THE PROLOGUE OF APULEIUS’

DE DEO SOCRATIS*

BY

VINCENT HUNINK

Apuleius’ philosophical discourse De Deo Socratis (hence: Soc) is preceded in the MSS by a long prologue, which has vexed classical scholars for centuries1) The prologue is generally considered not to belong to the discourse, given its contents In addition, most scholars assume a subdivision of the prologue into five different fragments In this paper, I will re-examine the question, and argue for the unity of the prologue and discourse, as well as the inner unity of the prologue

Discourse and prologue

In Soc, Apuleius gives what may be called an introduction to ancient demonology He shows that there must exist intermediate beings between gods and man, and describes the place they occupy in the world, their main characteristics, as well as the various types of these ‘demons’ It is only at this point, near the end of the discourse, that the ‘divine voice’ of Socrates makes its appearance, as a concrete example of a demon The speech ends on a more

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1) Apart from remarks and comments in editions of Apuleius’ works, partly to be mentioned in following notes, some special studies have been devoted to the problem of the prologue Among these, the most important 20th-century ones are: P Thomas, Remarques critiques sur les oeuvres philosophiques d’Apule, in: BAB 37 (1900), 143-65; R Helm, De prooemio Apuleianae quae est de deo Socratis, in: Philol 59 (1900), 598-604; T Mantero, La questione del prologo del De Deo Socratis, in: Argentea Aetas (in mem E V Marmorel) (Genova 1973), 219-59; and most recently: D Tomasco, Ancora sul prologo del De Deo Socratis, in: Enrico Flores [et al ] (edd ), Miscellanea di studi in onore di Armando Salvatore (Napoli 1992), 173-95
ethical note: every member of the audience is admonished to look after his own demon and devote himself to philosophy, thus earning praise for personal eminence. To illustrate the final point, the example of Odysseus is used.

Of this serious, philosophical subject matter, hardly anything appears in the prologue as found in the MSS. In what has come to be known as 'Fragment 1'), the speaker indicates that he has been asked by the audience to speak *ex tempore* after having delivered a weighty, studied discourse. He affirms he is willing to do so, adding some remarks about the role of the audience in *ex tempore* performances. In the short 'fr 2', he presents an anecdote on Aristippus and the use of philosophy. 'Fr 3' compares improvising with building a stone wall (*maceria*), in which stones of various proportions are freely put together, without measuring or levelling them. In 'fr 4', the Aesopic fable of the raven and the fox is told, to illustrate the notion that in searching more and new things, one may lose what has already been gained. The last section, 'fr 5', introduces a second part of a speech delivered in Latin, following a first part said to have been in Greek. The speaker renews his promise to satisfy his audience in both languages.

In the opinion of many scholars, the prologue does not suit the discourse. This apparent incongruity has led to various theories about its origin. As early as in the 16th century it was suggested that the prologue had nothing to do with Soc at all. In length, style and content, the prologue seemed more like a section from Apuleius' *Florida*, an anthology of selected passages from his speeches. Accordingly, many older scholars concluded that the

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2) The prologue has been subdivided into five different fragments by P Thomas (1900) (above, n 1). His theory has come to be generally accepted. In the course of this paper I will further discuss this subdivision. Presently, I will use it for convenient reference to the various parts of the prologue. The inverted commas will serve to indicate my scepticism.

3) Both Tomasco (1992) and, to a lesser extent, Mantero (1973) (above, n 1) present a detailed survey of scholarly opinions, arranged chronologically. See also the entry in Schanz-Hosius' *Geschichte der römischen Literatur* III, 123-4. For the sake of clarity and to avoid undue repetitions, I will limit myself to a short survey of theories, arranged thematically.