκάτων ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Χρειῶν. (6.32)

Once Diogenes cried out, “People!”, and when some people gathered, he hit them with his cane, saying “I called for people, not trash!”, as Hecaton states in the first book of (the) Chreiai.36

iii. εἰσελθών ποτε ἡμιξύρητος εἰς νέων συμπόσιον, καθά φησι Μητροκλῆς ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις, πληγὰς ἔλαβε· μετὰ δὲ ἐγγράφας τὰ ὀνόματα εἰς λεύκωμα τῶν πληξάντων περιήκε ἐξημμένος ἕως αὐτοὺς ὕβρει περιέθηκε καταγινωσκομένους καὶ ἐπιπληττομένους. (6.33)

34 The preposition shifts from πρὸς (in reply to or possibly simply with as in διαλέγεσθαι πρὸς τινα) to ἐπὶ (on or concerning).

35 If one were to interpret chreia here as equivalent to dialogue, this would undergird my point about the fluidity of chreia as a literary category in the early stage.

36 Cf. the Arabic in Gutas 1975, 67 n. 8.
Diogenes once went into a party of young people with his head half-shaved, as Metrocles relates in the *Chreiai*, and was beaten up. Afterwards he wrote the names of his attackers on a chalkboard that he hung about his neck, and then walked around until he brought insult on them by allowing them to be known and beaten up.

iv. Ζήνων δ’ ὁ Κιτιεὺς ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις καὶ κώδιον αὐτὸν φησὶ ποτε προσράψαι τῷ θρίβων ἄνεπιστρεπτοῦντα. (6.91)

In the *Chreiai*, Zeno of Citium relates that Crates once sewed a sheepskin on to his worn-out cloak without a care.

v. Οὔτος τὰ ἔκατον συγγράμματα κατακάιον, ὡς φησὶν Ἐκάτων ἐν πρώτῳ Χρείων, ἐπέλεγε τάδ’ ἔστ’ ὄνειρων νερτέρων φαντάσματα. (6.95)

As Hecaton relates in the *Chreiai*, Metrocles burned up his own books, saying as he did so: “They are phantoms of infernal dreams.”

vi. φησὶ δὲ καὶ Ἐκάτων ἐν τῷ δευτέρῳ τῶν Χρειῶν ἀνιεσθαί αὐτὸν ἐν ταῖς τοιαύταις κοινωνίαις. (7.26)

In the second book of the *Chreiai*, Hecaton says that Zeno would allow himself to relax in such gatherings (drinking parties).

vii. φησὶ δ’ ὁ Ἑκάτων ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις, εὐμόρφου μειρακίου εἰπόντος, “εἰ ὁ εἰς τὴν γαστέρα τύπτων γαστρίζει, καὶ ὁ εἰς τοὺς μηροὺς τύπτων μηρίζει,” ἔφη, “σὺ μὲν τοὺς διαμηρισμοὺς ἔχε, μειρακίον· αἱ δ’ ἀνάλογα φωναὶ τὰ ἀνάλογα οὐ πάντως σημαίνουσι πράγματα.” (7.172)

Hecaton relates in the *Chreiai*, that when a good-looking youth said, “If someone who slaps his stomach _gastrizei_, then someone who slaps his thigh _mērizei_,” Cleanthes answered: “Keep your thighs to yourself, boy! Analogous terms do not always signify analogous actions.”

*Chreia* i is in many medieval *gnomologia*; ii and v are without parallel but perhaps would not be out of place in the *gnomologia* or the *progymnasmata*; vii is a terminological joke that more resembles Machon than *chreiai* in the later sources. Even if their moral point can be understood, *chreiai* iv and vi are more difficult to classify and do not resemble later ones; the original context was probably more informative. Though iii has a moral point and would be classified as an action *chreia* according to later categories in the *progymnasmata*,

37 The words following this (ἐλέγε τε κρείττον εἶναι τοῖς ποσὶν ὀλισθεῖν ἢ τῇ γλώττῃ, τὸ εὖ γίνεσθαι μὲν παρὰ μικρὸν, οὐ μὴν μικρὸν εἶναι, οἱ δὲ Σωκράτους) may also come from Hecaton but this is uncertain. My method is to only include unquestionable excerpts from books of *Chreiai* as our fixed points of reference.

38 See references in *Corpus Parisinum* (Searby 2007) 3.57 and 3.471.
it is less concise than their typical *chreiai* and may have been longer in the original context of the *chreiai* here apparently attributed to Metrocles (for more on this see § 7).

5 **Other Occurrences of *Chreia* as Anecdote**

These, then, are the principal examples of quotations from works expressly entitled *chreiai*. Apart from *progymnasmata*, there are surprisingly few instances of *chreia* as anecdote in extant Greek literature, including the medieval period, at least as far as I have seen. None of the surviving collections of apothegms, which might otherwise fit the bill, from Plutarch to our medieval *gnomologia*, are ever entitled *chreiai*, nor is the word *chreia* ever used in this sense in the medieval collections. The Suda states that Theocritus of Chios composed *chreiai* (θ 166), and that Myro, a female philosopher from Rhodes, compiled *χρείας γυναικῶν βασιλίδων καὶ μύθους* (μ 1465); we may assume she belongs to the Hellenistic period. Menander of Laodicea (Menander Rhetor) speaks of the usefulness of *chreiai* and other sayings in achieving a conversational style:

Χρησιμώτατοι δὲ πρὸς λαλῆν καὶ οἱ Πλουτάρχειοι βίοι, ὥσπερ εἰς ἄλλην πολλὴν καὶ παντοδαπῆ παίδευσιν καὶ γὰρ πλήρεις εἰσὶν ἱστοριῶν καὶ ἀποφθεγμάτων καὶ παροιμιών καὶ χρειῶν ταῦτα γὰρ πάντα καταμιγνύναι ταῖς λαλιαῖς χρήσιμον, ἵνα πανταχόθεν τὴν ἡδονὴν θηρεύσωμεν. 39

Plutarch’s *Lives*, too, are most useful for informal talks, as well as for all kinds of educational use. For they are full of stories, apothegms, proverbs and *chreiai*. It is useful to mix all these into one’s talk so that we may pursue what is pleasing everywhere.

There may be subtle allusions to both *chreia* and *gnōmē* in Plutarch’s dedicatory preface to *Sayings of Kings and Commanders* (Βασιλεῶν ἀποφθέγματα καὶ στρατηγῶν), whether or not the preface is genuine:

Τοιαύτη δὴ τινι γνώμη κάμοι λιτά σοι δώρα καὶ ξένια καὶ κοινὰς ἀπαρχὰς προσφέροντος ἀπὸ φιλοσοφίας ἁμα τῇ προθυμίᾳ καὶ τὴν χρείαν ἀπόθεξα τῶν ἀπομνημονευμάτων, εἰ πρόσφορον ἐχει τι πρὸς κατανόησιν ἡδῶν καὶ

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προσιρέσεων ἡγεμονικῶν, ἐμφαινομένων τοῖς λόγοις μᾶλλον ἢ ταῖς πράξεσιν αὐτῶν.⁴⁰

And so, with some such thought (gnōmē) in mind, I likewise offer to you trifling gifts and tokens of friendship, the common offerings of the first-fruits that come from philosophy, and I beg that you will be good enough to accept, in conjunction with the author's ready goodwill, the utility (chreia) which may be found in these brief notes (apomnēmoneumata), if so be that they contain something meet for the true understanding of the characters and predilections of men in high places, which are better reflected in their words than in their actions.⁴¹

More importantly, Plutarch's Apophthegmata laconica 218A contains one of only three uses of the word chreia (as anecdote) within a chreia that I have seen:

Ἀρίστων, ἐπαινοῦντός τινος τὴν τοῦ Κλεομένους χρείαν, ὅτι ἐρωτηθεὶς τί δεῖ τὸν ἀγαθὸν βασιλέα ποιεῖν εἶπε τοὺς μὲν φίλους εὐεργετεῖν τοὺς δὲ ἐχθροὺς κακῶς ποιεῖν· "καὶ πόσῳ κρεῖσσον" ἔφη, "ὦ λύστε, τοὺς μὲν φίλους εὐεργετεῖν τοὺς δὲ ἐχθροὺς φίλους ποιεῖν; αὕτη Σωκράτους ὁμολογουμένη πρὸς πάντων χρεία οὖσα καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἀναφέρεται.

When someone praised the chreia of Cleomenes who, when asked what a good king should do, said "benefit his friends, harm his enemies", Aristo replied, “how much better, my good man, to benefit your friends and to make friends of your enemies”. This is generally agreed to be a chreia of Socrates and is attributed to him.

Here chreia occurs both in the anecdote itself and in the authorial or scribal note following it. There are two other such instances in Diogenes Laertius.⁴²

One, almost never discussed, is Zeno's citation of a chreia within a chreia in D.L. 7.19:

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⁴¹ It is still being debated whether or not this collection is Plutarch’s or pseudo-Plutarch’s. François Fuhrmann, the most recent editor of the Plutarchean apothegms, vigorously defends the authenticity of attribution (cf. Fuhrmann 1988, 1-10, 133-139). The one appearance of chreia as anecdote in the undisputed works of Plutarch is quoted in § 6 below.
⁴² Chreia in other senses occurs several times in D.L., including within chreiai, e.g. D.L. 2.118 (Stilpo).
Πρὸς δὲ τὸν φάσκοντα ώς τὰ πολλὰ αὐτῷ Ἄντισθένης οὐκ ἀρέσκοι, χρείαν
Σοφοκλέους προενέγκαμεν ήρωτησεν εἰ τινα καὶ καλὰ ἔχειν αὐτῷ δοκεῖ: τοῦ
δ᾽ οὐκ εἰδέναι φήσαντος, “εἴτε οὐκ αἰσχύνη,” ἐφη, “εἰ μὲν τι κακὸν ἢν εἰρημένον
ὑπ’ Ἄντισθένους, τούτ’ ἐκλεγόμενος καὶ μνημονεύων, εἰ δὲ τι καλὸν, οὐδ’
ἐπιβαλλόμενος κατέχειν;”

To someone who was saying that he didn’t much like Antisthenes, Zeno
cited (προφέρω) a chreia of Sophocles and asked if he thought it made any
good points. When the other man said he didn’t know, Zeno asked, “Aren’t
you ashamed to collect and remember anything bad said by Antisthenes
without even attempting to recall anything good he may have said?”

Here we have a chreia quoted within a chreia of the founder of the Stoics to
whom a collection of chreiai is attributed, yet no scholar argues for the Stoic
origins of the genre. This stands in stark contrast to our second example found
in the Life of Aristotle:

Διογένους ἰσχάδ’ αὐτῷ διδόντος νοήσας ὅτι, εἰ μὴ λάβοι, χρείαν εἴη μεμελετηκώς,
λαβὼν ἔφη Διογένην μετὰ τῆς χρείας καὶ τὴν ἰσχάδα ἀπολωλεκέναι.43

Diogenes offered him (Aristotle) a fig. He (Aristotle) thought that, should
he not take it, he (Diogenes) would have rehearsed a chreia (for the occa-
sion). So Aristotle took it, saying that Diogenes had lost his fig along with
his chreia.44

Scholars have seen this instance of chreia as support for the idea of the Cynic
origins of the genre.45 There is a close parallel to this in the Life of Stilpo:

43 D.L. 5.18.
44 Here I use ‘rehearse’ in the sense of practice as for an oral performance. The verb μελετάω
(here in a conditional sentence in indirect discourse after νοήσας ὅτι, hence the perfect
optative) regularly means ‘practice’ (often equivalent to ἀσκέω)—to practise a trade, an
art or, as here, a verbal quip. My translation agrees with that of Narcy in Goulet-Cazé
1999, 572-573. There remains an ambiguity as to who is the subject of which verb, so one
cannot entirely exclude the possibility that it is Aristotle who has rehearsed a chreia and
Diogenes who loses the opportunity of hearing it.
45 On this passage, see e.g. Kindstrand 1986, 223-224; Narcy’s comment in Goulet-Cazé 1999,
295; Sluiter 2005, 150-151.
Crates offered him a fig once and a question. Stilpo took it and ate it up. “Heracles!” said Crates, “I lost my fig!” “Not only that”, said Stilpo, “but also the question for which the fig was a bribe.”

These two versions, both involving Cynics, may conceal a reference to an otherwise unknown game of offering a fruit. The Stilpo version strikes me as being earlier, both because it seems to refer to a popular custom in which only a correct answer gives the right to consume the fruit and because it does not contain the word chreia. I suspect this word to be a substitution in a later retelling, once the teaching of chreiai had become more established, rendering the anecdote more intelligible to a later reader. The change of names would also help later readers grasp the point. Given that Diogenes figured widely in the chreiai used in the schools, the anecdote in D.L. 5.18 shows us Aristotle beating Diogenes at his own game, but it does not prove that the chreia tradition itself originated with Diogenes; it only indicates that it was regarded as a speciality of his.

6 Back to the Progymnasmata

The sources for all the instances of chreia in §§ 3-5 are authors of the Imperial Age, though they are referring to or quoting from Hellenistic writers. As far as I know, there are no occurrences of the word chreia as anecdote in early papyri, and, in fact, in only one later papyrus, a fragment of a rhetorical treatise.

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46 D.L. 2.118.
47 Cf. Düring 1957, 66.
48 There is some possibility that chreia need not carry the connotation of ‘quip’ at all, since the widely attested meaning of request or transaction could serve as well in which case fig and chreia (request) in the Stilpo version would be a more precise parallel to fig and question (ἐρώτημα) in the other.
49 PSI I 85 dated to the third century. See Hock and O’Neil 1986, 9. A recent discussion and re-edition is Bastianini 2004. For this article I am interested only in explicit occurrences of chreia as anecdote and not in any occurrences of concise anecdotes in the papyri; for two important papyrological volumes related to chreiai more generally, see CPF 2015, especially the preface to the section on chreiai by G. Bastianini, 364-365; and CPF 2017.
The exiguity of the evidence has made our interpretation of *chreia* as anecdote heavily dependent on the information supplied in the *progymnasmata*.50

The three most important extant ancient or late antique handbooks are attributed to Theon, pseudo-Hermogenes (a.k.a. pseudo-Libanius), and Aphthonius.51 In addition to these, there are a number of relevant fragments or allusions in various extant authors, none earlier than the first century of our era, as well as medieval *progymnasmata*.52 Ronald F. Hock and Edward N. O’Neil published three valuable volumes on the *chreia* in ancient rhetoric: Hock and O’Neil 1986 collects the discussions of *chreia* in the four Greek treatises as well as in three Latin;53 Hock and O’Neil 2002 collects the evidence for exercises of copying, declining and elaborating *chreiai* in the papyri as well as in mostly Byzantine authors; Hock 2012 deals with the commentaries and scholia on Aphthonius concerning the use of *chreiai*. Michel Patillon, George Kennedy, Malcolm Heath and several other recent scholars have made important contributions to the study of ancient rhetoric that are also relevant to the *chreia* tradition.54 The *progymnasmata* reveal a settled educational practice in which teachers, tending toward pedantry, define the *chreia* as a brief recollection (*apomnēmoneuma*), make reference to its usefulness, and offer various classifications of different types of *chreiai* (cf. § 1).

Setting aside the Hellenistic works cited by Imperial Age authors, our earliest, securely datable mentions of *chreia* as anecdote are in Plutarch, Seneca and Quintilian.55 In addition to my quotations from the collections of apothegms going under the name of Plutarch in § 5, we also have his disparaging words in *De profectibus in virtute* (Mor. 78F): ἔνιοι δὲ χρείας καὶ ἱστορίας ἀναλεγόμενοι

50 The word προγύμνασμα is first attested in Anaximenes, Rhet. 28.4 (previously Aristotle, Rhet. ad Alex. 1436a25). I thank prof. Gerard Boter for pointing this out to me.

51 Later *progymnasmata* texts on *chreiai* are also conveniently collected in Hock and O’Neil 1986; Nicolaus of Myra (5th century) is interesting especially for his remarks about *progymnasmata* in general within his treatment of the *chreia*.

52 Heath 2002-2003 provides a catalogue not only of writers of extant *progymnasmata* but also of writers to whom *progymnasmata* were attributed.

53 Aelius Theon, Quintilian, Hermogenes, Priscian, Aphthonius, Nicolaus, and an anonymous Latin treatise called Vatican Grammarian, earlier often considered to be a fragment of Charisius.

54 Cf. n. 7 above.

55 Hock and O’Neil 1986 place Theon (Aelius Theon) before Quintilian, following the majority of scholars, including Patillon, the most recent editor. More recently, however, Heath 2002-2003 has produced substantive reasons to date him to the fifth century, and I find his argument persuasive.
περιίασιν, some people ‘go about collecting anecdotes and stories about philosophers’ but lack philosophical perception. Seneca offers similar thoughts in Ep. 33.7: ideo pueros et sententias ediscendas damus et has quas Graeci chrias vocant, ‘this is why we make boys learn both maxims and those the Greeks call chreiai’ because their young age does not yet have the capacity of deeper philosophical insight.\(^{56}\) Seneca goes on to criticize the men who immaturely keep quoting the sayings of others with no originality: aliquid et de tuo profer (‘offer some thought of your own as well’)! Both Plutarch and Seneca here associate chreiai (as well as maxims and other stories) with first steps in moral philosophy rather than rhetoric or grammar, and their criticism is similar: these beginners learn how to quote but not to think on their own.

Quintilian is our earliest author to offer a brief description of chreiai in the context of elementary literary instruction (Inst. 1.9.3-6), mentioning their typical classifications (i.e. as simple statements, as replies or reactions, as describing actions) as well as the custom of declining them. Like Seneca, Quintilian uses the Greek word in transcription, but he equates chreia with narratiuncula.\(^{57}\) He places the chreia exercise under the supervision of the grammaticus before the boys are placed under a rhetor (priusquam rhetori tradantur). Quintilian does not speak of the chreia being so called because of its usefulness, but he does give us a different sense of chreiodēs (χρειώδης) when he mentions a third type: et aliud paene par ei, quod tamen eodem nomine appellare non audent, sed dicunt χρειώδες. Hock and O’Neil correctly translate this as: ‘And there is another type almost its equivalent, which they nevertheless do not venture to call by the same name but instead call ‘chreia-like’.’\(^{58}\) The example given by Quintilian is: ‘Milo used to carry the bull which he had grown accustomed to carry as a calf’ (Milo quem vitulum adsueverat ferre, taurum ferebat). This is not dissimilar to chreiai iv and vi (D.L. 6.91, 7.26) in § 4 above, yet this kind of chreia is not found in the Greek progymnasmata where the few examples of

\(^{56}\) I translate the et ... et as ‘both maxims and chreiai’, because I am convinced that Seneca is here alluding to the distinction between gnōmē and chreia that we find in the progymnasmata.

\(^{57}\) Narratiunculas a poetis celebratas notitiae causa, non eloquentiae, tractandas puto (Quint. Inst. 1. 9. 6).

\(^{58}\) Hock and O’Neil 1986, 148-149. Similarly Kindstrand 1986, 225 recalls the expression ἀποφθέγματα χρειώδη twice found in Diogenes Laertius (4.47, 5.39) which indicates “that the ἄποφθεγμα is similar to the χρεια”. Interestingly, in the entry χρεια in the lexicon of Stephanus, we find ἄποφθεγματα χρειώδη rendered as dicta sententiosa, not dicta utilia.
‘actions-chreiai’ show an action in response to a question or to another action and not, as here, a simple assertion of someone’s action.\(^{59}\)

In De rhetoribus, Suetonius does not mention chreiai but he may have had them in mind when he places the supervision of exercises involving dicta praeclare under the rhetor, although this may simply refer to exercises involving maxims (Rhet. 25.8-9).\(^{60}\) If dicta praeclare do cover chreiai, then Suetonius coincides with the educational scheme of Aelius Theon who also places the chreiai first. Theon is regarded by the majority of scholars as the earliest of the Greek authors of progymnasmata, more or less contemporary with Quintilian and Suetonius. Malcolm Heath has however argued at length for dating Theon to the fourth or fifth rather than the first century; if Heath’s arguments have been refuted with equal force and rigor, it has not yet come to my attention.\(^{61}\)

The controversy of dating, whatever its eventual resolution, underlines how little we actually know about Theon or the other authors of the progymnasmata that are so central to our understanding of the chreia tradition.

By giving pride of place to the chreia and omitting the exercise involving maxims or at least never referring to it, Aelius Theon is an outlier among the extant progymnasmata. He devotes far more space to division and subdivision of the varieties of chreia than the others and is the only one to insist on having students inflect the chreiai in the grammatical cases and numbers (including

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\(^{59}\) Theon, Aphthonius and ps.-Hermogenes all agree in classifying chreiai as λογικαί, πρακτικαί, μικταί. Ps.-Hermogenes, however, does refer to a division among the ancients (παρά τοῖς παλαιοῖς) into ἀποφαντικαί, ἐρωτηματικαί, πυσματικαί, categories to which Theon also refers but only as subdivisions of verbal chreiai. One wonders if ps.-Hermogenes is here referring to the same classification as Quintilian. What is the difference between ἐρωτηματικαί and πυσματικαί? Priscian, the Latin translator of ps.-Hermogenes, conlates the two into interrogation. In LSJ we read that a πύσμα is distinguished from an ἐρωτήμα, as requiring an explanatory answer, and not merely assent or dissent (citing Sextus Empiricus inter alios). Patillon translates πυσματική in Theon as ‘percontative’ which would mean interrogative but requiring an explanation. The third type in Quintilian illustrated by the Milo saying is not interrogative nor is it self-contained like other chreiai but requires an explanation, so chreiai πυσματικαί may be lurking here as well.

\(^{60}\) On Suetonius, see Patillon 1997, IX-XVI. Oddly, Heath only considers the possibility that dicta praeclare are chreiai. See also Luzzatto 2004, 178.

\(^{61}\) Disappointingly, Patillon 2008 only replies to Heath in a footnote on p. 6: “La tentative ... ne m’a pas convaincu et relève à mes yeux du paradoxe.” Luzzatto 2004, who has a special reason for seeing Theon as the earliest extant witness, also only deals with Heath in footnotes, e.g. 181 n. 59, where she does not do justice to the meaning of his words, though she does remark that she has not the space for the examination that his argument deserves; see also her notes 63 and 65.
the dual). Both ps.-Hermogenes and Aphthonius are far briefer in their exposition and also far more interested in training the students in the elaboration (ἐργασία) of chreiai. The priority given to chreiai by Theon is extraordinary as is his omission of maxims (gnōmai), not only because the other writers deal with maxims prior to chreiai but especially because γνωμολογία (the use of maxims in speaking) was a recognized feature of rhetorical instruction already in classical times and received a chapter of its own in Aristotle’s Rhetoric (2.21).

The only explanation for Theon’s method that occurs to me is that he regarded the exercise of maxim as subsumed under that of chreia, since, like the other writers, he admits that a maxim may be turned into a chreia by mere attribution to a person. This admission, however, immediately involves Theon in a direct contradiction, for, alone among the writers of progymnasmata, he points out that one way in which the chreia differs from the maxim is in being witty and not necessarily edifying (τῷ χαριεντίζεσθαι τὴν χρείαν ἐνίοτε μηδὲν ἔχουσαν βιωφελές) whereas the maxim is always useful for life (τὴν δὲ γνώμην ἀεὶ περὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ βιῶ χρησίμων εἶναι). He states this, mind you, after having acknowledged that the chreia is more useful for many purposes in life than other rhetorical exercises (μᾶλλον τῶν ἄλλων πρὸς πολλὰ χρειώδης ἐστί τῷ βιῶ). Furthermore, in the preface outlining his educational programme, Theon stresses the moral usefulness of the chreia in these words: ἡ διὰ τῆς χρείας γυμνασία οὐ μόνον τινὰ δύναμιν λόγων ἐργάζεται, ἀλλὰ καὶ χρηστὸν τι Ἰβος ἐγγυμναζομένων ἡμῶν τοῖς τῶν σοφῶν ἀποφθέγμασιν (‘the exercise with the chreia not only produces a certain verbal facility but also good moral character in that we are exercising with the apothegms of the wise’, 60.16-19).

Wittiness may seem to us an obvious, even essential characteristic of the chreia, but it is only once described as such in the above, notably inconsistent passage in Theon. Otherwise the writers of the progymnasmata agree that the core characteristics of the chreia are brevity, personal attribution and usefulness. Theon, ps.-Hermogenes and Aphthonius all use the adjective σύντομος (concise or brief) in defining the chreia: χρεία ἐστί σύντομος ἀπόφασις ἢ πρᾶξις (Theon 96.18-19), χρεία ἐστὶ ἀπομνημόνευμα λόγου τινὸς ἢ πράξεως ἢ συναμφοτέρου σύντομον ἔχων δήλωσιν (ps.-Hermogenes 3.1), χρεία ἐστὶ ἀπομνημόνευμα

62 On declining the chreia, see Sedley 1998, 127-129; Luzzatto 2004, 179-182. To their remarks I would merely add the idea that this exercise may have been useful with a view to oral performance and not merely morphological self-assertion.

63 In citing ps.-Hermogenes and Aphthonius, I refer to the divisions according to Patillon 2008.
Well-aimed attribution to some person is stated explicitly in the definition by Theon *ibidem* (μετ’ εὐστοχίας ἀναφερομένη εἰς τι ὑρισμένον πρόσωπον ἢ ἀναλογοῦν προσώπω) and Aphthonius *ibidem* (εὐστόχως ἐπὶ τι πρόσωπον ἀναφέρουσα). It is indirectly affirmed by ps.-Hermogenes *ibidem*: the chreia functions in general for the sake of something useful (ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλείστον χρησίμου τινὸς ἕνεκα). Aphthonius *ibidem* says simply that the chreia is so called because it is useful (χρειώδης δὲ οὖσα προσαγορεύεται χρεία). Despite the self-contradiction mentioned above, Aelius Theon is the author who insists the most on the moral usefulness of the chreia. He does so in the passage cited above in § 3 (which comes at the end of his preliminary remarks and before the classification of chreiai), in the prologue just quoted, and in his explanation of what makes the chreia similar to an apomnēmoneuma: like the chreia, the apomnēmoneuma recalls a deed or saying beneficial for life (καὶ τὸ ἀπομνημόνευμα δὲ πρᾶξις ἢ λόγος βιωφελής). The chreia is thus not only seen as closely related to the apomnēmoneuma but is even defined in terms of it.

The attentive reader will have also noted the appearance of another term for saying, the apophthegma, in the quotation from Theon’s prologue. This is one of only two occurrences in the *progymnasmata* of this otherwise common term for saying, a far more common term than chreia.65 The noun apophthegma is first attested in Xenophon’s description of the unlucky Theramenes’ last words and actions in *HG* 2.3.56.66 This first attested use is noteworthy in that it combines action, reaction and words, just like many later apothegms or chreiai. Though it is not a frequent word in Aristotle’s extant writings, his usage gives the impression that apophthegma had already become a common enough term. In *Metaph.* 1009b26, he uses it when citing certain words of Anaxagoras

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64 I would note here that ἀπομνημόνευμα σύντομον means rather a concise, that is, brief apomnēmoneuma, than a ‘trenchant’ or ‘cutting’ remark. Brevity is the soul of wit, and the chreia is a witty remark in its way, but the distinction here is that it is brief whereas the apomnēmoneuma can be longer. This is quite explicit in ps.-Hermogenes 3.3: διαφέρει δὲ χρεία ἀπομνημονεύματος μᾶλλον μέτρῳ τὴν μὲν γὰρ ἀπομνημονεύματα καὶ διὰ μακροτέρων ἡν γένοιτο, τὴν δὲ χρείαν σύντομον εἶναι δει.

65 The other occurrence is in the *thesis* exercise in Theon (121.1-5): Ληψόμεθα δὲ τὰ προοίμια τῶν θέσεων ἤτοι ἀπὸ γνώμης κατασκευαζομένης τὴν θέσιν ἢ ἀπὸ παροιμίας ἢ χρείας ἢ ἀποφθέγματος χρήσημον ἢ ἱστορίας ἢ ἀπὸ ἐγκωμίου ἢ ψόγου τοῦ πράγματος ὑπὲρ ὧν τὸ ζήτημα.

66 Retold in Cic. *Tusc.* 1.96. On the verb related to apothegm, see also n. 8 above.
to some of his companions (πρὸς τῶν ἑταίρων τινάς) as being remembered or recorded (μνημονεύεται): τοιαύτ’ αὐτοῖς ἔσται τά ὄντα οία ἂν ὑπολάβωσιν (‘reality will be for them such as they suppose it to be’). In Oec. 1345a12, he cites apothegms of ‘the Persian’ and of ‘the Libyan’ to prove his point that no one takes the same care of another’s property as of his own. These apothegms display both the question and answer form and the attribution to characters identified only by ethnicity, both of which features are typical of many later apothegms or, if you will, chreiai. In the Rhetoric, Aristotle mentions Laconic and ‘riddling’ as well as witty or urbane (ἀστεῖα) apothegms (see Rh. 1394b35-1395a1, 1412a22).

In all these instances, an apothegm is some person’s pointed utterance, often, but not necessarily, in response to a question, normally expressed in a concise, self-contained manner just like the chreiai described by the later grammarians. Apophthegmata as a title of collections containing items exactly fitting the grammarians’ definitions of chreia appears from (at least) Hellenistic times and throughout the ancient and medieval ages with no break in the tradition. Yet this obvious synonym for chreia is, except for the two asides in Theon, entirely missing from the progymnasmata.

7 Cynic Origins?

Basing himself on D.L. 6.33 (καθά φησι Μητροκλῆς ἐν ταῖς Χρείαις, see § 4 above), Kurt von Fritz claimed that Metrocles invented the genre of chreiai. This claim has been repeated many times since, perhaps due to the wish of scholars to situate the origins of the genre within the Cynic tradition, given the numerous chreiai associated with Diogenes. I submit, however, that von Fritz’ claim has flimsy support and should not be so blithely repeated. The evidence of D.L. 6.33 for Metrocles as the first author of chreiai appears to be contradicted by D.L. 2.84-85 in which we find books of chreiai attributed to Aristippus.

**Footnotes:**


68 M.-O. Goulet-Cazé in her entry "Metrocles" in Brill’s New Pauly (1996) states: “M. is considered the inventor of chreiai.” Branham 1996, 86 n. 17: “The practice of collecting anecdotes about philosophers can be traced back to Metrocles.” More circumspect, Morgan 2007, 122 writes: “Metrocles the Cynic was among those credited with inventing the philosophical collection” (sc. of chreiai). There are several others who could be cited for similar assertions, but Gow 1965, 13 n. 1 notes that von Fritz held this “for no visible reason”. Cf. also Trouillet 1979, 55 n. 47: “C’est donc à tort que l’invention des recueils … est attribuée à Métroclès par K. von Fritz” (sc. because Aristippus had already done so before him).
Though I find von Fritz’ claim too bold, in its support one might argue that, if it does refer to a book compiled by Metrocles, and the books of *chreiai* attributed to Aristippus (D.L. 2.85) were someone else’s collection of Aristippus’ sayings, then Metrocles would be the earliest explicit collector of *chreiai*, followed perhaps a generation later by Machon. The quotation in D.L. 6.33 would then also be interesting for another reason: it would be Diogenes Laertius’ only explicit quotation from a non-Stoic work entitled *chreiai*. One of those ‘Stoic’ quotations, the frequently cited *Chreiai* of Hecaton, informs us according to D.L. 6.95 (see § 4 above) that Metrocles burned his own books. Evidently the *Chreiai* of Metrocles survived that incendiary, unless the *Chreiai* in this passage are a reference not to a book by Metrocles but simply to the *Chreiai* of Hecaton, an excerpt of which occurs right before the citation of Metrocles (see § 4 above). Could this be a statement about Diogenes attributed to Metrocles in Hecaton’s *Chreiai*?

Here I am not questioning the Cynic penchant for *chreiai* or the fact of their wide use of *chreiai* or the appropriateness of the *chreia* as a vehicle of Cynic self-expression. I am only sceptical to the idea that the *chreia* and the collecting of *chreiai* were Cynic inventions and particularly that Metrocles was the sole inventor of the genre. Stoics and Peripatetics are cited as collectors of *chreiai* far more frequently than any Cynic. The comic poet Machon was writing *chreiai* within a generation of Metrocles. Furthermore, *chreiai* are found among the works attributed to an earlier philosopher, Aristippus, who was not a Cynic though he was a Socratic. It was, of course, Socrates who caused the major shift in philosophical discourse a century before the dawn of the so-called Hellenistic Age, and, if we must assume a philosophic origin of the genre, it is to the Socratics more generally we should look for its origins. *Chreia* is defined by the later rhetoricians as a kind of recollection (*apomnēmoneuma*), and surely Xenophon, author of Socratic *apomnēmoneumata*, provides us with some of our very first examples of what would come to be called *chreiai*. If Xenophon could compose *apomnēmoneumata*, what reason do we have for doubting that Aristippus may have done likewise with *chreiai*? We should at least be more

69 We would still have the three *chreiai* (in the singular) in the first list of Aristippus’ books (D.L. 2.84), which we would have to assume to be quite different from the *chreiai* of Metrocles in order to maintain the latter’s priority.

70 It would take us too far afield to discuss the appropriateness of attributing to both Stoics and Peripatetics the systematic collection of *chreiai*, due to interest in biography (especially Peripatetics), the Cynics (especially Stoics), and other noteworthy connections. For the former interest, see for starters Fortenbaugh 2007 (*passim*), and Long 1996, 36f. on the latter.
careful about attributing the invention of the genre to Metrocles because of a single, in my view questionable, citation in Diogenes Laertius or because of the many extant chreiai attributed to the Cynics. There are also many extant chreiai attributed to non-Cynic philosophers and to non-philosophers. 71

**Conclusion**

This article grew out of my study of the tradition(s) of apothegms in medieval collections that show a strong but independent relationship with the apothegms in Diogenes Laertius. Three things puzzled me: the absence of the term apophthegma in the surviving treatments of chreia, the dissatisfying etymology of chreia as chreiōdēs, and the discrepancy between the chreiai of Machon and the examples in the progymnasmata as well as in my medieval collections which, though not labelled chreiai, fit the definition of the grammarians. Here one might also add the detail of the three chreiai (to Dionysius, on the statue, on the daughter of Dionysius) attributed to Aristippus in Diogenes Laertius’ first list of his books. A closer examination of the semantics of the word chreia led to my conviction that the sense of ‘concise anecdote’ was more likely to have derived from the sense of ‘familiar dealings’ and ‘usage’ than from that of ‘utility’. The chreiai of Machon supply us with our by far most extensive fragments from the early stages of development, and they are not concise anecdotes. Nor are they, of course, full-blown comic dialogues but, rather, a string of short, comic episodes arranged around certain characters and featuring witty exchanges of varying length. We can form no idea of Aristippus’ three chreiai but can merely assume that they were long enough to stand on their own; they may have been short dialogues similar to the ones we find in Xenophon’s Memorabilia (apomnēmoneumata). Some of the extant fragments from books of chreiai (see § 4)—including the one from Metrocles’ Chreiai—are not the self-contained, concise anecdotes we expect from the later definitions; most, however, do fit the description. Yet we do not know what else these excerpted Hellenistic books contained or how they were arranged: the quotations from

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71 Although philosophers predominate in the medieval collections, it is far from a complete domination. Rulers and commanders, orators, poets (lyric, tragic, comic), doctors, courtesans can all be found in significant numbers in them. In general, Alexander the Great is a close rival to Diogenes in the number of chreiai, and Peripatetics and Stoics have a significant presence, as does, of course, Socrates as well as non-Cynic Socrates. Even in the progymnasmata, if we look at the catalogue of chreiai in Hock and O’Neil 1986, we find a significant number of non-Cynics and non-philosophers, not least Alexander the Great.
them come from much later authors who were on the look-out for *chreiai* as we normally define them.

The model I propose is as follows. During the fourth century the word *chreia* underwent a development in one of its semantic fields, that of ‘familiar usage’. If we can trust the ascription of *chreiai* to Aristippus, the word may already then have begun in some contexts to mean ‘conversation’ or ‘verbal exchange’, similar to *apomnēmoneuma* in terms of which it is consistently defined in later sources. I speculate that *chreia* as an example of verbal exchange became more cemented during Machon’s lifetime in the third century. There were, of course, many other literary developments during this century, one of them being an increasing production of biographies that included apothegms which, as I point out in § 6, have the same features as the *chreia* as later defined by the schoolmasters. From the next century comes our first surviving work of Greek grammar, that of Dionysius Thrax, who aimed not only at teaching what we call grammar but also what we call literature.\(^\text{72}\) The case-system of Greek receives its first extant description in his work; we may assume that the technicalities were worked out between Aristotle and Dionysius Thrax. It is in this period that I suggest the methods that evolved into what we see in the later *progymnasmata* first came about; certainly any exercises involving the inflection of *chreiai* cannot be earlier. It is on this Hellenistic system of the second and first centuries BC that Romans of the first century AD based their own educational programmes. It is during this mid to late Hellenistic period that I suggest a kind of genre shift occurred: after having been a genre of short dialogues and anecdotes featuring selected characters, the *chreia* gets put to systematic use in language instruction. Its technical meaning becomes fixed along with other micro-genres such as the *apomnēmoneuma* of which it becomes the short version; so the *chreia* goes from being an exchange of varying length to being defined as a concise *apomnēmoneuma*. When this happens, however, the *chreia* simply becomes equivalent to the *apophthegma* as far as school use is concerned; for that reason the latter term is avoided in the writing exercises. In popular usage, however, *apophthegma*—with its narrow semantic sense of utterance—is the natural choice for describing the anecdotal sayings that the schoolmasters place under the category of *chreia*, the latter being an ill-fated denomination due to the very broad semantic field of *chreia*. Teachers being what they are, the school materials and hence the terminology used therein are maintained through continuous recycling. While collections of *apophthegmata* continue to be made and people continue to refer naturally

\(^{72}\) Cf. D.T., *Ars grammatica* 1.1 in which the most sixth and most important part of grammar is literary criticism (κρίσις ποιημάτων).
to apothegms of the wise and famous, the term chreia drops out of use in titles and makes ever more rare appearances as “anecdote” in extant literature. The chreia as anecdote survives only as a fossil of Hellenistic fashion within the narrow confines of the school.

De nominibus non curat sapiens, which, if so, does not make me very wise in my insistence on the name chreia rather than the thing itself. I would, nevertheless, point out that the thing itself—the concise anecdote resembling the chreiai in the progymnasmata—is not frequently found in classical literature prior to Xenophon and Aristotle. Yet concise anecdotes (explicitly called apophthegmata or chreiai) do appear with increasing frequency in Hellenistic and later Greek literature. An indication of the Hellenistic nature of this tradition is simply that a great many of the names appearing in the chreiai in the progymnasmata as well as in my medieval gnomologia belong to persons from the Hellenistic Age. I may be wrong in my proposed model as well as in my etymological explanation, but I have at least tried to connect the few dots available.

Bibliography


73 Luzzatto 2004 wishes to trace the origins of the chreia exercise back to the school of Isocrates. Although the article makes a number of interesting points, it remains a preliminary study, as the author states at the start. I find the underlying reasoning insufficient. It first invents a label that we do not find in antiquity—the philosophical chreia—and then asks why this absent is from the classifications of the ‘Greeks’ and ‘Romans’ as found in their schoolbooks. It argues that this is so because the practice derives from a time and a context when it was all one to study grammar, rhetoric and philosophy, thus to Isocrates. I do think connections to the school of Isocrates are worth exploring more, but I cannot see the chreia exercise as anything but a Hellenistic development.


