

## I. The usual stories

How did the name *philosophos* come to be? Two views are now popular. Some (especially teachers of philosophy classes) say it first meant “lover of wisdom.”<sup>1</sup> Others say it first meant “intellectual curious person” before later acquiring a specialized disciplinary meaning defined by Plato.<sup>2</sup> Two views were popular in ancient times. Both take it as Pythagoras’ self-applied name. One has Pythagoras demurring that the name *sophos* is appropriate only for god. The other has him distinguishing *philosophoi* from the people who care for either honor or money.

This paper argues against these four views. It conjectures instead that *philosophos* was coined as a bemused, ironic, perhaps derisive name-calling name meaning “wanting to become *sophos*,” where *sophos* names the elite cultural status for which the Seven Sages are archetypes. Wanting to become *sophos* would seem ludicrous because being *sophos* was not thought to be a status deliberately attained. Because the word labels behavior that is explained as emulating a social type, it does not purport to give information about the person’s cognitive status or investigative methods. But because this label is not directly offensive, even if it once had a negative inflection it could be taken up by its recipients, accepted, and made to sound positive.

The first evidence that *philosophos* cannot mean what it is popularly taken to mean is that the Platonic dialogue most fully concerned with the name *philosophos*—*Rival Lovers*—sustains none of them. The dialogue opens with an athlete using the participle *philosophountes* derisively. He uses it as an adjective for earnestly serious discussion by student-age boys arguing about Anaxagoras or Oenopides,<sup>3</sup> Athenian astronomical theoreticians.<sup>4</sup> The athlete’s rival thereafter

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<sup>1</sup> Chroust 1964, 429; Guthrie 1987, 30-31; Friis Johansen 1998, 18; Barnes 2001, xiv; Hadot 2002, 2, 16-17; Duignan 2010, 18; Blackson 2011, 3, 54-56; McGinn 2012. Osborne 2004, intro., “seek after wisdom”; Warren 2007, 28, “literally, a lover of and, by implication, a seeker after wisdom.”

<sup>2</sup> Chroust 1947, 19-23: “The term ‘philosopher’ was originally used in a very large sense, referring to anyone who had received a liberal and all-encompassing education (παιδεία)”; Heyde 1961; Malingrey 1961, 30-39 (noting two aspects, a non-specialized one and one concerned with causes and laws of nature, 39); Sommerstein 1998 ad 571; Laks 2002, 29; Nightingale 1995, 2004, 24, 30, 77 (“‘intellectual cultivation’ in the broadest sense”); Cooper 2007, 23-24n4 (“a person devoted to ‘intellectual and general culture’”); Graham 2010, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Bodnar 2007 collects what is known of him.

<sup>4</sup> Socrates had asked whether what the boys were doing was something significant and remarkable; the athlete responded: “‘What?!’ he said. ‘Significant and remarkable? Those boys are just babbling about things up in the sky

gives several definitions of “philosophy,” but none are closely equivalent to “love of wisdom,” “intellectually curious,” “lacking wisdom,” or “aiming only for theoretical reflection.”<sup>5</sup> If the etymology, earliest meaning, or coinage story were as obvious as modern or ancient commentators suppose, we would expect at least one of them to show up.

There are additional difficulties for the common modern and ancient views. Proponents of the “intellectually curious” meaning do not explain why *philosophos* came to mean that, and why no other Greek word would have served as well, for example *thumosophos*, *phrontistês*, *sopherastês*, or *erosophos*.<sup>6</sup> Nor do they explain—when they assume that Plato narrowed the meaning of this word into a technical or specialized disciplinary term—why Plato chose this one. It is a further problem that “intellectually curious” is incompatible with the pejorative usages of Heraclitus, Zeno, Thucydides, or the Hippocratic author, the earliest users of the term, all of whom we should like to call intellectually curious themselves.

The struggle to define *philosophos* in the *Rival Lovers* suffices to show that Greeks could not so easily decompose the word to “lover of wisdom.”<sup>7</sup> The “lover of wisdom” interpretation would have to—but does not—explain why the word combines these two elements in particular, rather than any other pair that would mean the same thing. Rather than *philein*, why not caring, desiring, feeling passionate about, admiring, or vaunting? Rather than *sophia*, why not flourishing, excellence, knowledge, mindfulness, or goodness?<sup>8</sup>

The Pythagorean stories have their own problems. Biggest is that they conflict, putting all of them into question, and showing that explaining the name’s origin is no easy matter. Each story is late, and recounted by or via Platonizers, and so likely retrojects Academic or wisdom-literature tropes.<sup>9</sup> That he would invent words became itself a trope.<sup>10</sup> Pythagoras’ abrupt diffidence before the title “Wise” seems false, given his confidence in knowing about the soul,

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and chattering in their philosophizing” (μέγα καὶ καλόν; ἀδολεσχοῦσι μὲν οὖν οὐτοί γε περὶ τῶν μετεώρων καὶ φλυαροῦσι φιλοσοφούντες, 132b8-b10). Translations are the author’s unless noted.

<sup>5</sup> Instead, the friend defines philosophy consecutively as polymathy (133c11, e5); having a measured amount of learning (134d10); getting fame from appearing most wise in all important skills (135b1-7, c6-d7); that is, like a pentathlete (136a6). Socrates suggests something connected to disciplining people, knowing good and evil, knowing oneself, being sensible, exercising good sense and justice, and having political skill (137d1-138c10). See Peterson 2011, 201-205 for more discussion.

<sup>6</sup> The first two are in Aristophanes *Clouds*, at 877 and 266, 414; the latter two are invented by Peterson 2011, 248.

<sup>7</sup> We see it done first in Plato *Lysis* 212e1: ἀν μὴ ἡ σοφία αὐτοὺς ἀντιφιλή (“wisdom not loving them in return”).

<sup>8</sup> See Peterson 2011, 247-248, on the way *philosophos* would be an implausible formulation for expressing the putative idea “lover of wisdom.”

<sup>9</sup> For skepticism about the Pythagoras stories, see Burkert 1960; Jaeger 1960, 432-3; Nightingale 2004, 22-26. For the tropes this story might enact, see Joly 1956, Martin 1993, Sharp 2004, Reidwig 2005, 94.

<sup>10</sup> Vogel 1966, 218-220, lists more than a dozen supposed coinages.

about his past lives, and about the best way to learn.<sup>11</sup> His arguments about the life of contemplation seem to vindicate quite another name for his activity, *philotheamon* or *philotheatês*.<sup>12</sup>

Still, the Pythagorean stories' focus on Pythagoras and an anxiety about being *sophos* may record something true.<sup>13</sup> This paper begins by showing the kernel of plausible agreement in all the versions: all consistent with a reading of *philosophos* as "wanting to become *sophos*." We then see that the name-calling origins is consistent with Aristotle's analysis of *phil-* prefixed names, and with the earliest extant *phil-* prefixed names. A story in Aristophanes, and different analysis by Aristotle, confirm our account. I then propose a likely coinage situation, dependent on the cultural meaning of *sophos* and Pythagoras' cultural innovations. The earliest extant uses of *philosoph-* words corroborate this understanding. The conclusion reiterates the inability of etymology to explain the nature or self-perceived identity of philosophical practitioners.

## II. Pythagoras and the *sophoi*

No ancient source puts someone other than Pythagoras at the beginnings of the term *philosophos*. With no other story to pursue, we have little choice but to draw what we can from this common claim. So even if they conflict and are implausible in their details, they may point to something true.<sup>14</sup> We should look then at the extant stories. One of the earliest is from Diodorus Siculus (writing between 60-30 BCE). His is remarkable for being among the least discussed in the *philosophos* scholarship.<sup>15</sup> This would be irrelevant were it not that his version includes some unique details, details which are both plausible in themselves and can fill in explanatory lacunae in other versions.

Diodorus, having first discussed the Seven Wise Men (9.1-37) has just discussed Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans. He turns to titles.

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<sup>11</sup> Morrison 1956, 136-138; Chroust 1964, 427n17, 432-3; Reidwig 2005, Kahn 2001, 2, 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Burkert 1960, 161; Chroust 1964, 427-8.

<sup>13</sup> Reed 2012 makes Pythagorean self-appellation plausible outside consideration of the etymological evidence and reflection on the nature of name-calling.

<sup>14</sup> Morrison 1958, 208, Reidwig 2005, 90-97. Hadot 2002, 14n1, falsely infers from the existence of implausible details to total unreliability.

<sup>15</sup> Few commentators on the origins of the term *philosophos* cite Diodorus' story, and the ones who do tend to treat it as identical to DL I.12 (discussed below), e.g. Burkert 1960, 161n5; Malingrey 1961, 29n1; Chroust 1964, 427n17.

Pythagoras called his particular path “philosophy,” but not “sophia” [wisdom]. For, finding fault with the ones before him having been called Seven Wise Men, he said that nobody is wise, being human, and often, because of the weakness of his nature, is lacking strength to set everything right, but the one emulating the character and life of the *sophos* may suitably be called “philosopher.” (10.10.1)

Pythagoras explains the name *philosophos* by reference to the name *sophos*. (Pythagoras does not purport to give the etymology, and Diodorus does not say he coined the name.) He refers first to the group that stood in for all *sophoi*, the “Seven Wise Men.” These people are attributed (ἔλεγεν) a more-than-human success in setting everything right (πάντα κατορθοῦν). He seems to criticize (καταμεμφόμενος) their being called *sophos* rather than the men themselves, since he mentions neither anything they have done, nor says that they erroneously or pridefully called themselves *sophos*; Diodorus reported at length the stories that the so-called Seven Wise Men in fact disowned the name *sophos* (9.3.1-3).<sup>16</sup> Pythagoras takes the name itself to be too high-flown, denoting a status quite inaccessible to humans.<sup>17</sup> But for all his criticism, Pythagoras does not reject the ideal of being *sophos*. Far from it; he establishes it as the goal to which to aspire. It is of some importance that the *philosophos* wishes to avoid charges of hubris; but it is of greater importance that the *philosophos* defines his life by orientation toward the *sophoi*. The lives of the Seven Wise Men—with their legendary practical, investigative, and managerial capacities, to discern what is right, and to accomplish it—provide the image for the *philosophoi*. It is not some other set of analytic practices or norms of rational judgment that define the Pythagorean class.

According to Diodorus, then, Pythagoras took up the name *philosophos* as meaning a practice (αἴρεσιν) of wanting to become (ζηλῶν) *sophos*. This would be a wholly surprising practice. The *Sophoi* were thought to have more-than-human wisdom received through divine or special dispensation. Thus, the conscious intention to achieve that wisdom through disciplined human means would be remarkable.<sup>18</sup> It would thus deserve a special name. The name would apply to all those unusual students aiming not for some familiar scientific or artistic knowledge but to join in the elite cultural category of *sophos*, in this telling figured by the lives of the Seven Wise Men.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. DL I.27-33.

<sup>17</sup> Reale 1987, 17, because he believes that “the term [sc. *philosophos*] was certainly coined within a religious milieu,” thinks the story about Pythagoras’ reasoning is the most plausible one.

<sup>18</sup> Diodorus mentions the education of the none of the Wise Men except Solon (9.1.2).

Several centuries later Diogenes Laertius reports a related story. His has more dramatic and historical context, but lacks the explicit reference to the Seven Wise Men.

Pythagoras first called “philosophy” by name and himself “philosopher,” in Sicyon talking to Leon tyrant of Sicyon, or of Phlias, as Heraclides of Ponticus in the *Peri tês apnou* says; for nobody is wise but for god. But right away it was called “wisdom,” and a “wise man” the professor of it, who has a perfected soul in the highest degree, but “philosopher” the one eagerly welcoming wisdom. (I.12)

The similarities are readily apparent. Pythagoras denies, at least for himself and his followers, the fittingness of the status-name *sophos*. But the name *philosophos* is not so inapt, since it refers to those who “eagerly welcome” (ἄσπαζόμενος) what the *sophos* professes or stands for. This remark comes in Book I of *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, in which Diogenes writes at length about the (many) “Seven Wise Men” and their relationship to the *philosophoi* (I.22-122). This gives reason to believe that in recounting the story—only the first sentence of which appears to paraphrase Pythagoras—Diogenes means to say that the *philosophoi*, according to the Pythagorean tradition, welcomed becoming like the Seven Wise Men.

Like Diodorus’ story, Diogenes’ version does not say that Pythagoras invented the personal name *philosophos*,<sup>19</sup> and it does not give an etymology for the word. But this version does say that Pythagoras was the first to call himself *philosophos*. Diogenes does not say why he did so; his account explains only why Pythagoras did *not* call himself *sophos*. This story encourages thinking that Pythagoras took up a name often enough applied to himself or his followers, and in doing so was the first notable person to accept it publicly, and then to explain its positive message. “Wanting to become *sophos*” could have both a joking, name-calling connotation, and a laundered, affirmative connotation, as when we see first, that becoming *sophos* is a strange goal, but second, that it is nevertheless a laudable one.

Though Diodorus is evidently reading from several sources, not just Heraclides,<sup>20</sup> and differs in detail from Diogenes, there is still a shared explanation for the meaning of

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<sup>19</sup> That he says Pythagoras invented the abstract noun—as does Plut., *de plac. phil.* 876e—is not significant for this paper, since the adjective/name always precedes the abstract noun in compound words of this sort.

<sup>20</sup> On whom see Fortenbaugh and Pender 2008, 27-40, 237-250, Gottschalk 1980, 13-36; Joly 1956, 21-28; Malingrey 1961, 30-31.

*philosophos*,<sup>21</sup> a tradition continuous through Augustine.<sup>22</sup> We may note, however, a second tradition, maybe equally old, preserving an apparently distinct mode of explanation.<sup>23</sup> Sosicrates (ca. 180-150 BCE) imagines, like Diogenes' source earlier in Book I of his book, a conversation between Pythagoras and Leon. But Sosicrates knows a different answer to Leon's question.

Sosicrates, in *Diadochus*, said that [Pythagoras] being asked by Leon tyrant of Phlias what he was, said "a philosopher." And he likened life to a festival, since some come to it to compete, some for marketing, some, indeed the best, as spectators; thus in life some are born, he said, slavish and hunters after reputation and excess, but philosophers [are hunters] after truth. (DL VIII.8)

Sosicrates' Pythagoras speaks of *philosophoi* not concessively, as a sort of humble, aspirational name, but positively, as referring to people superior, in their aim for truth, to those driven by honor or money. This story presents no explicit comparison with *sophoi* (presumably the issue did not come up); no concern for etymology (tyrants being perhaps uninterested in linguistics); and no assertions of coinage (irrelevant to the explanation). Pythagoras is simply explaining what he does, insofar as he considers himself a philosopher, in terms of a familiar "three lives" parable.

A century later, Diodorus' contemporary Cicero relates a longer version of Sosicrates' story. He does so in the context of a historical narrative. He begins by speaking about the *sophos*-tradition, and then explains the origins of "philosophy."

From these [the seven sages, Lycurgus, others] are descended in turn all who devoted their energy to the contemplation of things (*rerum contemplatione studia*), and they were both considered and called wise men (*sapientes*). And this name for them spread all the way to the time of Pythagoras. People say that he went to Phlius, as Heraclides Ponticus writes, the pupil of Plato and a man foremost in learning, and discussed certain issues learnedly and at length (*docte et copiose disseruisse quaedam*) with Leon, the ruler of the Phliasians. When Leon marveled at his talent and eloquence (*ingenium et eloquentiam*), he asked him in which art (*artem*) he trusted the most.

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<sup>21</sup> We find the related argument that god alone is wise and that Pythagoras is therefore a philosopher because he is friends with god in Clement *Stromata* 4.9.1; at 1.61.4 Clement writes that Pythagoras was the first to call himself a philosopher.

<sup>22</sup> *City of God* 8.2, *On the Trinity* 14.1.2.

<sup>23</sup> Chroust 1964 does not explain why we see coherent but distinct lines of retelling.

He in turn said that it was not an art he knew, but that he was a philosopher (*philosophum*). Leon, astonished at the novelty of the term, asked what kind of people philosophers were and what the difference was between them and the rest of mankind. Pythagoras then answered that he thought human life was similar to the kind of fair which is held with a magnificent display of games in a gathering from the whole of Greece. For there some people seek the glory and distinction of a crown by training their bodies, and others are drawn by the profit and gain in buying or selling, but there is a certain class of people, and this quite the most genuine, who look for neither applause nor gain, but come for the sake of seeing and look thoroughly with great attention at what is being done and how. In the same way, he said, we have arrived into this life from another life and nature, as if from some city into some crowd at a festival, and some devote themselves to glory and others to money, but there are certain rare people who count all matters for nothing and eagerly contemplate the nature of things (*rerum naturam studiose intuerentur*). These people call themselves lovers of wisdom (*sapientiae studiosos*)—that is, philosophers (*philosophos*)—and just as there it was most fitting for a free character to watch while seeking nothing for oneself, so in life the contemplation and understanding of things (*studiis contemplationem rerum*) far surpasses all other pursuits. Nor was Pythagoras only the inventor of the name... (TD 5.3.8-4.1, tr. King, modif.)

Cicero introduces his discussion of the *philosophos* by talking about the *sapientes*, his name for the group of *sophoi* that he had earlier said include the Seven Wise Men. He makes a point that these *sophoi* form a kind of common class by being “called” so, with “this name for them [having] spread all the way to the time of Pythagoras.” But Leon does not think to call Pythagoras one of the *sophoi* or *sapientes*, or even to compare him to one.<sup>24</sup> Why not? Presumably because Pythagoras does not seem like the *sophoi* of whom Leon might have heard. The two men “discussed certain issues learnedly and at length,” revealing Pythagoras’ “talent and eloquence.” It may at first seem odd that Cicero or Cicero’s source does not mention what Leon and Pythagoras talked about, especially on the assumption that their conversation was so marvelous and such a great example of Pythagorean philosophy. But it is not odd if the point of

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<sup>24</sup> Reidwig 2005, 92, thinks that in Cicero’s source, *artem* translates *sophous*, and Leon asked, “what *sophous* do you trust?” His reasoning is that this would make *philosophos* a clever response. But Sosicrates’s story, which is similar to Cicero’s, does not depend on such cleverness. If we do not assume this tradition aims to give an etymology, but simply to explain the meaning of the discipline Pythagoras has come to call “philosophy,” then we do not need to reconstruct the Greek in Reidwig’s question-begging fashion.

the story is to show only that Pythagoras spoke with scholarly erudition.<sup>25</sup> Scholarly erudition was not a traditional quality of the Wise Men.<sup>26</sup> Those men were characterized more by pithy sayings, clever engineering or astronomical feats, and sound political advice: for great accomplishments and having set affairs to rights. The Wise Men were not said to have read or studied broadly and rigorously. The traits Pythagoras reveals in his conversation with Leon are those of someone who studies and who believes in the value of reading and thinking through ideas.

The *philosophos* is thus notable for talking in a particularly studious way. The manner or content of this talking must have been novel to Leon. The name, too, was novel, and had no transparent meaning to the tyrant. Pythagoras does supposedly finish his story with a decomposition of the term, but the content of his tale does not seem to accommodate his account. It talks of a kind of person who is an avid spectator, who reflect on the nature of things. There is little reason to think that at Pythagoras' time such viewing and reflection would count as loving wisdom.<sup>27</sup> By the fourth century, and Heraclides' telling, philosophy may have been connected to reflection on the nature of things; but this would have been only after more than a century of attention to "philosophy" itself. So because the compound *philosophos* is not transparent to Leon, and because Pythagoras' story does not give a good accounting even of the phrase *sapientiae studiosos*, it is best not to take *philosophos* to mean, at Pythagoras' time, "lover of wisdom."

What then can we infer from this story? First, Pythagoras' pursuit is in some way continuous with that of the *sophoi*, but his way of talking does not lead Leon to believe that he *is* a *sophos*. Second, *philosophoi* have as their principle activity observation and study. Third, Pythagoras does want to link his pursuit centrally to the tradition of wisdom, not to some other equally appropriate term (truth, reflection, knowledge, immortality). Accordingly, the term *philosophos* appears to be initially connected to the cultural status *sophos*, differing from it in that *philosophoi* study and talk studiously whereas members of the *sophoi*, linked to it in the way that whatever the *sophoi* have—tautologically, *sophia*—is what the *philosophoi* want, and

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<sup>25</sup> That Pythagoras spoke this way seems clear from Heraclitus B129: Pythagoras practiced inquiry more than other men, collated others' writings, made up his own wisdom, and was polymathic. See Huffman 2008.

<sup>26</sup> In this work Cicero mentions wise Solon (I.49)'s political excellence alone (I.45, II.1, II.34); his main examples of *Sophoi* are Lycurgus, Odysseus, and Nestor; he also mentions the more-than-human wisdom of Atlas, Prometheus, and Cepheus (5.3).

<sup>27</sup> See below note 000 on the sixth- and fifth-century meanings of *sophia*.



achieve in their unique way. Not only is Cicero's tale consistent with *philosophos* being coined to mean "wanting to be *sophos*," the story is best read with such a coinage situation as its background. It is true that Cicero says Pythagoras invented the name, but his source for the story does not account for any coinage. It is therefore safer to assume that Cicero's source meant that Pythagoras introduced the word into public usage.

Some centuries later, Iamblichus takes up the same thread, but drops the dramatic frame of the Leon conversation (*VP* 58-59). It also gives a more cogent explanation for the name *philosophos*. Whereas Cicero's version simply assumes that contemplating and understanding things is what for Pythagoras loving wisdom is, Iamblichus' paraphrase, gloss, or fill-in states that *sophia* is a kind of perfected knowledge, *philosophia* the "zealous pursuit" of that cognitive state. But because the story has so much similarity to Cicero's, Iamblichus must have drawn from a similar source. The fresh polish sounds largely Neoplatonic. While it accounts more coherently for the meaning of *philosophos*, then, it has less historical validity than Cicero's. But while Iamblichus' account, some three-quarters a millennium after Pythagoras, does not advance the "wanting to become *sophos*" thesis, its consistency with Cicero's (which does), and its tendentious support of Pythagoreanism and Neoplatonism, makes its non-advancement of that thesis unimportant.

Despite, then, the noted differences between several strands of stories, we note some important similarities. The *philosophos* is always related to the *sophos* in a special way. This is way is neither "opposition" nor "historical descent."<sup>28</sup> It is not "opposition" because in fact the *philosophos* emulates and takes after the *sophos*; he likens himself to the ideal form, and while admitting that he is not presently *sophos*, and may be more or less skeptical about the possibility of finally becoming *sophos*, he directs his actions toward becoming it. The relation between *sophos* and *philosophos* is not "historical descent" either, because *philosophoi* are not simply the stage of intellectual practitioners subsequent to the *sophoi*. Our authors treat *sophoi* and *philosophoi* as contemporaries. The class of *sophoi* did precede the class of *philosophoi*, and the advent of *philosophoi* presumably depends somehow on the existence of *sophoi*. This does not mean, however, that the *philosophoi* took over the mantle of the *sophoi*. Instead, the *philosophoi* appear related to the *sophoi* in the way Diodorus puts most directly: as "wanting to become *sophos*," that is, the person called *sophos*. Cicero and Iamblichus obscure the relation between

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<sup>28</sup> Compare Chroust 1947, 28, giving a similar analysis, and 1964, 430n23, 432, with a difficult one.

the *philosophos* and the person called *sophos* by focusing on the state of *sophia*, and filling in the content of that state in a way that may not comport with Pythagoras' thinking. Still, the abstraction from agent noun *sophos* to state *sophia* is not unexpected. Cicero's ultimate source could very well be thinking about the *philosophos* as the one who wants to become *sophos*.

On this interpretation, Pythagoras was the first to call himself an epithet that had perhaps already been bandied about: "wanting to become a *sophos*." This is equivalent neither to "loving wisdom," nor "being intellectually curious," nor "not being *sophos*," nor "nor caring about honor, etc., but only about wisdom." All these are possible derivative meanings.<sup>29</sup> But our best understanding of the Pythagorean origin-stories does not support them being the meaning at coinage.

These latter-day Pythagoras origin stories are, still, full of contradiction and likely anachronism. What reason do we have for thinking *philosophos* really did start out meaning "wanting to become a *sophos*"? Do we have cause for thinking that Pythagoras would actually have said this about himself? Should we surmise that Pythagoras would *coin* this term for himself? Regarding this last question, I hope to have put some doubt on it. It is after all possible that Pythagoras was the first person to call himself *philosophos* but not the first to call somebody else *philosophos*. About the first two questions, we will need to look to the linguistic history for evidence.

### III. Aristotle's *philotoioutoi*

The earliest sustained analysis of *phil-* prefixed names comes in Aristotle.<sup>30</sup> Aristotle makes it clear that the *phil-* prefix is a generator of epithets or names for people other than the users of the names. In his *Ethics* and *Rhetoric* Aristotle writes about people who are called by various *phil-* names. To refer to this class of people, he invents a word, *philotoioutoi*, "*phil-whatevers*."<sup>31</sup> This metalinguistic name—used in discussion of language rather than of people

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<sup>29</sup> Chantraine 2009, s.v. σοφός, lists other, derivative, meanings: the taste for research, science, and eloquence.

<sup>30</sup> The *Lysis* works out the semantics and syntax of *philos*, and deploys many *phil-x* compounds, but is immediately concerned with "friends" and not those named by *phil-x* compounds. See, however, Cipriano 1990, 40-41, and Belfiore 2012, 68-108, for what can be inferred about Plato's attitudes toward those compounds; Cipriano, 39, 100-102, 105 argues that sophists would have been attentive to *phil-* prefixed terms by Aristophanes' maturity.

<sup>31</sup> Until Eustathius we see this word again only in two commentaries on Aristotle's *Ethics*: Aspasius': 91.22, 92.5, 116.28, 117.8 Heylbut; Eustratius': 82.10-30. No other extant literature takes up this kind of analysis.

themselves—allows him to talk in general terms about people who are called by *phil-* names.<sup>32</sup> He never decomposes *phil-* names into noun-object phrases like “lover of such-and-such.”<sup>33</sup> His attention to *phil-*names themselves throughout his discussion, and his coinage of the variable, shows Aristotle recognizes the special nature of these words.<sup>34</sup>

Aristotle first talks about the kinds of *philotoioutoi* when arguing that the life of excellent activity is pleasant in itself. He contrasts what is universally pleasurable—excellence—with the idiosyncratically pleasurable:

to each person that item is pleasurable in respect to which he is called a *phil-*whatever, for instance a horse to the *philippos*, sights [*theama*] to the *philothoros*;<sup>35</sup> and in the same way, things of justice to the *philodikaios* and, generally, things in accordance with virtue to the *philaretos*. Now the pleasures with respect to most people conflict, since such things are not pleasurable by nature, but with respect to the *philokalos* [*phil-beauty/excellence*], pleasures are pleasurable by nature. (*EN*.I.8 1099a7-11)<sup>36</sup>

Aristotle says that people called *phil-x* find the *x* pleasurable. The compound name does not, on this view, encode the appropriateness, normality, or intensity of the pleasure taken in the object indicated by the word’s second element. It expresses only a simple psychological state, the existence in the named person of a pro-attitude toward the named object. Depending on how we take the MSS,<sup>37</sup> Aristotle may express this view again in the *Rhetoric*:

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<sup>32</sup> He is not talking about people who are indiscriminate “lovers” of whatever; if the term meant “amateur” or “aficionado,” we would expect a broader usage of it. Evidence that it is a metalinguistic term comes further from the fact that it always precedes specific examples of *phil-* words and in the three *EN* cases, it is collocated with a λέγεται word, “being said” or “being called.”

<sup>33</sup> This fact is often hidden in translation, as e.g. in Rowe and Broadie 2002.

<sup>34</sup> The following discussion will be at the level of linguistics, not at the level of ethical analysis, as in Lefebvre 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle’s word differs from Plato for the *phil-*sights or –spectacles, who uses φιλοθεάμων, which contains the root noun, θέαμα, cited by Aristotle here. The difference would be a *phil-* name built from an action, θεωρειν, and one built from the object of that action. There are no extant comparisons of the two, and both are extremely rare in the classical period. The arbitrary creation of the name shows that the object need not be expressly stated by the *phil-* name; this finding will be consistent with what we show below.

<sup>36</sup> ἐκάστῳ δ’ ἐστὶν ἡδὺ πρὸς ὃ λέγεται φιλοτοιοῦτος, οἷον ἵππος μὲν τῷ φιλίππῳ, θέαμα δὲ τῷ φιλοθεώρῳ· τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ τὰ δίκαια τῷ φιλοδικαίῳ καὶ ὅλως τὰ κατ’ ἀρετὴν τῷ φιλαρέτῳ. τοῖς μὲν οὖν πολλοῖς τὰ ἡδέα μάχεται διὰ τὸ μὴ φύσει τοιαῦτ’ εἶναι, τοῖς δὲ φιλοκάλοις ἐστὶν ἡδέα τὰ φύσει ἡδέα·

<sup>37</sup> πρὸς ἃ φιλοτοιοῦτοι conjectured by Vahlen and accepted by Ross; earlier editors accepted πρὸς ἃ τοιοῦτοι.

and [one feels desire toward and thus deems good] especially that of which each is a *phil*-whatever: for instance victory in the case of *philonikoi*, honor in the case of *philotimoi*, money in the case of *philochrêmatoi*, and the others likewise. (*Rhet.* 1363a38-b3)

Again Aristotle treats the *phil*-prefixed name as revealing a descriptive psychological state.<sup>38</sup> He does not here speak of the name itself encoding any evaluation of the person so named. But in the next text he does.

Regarding the peculiarities of pleasure many make errors in many ways. For being called *phil*-whatevers either for caring (*chairein*) for what they ought not, or more than the many do,<sup>39</sup> or not as they ought, and in accordance with all these, intemperate people overreach. For they care for some things that they should not (being hateful), and if some of the pleasures it is appropriate to enjoy, rather more than it is appropriate and than the many enjoy them. (*EN*.III.11.4 1118b22-27)

Here Aristotle retains his view that people called *phil*-x find the x pleasurable. But now he notes that the term is a normative one, applied negatively. The *akolastoi* (“intemperate people”) are *philotoioutoi* in the respect that they find x pleasurable in some inappropriate way. So *phil*-x means inappropriate liking of x. Aristotle no longer treats the word as having solely a psychological referent. He now treats it as a pejorative epithet, a sort of slur.

In the final text, however, Aristotle steps back from the pejorative reading and takes a broader perspective.

Clearly, since we talk about a *phil*-whatever in multiple ways, we treat the *philotimon* as not always being about the same thing, but when praising it, [we treat it as being] about more [honor] than most people, but when censuring it, about more honor than is appropriate. (*EN*.IV.4.4 1125b14)

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<sup>38</sup> Cipriano 1990, 42, observes that Aristotle distinguishes between being inclined toward something, loving something, and feeling pleasure in the attainment of that toward which one is inclined; she also notes that Aristotle’s attention to these experiences has dialectical and not purely linguistic motivation. For the sake of the argument here, however, we can call all of them descriptive psychological states.

<sup>39</sup> For some reason Irwin does not translate ἢ τῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ὥς οἱ πολλοί (but Taylor and Ross do); perhaps he thinks that the point is made sufficient in the last clause.

At this point, Aristotle abandons the “always bad” reading for a “sometimes good, sometimes bad” reading of *phil-x*.<sup>40</sup> His basic premise is that the enjoyment characteristic of a *philotoioutos* is abnormally great. The goodness of this enjoyment depends on what is appropriate with respect to the object of enjoyment. The compound word does not itself contain an evaluation. It contains only a judgment of relative quantity. It would be work of a sociological nature to determine whether a certain relative quantity earns approval or disapproval in a community.

We can see, then, that Aristotle expresses three distinct views about *phil-* words.

1. *phil-x* indicates liking (a psychological reading)
2. *phil-x* indicates liking more than one should (a pejorative reading)
3. *phil-x* indicates liking more than others do (a comparative reading)

The variety of views prevents any easy application of Aristotle’s analysis to the *philosophos*. Might one then try to bring them into concord? Perhaps the third, “comparative,” view comprehends the other two. Enjoyment falls under copious enjoyment, as does inappropriate enjoyment. In this view, the *philotoioutos* enjoys something, enjoys it more than others do, and this of course is consistent with enjoying that thing reprehensibly or admirably.

Unfortunately this combination does not work. The pejorative reading of *philotoioutos* puts the negative evaluation in the name itself. The word itself announces the norm-breaking. The comparative reading of *philotoioutos*, on the other hand, puts the evaluation in the sentence. The word by itself does not announce any norm-breaking. In the comparative reading, if the sentence is one of praise, then the word serves to laud; if the sentence is one of censure, then the word serves to denounce. So last two texts are incompatible, and we cannot decide whether Aristotle thinks *philotoioutos* is a pejorative name or not.

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<sup>40</sup> Dover 1974 makes a similar analysis of *philotimos*, which while in a positive light is reputation bought at a cost to oneself, patriotism rather than shameful living, through its competitive realization may shade into “aggression, pride, and boastfulness” (230-234, 236); *philonikia*, which while sometimes thought a virtue early in the fourth century, was also a derogatory name, for being “quarrelsome, factious, contentious” (233-234); *philanthropia*, which though happily linked with compassion is, at least by Demosthenes, seen as servile (201-202); *philodikos*, *philoloidoros*, and *philopragmon*, all of which may be used as terms of reproach for being litigious and quarrelsome (187-189). See also Christ 1998.

Even if the pejorative and comparative readings were compatible, they would both be false. This is because both depend on the psychological reading, and this, as a matter of Greek semantics, does not generally hold. The psychological reading has two parts:

1. the *phil-x* experiences pleasure (or feels desire) toward something (an “attitudinal” part)
2. it is *x* toward which the *phil-x* has this attitude of pleasure or desire (an “object” part)

According to the psychological reading, names like *philotoioutos* encode an attitude, namely enjoyment, and an object, namely the thing referred to by the second element of the word. As a factual matter, however, neither is true. This is what the next section will argue.

Let us summarize Aristotle’s lesson. *Phil-* prefixed words are names applied to other people. This is clear because these names are charged, either negatively or sometimes positively, and people do not generally excoriate or praise themselves through names.

#### IV. The history of Greek *phil-* prefixed names

Greek has over 800 *phil-* prefixed names.<sup>41</sup> By the period of Aristophanes, and certainly by Plato and Aristotle, many *phil-* prefixed names would be understood as if built from a verbal first element, φιλέω, and an objective second element, the accusative argument of the verb.<sup>42</sup> The verb φιλέω would, by that time, be understood attitudinally, as “to desire,” “to like,” or “to love.” But the morphosemantics as understood by late-fifth and fourth-century Greek speakers cannot be generalized to the understanding of earlier Greek speakers. It has long been appreciated by scholars that in the earliest Greek *phil-* prefixed names, at least up through Pindar and thus time of the *philosophos* coinage,<sup>43</sup> the *phil-* first element would not have been understood verbally. It would have been understood differently, as a *bahuvrihi* compound meaning “to whom *x* is *philon*.” In that earlier period, *philon* did not have the attitudinal inflection it later acquired. It meant, depending on grammatical role and context, united, dear, friend, shared, convenient, trustworthy, benign, welcome, particular, relevant, or inherent.<sup>44</sup> Much of the scholarly controversy concerns when the understanding of the first element

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<sup>41</sup> Landfester 1966, 108.

<sup>42</sup> Cipriano 1990, 43, 97-100.

<sup>43</sup> If Pythagoras called himself *philosophos*, then the word would have been formed by the end of the sixth century. This date is corroborated by a Heraclitean fragment that uses the word; and Heraclitus died by 475.

<sup>44</sup> Cipriano 1990, 14-24, and Landfester 1966, 95-107.

changed, and why.<sup>45</sup> This investigation, however, does not need to settle the controversy. Whenever the shift from non-attitudinal to attitudinal first element *phil-* occurred, it could not be complete before the coinage of the name *philosophos*.<sup>46</sup> And even if the shift was occurring during the time of the coinage, we would not know thereby the history of a particular word. The complexities of compounding are too great,<sup>47</sup> and the connotations of the first element too numerous.<sup>48</sup>

As we look at the *phil-* prefixed names from before and up to the likely coinage of *philosophos*, we will see the infrequency with which those names denote anything like the attitudinal component highlighted by Aristotle. Our evidence will be the nine Homeric *phil-* prefixed names; the five other seventh-sixth century *phil-* prefixed names; and the nine such words used by poets before the Athenian tragedians.<sup>49</sup> Going over these names to show that they lack an explicit attitudinal component would be otiose, given previous scholarship, were it not that we will see that most of the names have three other features that the scholarly literature hardly acknowledges. In most of the *phil-* prefixed names, the second element is not taken literally: the x in the *phil-x* is not explicitly what the name is about.<sup>50</sup> Most are originally other-applied epithets, rather than self-descriptions.<sup>51</sup> Finally, in many, the names are used negatively, with an ironic, bemused, or even derogatory inflection. Thus in the following analysis, I will assess for four features:

- (i) lack of explicit attitudinal component (of the sort “desire for”)
- (ii) lack of literal object in second element
- (iii) other-applied epithet

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<sup>45</sup> Especially Osthoff 1878, 145-160; Landfester 1966; Cipriano 1990, 25-38, 97-110.

<sup>46</sup> Riedwig 2005, 90-97, which cites Cipriano 1990, fails to appreciate the non-attitudinal meaning of *phil-*.

<sup>47</sup> Cipriano 1990, 11.

<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., LSJ svv.

<sup>49</sup> Cunliffe 1963, 408-409, Cipriano 1990, 48-55. There are also proper names in Homer—Φιλητορίδης, Φιλοίτιος, Φιλοκτήτης, Φιλομηλείδης, cf. Chantraine 2009, s.v. *philos*. These names resist evaluation: they are not used meaningfully or in any context. We assume that they are first used as other-applied names; but while we may also assume that they must have been coined as having affirmative connotations, we cannot be certain. The most important conclusion to draw from their existence is the long-standing use of *phil-* prefixed names, their familiarity, and their ready opacity of morphosemantic content.

<sup>50</sup> While Cipriano 1990, 107, notes only in passing that the different semantic connotations the second member can assume does determine the possible meanings of the compound; it does not play an important part in the analysis, despite the fact that she is comparing *philologos* to *logophilos* (cf. p. 8).

<sup>51</sup> This fact is observed but little is made of it by Cipriano 1990, 97, which notes that *phil-* compounds tend to be stereotypical epithets, poetic description of abstract entities, and adjectives applicable to large sets of individuals.

(iv) negative inflection

Compound words are *words*, and not simply abbreviations of phrases. Phrases use words with determinate parts of speech and determinate syntactic relations. The meanings of words, even compound words, have much less determinate relations to their constitutive morphemes. The meanings depend on their original coinage less than on something that could be deduced independently from their parts.

Homer

φιλήρετος – *phil-oar*

This term is an epithet of the Phaeacians<sup>52</sup> and the Taphians,<sup>53</sup> referring to their naval proclivities. We should not expect that either people got pleasure or enjoyment from, or that they desired, oars. It is unlikely they had any particularly fond feeling even toward rowing or their navy. Therefore the name does not encode an attitude of liking. The *phil-* element here is not psychological; it is instead a marker, in that their navy was a large part of their public image. What about the *-eretmos* element? There is no reason to believe that the Phaeacians or Taphians had any attitude at all toward their oars as such. The second element is likely not the literal object of anything that the first element *phil-* might mean. It is instead synecdochal, a symbol for what set the Phaeacians and Taphians apart from other peoples. We cannot know the reason the epithet uses the “oar” element; perhaps it is a funny litotes, or the result of something someone once said, or the consequence of a counting principle (as with “head of cattle”). Thus (i)-(iii). We cannot discern the inflection with which Homer uses it.

φιλομμειδής<sup>54</sup> – *phil-smiling*

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<sup>52</sup> *O.* 5.386, 8.386, 535, 11.349, 13.36

<sup>53</sup> *O.* 1.181, 419

<sup>54</sup> At Hes. *Th.* 200, this word is sometimes read φιλο(μ)μηδέα, from μηδος (“genitals”), to account better for the rest of Hesiod’s line, ὅτι μηδέων ἐξεφάνθη (“because she came forth from genitals”).



This epithet of Aphrodite<sup>55</sup> does not present the goddess of sexual love’s psychological state.<sup>56</sup> Rather than picking out some visceral approval or desire of smiles, it refers instead to part of the performance of seduction—coy smiling<sup>57</sup>—that she personifies. So the word does not transparently pick out some feeling Aphrodite has, it does not mean that she has an attitude toward smiles as such, and it is an epithet. There is evidence that this epithet, unlike her others, φιλοστεφάνου (*HH to Dem.* 102) or εὐστέφανος (*O.* 8.267), has a negative inflection.<sup>58</sup> Thus (i)-(iv).

φιλοψευδής – *phil-lies*

Zeus is called this a single time in the Homeric poems (*Il.* 12.164). He is being accused of misrepresenting his allegiances. But he is not accused of enjoying doing so; nor is he accused of looking preferentially on lies themselves. The charge is that Zeus is characteristically deceptive about his intentions. Aristotle later uses the word to refer to people who are not sincere, who either boast or self-deprecate (*EE* 1234a3). The word is not used for those who get pleasure from lying, or even for those who simply lie a lot. Thus (i)-(iv).

φιλοκέρτομος – *phil-jeering*

In the *Odyssey*, the son of Polythereses is called “contemptuous” (*O.* 22.287); he is characterized by jeering and disrespectful behaviors associated with jeering. Odysseus does not say that Ctessipus enjoys jeering. We learn too little about Ctessipus himself to know whether he actually jeers frequently. We can tell that this is a name applied to others, and is negative. Thus at least (i), (iii), and (iv).

φιλοπόλεμος – *phil-war*

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<sup>55</sup> *Il.* 3.424, 4.10, 5.375, 14.211, 20.40; *O.* 7.362; *HH to Aphr.* 17, 49, 56, 65, 155; [Hes.] *fr.* 176.1 and *Cypr.* 5.1.

<sup>56</sup> Boedeker 1974, 20-36 invalidates Beekes 2010, s.v. *philos*: φίλομειδής, “with a friendly smile.”

<sup>57</sup> Faulkner 2008, 92.

<sup>58</sup> Jackson 2010, 157: it is used “most often when Aphrodite is being shamed or subordinated on account of her association with sexuality”; “Zeus, by belittling Aphrodite and encouraging Athena, seeks to replace Aphrodite’s model of excessively intimate interaction with Athena’s more appropriate model of friendship” (161). Cf. Boedeker 1974, 35; Friedrich 1982, 105.

Various peoples are said to be warlike: the Myrmidons, Trojans, Greeks, Leleges.<sup>59</sup> Whether they like or desire war is not at issue; they are predisposed to irascibility or to fighting, and perhaps do not make the normal efforts to ensure peace. None of Homer's characters applies this term to himself. It is used as an epithet here; later literature makes clear its negative connotation. Thus likely (i)-(iv).

φιλοφροσύνη – *phil*-mindedness

This name refers to kindness or friendly temper (*Il.* 1.256). There is no obvious way to construe this trait either as a *desire* for or a desire *for* any particular object.<sup>60</sup> It describes other people, in a laudatory way. Thus (i)-(iii).

φιλοκτέανος – *phil*-possession

The Atrides are said to be “most covetous” (*Il.* 1.122). Perhaps they rather enjoy possessions. Context does not determine whether they are accused of liking just any and all possessions, or whether this general term stands in for something particular, like money or land. This name is clearly other-applied, and negative. Thus certainly (iii)-(iv).

φιλόξενος – *phil*-stranger

People referred to as “hospitable” (*O.* 6.121, 8.576, 9.176, 13.202) may enjoy the company of or hosting strangers or foreigners. But this adjective does not determine whether *philoxenoi* like strangers themselves, or are fastidious about meeting the obligations of *xenia*, or are simply accommodating of everybody. It is probably safest to assume something like the second: good participation in *xenia*, rather than some attitude toward *xenoi* per se. In the Homeric contexts, then, (i) is probable, (ii) seems likely, and (iii) is certainly true.

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<sup>59</sup> Myrmidons: *Il.* 15.65, 22. 129, Trojans: 15.90, 15.835, 16.194, Greeks: 16.224, 18.269, 19.351, Leleges: 21.86.

<sup>60</sup> Cipriano 1990, 43n21 finds this word singularly difficult to subject to analysis.

φιλοπαίγμων – *phil-play*

In the first extant usage of this word, a dance-tune is called “sportive” (*O.* 23.134). Presumably it is used metaphorically, on the model of people enjoying to play. What is clear is that tunes themselves do not have feelings. Humans who are *philopaigmones* could enjoy play and childishness, but they might not. This term is other-applied, and its inflection probably varies depending on context. Thus (i)-(iii).

Through the sixth century

The remaining *phil-* prefixed names of the seventh and sixth centuries confirm that *phil-* prefixed names are generally epithets (usually negative ones) that refer neither to a desire nor to the literal object of some desire.

φιλαίματος – *phil-blood*

This word is translated “bloodthirsty,” describing the war-god Ares and Fear (Anacreon fr. 100.3 D, Aesch. *Th.* 45; cf. Eur. *Ph.*174, *Rh.*932). One imagines these beings do not actually enjoy blood itself, in whatever sense this would make for beings other than blood-sucking animals; rather, they are distinguished by their connection to war, violence, and destruction. It is obviously a divine epithet, and seems negatively inflected. (i)-(iv).

φιλοδέσποτος – *phil-master*

This term, in Theognis modifying δῆμον (“people,” 849), is clearly ironical; it is as though the only way to describe the people’s “subservience” is to imagine them as partial to their master. But the subservient person may not actually *love* his *master*; he simply accommodates to the wishes of some authority. (i), (iii), (iv).

φιλοκερδής – *phil-profit*

As we see again in Theognis (199; cf. Pindar *I.*2.6), this man is not to be applauded. (iii), (iv).

### φιλόμωμος - *phil-blame*

One would not want to be called “censorious”; Simonides’ poem includes a disavowal of the name (Simonides fr. 4.22: οὐ γάρ εἰμι φιλόμωμος). Thus this is a negative other-attributed name, used defensively here. And once again, there is little sense that the censorious person *likes* or *desires* to blame; the point is rather that he is characterized by behavior that can be interpreted as blaming. (i), (iii)-(iv).

### φιλοστέφανος – *phil-crown*

Aphrodite has as one of her epithets “glory-loving”; so do other divine beings.<sup>61</sup> As with φιλήρετμος, the crown obviously stands in for something larger and less concrete, and there is no reason to ascribe to the named person any particular emotional state. (i)-(iii).

### Early fifth century

Most of the early fifth-century poetic uses of *phil-x* words (i) lack an attitudinal component, (ii) lack a literal object, and (iii) are other-applied epithets. Half are explicitly negative.

φιλάγλαος – <i>phil-splendor</i>	‘resplendent’	of Agrigento	Pi. P.12.1
φιάνωρ – <i>phil-man</i>	‘amorous’	of Delphians	Pi. fr. 236
φιλάρματος – <i>phil-chariots</i>	‘chariot-loving’	of Thebes	Pi. I.7.20
φίλιππος – <i>phil-horse</i>	‘horse-loving’	of Thebes	B. III.69 D
φιλοκτήμων – <i>phil-possession</i>	‘covetous’	of a man	Sol. fr. 24.20 D
φιλόμαχος – <i>phil-battle</i>	‘pugnacious’	of the γένος ἐκ Πελοσέος	P. fr. 164
φιλόμολπος – <i>phil-song</i>	‘song-loving’	of Aigina	Pi. N.7.9
φιλόνεικος – <i>phil-victory</i>	‘contentious’	denied by speaker	Pi. O.6.19
φιλόπολις – <i>phil-city</i>	‘patriotic’	of Hesychia	Pi. O.4.17

### Commonalities

<sup>61</sup> See Anacr. fr. 109.1 D; Ion fr. 1.14-16 D; Bacch. 13.184.

Nearly all the earliest *phil*- prefixed words have at least three of four common characteristics: non-attitudinal, non-objective, non-self-ascribed, and non-positive. The negatively-inflected names are usually formed by combining the *phil*- prefix with a neutral or even positive second element. In succeeding generations, more words lacking these four elements are coined; but we cannot retroject these analyses onto the earlier generations of *phil*-prefixed words.

#### **V. *Phil*-x as notably related to a conventional practice**

The preceding analysis shows that the *phil*- prefix generates fairly opaque names. They wave to some relevant distinctive quality of a god or a people. Burkert's gloss of the *phil*- prefix, "close acquaintance and familiarity with," is thus too concrete, narrow, and selective.<sup>62</sup> A truer formulation would be "marked somehow by a notable relation to." The above analysis should also show that the second element (the x) usually stands in for something less concrete or natural than if it were an independent word. Many of these names come from legal competition (e.g., φιλαίτιος, A. S. 803, "litigious"; φιλόψογος, E. El. 904, cf. Ph.198, "ensorious") and economic relations (e.g., φιλόαργυρος, S. Ant. 1055, fr. 528; φιλόπλουτος E. IT 411, "avaricious"); others come from norms of warfare, servitude, and competition. We can infer that the second element—usually a natural object (oar, smile, silver, soul)—stands for some conventional practice or system (navy, seduction, monetary accumulation, protecting external values). In every conventional practice, a participant must modulate his participation. He must be involved to some degree: defending his property, seeking romantic partners, promoting the welfare of his hometown. And that involvement is in an important respect set by the common good it facilitates. But be involved too much, and the directing good can come to seem one's own. One explains a person's overwhelming helpfulness by locating the self-directed benefit; the public good is being sacrificed for the private good. Criticism is difficult, because participation in the conventional practice is nonetheless important. But it is also necessary, because such participation is voluntary, and so must be corrected. The name-calling allowed by *phil*- prefix names allows sensitive policing of these conventional practices. A name-caller can seem simply

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<sup>62</sup> Burkert 1972, 65, whose main point, that the prefix does not always mean "insatiable striving," is correct; cf. Chroust 1964, 427n16 and 432n28. Hadot 2002, 16, is also too narrow in saying that the prefix "designate[s] the disposition of a person who found his interest, pleasure, or *raison de vivre* in devoting himself to a given activity," and gives only the examples of *philoposia* (not extant from before Xenophon's *Memorabilia*) and *philotimia* (which LSJ, s.v., says is "frequently in bad sense in early writers").

to draw attention to a person's participation in an apparently neutral activity: for example, "that guy is notably related to legal motions" (φιλαίτιος). Since legal motions themselves are appropriate for many situations, the name-caller is not openly criticizing, in the way names like "jerk" do. But since one's relation to legal motions usually goes without saying, calling attention to it by creating a name for it implies that the relation is not merely notable; it is problematic. It would usually be pointless to make a name for someone unless it were to aim to regulate behavior; and most regulation-worthy behavior is problematic behavior.

At least three times in classical literature authors articulate the naming-conventions of *phil-x* names (beyond Aristotle's *philotoioutos* discussions); to two of them we now turn.<sup>63</sup>

### Aristophanes' *Wasps*

Aristophanes' comic play the *Wasps* (422 BC) tells about a man, Philocleon, obsessed with exercising the power jury-duty affords.<sup>64</sup> He really cannot get enough of it, and much of the play is about his son's attempts to curb his mania. Early in the play the household's slaves ask the audience to guess what trait they should ascribe to this man.

XANTHIAS: ...[Philocleon] is ill from a bizarre illness  
that nobody will recognize or diagnose  
but by learning from us. So guess!  
Amynias here, son of Pronapses, claims the man  
is a *philokuban* ("philo-dice").

SOSIAS: But he speaks nonsense, by Zeus,  
judging the illness by his own symptoms!

X.: True enough, though "*philo-*" is the start of the evil.  
Here next is Sôsius claiming to Dercliyus that  
the man is a *philopotên* ("philo-drinking").

S.: Not at all; since  
that illness is an affliction of gentlemen.

X.: And now Nicostratus of Scambonidae claims

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<sup>63</sup> The possibly-Platonic *Hipparchus* analyzes φιλοκερδής, "*phil-profit*," in a way interestingly similar to Aristotle's analysis of *philautos*: the "profiteer" is obviously a bad name, as Socrates' friend is confident but for reasons he cannot articulate; Socrates does violence to the connotations of the word by arguing that it means "lover of the good."

<sup>64</sup> The protagonist's name, contrasted with his son Bdelycleon's name, presages attention to *phil-* prefixed names.

the man to be a *philothutên* (“*philo*-sacrifice”) or a *philoxenon* (“*philo*-hosting”)

S.: By the dog, O Nicostratus, not a *philoxenos*; since Philoxenos is a bugger.

X.: You’re all just driveling; you’re not going to find it;

if you’re really eager to know it, quiet down and listen:

I’ll tell you now what’s plaguing the master.

A *philêliastês* (“*phil*-jury”) is what he is, like none other,

passionate (*erai*) for it—judging—and he groans

unless he sits in the front row. (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 71-90)

Aristophanes seems to have coined the word *philêliastês*, combining the naming element *phil-* and the name of the body of 6000 citizens from which individual juries would be empanelled, the *Eliaia*.<sup>65</sup> The word is an opaque label, as is clear from the slaves’ having to gloss it with a description, “passionate for judging.” It is evaluative, as it must be to mimic the other terms. Those other *phil-* words are evaluative—as names of diseases (76, 80, 87)—and, in this comic context, negative.<sup>66</sup> They—and so too *philêliastês*—are ironic slanders.

Taken compositionally, each of the *phil-* terms would seem simply to say that the second element somehow characterizes the subject of the term. Indeed, if *phil-* meant “love of,” and the second element were taken literally, the names would mean the following: “lover of dice [a game],” “lover of drinking [a way of staying hydrated],” “lover of sacrifice [a way to propitiate the gods],” “lover of hosting [a part of hospitality],” and “lover of the jury [a venue of democratic practice].” But since these words make fun, they obviously do not have the meaning suggested by their components. *Philokubos* means profligate gambling,<sup>67</sup> *philopotên* means wallowing in alcoholic excess,<sup>68</sup> *philothutên* means, at least here, acting piously for the sake of eating the meat produced in the sacrifice (elsewhere it might mean “acting superstitiously”),<sup>69</sup> and *philoxenon* could mean throwing decadent parties or, more pungently, purchasing foreign male prostitutes in Athens.<sup>70</sup> Each is at least here a way of calling a person out for his excessive

<sup>65</sup> On the *Eliaia*, see MacDowell 1986, 30.

<sup>66</sup> It is not important for the interpretation here to distinguish obsessions and addictions, per Thorburn 2005; Cipriano 1990, 39, suggests “maniac of,” and more generally, loving beyond measure (excessively).

<sup>67</sup> Described in the context of other *phil-* prefixed character traits at [Arist.] *Physiogn.* 808a-b.

<sup>68</sup> Herodotus (2.174.1) expresses his low esteem of the Egyptian Amasis: “a *philopotês* and a real jester (φιλοσκόμων) and never a get-down-to-business kind of guy”). Hp. *Aer* I contrasts the ones who are “φιλοπόται and eat multiple big meals and are indulgent” with those who exercise and labor and refrain from drinking.

<sup>69</sup> Starkie 1897, ad 82.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Gilula 1983, contra MacDowell 1971 ad loc.

engagement with a common social institution: gambling, drinking, feasting, and partying. These names are humorous because the positive-sounding second element refers only indirectly to the characteristic the comedian is lambasting.

The word invented by Aristophanes here follows this pattern. The jury is a preexisting social institution a person's orientation to which must be rightly modulated. The name *philêliastês* is funny because while its naively literal reading—"somehow concerned with the jury"—would be anodyne and possibly trivially patriotic, its pragmatic use, in name-calling, expresses a counter-normative involvement with something this social institution implies.<sup>71</sup> It is not, as Aristotle's latter-day analysis would suggest, that Philocleon likes the jury-pool, or likes it a lot, or likes it in the wrong way. Philocleon's attitude toward the jury-pool itself is not really at issue. The slaves are pointing out that he likes to wield arbitrary coercive powers over others. He has access to this power when he is empanelled on a jury. It is much funnier, however, to say that he is *philêliastês* than that he likes to abuse his democratic power, because *phil-* names beat around the bush by referring obliquely to some social institution in which one can choose, and choose wrongly, how involved to be. The playful slaves can make an obviously negative judgment more safely by mentioning a neutral or positive institution and letting name-calling patterns induce a listener to understand that negative judgment.

### Aristotle's *philautos*

A similar case is in Aristotle (insulated from his *philotoioutos* analysis). While treating of friendship Aristotle comes to dwell on what is usually translated the self-lover, the *philautos*. A better name would be "egoist." This word comes up in the context of Aristotle's reflection on friendship (*EN IX.8*). Aristotle notes that there is a puzzle about whether one should love (φιλεῖν) oneself the most. On the one hand, many people think that like goes best with like, and nobody is more like you than you yourself. On the other hand, those who care for (ἀγαπῶσι) themselves most of all—i.e., more than they do for other people—are criticized (ἐπιτιμῶσι), being denounced (ἀποκαλοῦσι) as so-called φιλάυτους, "egoists." This name, Aristotle reiterates, is used as a term of reproach (ὡς ἐν αἰσχρῶ). So the name *philautos* is an other-applied, pejorative label for selfish people.

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Konstan 1985, 27-28, 31-33: humor comes about only if an otherwise salutary desire "is represented as a pure obsession, detached, in the final analysis, from the acknowledged public value of its goal."



*Philautos* is a label in part because it is not merely a combination of the words for “self” and “lover,” as the standard English translation suggests. We can see this for both parts of the compound. First, Aristotle says that the attitude the self-lover has toward himself is *agapê*, not *philia*.<sup>72</sup> Aristotle describes this person’s character with words other than the ones that appear to form the two elements of the compound. Plato, talking about a lover of oneself, does not use the reproachful name; reproach is not appropriate to his context (*Laws* 731d-732b).<sup>73</sup> Second, the *philautos* does not especially love the self (*autos*). In Aristotle’s first explanation, the *philautos* fails to act in accordance with the excellent (*kalos*, 1168a33), presumably preferring instead pleasure or ease or his current whim. In his second explanation of this reproach (ὄνειδος), Aristotle says the *philautos* assigns himself the most goods, honors, and bodily pleasures (1168b15-18). If names were transparent, the *philautos* would be much less meaningful and useful than *philochrêmatos*, *philotimos*, or *philêdonos*.

So how could this name have come to be? We want to pick on people for their failures in communal activities, in particular of distributive justice. But we do not want to be harsh. *Autos* is not itself bad, and so being notably related to it is not, on the surface, bad. But it would be meaningless to say that for someone, their “self is dear,” since this is the case for nearly everyone. To justify the name-calling, the name must be understood to involve a second element *autos* that actually stands in for the distribution of goods, and the compound to be picking out an improper distribution of goods. *Phil-* does not literally mean “mania for” or “excessive desire for”; it is more properly understood as a name-generator for these ironic names.

Two parallels are the names φιλόζωος (Eur. fr. 816.6) and φιλόψυχος (Eur. *Ph.*597, *Hec.*348). On the surface they mean *phil*-life; but since everyone loves life itself, “life” stands in for protection of one’s own in battles, and the *phil-* compounding creates a name-calling name, and so the compounds mean “coward.”

Interestingly, Aristotle goes on to redeem the *philautos*’ name, saying that, in some respects, it is admirable to love oneself. But this redemption of the name for Aristotle’s philosophical purposes does not by itself change the public connotations of the word.

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<sup>72</sup> That Aristotle elsewhere uses *philein* means only that the verbs of affection are interchangeable; it doesn’t change the fact that *philautos* doesn’t mean *philein heautos*.

<sup>73</sup> When Plato is describing the phenomenon of preference for oneself over others, he uses a descriptive phrase (ὁ λέγουσιν ὡς φίλος αὐτῷ; τὴν σφόδρα ἑαυτοῦ φίλιν), not this name; since the *Laws* would not have been written much earlier than the *Ethics*, and Aristotle does not speak of the name as an in-vogue slang, if the name were other than a nickname Plato would likely have used it.

## VI. *Sophos* as a conventional practice

An important part of Diodorus' claim is that being *philosophos* is the emulation of a certain kind of person. Being *sophos* is not simply possessing some natural product called *sophia*. It is being part of an elite social class of *sophoi*. Thus being *sophos* (adjective) or a *sophos* (noun) means being part of that group. From the sixth century the Greeks recognized a cultural category of *sophos*, "sage," most recognizable in the stories of the Seven Sages.<sup>74</sup> The special competence of the *sophoi* included poetic skill, political expertise, and religious knowledge; this means being *sophos* is concerned the "practical matters of common life."<sup>75</sup> Kerferd provided the original analysis, that "it is not the skill of such persons [i.e., *sophoi*] which is in question, but simply the functions which they perform as a class."<sup>76</sup>

From the beginning *sophia* was in fact associated with the poet, the seer and the sage, all of whom were seen as revealing visions of knowledge not granted otherwise to mortals. The knowledge so gained was not a matter of technique as such, whether poetic or otherwise, but knowledge about the gods, man and society, to which the "wise man" claimed privileged access.<sup>77</sup>

Euripides' paradox—"the <so-called> wisdom is not <actual> wisdom" (τὸ σοφὸν δ'οὐ σοφία *Bacchae* 395)<sup>78</sup>—expresses the fact that wisdom could be considered a status, not just an accomplishment. In Plato's *Apology*, Socrates goes around testing those reputed to be wise. His friend Chaerephon had sought out whether any Greek more properly deserved the name "wise" than Socrates.

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<sup>74</sup> Plato *Protagoras*, Cicero *TD* 5.3.7, DL 1.27-33, 4-42; Martin 1993; Sharp 2004; Tell 2011, 15-17 and *passim*; Kurke 2011, 95, 96-126: "there was a native Greek conceptualization of Hesiod, Theognis, Pythagoras, and the Seven Sages (among others) as a coherent tradition, designated as *sophia*, and its practitioners as *sophoi* or *sophistai*."

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Lattimore 1939; Chroust 1947, 20-22, quoting Aeschylus: ὁ χρήσιμ' εἰδὼς, οὐχ ὁ πολλ' εἰδὼς σοφός ("wise is the one knowing useful things, not many things" fr. 286A); Munn 2000, 16; Chantraine 2009, s.v. σοφός, "qui sait, qui maîtrise un art ou une technique," e.g., poets, musicians, horsemen, sailors, artists, craftsmen.

<sup>76</sup> Kerferd 1950, 8-9.

<sup>77</sup> Kerferd 1981, 24; cf. Kerferd 1976, 26-28, Hadot 2002, 18-21: the practices of *sophia* "presuppose instruction and apprenticeship, but they also demand the help of a god or divine grace which reveals secrets of fabrication to the artisan and artist and helps them in the exercise of their art."

<sup>78</sup> Compare the Euripidean μισῶ σοφιστήν, ὅστις οὐχ αὐτῷ σοφός ("I hate a sophist, someone who is not wise about himself.")

A cultural category may exist without one being able to identify a contemporary as a member of it. The *sophoi* were often legendary, or referred to in poetry. It is not certain that one could identify a contemporary as *sophos*. Such identification, however, is unnecessary for a cultural category. To be *sophos* is to have attained an enviable and powerful social position. It involves understanding the role of humans in the world and in their particular societies.

One of the most interesting elements of the *sophoi* legends is that there are essentially no accounts for how people got that way. This fact implies that the status of *sophos* would arise naturally, with time and experience, and not through specific training worth noting. Pindar wrote that “a wise person is the one who knows much by nature” (σοφὸς ὁ πολλ’ εἰδῶς φύξ *Ol.* 2.87), contrasting him with those who explicitly learn, who are pointless chatterers (μαθόντες δὲ λάβροι / παγγλωσσία 88). Diogenes Laertius, and thus apparently his sources as well, never mentions the education or maturation of Solon, Chilon, Pittacus, Bias, Cleobulus, Periander, Anacharsis, or Epimenides. Thales, Diogenes said, had no teacher (οὐδεὶς δὲ αὐτοῦ καθηγήσατο, 1.27), except that he once spent time with (συνδείτριψεν) some priests in Egypt. The sole exception is Diogenes’ last sage, Pherecydes, who followed (διακίχοεν) Pittacus and instructed (σχολάσαι) Pythagoras. It appears then that, usually, a person simply comes to be considered *sophos* upon living a successful, diverse, practically-minded life. In some cases, a *sophos* may have travelled, but this is to be distinguished from study, lessons, or mentorship.<sup>79</sup>

## VII. *Philosophos* is a name-calling name for those trying to become *sophos*.

Compound names present the puzzle that they obscure the part of speech of the second element. *Philosophos* could be analyzed *phil-* + (*to*) *sophon* (neuter: ‘the wise thing’),<sup>80</sup> *phil-* + (*hê*) *sophia* (feminine abstract noun, ‘wisdom’),<sup>81</sup> or *phil-* + *sophos* (masculine adjective: ‘being wise’).<sup>82</sup> The second element’s part of speech is in fact indeterminable. But any disappointment about this is misplaced. A name-coiner does not attach the *phil-* element with a word in a definitive form, and then set the compound name into the adjective or agent-noun form. He takes

<sup>79</sup> Szegedy-Maszak 1978; Montiglio 2000, 88-89; Ker 2000; Nightingale 2004

<sup>80</sup> Chantraine 2009, s.v. φίλος, without argument.

<sup>81</sup> Hadot 2002, 17, for example, writes that “the words *philosophos* and *philosophen* thus presuppose the notion of *sophia*”; on the next page, however, he depends on information about *sophos*. Though σοφία existed at the time of Homer (*Il.* 15.412), it is not clear that there is any precedent for *phil-* + an abstract noun

<sup>82</sup> Beekes 2010, s.v. σοφός: “friend of a σοφόν, who loves τὸ σοφόν, τὴν σοφίαν, eager for knowledge, friend of the sciences.” This follows the pattern of *philophrôn*.

some idea—oars, smiling, falsehoods—and makes a name-calling name by prefixing the root of that word with *phil-*, and adding the adjectival ending. Since *phil-* is not an arrow pointing at something, as “love of” or “familiarity with” would imply, even being able to affirm any particular object would not help. *Philosophos* has come from the *phil-* formation of a name somehow about the idea indicated by σοφ-.<sup>83</sup>

The pattern familiar from the history of *phil-* prefixed names is that they lack an attitudinal component; lack a literally-referred-to object; are other-applied; are bemused, ironic, or derisive; and the second element, often a natural neutral or good thing, stands in for some conventional social practice or system. We can thus expect that the meaning of *philosophos* will be some characteristic way of being, concerned not about wisdom as a natural cognitive achievement but as a conventional practice, with application to others, and thus dependent on publicly-available traits, and jokingly register lack of total approval. These expectations limit the possible meanings of the word. But they also leave the precise meaning underdetermined. That the meaning is underdetermined explains why people are always having to explain what *philosophos* means: the morphology or compounding or pattern is insufficient information. Indeed, joke-names ought to be underdetermined, for the play in grammatically-allowed interpretation is what makes them both fun and relatively safe for the name-caller (they preserve plausible deniability). Names for intellectuals appear to follow this pattern especially.<sup>84</sup> So only the coinage-situation (which could of course extend over time) will determine the meaning.

The following is what I take to be a plausible coinage-situation. We will then see that there are people who could fit the abstract schema: as recipients of the name, coiners of the name, and diffusers of the name. We will find that *philosophoi* retained many of the traits the initial coiners likely identified.

We can imagine the action of the *Rival Lovers* transposed some decades earlier. Suppose there were certain young men engaged in study and conversation, doing so in a serious fashion. Such study did not appear to onlookers to be connected to any of the usual sort of learned trades. Perhaps these men acted like students or apprentices. But students of what discipline, apprentices to what experts? It looked like they wanted to know about the cosmos, about the gods, about justice, about the finest things. Expertise in such abstract and general topics is the province of the

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<sup>83</sup> Chantraine 2009, s.v. σοφός, acknowledges the frequency with which –σοφ– is compounded.

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., Natali 1987; Edmunds 2006, 415-423; Edmunds 2007, 181-185.

*sophoi*. Thus it seemed one could explain these people only by saying they wanted to become *sophoi*. But in the traditional patterns one does not train to become a *sophos*; at some mature age, one simply has become *sophos*. A teenager studying to become *sophos* is an odd, even risible idea. It is not obvious that doing so is possible; it may even be hubristic. The *sophoi* of legend got that way through remarkable self-application in warfare, leadership, agriculture, writing, and travel. Such practical experience, even if accompanied by copious reflection and discussion, is what contributes to one's wisdom. Aspirants to *sophos* would, it would seem, be better off trying to live well than thinking about living well. All the same, here are some people who seem to be trying to shortcut the route to *sophos*-status. These aspirants are a funny group, with a funny commitment to a social status. They are marked by their peculiar attitude to the convention called "being *sophos*." The *phil*- prefix denotes this markedness. *Philosophoi* would be coined to classify certain people as, at least on the surface, aiming to be *sophos*.

It is important to distinguish this from the psychological translation, "love of wisdom." To say that someone loves wisdom is to purport to make a factual claim about the objects of that person's interest. The person who loves wisdom is a person who cares about, aims toward, or desires a certain cognitive achievement, a kind of knowledge or intellectual competence or theoretical virtue. Contrast this with name-calling connected to social conventions. In name-calling situations, to say that someone desires to be *sophos* is to say that it looks as though a person is planning to gain a certain cultural status and authority, a status and authority that likely cannot be attained in the manner on display.

What students would these be? They would need to be numerous, publicly visible, and influential enough to be worthy of classification or castigation. They would also need to exist over a long enough period for the name to acquire durability. A good possibility are the members of the Pythagorean synedria.<sup>85</sup> They lived in cities throughout Italy and traveled enough to be seen by many people, not all of whom would have understood or appreciated their studious activity. The name could easily have been diffused, given the likely amount of gossip about political developments in Magna Graeca. The stories which tell of Pythagoras naming his "practice" *philosophia* suggest that the name had been associated with Pythagoreans. If Pythagoras really did call himself *philosophos*, he could have accommodated an initially other-

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<sup>85</sup> See Morrison 1956, Morrison 1958, 202, and Kahn 2001, 6-9. Philip 1966, 136-148, is skeptical about the existence of a Pythagorean (monastic, religious) brotherhood but accepts that "there may have been Pythagorean political associations in the fifth century," on which 25-26.

applied name and vindicated it (as with “Quaker,” “Protestant,” “queer”); if he never in fact called himself *philosophos*, the fifth- and fourth-century Pythagoreans may have wanted to vindicate their name by inventing the story.<sup>86</sup> At some later point, during the era of the Socratics after their master’s death, the name may have come to refer to a particular discipline separate from the Pythagorean lineage.<sup>87</sup>

The word *philosophos* retained many of the traits the hypothesized coinage-situation would give to it. *Philosophoi* were thought to be students. The *diadochoi* of Diogenes and other doxographers make the student-teacher relationship central to their account. Heraclitus’ exception reveals this expectation: “he followed nobody, but said he delved into himself and learned everything by himself” (DL 9.5).

### VIII. The earliest uses of the term

The earliest uses of the term *philosophos*, and its derivative verb and abstract noun, are consistent with the view that *philosophos* refers somewhat risibly to people wanting to become *sophos*, that is, to wanting to attain a certain culturally-elite status. I will discuss them in order of their earliest possible date but without commitment to any actual date of writing.<sup>88</sup>

#### Heraclitus

The Pythagorean stories aside, the earliest text is a fragment from Heraclitus (B35), cited in Clement *Stromata* 5.140.6.<sup>89</sup> Heraclitus’ book of fragments is probably from 500-490.<sup>90</sup> Among a number of remarks about being *sophos*, we get a single remark about “philosophers”:

For men who are philosophers should indeed be acquainted with many things.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Ebert 2001.

<sup>87</sup> Rossetti 2011 argues for the importance of Socrates to the popularization of the term, but he does not consider the Pythagorean evidence and explicitly leaves aside the Heraclitean, Herodotean, and Thucydidean usages. See Bromberg 2012 on the Greek’s own criteria for becoming an academic discipline.

<sup>88</sup> The instances are from Burkert 1960 and Rossetti 2011.

<sup>89</sup> There is some doubt about this fragment; for earlier discussion see Burkert 1960, 171. Robinson 1987, 104, thinks that the phrase sounds odd (but *σόφος ἀνὴρ* is precedented, e.g. *Apol.* 18b); Marcovich 1967 says that Clement often uses *philosophos* as an adjective; Hadot 2002, 285n1 follows Dumont (though admits Heraclitus could have spoken of “philosophers,” at 285n5). Nevertheless, it is accepted by Chroust 1947, 22, 25-26, Joly 1956, 30-31, and Malingrey 1961, 38, and included in Kahn 1979 and Graham 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Graham 2010, 186.

<sup>91</sup> *χρὴ γὰρ εἶ μάλα πολλῶν ἴστορας φιλοσόφους ἀνδρας εἶναι καθ' Ἡράκλειτον*

This is not an expression of philosophy's noble rigor.<sup>92</sup> Heraclitus seems to be speaking derisively, commenting on the philosopher's quixotic and foolish project to become polymathic. The pejorative sense is established by two other fragments:

Pythagoras practiced inquiry more than all other men, and making a selection of these writings, constructed his own wisdom, polymathy, evil trickery. (B129, tr. McKirahan)

Polymathy does not teach insight. Otherwise it would have taught... Pythagoras. (B40)

Heraclitus thinks that so-called "philosophers" have a goal that requires them to do too much work. This is work that involves trying to learn as many things as possible, maybe even superficially. Perhaps because of the breadth of these investigations, or because of their content or method, they fail to cause a person to become truly educated. Sometimes philosophers may be driven by this unrealistic desire to canvass all positions to plagiarize and deceive.<sup>93</sup>

Heraclitus thus takes "philosopher" as a name for a sort of person who does not really "love wisdom."<sup>94</sup> After all, a zeal for intelligence or insight is exactly what Heraclitus says the philosophers fail to have. The so-called "philosopher" aims not to live well but to gain the appearance of all-around intellectual expertise. This person wants the cultural status of *sophos*. Consider Isocrates' story about Pythagoras' pursuit of a reputation for all-around expertise.

Pythagoras

brought back philosophy in general to the Greeks [from Egypt] and also paid particular attention to sacrificial and purificatory matters of ritual, thinking that even if he did not get much advantage of them from the gods, he would at any rate get out of them a great reputation among men. And this is just what happened; for he far surpassed everyone in reputation, so that all the younger men wanted to be his pupils and the older men would rather see their sons sitting at his feet than managing his own affairs. The truth of this is indisputable, for even now greater respect is paid to those who claim to be his disciples in their silence than to those who have the greatest reputation for speaking. (*Busiris* 28-30, tr. Morrison)

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<sup>92</sup> On the affirmative and negative readings, see Laks 2002, 30.

<sup>93</sup> Huffman 2008.

<sup>94</sup> Chroust 1947, 22, 25-26, ignores the Heraclitean evidence on the belief that the word it "already restricts ... its meaning," from "the lover or pursuer of a handicraft or an art"; but for this he cites Plato's *Republic* 475 and Xenophon's *On Revenues* 5.4, written a century-and-a-half later!

Being a philosopher was thought, in this story, to be a practice of striving for *sophos* status. Heraclitus himself seems eager himself for wisdom and truth, and he pointedly excludes himself from the class of “philosophers.”

### Zeno

According to the Suda (s.v. Ζήνων = A2DK), Zeno of Elea (c. 490-430) wrote a book called “Against the Philosophers” (πρὸς τοὺς φιλοσόφους). It may have been written between 449-430, the time after the dramatic date of Plato’s *Parmenides* by which time Zeno is said to have written only one book (127b4). The Suda seems to refer to the title and not the content. It would be odd for a late biographer to present a person who came to be accepted as a philosopher writing against “philosophers”; this would be either self-abusive or too unspecific about his particular adversaries. Second, the names the Suda uses for the other works sound themselves like titles (Ἐριδες [‘Quarrels’], Ἐξήγησις τῶν Ἐμπεδοκλέους [‘Explanation of the Empedocleses’], Περὶ φύσεως [‘On Nature’]).<sup>95</sup> Third, it does not seem implausible for Zeno to have written multiple books, and therefore to have titled each.<sup>96</sup>

If Zeno really wrote a book with this title, it would be evidence that by the mid-fifth century the name “philosophers” referred to a coherent group of people. It would mean that “philosopher” would not mean “lover of wisdom” or “intellectually curious person” as such, since this would be an obtuse target of Zeno’s critique. Its use sounds similar to Heraclitus’ in its acknowledgement of the name of certain idiosyncratic practitioners. It may very well refer to the Pythagoreans.<sup>97</sup>

### Gorgias

We have little evidence for the date of Gorgias’s “On Helen,” except that it may have been written after 441, were “On Truth” written then and were it Gorgias’ earliest published work,<sup>98</sup> and before 380, Gorgias’ death. In section 13, Gorgias gives examples from three

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<sup>95</sup> Burnet 1892, §156; Ebert 2001, 431-2.

<sup>96</sup> Kirk, Raven, Schofield 1977, 264-5; against multiple books: Burkert 1960, 170; Guthrie 1962, 81; Heidel 1940, 22, without explanation; Graham 2010, 245, also without explanation, and exclusion of Suda testimony.

<sup>97</sup> Booth 1957, 90-103; Morrison 1958, 207; Ebert 2001, 432, following Alcidas’ argument about “philosophers,” Pythagoras included, at Ar. *Rhet.* 1398b9-18.

<sup>98</sup> Evidence from Olympiodorus; argument from MacDowell 1982.



professional activities to show that persuasive speech can mold the mind of the listeners. Astronomers replace belief with belief, making what is initially unbelievable and unclear appear true and clear. Speakers in compulsory contests (ἀγῶνας) in speech please and persuade the audience, using skill and not truth. So too in “conflicts of philosophical speeches, in which it is shown that quick-wittedness too makes the opinion based in belief changeable” (tr. MacDowell).<sup>99</sup> The lack of precise parallelism between these three examples—focusing on topic, venue, and type of argument respectively—helps the inductive argument about the scope of persuasion. It is also a result of Gorgias’ attitude toward speakers of philosophical speeches. He mentions neither the practitioners nor the motivations, just the potential of the medium. The activity is competition, the criterion of success quick-wittedness, the goal changing a person’s mind. “Philosophical” activities are those that have an appearance of intellectual competence founded on quick-turning talking and argumentation.<sup>100</sup> This is more consistent with a sense of “philosophers” as those who appear interested in becoming *sophos* rather than with a view of “philosophers” as people who are especially “intellectually curious” or “lovers of wisdom.” Gorgias’ attention is on “philosophical speech” as a kind of speech characterized by logically-powerful appearances.<sup>101</sup>

### Herodotus

Herodotus uses the verb φιλοσοφῶν in his book written around 425.<sup>102</sup> Herodotus, referring back to the sixth century (580-565), has Croesus say that Solon has become well-known for his wisdom and wandering, in that he “philosophizes”<sup>103</sup> for the sake of *theoria* (I.30).<sup>104</sup> The implication is that the activity is not oriented toward the practical. In fact, Herodotus had earlier mentioned that Solon was very deliberately traveling around to bide his ten

<sup>99</sup> φιλοσόφων λόγων ἀμίλλας, ἐν αἷς δείκνυται καὶ γνώμης τάχος ὡς εὐμετάβολον ποιοῦν τὴν τῆς δόξης πίστιν

<sup>100</sup> Hadot 2002, 17, observes that the instances of “philosophical discourse” would be concerned not with “any particular juridical or political problem but [with] overall culture.” Rossetti 2011, 267, agrees that Gorgias is not referring to any precisely-delineated class of practitioners.

<sup>101</sup> Dover 1974, 10-11, tracks this quality of amoral cleverness in the verb *philosophēō* in the fourth century, finding that Lysias (8.11) and Demosthenes (48.49) use it to refer to “dishonest or absurd ingenuity in argument,” and at Lys. 24.10 as a synonym for φροντίζειν (“to think, worry”).

<sup>102</sup> Munn 2000, 43, argues for a publication after 425, sympathetic with Fornara’s dating of 425-415.

<sup>103</sup> The English translation that is Hadot 2002, 16, translates “have a taste for wisdom,” but this replaces a single verb with a phrase, and since wisdom (*sophiē*) has already been mentioned, the subordinate clause becomes tautological.

<sup>104</sup> ξεῖνε Ἀθηναίε, παρ’ ἡμέας γὰρ περὶ σέο λόγος ἀπίκται πολλὸς καὶ σοφίης εἵνεκεν τῆς σῆς καὶ πλάνης, ὡς φιλοσοφῶν γῆν πολλὴν θεωροῖς εἵνεκεν ἐπελήλυθας

years away from Athens—he even had to play up his interest in seeing the world (I.29), despite not really being interested (30). There is a sense that Croesus is somewhat bemused, and knows that he has much more power and wealth than Solon.<sup>105</sup> Solon’s activity is, if not exactly quixotic, then outside the realm of the practical man. The question Croesus asks Solon—who is the happiest man—is the kind of a question a *sophos* could answer.<sup>106</sup> So referring to Solon’s activities as characteristic of a person who wants-to-be-*sophos* would be appropriate.<sup>107</sup>

### On Ancient Medicine

In the 420s we find the earliest instance of the abstract noun *philosophia*.

Some doctors and sophists say that it is impossible for anyone to know what medicine is who does not know what the human being is.... Their account tends toward philosophy, just like Empedocles or others who have written about nature from the beginning, what the human being is and how it originally came to be and from what things it is compounded. But I hold that whatever had been said or written about nature by a sophist or doctor pertains less to the art of medicine than to the art of depicting (*graphikên*), and also that it is impossible to have any clear knowledge about nature from any other source than medicine. ...I think what it is necessary for a doctor to know about nature and to make every effort to know... [is]: what the human being is in relation to foods and drinks, and what it is in relation to other practices, and what will be the effect of each thing on each individual. (*VM* 20.1-3; tr. Schiefsky)

“Philosophy” is the name of the practice of certain writers, Empedocles for example.<sup>108</sup> This practice includes reflecting on the cosmos and the origins, nature, and compositional structure of humans. The author suggests that these reflections are fruitless and are concerned largely with clever presentation; they do not help heal people, which is what substantive medical wisdom allows. “Philosophy” is thus a label of a certain kind of overly-broad, inadequately-searching, foolishly-misplaced intellectual posturing.

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<sup>105</sup> Cf. Ker 2000, 312-313; Sharp 2004, 90-93; Nightingale 2004, 63-65.

<sup>106</sup> Hadot 2002, 16, claims that Croesus asks Solon about the happiest man because Solon’s “inquiry” would give him “experience [that] can make the person who possesses it a good judge in matters concerning human life.”

<sup>107</sup> Contra Chroust 1947, 22; Morrison 1958, 208; Hadot 2002, 16; Frede 2004, 23.

<sup>108</sup> Rossetti 2011, 266.

## Dissoi Logoi

Twice a *philosoph-* word appears in the *Dissoi Logoi*, which may be from around 400 (though in fact the text could come from centuries later, in which case this discussion is moot).<sup>109</sup>

There are competing accounts in Greece among those who philosophize about good and bad (I.1, tr. Graham)<sup>110</sup>

The greatest and fairest discovery for life is found to be memory, which is beneficial for everything: for philosophy as well as for wisdom (IX.1, tr. Graham)<sup>111</sup>

Philosophizing and philosophy involve talking about significant moral generalizations, as we see from the remaining text of the *Dissoi Logoi*. This talking must be in a competitive context, where a winner would silence his opponents, or seem particularly competent in deep political and ethical matters. Perhaps use of the participle suggests that people could engage in characteristically philosophical activities without being “professional” philosophers, and these arguments pertain more to the activity than the way of life.<sup>112</sup> The verb is not being used in a pejorative way; but since the activity being ascribed the ones philosophizing is rather specific, the verb is also not being used to apply generally to “intellectually curious” people. It must refer to an activity that values what to an outside observer could look ludicrous trying to gain a deep sensibility about value, judgment, and the good life.

It is important that philosophy and wisdom (also mentioned at V.1 and VI.1) are distinguished; the one refers to a state, the other to a supposed orientation to that state.<sup>113</sup> Memory is useful for both wisdom and philosophy; wisdom needs memory to benefit from

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<sup>109</sup> Ca. 400: Robinson 1979, Graham 2010 (following Robinson). Much later: Conley 1985, Burnyeat 1998.

<sup>110</sup> δισοὶ λόγοι λέγονται ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι ὑπὸ τῶν φιλοσοφούντων περὶ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τῷ κακῷ

<sup>111</sup> μέγιστον δὲ καὶ κάλλιστον ἐξεύρημα εὔρηται ἐς τὸν βίον μνάμα καὶ ἐς πάντα χρήσιμον, ἐς φιλοσοφίαν τε καὶ σοφίαν διὰ τούτῳ ἐλθοῦσα ἂ γνώμα μάλλον αἰσθησέεται σύνολον ὃ ἔμαθες

<sup>112</sup> This undermines the concern of Robinson 1979, 147-8, who argues that the people philosophizing must be “thinking people” in general, perhaps to include “would-be ‘professional’ φιλόσοφοι,” on the grounds that the arguments about the good and the bad that follow are also found in Herodotus and Euripides (and thus cannot be the special purview of professionals), and it would seem worthless for the author to discuss problems that concern only ‘professional’ φιλόσοφοι.

<sup>113</sup> Wilamowitz did not appreciate this when he amended the text to read ἐς τὰν σοφίαν τε καὶ ἐς τὸν βίον.

experience, and philosophy needs memory to recall all the arguments that make one actually or appear to be wise.<sup>114</sup>

### Thucydides

In Thucydides' recreation of Pericles' funeral oration of 431, Pericles is praising his own people, the Athenians:

We self-cultivate (φιλοκαλοῦμέν) with economy; we philosophize without effeminacy (2.40.1)

This is a very telling jingle, written by perhaps 396.<sup>115</sup> It puts the verb *philosopheō* in parallel with a consonant verb *philokaleō*.<sup>116</sup> Both verbs imply overdoing it in or wrongly going about the search for something otherwise good—"thoughtfulness" in the case of *philosophizing*, "appealingness" in the *philokalizing* case—as is clear from Pericles' having to qualify them both. His use of these terms suggests that Athens gets called names. Both come originally from names. *Philokalizing* seems to mean trying to do oneself up, to ornament oneself, perhaps at risk of wastefulness or decadence. The "beauty" referred to by the *kalos* is not beauty in general, but making oneself attractive, elegant, noble-seeming. *Philosophizing*, on this template, seems to mean trying to attain a more authoritative perspective on difficult issues than can really be expected.<sup>117</sup> Philosophizing here cannot simply mean caring for wisdom, since caring for wisdom is not itself something weak or disgraceful.<sup>118</sup> It must mean spending time seeming to go through every possible contingency. It is relying on intellectual work, rather than on native intelligence, experience, or regimen, to make good decisions. The so-called "philosopher" is the one who

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<sup>114</sup> Robinson 1979, 238, wrongly believes that the professional philosopher is not special in his needs for memory, and so he quite unprecedently translates the beneficiaries of memory in IX.1 as "general education" (*philosophian*) and "the practical wisdom of the sophist-rhetor" (*sophian*).

<sup>115</sup> Munn 2000, 12.

<sup>116</sup> LSJ says this is the first and only occurrence in the classical period.

<sup>117</sup> It is hard to make sense of Pericles' concession if we simply hold with Hadot 2002, 16, that his audience was "proud of [their] intellectual activity and the interest in science and culture which flourished in their city." Laks 2002, 30, supposes that philosophizing is equivalent here to being attracted by the fine arts and literature. Rusten 1985, on the other hand, says that "it is no longer necessary to dilute the force of φιλοσοφοῦμεν to 'general culture', since it need not apply equally to every Athenian"; he also holds, however, that "on an individual level... φιλοκαλεῖν is virtually a synonym for φιλοσοφεῖν."

<sup>118</sup> Thus Gomme 1945 ad loc—"the comparison is with other Greeks, Boeotians and Peloponnesians, who would think a love of learning to be as inconsistent with courage as political discussion with decisiveness of action"—is not convincing.

chatters without advancing action, not knowing how to operate on rules of thumb, with prudence and efficacy. All due deliberation becomes self-subverting caution.

### Aristophanes

Aristophanes, in the *Ecclesiazusae* around eight years after Socrates' death, using the adjective referring to a mind, has the Chorus refer to Praxagora's innovative mind (571): it is just after this paean to her ingenuity that she announces the idea of the community of property and women. By this point, following decades of Athenian intellectual practice often called *philosophia*, the term refers to large, innovative, and speculative, perhaps quite outlandish, thought.<sup>119</sup> It is thought from a mind that is studious, analytic, and hopeful for a big reputation.

As we see from these eight authors,<sup>120</sup> the name *philosophos* and its derivative parts of speech refer to people and their characteristic activities defined by their public persona as aiming to become considered *sophos*.

### **IX. Plato on the *philosophos***

The post-Platonic *Definitions* glosses φιλοσοφία as “desire (ὄρεξις) for the knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) of what always exists; the state which contemplates the truth (ἀληθοῦς), what makes it true; cultivation of the soul, based on correct reason” (tr. Cooper ed.). This definition uses neither *phil-* nor *soph-* words. The *Cratylus* twice mentions “philosophy,” but in neither case gives a definition connected to the supposed decomposed elements (404a, 406a). These central sources for etymology do not suppose that the meaning of philosophy may be easily discerned from the word's two elements.

All the same, Plato, both in his depictions of Socrates and in the course of discussion in his dialogues, is often cited as the source for the retrojected etymologies of philosophy (*Smp.* 204a1-7, *Rep.* 474b-489e9, *Phdr.* 278a). But except for the *Lysis* passage noted above, none of the four instances in which Plato seemingly gives an etymology of *philosophia* tries to define the

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<sup>119</sup> Sommerstein 1998, ad 571, believes that Aristophanes is playing on the “buzz-word” popularized by Isocrates in “introducing an extended, coherent and sophisticated piece of political rhetoric which... stands conventional ethical and social assumptions on their heads.”

<sup>120</sup> I omit discussion of Herodorus of Heracleia's remark about Heracles, that he has three ἀρεταί: μὴ φιλαργυρεῖν, μὴ φιληδονεῖν, μὴ ὀργιζεσθαι, and he φιλοσοφῆας μέχρι θανάτου (31F14 FGrHist), and Prodicus' supposed use of the word in *Euthyd.* 304d4-6 (6 DK), that there is a group of people between “politicians” and “philosophers,” discussed in Laks 2002, 32 and Rossetti 2011, 267.

word as “love of wisdom.” They actually confirm the point made so far, that *philosophos* started as a bemused name-calling name.<sup>121</sup> More important is Cipriano’s finding that whatever shift occurred in the public understanding of *phil-* prefixed names would precede Plato, and thus Plato’s analyses would be moot.

## X. Conclusion

Anton-Hermann Chroust concludes his second article on the origin of the term *philosophos* with this most vaunted view of the philosopher:

If, then, the philosopher can be defined as “the fond viewer of the sublime vision,” as “the quiet (passive) spectator of absolute truth,” or as “one who loves to view things dispassionately,” true philosophy itself is nothing other than “the fond viewing of the sublime vision of absolute truth” or “the ability and love of viewing things dispassionately”—a perfect and, at the same time, most comprehensive definition of metaphysics. This definition, which relates metaphysics to the “beatific vision,” not only sets metaphysics apart from all other intellectual pursuits but also proclaims it the noblest of all intellectual activities by making it the ultimate end of all intellectual attitudes. (1964, 434)

It should be clear that this it is unlikely that the epithet *philosophos* was or could be coined to mean this. I have argued that it is much more likely that the name responded to the surprising perception of students trying to become *sophos* without living the kind of life typical of heretofore-seen *sophoi*. This amazement would be about their faith in the power of reading and studying, and their assumption that theoretical knowledge might cause practical or existential success. Because the name is not literally offensive, only at most ironic or bemused, it was possible for addressees of the name to come to their own terms with it, remove the irony, and start calling themselves the name. Since the name does not refer to an internal motivation or specific set of techniques, it can be appropriate for a range of distinct attitudes and practices. Thus arguments about the nature of philosophy can never be adjudicated by arguments about the meaning of the word *philosophos*.

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<sup>121</sup> Havelock 1963, 280-290, meditates on Plato’s role in defining the term, and takes Plato’s *philosophos* as “intellectual,” saying “the word has that same colour of doubtful fame, [and] conveys the same ambiguity of social evaluation.”

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