When it happened to me to be exiled for my alleged friendship with a man of good character the charge against me that I was friend and advisor to that man. For, it is the nature of tyrants, just as to bury wine-bearers and cooks and concubines with Scythian kings, so to add for no reason several others to those who are being executed by them. (Dio Chrys. Or. 13.1).

In this speech to the Athenians, Dio Chrysostom criticises Domitian for killing good men and for punishing their friends and advisors merely for their acquaintance with those whom the emperor had sentenced to death, presumably for an attempt on the throne in 82 CE (Dio Chrys. Or. 13.1). Later in another speech, this time held in his hometown of Prusa, Dio carries on the attack against Domitian by describing him as an evil despot whom Greeks and barbarians alike styled as ‘master and god’, δεσπότην καὶ θεὸν and by whom he was exiled for being the only one courageous enough to challenge the tyrant openly (Dio Chrys. Or. 45.1). And so Dio offers two versions as to why he was exiled.1 But what is essential here is how he addresses several fundamental issues of what Romans traditionally considered good governmental practice: the right to speak freely, the right to protection by the law and the moderate conduct of the ruling authorities.2

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1 For further discussion Dio’s as literary topos or historical event see Whitmarsh 2001: 159–61; Madsen 2009: 110–1.
2 For the second century debate on libertas by Tacitus and Pliny the Younger, see Morford 1991: 3436–7.
From the writing of other Greek intellectuals between late first and early third century CE it is evident that Dio’s reservations about Roman rule were not unique. Plutarch reminds members of the Greek civic elite that Greece was no longer free but under foreign domination and emphasises in his essays on Greek and Roman questions the significant differences between the two cultures.\(^3\) In his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias criticises the foundation of Nicopolis and re-colonisation of Patrai and Corinth and refers to Roman domination as a misfortune for Greece (7.6.1).\(^4\) And Philostratus questions the emperor as an institution with the claim that all predecessors of Vespasian except Augustus, and perhaps Claudius, had ruled as tyrants (*VA* 5.27).\(^5\) This scepticism towards Roman rule, together with a general criticism of Roman luxury, lack of education, brutal laws and barbaric forms of entertainment, has been seen as a culturally motivated attempt by which educated Greeks tried to distance themselves and the Greek World from the Roman imperial community.

One of the most influential studies of Greek reluctance towards the Roman world is Simon Swain’s *Hellenism and Empire* from 1996. Here, Greek criticism of Roman rule and the institutions involved are seen as ways by which educated Greeks drew a line between the Greek and the Roman worlds. As pointed out by Swain, members of the Greek elite were often legally Romans and deeply engaged in Roman politics and administration, but in contrast to what is believed of their peers in the western provinces, did not perceive themselves as belonging to a Roman collectivity. Instead, a distinction is drawn between being Greek and being Roman, and it is argued that Greeks, who are seen as ‘under foreign domination’, were forced to make a choice between a Greek or Roman identity, which more often than not caused intellectuals, including those involved in Roman government, to put their Greek identity before their Roman affiliation.\(^6\) Greek intellectuals criticised aspects of Roman rule and *mores*. Emperors such as Caligula, Nero, Domitian and Commodus were generally exposed to substantially negative press for their tyrannical conduct; and the imperial cult and, in particular, the worship of living emperors

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\(^3\) Plut. *Political Advice* 813c–e; Preston 2001: 90–1, 97, 100.

\(^4\) For more critique of Roman urbanisation in Greece see Paus. 5.23.3; 7.18.8; 8.24.11; 8.27.1; 10.38.4.

\(^5\) See Flaig 2010: 276–9 on the general legitimacy of the principate as opposed to the acceptance of the individual emperor. Philostratus’ general critique of almost every emperor testifies to a more profound scepticism towards the institutions and not just the individual emperor.