

Byzantina Symmeikta

Vol 31 (2021)

BYZANTINA SYMMEIKTA 31



Several Remarks on Eustratios of Nicaea's Dialogue

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doi: [10.12681/byzsym.22633](https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.22633)

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To cite this article:

CHRYSSOGELOS, K. (2021). Several Remarks on Eustratios of Nicaea's Dialogue. *Byzantina Symmeikta*, 31, 11–28. <https://doi.org/10.12681/byzsym.22633>

INSTITUTE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH
SECTION OF BYZANTINE RESEARCH
NATIONAL HELLENIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION



ΙΝΣΤΙΤΟΥΤΟ ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΤΟΜΕΑΣ ΒΥΖΑΝΤΙΝΩΝ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ
ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΙΔΡΥΜΑ ΕΡΕΥΝΩΝ



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TOMOS 31 VOLUME

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SEVERAL REMARKS
ON EUSTRATIOS OF NICAEA'S *DIALOGUE*

ΑΘΗΝΑ • 2021 • ATHENS

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In 1081 Alexios Komnenos was in desperate need of money in order to finance his campaign against the Normans. Struggling to meet his obligations, he finally decided to melt down church treasures. The emperor's action caused an outcry and generated a heated debate among the clergy and the court, which was not settled until the mid-1090s. The leader of the opposition was Leo, Metropolitan of Chalcedon, who was forced into exile in 1086, due to his constant efforts to call the emperor out on his policy in regard to church treasures. Around that time the same Leo wrote a treatise, now lost, which essentially turned the affair into a theological discussion about the veneration of icons. The dispute over the icons, in which prominent figures of the aristocracy and the Church, including the emperor's brother, Isaak Komnenos, were involved, was finally put to an end at a Synod that was held in late 1094, which forced Leo to recant and thus reconcile with Alexios¹.

* I wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions; also Dr. Maria Tomadaki for her assistance in my quest for secondary sources.

1. On the history of the dispute, see A. GLAVINAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ (1081-1118) περὶ ἱερῶν σκευῶν, κεκτημένων καὶ ἁγίων εἰκόνων ἔρις (1081-1095)* (Βυζαντινὰ κείμενα καὶ μελέται 6), Thessaloniki 1972, esp. 117-126 (the Synod of 1186 and Leo's exile); 120 (Leo's treatise on the worship of the icons); 151-177 (literature on the worship of the icons before the Synod of 1194); 179-193 (the Synod of 1194, which Glavinas dates to early 1195). Cf. A. CAMERON, *Byzantine matters*, Princeton – Oxford 2014, 97-99; EADEM, *Arguing it out: Discussion in twelfth-century Byzantium*, Budapest – New York 2016, 15-16.

On the occasion of the Synod of 1094, Eustratios, Metropolitan of Nicaea², a former pupil of John Italos and by this time protégé of Alexios Komenos, as well as one of the most erudite theologians of his time and a skilful dialectician (so described by his future patroness, Anna Komnene, in her celebrated *Alexiad*³), composed two texts on the icons, which seem to be confuting the views of those who opposed the emperor's policy. The two texts in question are a dialogue (hereafter: *Dialogue*) and a treatise (hereafter: *Treatise*)⁴, which are excellent examples of Eustratios' impressive prowess in theology and dialectic, a point to which we shall return⁵. Given that both texts deal with the theological aspect of the veneration and the worship of the icons, and therefore seem like direct responses to the views expressed by those who opposed Alexios between 1086 and 1094, especially Leo, modern scholarship tends to date them to the early 1090s, shortly before the Synod of 1094⁶. As regards Eustratios' preferences, he was clearly on the emperor's side. Within this context, the *Dialogue* in particular has been described as: "the equivalent of a modern dossier brought to support an unpopular government initiative"⁷.

2. For a concise overview of the life and works of Eustratios of Nicaea, see M. TRIZIO, *Il neoplatonismo di Eustrazio di Nicea*, Bari 2016, 3-17. Cf. CAMERON, *Arguing it out* (cited n. 1), 16-17.

3. D. R. REINSCH – A. KAMBYLIS (eds.), *Annae Comnenae Alexias. Pars prior: Prolegomena et textus* [CFHB 40], Berlin – N. York 2001, 457, 28-29: *Εὐστράτιος ὁ τῆς Νικαίας πρόεδρος, ἀνὴρ τὰ τε θεῖα σοφὸς καὶ τὰ θύραθεν, ἀνχῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς διαλέξεσι μᾶλλον ἢ οἱ περὶ τὴν Στοὰν καὶ Ἀκαδημίαν ἐνδιατρίβοντες*. On the relationship between Anna and Eustratios, see TRIZIO, *Il neoplatonismo* (cited n. 2), 22-72.

4. Edition: A. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, v. 1, Leipzig 1866, 127-151 (*Dialogue*), 151-160 (*Treatise*).

5. For an analysis of the theological views expressed in these two texts from the perspective of an art historian, see C. BARBER, *Contesting the logic of painting. Art and understanding in eleventh-century Byzantium*, Leiden – Boston 2007, 99-130. Cf. IDEM, Eustratios of Nicaea on the separation of art and theology, in: C. BARBER – D. JENKINS (eds.), *Medieval Greek commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics* (Studien und Texte zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 101), Leiden – Boston 2009, 131-143, esp. 136-140.

6. See CAMERON, *Byzantine matters* (cited n. 1), 98 and BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 99.

7. CAMERON, *Byzantine matters* (cited n. 1), 99.

PROSOPOGRAPHY OF THE *DIALOGUE*: BETWEEN FACT AND FICTION

Leaving the *Treatise* aside for the moment, we cannot help but notice the unconventional character of the *Dialogue*. Indeed, it is the sole text in dialogical form that pertains to the dispute over the icons during Alexios' reign. Moreover, the *mise-en-scène* is worth-noting, for although there are echoes of an unspecified Synod taking place, the overall setting is clearly fictitious and the discussants, called *Φιλαλήθης* and *Φιλοσυνήθης*, loosely based on Eustratios and Leo respectively, function in a rather symbolic than realistic way. The content of the *Dialogue* is also exceptional, for the accumulation of intertextual references deriving from Church Fathers and Ecumenical Councils (characteristic of basically all other primary sources that are associated with the dispute and present its theological aspect⁸), has here been replaced by sophisticated syllogisms and, as Barber has demonstrated, Aristotelian argumentation⁹, a method that eventually results in a refined mixture of philosophy and theology. This remark does not intend to downplay the other sources as "simplistic" or "uninspired", for even they testify to the era's ambiguous fascination with debate and dialectic¹⁰. Nevertheless, the *Dialogue* does appear to approach its subject with a subtlety that these other sources lack.

The *σκέμμα*, that is the subject of the *Dialogue*, is the kind of veneration that is appropriate for the icons. *Φιλοσυνήθης* argues that the icon, as a physical object, is worthy of worship (*λατρευτικῶς ἢ προσκύνησις*),

8. See BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 131-149. These include two letters of Leo, one to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nikolaos Grammatikos [ed.: A. LAURIOTIS, *Ἱστορικὸν ζήτημα ἐκκλησιαστικὸν ἐπὶ τῆς βασιλείας Ἀλεξίου τοῦ Κομνηνοῦ, Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ Ἀλήθεια* 20 (1900), 405a-407a], and another to Nikolaos of Adrianopolis [ed.: LAURIOTIS, *Ἱστορικὸν ζήτημα, cit.*, 414a-416a; 445b-447a; 455b-456b]; a letter of Basil of Euchaita to Isaak Komnenos (411b-413a); the *σημείωμα* of the Synod of 1094 (ed.: PG 127, 971-984). We should also add to these the now lost florilegium of Isaak Komnenos [see GLAVINAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* (cited n. 1), 174-177 and BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 143].

9. BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 113: "What Eustratios presents to us is a very strong sense of the continuing power of the logical, ultimately Aristotelian definition of the work of art".

10. See CAMERON's remark on the "Sacred arsenals" of the 12th century (*Arguing it out* [cited n. 1], 55), which essentially follow trends that were set in the last decades of the previous century.

whereas *Φιλαλήθης* counter-argues that the icon is worthy solely of relative veneration (*σχετικῶς ἢ προσκύνησις*), for it functions as a “reference” to the prototype that it depicts (*ἄξιοπροσκύνητον διὰ τὸ πρωτότυπον, πρὸς δ’ ἀναφέρεται*)¹¹. Rather unsurprisingly, the outcome is in favour of *Φιλαλήθης*, who is in any case the undisputed driving force during the whole discussion. Nonetheless, it should be noted that *Φιλοσυνήθης*, although eventually unable to refute his discussant’s arguments, does not accept complete defeat. This last point leads us to the anthropological aspect of the *Dialogue*, which is equally important for our understanding (or at least exploration) of its poetics in full.

Despite the fact that we lack concrete evidence as regards the *Dialogue*’s impact on the dispute over the icons, it is self-evident that the text supports Alexios and opposes Leo. In order to get this message across to the reader, Eustratios not only employs logical appeal, but also constructs a narrative that exposes the character of *Φιλοσυνήθης*. An outline of the *Dialogue*’s setting is useful here: *Φιλοσυνήθης* is paying a visit to *Φιλαλήθης*. He has come from the palace and informs the latter of the discussions that took place there, during which the “longtime primate of the Church and the Synod”, until then a well-respected figure, was accused of heresy¹². The whole text is essentially a discussion on the opinion expressed by the “primate of the Church” about the worship of the icons, which opinion is shared by *Φιλοσυνήθης*. However, it becomes apparent that the latter’s views, which are based on feeble arguments anyway, are significantly influenced by his personal feelings towards the accused prelate. Indeed, his friendly predisposition towards the man is so strong that at the end of the debate he is forced to admit defeat but also argues that if the “primate of the Church” were present, the debate would have continued, for he would be able to refute the arguments of *Φιλαλήθης*¹³.

So, *Φιλοσυνήθης* is depicted as a rather superficial and impulsive individual, whose opinion on such a complex issue as the veneration of the icons is based on misconceptions. Indeed, it is by and large the result

11. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 149-150.

12. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, 129: *ὅνπερ διὰ χρόνον πλείστον τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τῆς Συνόδου πρωτεύοντα ἔσχομεν...*

13. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, 150-151.

of relying too much on the knowledge of other people, namely those he admires. But these are not his only personality traits, for in the middle of the dialogue he comes across as somewhat hot-tempered and curt, accusing his discussant of using sophisms and fallacies, to which *Φιλαλήθης* responds calmly, simply exhorting *Φιλοσυνήθης* to abandon his quarrelsome ways (*φίλεσθιν*) and focus on the topic in hand¹⁴. And yet, despite these anything but flattering qualities, *Φιλοσυνήθης* is not exposed as a clueless fool. To the contrary, Eustratios' attitude towards him is rather sympathetic, if just a little condescending, but nowhere do we get the impression that his intention is to humiliate Leo, who is the one hiding behind the veneer of *Φιλοσυνήθης*. Indeed, the interaction between the two discussants resembles more the relationship between a tutor (*Φιλαλήθης*) and his pupil (*Φιλοσυνήθης*)¹⁵, than that between two equally well-educated literati, something that is also reflected in the long monologues of *Φιλαλήθης*, which outnumber far and away the brief interventions of *Φιλοσυνήθης*.

Eustratios' stance against *Φιλοσυνήθης*/Leo corresponds to Alexios' attitude against Leo in real life, whereas it is generally in agreement with the metropolitan's portrait as illustrated in Anna Komnene's *Alexiad*, several decades after the *Dialogue* was written. Truly, although Leo had been tenaciously critical of Alexios during the whole controversy, the emperor's tone from 1086 onwards was conciliatory, even during the metropolitan's exile¹⁶. For her part, Anna describes Leo as righteous, yet coarse and difficult to get along with¹⁷. As regards his views on the icons, she attributes them either to his rivalry (*ἔθριν* – cf. Eustratios' *φίλεσθιν* in the previous paragraph) against the emperor or to his ignorance about theological matters¹⁸. In

14. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, 135.

15. Perhaps we could make a connection here with several dialogues written in Late Antiquity and the Early Byzantine period, where: “the instructional relationship between the speakers undermines a truly dialogic exchange” (A. RIGOLIO, *Christians in conversation: A guide to Late Antique dialogues in Greek and Syriac*, Oxford 2019, 24).

16. See GLAVINAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* (cited n. 1), 142.

17. See *Annae Comnenae Alexias* (cited n. 3), 145, 17-19. Leo's quarrelsome personality is reflected palpably in the imperial *σημείωμα* of the Synod of 1086 as well [see SAKKELION, Documents inédits tirés de la bibliothèque de Patmos. I. Décret d'Alexis Comnène portant déposition de Léon, métropolitain de Chalcédoine, *BCH* 2 (1878), 102-128, 113-128].

18. See *Annae Comnenae Alexias* (cited n. 3), 145, 38-40.

addition, Anna suggests that Leo's hostility was further fuelled by several "insidious people" (*χαιρεκάκοις ἀνδράσι πειθόμενος*)¹⁹. It is easy to see that Eustratios' *Φιλοσυνήθης*, with his well-meaning, yet unsophisticated and (somewhat) contentious manner, as well as his dependence on other people, is quite similar to Anna's Leo.

Let us return now to the unnamed "longtime primate of the Church and the Synod", who, although not present when the debate purports to take place, is an important component of the *Dialogue*, especially in order to understand what exactly the name *Φιλοσυνήθης* means. First, a brief prosopographical survey is required. We can be quite sure that the phrase "primate of the Church" denotes the patriarch of Constantinople. We cannot be certain whether the *κοινὰ συζητήσεις* and the *ζητήσεις δόγματος* that were being held in the palace, as *Φιλοσυνήθης* informs *Φιλαλήθης* at the beginning of the *Dialogue*²⁰, refer to actual events, for they could be fictitious elements whose function is to set the tone of the ensuing debate. However, it would not be far-fetched to argue that, to some extent, they echo the tumultuous Synod of 1086, which had forced Leo into exile²¹. Shortly afterwards, the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nikolaos Grammatikos, who presided at the Synod of 1086 (and that of 1094, as *συνεδριάζων* of the emperor²²), refused to sign a *σημείωμα* against Leo. For his part, while in exile Leo sent a letter to Nikolaos, in which he elaborated on his views about the veneration and the worship of the icons²³.

All this shows that Leo and Nikolaos were on friendly terms during the controversy. Furthermore, we may tentatively surmise that the Patriarch was not completely hostile to Leo's views. As far as the *Dialogue* is concerned, it is safe to assume that, since *Φιλοσυνήθης* was based on Leo, the "primate of the Church and the Synod" was based on Nikolaos. There is only one problem with this identification: Nikolaos was never accused of heresy (*Φιλοσυνήθης* speaks explicitly about *κακοδοξίας ἔγκλημα*²⁴) during the controversy over the icons, nor did he fall, as far as we know, into disfavour with the court

19. *Annae Comnenae Alexias* (cited n. 3), 145,42-43.

20. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 127 and 129 respectively.

21. Cf. GLAVINAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* (cited n. 1), 130.

22. PG 127, 976.

23. See GLAVINAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* (cited n. 1), 126-128.

24. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 130.

or the Church due to his relationship with Leo. The solution to this problem probably lies in the unique character of Eustratios' *Dialogue*, which blends freely true events with fictional elements. In this instance, it seems that Eustratios purposefully exaggerates the friendly relationship between Nikolaos and Leo, as well as Nikolaos' overall role during the controversy, in order to highlight the fact that Leo was not capable of forming his own theological arguments. In any case, Eustratios cleverly avoids mentioning any real names, in this way blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction.

As far as the perspective of *Φιλοσυνήθης* on Nikolaos Grammatikos is concerned, here is the right place to discard Glavinias's suggestion that the Patriarch had passed away when the *Dialogue* was written and therefore the text should be dated later than 1111²⁵. Glavinias based this argument on a passage in the *Dialogue*, where *Φιλοσυνήθης* says that the "primate of the Church" is criticized for his views, *ὥσπερ ὁστράκου μεταπεσόντος*²⁶. Although not stated explicitly, the scholar, who also identifies this primate with Nikolaos, has presumably misinterpreted the ancient expression as referring to the passing of a person, whereas it actually denotes a sudden change in status, in this case the prelate's abrupt fall from grace, as alleged in the *Dialogue*. At any rate, it would not make much sense for Eustratios to have written a work such as the *Dialogue* after the controversy over the icons had ended. The dating of the *Dialogue* shortly before 1094 could also justify the claim of *Φιλοσυνήθης* that he is coming from the palace (the Synod of 1094 was held in the palace of Blachernai) and also that the prelate has been "the primate of the Church" for "a very long time" (*διὰ χρόνον πλείστον*²⁷); in 1094 Nikolaos had been Patriarch of Constantinople for ten years, a considerably longer period than the three-year tenure of his predecessor, Eustratios Garidas.

As regards the dating of the *Dialogue*, it is useful to remind ourselves of another hint that we have at our disposal, namely a reference to the *Treatise* in a *Logos* by Niketas of Serres²⁸, written within the frame of Eustratios'

25. See GLAVINIAS, *Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* (cited n. 1), 197-198.

26. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 129.

27. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη*, as in previous note.

28. The *logos* of Niketas has been edited by P. IOANNOU [Le sort des évêques hérétiques

condemnation as a heretic in 1117, due to his views on the relationship between the Divine and the Human Nature of Christ²⁹. Eustratios had insinuated that the Natures were not equal, inasmuch as the former was worshipped by the latter. Niketas aptly points out that Eustratios had essentially made the same claim in his *Treatise*³⁰, which was written *πρὸ πολλοῦ*³¹. Barber translates this *πρὸ πολλοῦ* as “many times before”³², but it would be more accurate to understand it as “long before”. This would mean that, according to Niketas, the *Treatise* was composed “long before 1117”. Eustratios’ elaboration on the submission of the *πρόσλημμα* to the Divine Nature is to be found in the *Treatise* but not in the *Dialogue*, and thus we may assume, although with great caution, that the *Dialogue* precedes the *Treatise*. Therefore, although this *πρὸ πολλοῦ* is not very precise, it should be taken into consideration in future attempts to date the two texts.

ΦΙΛΟΣΥΝΗΘΗΣ: A “LOVER OF FRIENDSHIP”?

The relationship between *Φιλοσυνήθης* and the “primate of the Church” can help us decipher the true meaning of the former’s name. First of all, it seems that Eustratios has constructed the name of the two discussants in the *Dialogue* by means of analogy. If *Φιλαλήθης* is the one who loves (*φιλεῖ*) *ἀλήθειαν*, then *Φιλοσυνήθης* must be the one who loves *συνήθειαν*. According to *LSJ*, the second definition of the noun *συνήθεια* is “habit, custom”, which corresponds to its modern Greek usage. Based on these, the name of *Φιλοσυνήθης* has been translated as either “Lover of habit”

réconciliés: Un discours inédit de Nicéas de Serres contre Eustrate de Nicée, *Byz* 28 (1958), 1-30, 8-30], with some *lacunae*, and by J. DARROUZÈS (*Documents inédits d’Ecclésiologie byzantine*, Paris 1966, 276-305).

29. See CAMERON, *Byzantine matters* (cited n. 1), 99-101. Cf. P. IOANNOU, Eustrate de Nicée. Trois pièces inédites de son procès (1117), *REB* 10 (1952), 24-34, 24-27; IDEM, Der Nominalismus und die menschliche Psychologie Christi. Das Semeioma gegen Eustratios von Nikaia (1117), *BZ* 47 (1954), 369-378, 369-374; IDEM, Le sort des évêques (cited n. 28), 1-30, 1-7.

30. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 152-154.

31. DARROUZÈS, *Documents inédits* (cited n. 28), 302, 26-27.

32. See BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 129.

(Cameron)³³ or “Lover / Friend of custom” (Spingou)³⁴. However, it is important to engage in a close reading of the text, in order to see the context in which *συνήθεια* appears each time.

The first time we come across the proper noun *συνήθεια* in the *Dialogue*, it is placed right next to *φιλία*. The passage starts with *Φιλοσυνήθης* informing his discussant that the “primate of the Church” is accused of impiety. *Φιλοσυνήθης* does not attempt to hide his feelings towards this person. On the contrary, he first confesses that he holds the man in high esteem and then admits that this unequivocal admiration prevents him from being objective. For his part, *Φιλαλήθης* warns him that *φιλία* and *συνήθεια* may well cloud one’s judgement and thus distract one from the pursuit of truth³⁵. *Φιλία* is easily understood as “friendship” or “friendly disposition”; the case of *συνήθεια* is not so simple. According to *LSJ*, the primary definition of this word is “habitual intercourse, acquaintance, intimacy”, whilst the secondary is “habit, custom” (but vice versa in Montanari). Apparently, the primary definition contains the meaning of “habit”, thus *συνήθεια* may refer to an intimate relationship that has resulted from a long-standing acquaintance. *Φιλοσυνήθης* himself lays emphasis on the aspect of time with regard to his friendly disposition towards the primate, whom he calls “a good man” (*ἀνὴρ χρηστός*)³⁶.

Nonetheless, although the relationship between *Φιλοσυνήθης* and the primate is defined both by “habit” and “friendship / friendly disposition”, the response of *Φιλαλήθης* to his discussant’s latest claim clearly stresses the aspect of “friendship”; for according to him, *Φιλοσυνήθης* is certainly allowed to “love” (*φιλεῖν*) the man, but it is “absurd” (*ἀτοπώτατον ἅμα καὶ ἀλογώτατον*) to prefer *φιλίαν* and *ἥθος* over God and God’s truth³⁷. Since the sole concern of *Φιλαλήθης* as regards the issue that the two men

33. See CAMERON, *Arguing it out* (cited n. 1), 16.

34. F. SPINGOU, A Platonising dialogue from the twelfth century. The logos of Soterichos Panteugenos, in: A. CAMERON & N. GAUL (eds.), *Dialogues and debates from late Antiquity to late Byzantium*, New York – Oxfordshire 2017, 123-136, 129.

35. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 129.

36. *Καὶ πῶς ἀρνησαίμην διάθεσιν διὰ πλείστου βεβαιωθεῖσάν μου τῇ ψυχῇ, καὶ χρονίαν ὑπόληψιν πρὸς ἄνδρα χρηστόν;* : DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 129.

37. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 129-130.

are about to discuss is the pursuit of truth, whereas the real problem of *Φιλοσυνήθης* is that he is unable to look past his relationship with or his feelings towards the primate, then we should consider reading the *Dialogue* as a clash of mindsets. That is why *Φιλαλήθης* insists on the notion of *φιλία* (and *φιλεῖν*), which he regards as the reason for *Φιλοσυνήθης* being blind to the truth. Moreover, *ἥθος*, a word that here clearly denotes “moral character”, not habit³⁸, appears to be a direct reference to the characterization of the primate as *ἀνὴρ χρηστὸς* by *Φιλοσυνήθης*, with respect to the relationship between the two men.

The proper noun *συνήθεια* makes one final appearance towards the end of the *Dialogue*, in a passage that has been mentioned already, where *Φιλοσυνήθης* insists that if the primate were present, the debate would not have ended, for he would be able to overcome *Φιλαλήθης* with his arguments. The latter responds calmly that he knew from the start that it is extremely difficult for someone to ignore a longtime *συνήθεια*, which is why his discussant refuses to accept that the man he admires is inferior to another person³⁹. As in the previous instance, *συνήθεια* here refers primarily to the relationship between the two men, with an emphasis on the feelings of *Φιλοσυνήθης* towards the primate – in fact, we never actually learn if these feelings are mutual. Given that *φιλία* (also *φιλεῖν*) and *συνήθεια* are employed interchangeably by *Φιλαλήθης*, we may assume that Eustratios considers their respective meaning close, which would not be the first time in Greek literature⁴⁰. Let us also repeat that the notion of “habit” is relevant in this discussion, however the point *Φιλαλήθης* is really trying to make seems to be that one should be ready to sacrifice friendship (in the broad sense) for the sake of truth.

38. Although it should be stressed that a person’s character is shaped by habit, as Aristotle famously argues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1103a): ἡ ἠθικὴ [ἀρετὴ] ἐξ ἔθους περιγίνεται.

39. See DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 150-151.

40. For *συνήθεια* and *φιλία*, see Aristotle’s *De generatione animalium*, 753a: γίγνεται *συνήθεια καὶ φιλία, καθάπερ τοῖς τε ἀνθρώποις καὶ τῶν τετραπόδων ἐνίοις*. Moreover, *φίλος* and *συνήθης* appear rather frequently together. See, for instance, in Lucian, *Περὶ τοῦ μὴ ραδίως πιστεύειν διαβολῇ*, § 1: ἐς τὰς οὐκ ἀληθεῖς κατὰ τῶν συνήθων καὶ φίλων διαβολάς (ed. M. D. MACLEOD, *Luciani Opera*, v. 1, Oxford 1972, 126); and in Flavius Josephus: [οἶνος] καὶ φίλων καὶ συνήθων ἐξαιρεῖ μνήμην (*Ιουδαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία*, Book 11, § 41, in *Flavii Iosephi opera*, v.3, ed. B. NIESE, Berlin 1890).

If so, how should we translate the name of *Φιλοσυνήθης*? “Lover of friendship” is apt, provided that we keep in mind that “friendship” refers here more to an “accustomed friendly disposition due to longtime admiration”, an interpretation which covers all the nouns and verbs used by the two discussants to describe the relationship in question (*φιλία-φιλέω, συνήθεια, ἥθος, ὑπολαμβάνομαι*). Alternatively, we may assume that the second component of *φιλοσυνήθης* is not *συνήθεια* but *συνήθης*, an adjective whose primary definition is, according to *LSJ*, “acquaintance”, “well-acquainted or intimate with one” and, less frequently, “friend”. In that case, the discussant’s name would mean “He who loves his friend (more than truth itself)”, which eventually brings us back to the more convenient “Lover of friendship”.

It should be also noted that *φιλοσυνήθης* is not a neologism, for it already appears in Late Antiquity. The earliest author who uses it is Plutarch in his *Moralia*, in the essay *Πῶς ἂν τις διακρίνει τὸν κόλακα τοῦ φίλου* (*How to tell a flatterer from a friend*)⁴¹. The word is interpreted in *LSJ* as “loving one’s associates”, and in Montanari as “fond of company, friendly, sociable”. Barber surmises that Eustratios’ use of the word is a reference to Plutarch and thus translates *Φιλοσυνήθης* as “Lover of one’s associates”⁴². It is useful to correlate Barber’s assumption with Trizio’s remark that Eustratios was particularly fond of Plutarch, for the latter’s name appears frequently in the former’s commentary on Aristotle⁴³. In addition, it should be noted that the word *φιλαλήθης* can also be found in Plutarch’s *Moralia*, in the essay *Περὶ τοῦ ἀκούειν* (*On hearing*), where it is juxtaposed with *φιλόνεικος* and *δύσερις*⁴⁴ (contentious and quarrelsome) – and as we saw previously, on one occasion *Φιλαλήθης* characterizes the attitude of *Φιλοσυνήθης* as «*φίλεριν*».

As regards other primary sources, the word *φιλοσυνήθης* is rather common in the astrological treatise of Vettius Valens, where it could be

41. Ἐν δὲ ταῖς κολακείαις ὁρᾶν χρὴ καὶ παραφυλάττειν... τὸν ἔρωτικὸν[καλούμενον] *φιλοσυνήθη* (R. KLAERR – A. PHILIPPON – J. SIRINELLI (ed.), *Plutarque, Oeuvres morales*, tome 1-2e partie, Paris 1989, 100).

42. See BARBER, *Contesting the logic* (cited n. 5), 101, n. 8.

43. See M. TRIZIO, Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium, in: S. GERSH (ed.), *Interpreting Proclus from Antiquity to the Renaissance*, Cambridge – N. York 2014, 182-215, 200.

44. *Plutarque, Oeuvres morales* (cited n. 41), 41.

interpreted as “sociable”, or even “popular”⁴⁵. Apart from these two authors, *TLG* offers more results. Leaving aside those that are from Eustratios’ *Dialogue*, we are left with only a few passages that are again associated with an individual’s friendly disposition and the need (or will) to socialize with other people⁴⁶ – or human beings, when it refers to the social behaviour of animals⁴⁷. Therefore, as far as the history of the word is concerned, “Lover of friendship” is preferable to “Lover / Friend of habit / custom”.

AN EXERCISE IN “SELF-PERFORMANCE?”

We have seen how *Φιλοσυνήθης* can be understood as a moral quality, with regard to the *Dialogue*’s “realistic” pretensions – its “plot”, as we would say. Blinded by friendship, *Φιλοσυνήθης* is unable to see the truth. But “truth” is the sole concern of his discussant, the lonesome thinker who dislikes socializing and is uninformed about public affairs, preferring to stay at home, undistracted by everyday worries and thinking about ways to improve himself. The discussion is about a demanding theological topic and indeed the very last words of *Φιλαλήθης* constitute a “confession of faith” in the authority of the Apostles and the Fathers of the Church⁴⁸. However, explicit intertextual references to ecclesiastical authority are completely absent from the *Dialogue*, with the exception of pseudo-Dionysios, whom

45. Vettius Valens refers to the influence of the planets on human character. *Φιλοσυνήθης* appears next to such words, as *εὐσυνμβίωτος* [D. PINGREE (ed.), *Vettii Valentis Antiocheni anthologiarum libri novem*, Leipzig 1986, 41,27; *LSJ*: “easy to live with”] and *πολύφιλος* (*op. cit.*, 39,22; *LSJ*: “having many friends, dear to many”), thus it has a similar meaning.

46. In the *Διδασκαλίας* of Dorotheus of Gaza, for instance, we read: *φιλοσυνήθης ὢν καὶ ἀγαπῶν τοὺς ἐταίρους μου* [L. REGNAULT – J. DE PRÉVILLE (eds.), *Dorothee de Gaza, Oeuvres spirituelles* (SC 92), Paris 1963, § 10,105]. The use of *φιλοσυνήθης* in the *Life of Saint Loukas of Stiris* is similar, although at first it may give the impression it denotes “a fondness for a habitual lifestyle”: *φιλοσυνήθης ψυχὴ καὶ τὰς μεταβάσεις ἐπιεικῶς δυσχεραίνουσα* [D. SOPHIANOS (ed.), *Ὁ βίος τοῦ ὁσίου Λουκᾶ τοῦ Στειριώτη*, Athens 1989, § 66,5]. It actually refers to the saint’s loving care towards the faithful, as related in previous chapters.

47. The dove, for instance, is described by John Chrysostom as (ὄρνειον) *φιλοσύνηθες* (*PG* 53, 234), which probably means “well-disposed towards humans”.

48. Ὅσα μὲν γὰρ τοῖς θεόπταις καὶ Ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς θεοπνεύστοις Πατράσιν ἡμῖν παραδέδοται, ταῦθ’ ὡς ἀναγκαῖα ἡγοῦμαι καὶ ἀπαραίτητα ... Ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς εἴ ποτέ τι ἀγνοήσας ἐρῶ, καὶ φανῇ τοῦτο ἀπᾶδον τῶν ἀποστολικῶν καὶ πατρικῶν παραδόσεων, ἀφίσταμαι τούτου μὴ ἐνδοιάζων μηδέν, ὡς τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ ἐαυτοῦ προτιμῶν. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἐκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 151.

Φιλαλήθης mentions in a slight ironic way, in order to expose, as it seems, the unfamiliarity of Φιλοσυνήθης with this writer, in contrast to what the latter claims⁴⁹. Moreover, the arguments of Φιλαλήθης during the debate make good use of dialectic, with syllogisms and source material that showcase Eustratios' familiarity with Aristotle⁵⁰. All this suggests that Eustratios engaged consciously in a crossover between philosophy and theology, in the pursuit of theological "truth".

Based on the above, we may ask ourselves if there is more to the name of Φιλοσυνήθης than the mere characterization of a man's character, as someone who is too dependent on his friends for his own good. In other words, are there any deeper theological connotations in his name? With the aid of Lampe's *Patristic Greek Lexicon*⁵¹, we come across several passages from Early Christian and Early Byzantine texts that relate *συνήθεια* with idolatry, pagan life and Judaic traditions, always in contrast to the Christian way of life, which of course is identified with the truth (*ἀλήθεια*)⁵². In other instances, early Church Fathers talk about the *πονηρὰ συνήθεια*, when referring to a non-Christian way of living⁵³, or about the *παλαιὰ* or *ἀρχαία συνήθεια*, in relation either to belief in the Greek gods or to Judaism⁵⁴.

49. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 134. It should be noted that Leo appeals at least twice to Dionysios' authority in two of his letters that are associated with the dispute (see LAURIOTIS, *Ἱστορικὸν ζήτημα* [cited n. 8], 405b – letter to the patriarch Nikolaos Grammatikos; 445b – letter to Nikolaos of Adrianopolis).

50. See note 9.

51. See LAMPE, s. v., 1. In *LBG*, *συνήθεια* is registered as a financial term, which does not concern us here.

52. On the *συνήθεια* of idolatry and paganism as opposed to Christian truth, two passages from Clement of Alexandria's *Προτρεπτικὸς πρὸς Ἑλληνας* (*Exhortation to the worshippers of the ancient Greek religion*) are relevant here: ὥς μὲν οὖν τοὺς λίθους καὶ τὰ ξύλα, καὶ συνελόντι φάναι, τὴν ἕλιν ἀγάλματα ἀνδρείκελα ἐποιήσατε, οἷς ἐπιμορφάζετε εὐσέβειαν, συκοφαντοῦντες τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἥδη μὲν αὐτόθεν δῆλον (PG 8, 136 A); and: Φύγωμεν οὖν τὴν συνήθειαν, φύγωμεν, οἷον ἄκραν χαλεπὴν, ἢ Χαρίβδεως ἀπειλήν, ἢ Σειρήνας μυθικάς (op. cit., 237 B). On *συνήθεια* denoting Jewish traditions, we read in the *Constitutiones Apostolorum* (4th century): Δι' ὃν καὶ παρακαλοῦμεν ὑμῖν ἐν Κυρίῳ, ἀπέχεσθαι παλαιᾶς συνηθείας καὶ δεσμιῶν ματαίων [F.X. FUNK (ed.), *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, v. 1, Paderborn 1905, 347, 8-9].

53. See, for instance, in John Chrysostom's *Περὶ μετανοίας* (*On repentance*) signifying sin: ἔκκοψον ... συνήθειαν πονηράν (PG 63, 833).

54. See note 52, and add to these John Chrysostom's *ἀρχαίαι συνήθειαι* (PG 63, 691) and *παλαιὰ συνήθεια* (op. cit., 520).

Although we have to be careful here, for *συνήθεια* had been used in past Christian literature in a positive way as well, signifying Christian Orthodox life and customs⁵⁵, our impression that in the *Dialogue* it acquires negative theological associations is reinforced by several points: First and foremost, by the emphatic urging of *Φιλαλήθης*: *συνήθειαν ἐν τῷ παρόντι ἀρνήσασθαι, τοῦ ἀληθοῦς δ' ἀντέχεσθαι*⁵⁶. Second, by the very name of *Φιλαλήθης*, which had been employed in past ecclesiastical Greek literature as an attribute of such prominent figures of the Christian religion, as Matthew⁵⁷, but also of God himself⁵⁸. Third, by Eustratios' correlation of Leo's views on the icons with paganism and Judaism in the *Treatise*⁵⁹, which reminds us of the association of *συνήθεια* with pre-Christian belief systems, as we saw in the previous paragraph. To these we may add the word *προλήψις*, which is once more employed by *Φιλαλήθης* in order to describe the shortsightedness of *Φιλοσυνήθης*, this time as an antonym of *τάληθές*. The noun here clearly means "predisposition" or "prejudice"⁶⁰ and can be found right next to *συνήθεια* in a passage from the fourth Homily of (pseudo-) Makarios of Egypt, where it is argued that Evil has become, *συνηθεία καὶ προλήψει πολλῇ*, the nature of man⁶¹.

Naturally, theology was both the means and the end of the whole controversy, and all related primary sources are interspersed with quotes deriving from Ecumenical Councils and Church Fathers. What distinguishes Eustratios' *Dialogue* is the almost complete lack of explicit intertextuality, which has already been mentioned, and its highly sophisticated style, which is already reflected in the author's unconventional choice of composing a

55. See LAMPE, s.v., 3.

56. DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 129.

57. See LAMPE, s.v.

58. See, for instance, *ὁ φιλαλήθης Θεὸς* in Olympiodorus the deacon's 6th century commentary on *Job*: U. HAGEDORN (ed.), *Olympiodor Diakon von Alexandria. Kommentar zu Hiob* (Patristische Texte und Studien 24), Berlin 1984, 117, 19.

59. *οὐδεὶς χριστιανῶν πρὸς αὐτὴν [sc.: ὁμολογίαν], εἰ μὴ πον τὸν χριστιανὸν ψεύδεται ἐλληνίζων τῇ γνώμῃ καὶ πολυθεῖαν τιθέμενος*: DIMITRAKOPOULOS, *Ἑκκλησιαστικὴ βιβλιοθήκη* (cited n. 4), 152. However, this statement could also be viewed as an ironic answer to Leo's exact same claim in his letter to Patriarch Nikolaos Grammatikos (see LAURIOTIS, *Ἱστορικὸν ζήτημα* [cited n. 8], 405b).

60. Cf. LAMPE, s.v. 3 & 4.

61. PG 34, 477 D.

Platonizing dialogue. As far as argumentation is concerned, Eustratios' arsenal comprises the use of dialectic, syllogisms and Aristotelian logic (and perhaps also Neoplatonism?⁶²), in order to tackle a theological matter. Moreover, as we have already seen, in the *Treatise* the author elaborates his own views on the relationship between the two Natures of Christ, which eventually led to his condemnation and abdication from his see more than twenty years later.

All this makes us wonder about Eustratios' intention in composing these two works. Were they really meant to assist Alexios during the last phase of the controversy over the icons, against Leo and any other opponent of the emperor's will? We have already seen that the *Dialogue* relates to real events, although in a singular, if not unique, way. Furthermore, the veneer of *Φιλαλήθης* highlights the way Eustratios wants to present himself, namely as a reclusive sage⁶³, who is interested only in his theology and philosophy, shunning everyday worries and ignoring important events taking place in the palace. By taking all this into consideration, I would suggest that the *Dialogue* and the *Treatise* were possibly meant to be received as statements of "self-performance" or "performance of one's self", rather than up-to-date essays against current problems. This could also explain, at least to some extent, the absence of any mention of Eustratios or these two works in the *σημείωμα* of the Synod of 1094⁶⁴, as well as Anna's silence about Eustratios' involvement in the controversy – and let us remember that she speaks very highly of him on another occasion.

62. Neoplatonic associations are possible, since we know, thanks to TRIZIO (Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium [cited n. 43], and: Neoplatonic source material in Eustratios of Nicaea's commentary on Book VI of the Nicomachean Ethics, in: *Medieval Greek commentaries on the Nicomachean Ethics* [cited n. 5], 71-109), that Eustratios' comments on Aristotle were heavily influenced by Neoplatonism, especially by the writings of Proklos. Within this frame, it could be of some use to cite Iamblichus, a Neoplatonist, who, in his *Προτρεπτικός ἐπὶ φιλοσοφίαν* (*Exhortation to the study of philosophy*), defines ἀμαθία (ignorance), which he regards as the opposite of the study of philosophy, as *συνήθεια πονηρῶν λόγων* [H. PISTELLI (ed.), *Iamblichi protrepticus ad fidem codicis Florentini*, Leipzig 1888, 99,24-25]. For *πονηρὰ συνήθεια*, see note 53.

63. Cf. CAMERON, *Arguing it out* (cited n. 1), 16: "Lover of Truth ... is a veritable hermit".

64. According to GLAVINAS (*Ἡ ἐπὶ Ἀλεξίου Κομνηνοῦ* [cited n. 1], 196), this is another indication that the *Dialogue* was written at a later date. However, his assumption is also based on the misinterpretation of a passage in the *Dialogue*, as we have already shown.

If so, is it possible to specify the *Dialogue*'s intended audience? Trizio has perceptively pointed out that the readers of Eustratios' commentaries on Aristotle must have been "highly educated"⁶⁵ and I see no problem in picturing a similar set of recipients for the *Dialogue*. Eventually, the "audience" of this text would automatically become part of the "performative" procedure, thus sharing the experience of a Platonizing dialogue that mixes philosophy and theology in a highly sophisticated style. Given that one of the things Eustratios was accused of in 1117 was the use of Aristotelian logic in talking about Christ⁶⁶, and the *Dialogue* makes good use of Aristotle, another question arises on the shared ideology between Eustratios and his audience with regard to the text in question.

Kaldellis has argued that Eustratios was condemned as a heretic because he had been an "Outsider" for too long, meaning that he had regarded philosophy, not as "ancilla theologiae", but as an autonomous discipline⁶⁷. For his part, Trizio maintains that such characterizations, as "Neoplatonist", "Christian" or "Christian Neoplatonic", are not applicable to a complex personality such as that of Eustratios⁶⁸. Be that as it may, the *Dialogue* certainly surpasses all other primary sources that surround the controversy, and at the same time it urges us to assume that it was composed for the "initiated" few who would have been able to appreciate all its aspects in full. This means that a private gathering, and not the public space of the Synod or the court, would have been more appropriate for the "delivery" (whatever this word could mean: recitation, performance of some sort?⁶⁹) of the *Dialogue*.

65. See TRIZIO, Eleventh- to twelfth-century Byzantium (cited n. 43), 200 and IDEM, Neoplatonic source material (cited n. 62), 109.

66. IOANNOU, Trois pièces inédites (cited n. 29), 34: Ὅτι πανταχοῦ τῶν ἱερῶν καὶ θεῶν λογίων ὁ Χριστὸς συλλογίζεται ἀριστοτελικῶς. For his part, TRIZIO, Il neoplatonismo (cited n. 2), 12 considers this accusation exaggerated and undue.

67. A. KALDELLIS, Byzantine philosophy inside and out: Orthodoxy and dissidence in counterpoint, in: K. IERODIAKONOU – B. BYDÉN (eds.), *The many faces of byzantine philosophy* (Papers and monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4.1), Athens 2012, 129-151, esp. 140-1.

68. See TRIZIO, Neoplatonic source material (cited n. 62), 109.

69. On public performances and recitations of dialogues written in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium, see RIGOLIO, *Christians in conversation* (cited n. 15), 15.

CLOSING REMARKS

For all its merits and intriguing aspects, Eustratios' *Dialogue* is part of a bigger picture. It was composed within the framework of a debate, and judging by the flourishing of discussions and, by extension, the composition of a significant number of dialogues during the next century, it could be argued that, in a way, the whole controversy over the icons set the tone for future developments in the domain of theology. Certainly, when *Φιλοσυνήθης* accuses *Φιλαλήθης* of sophistry, or when the latter urges his discussant to leave *ἔρις* aside, we think primarily about Leo and his efforts to impeach the emperor during the last two decades of the 11th century. And yet, at the same time, we are somehow transferred to the reign of Manuel Komnenos, an era in which scholars pondered over the use of dialectic and the use of syllogisms, and thus challenged the boundaries between the theological and the secular – although frequently an ambiguous stance was involved; a time of lively debates, when someone could be easily accused of being *σοφιστικὸς* or *ἐριστικὸς*⁷⁰.

What distinguishes Eustratios from this evolution is his firm position with regard to dialectic and syllogistic reasoning. Indeed, the *Dialogue* constitutes an impressive example of an erudite scholar who believed that theology and philosophy could co-operate on equal terms. As regards characterization and self-representation, it is Eustratios' adversary who is described as *ἐριστικὸς* and probably comes across as *σοφιστικὸς*, whereas *Φιλαλήθης*, the alias of Eustratios, does not feel the need to explain himself for his extensive use of syllogisms. Even if we take into consideration that eventually he was condemned as a heretic and then forced to sign a confession of faith, all this does not make him necessarily an "Outsider" – and let us not forget that envy must have played an important part in his conviction⁷¹. Probably the best way to describe him would be as an intellectual characterized by his bold and creative way of thinking – which,

70. See CAMERON, Arguing it out (cited n. 1), 50-51 & 74. Cf. K. CHRYSOGELOS, Nikolaos Mouzalon's resignation from the patriarchal throne and Manuel Komnenos as the new Socrates, *Parekbolai* 10 (2020), 43-63, esp. 53-54.

71. Unsurprisingly, Eustratios was brought to trial a year before the seriously-ill emperor passed away. See TRIZIO, Il neoplatonismo (cited n. 2), 13 and IOANNOU, Le sort des évêques (cited n. 28), 6-7.

to some extent, surely benefited from having powerful patrons, namely Alexios and, later, Anna. Ultimately, the notable character of the *Dialogue*, with its blending of reality, fiction, Aristotelianism and theology, testifies to its author's artistry.

ΠΑΡΑΤΗΡΗΣΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΝ ΔΙΑΛΟΓΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΟΥ ΝΙΚΑΙΑΣ

Αντικείμενο της μελέτης αποτελεί ο *Διάλογος* που συνέγραψε ο Ευστράτιος Νικαίας στο πλαίσιο της πολύχρονης διαμάχης που είχε ξεσπάσει τις τελευταίες δεκαετίες του 11ου αιώνα, εξαιτίας της απόφασης του Αλεξίου Α΄ να λιώσει εκκλησιαστικά κειμήλια, προκειμένου να χρηματοδοτήσει τις εκστρατείες του. Ύστερα από μία σύντομη εισαγωγή, όπου εκτίθεται το ιστορικό πλαίσιο που περιβάλλει τον *Διάλογον*, η μελέτη διαρθρώνεται σε τρεις βασικές ενότητες, όπου κατά σειρά μελετάται η σχέση των προσώπων του κειμένου με κάποια από τα ιστορικά πρόσωπα που συμμετείχαν στη διαμάχη, διερευνώνται οι πιθανές δηλώσεις και συνδηλώσεις των ονομασιών που έχουν δοθεί στους δύο συνομιλητές (*Φιλαλήθης* και *Φιλοσυνήθης* – με έμφαση στον δεύτερο) και προτείνεται μία νέα προσέγγιση ως προς τη συγγραφική πρόθεση του Ευστρατίου. Μαζί με τον *Διάλογον* συνεξετάζεται, όπου κρίνεται σκόπιμο, και η επίσης συναφής με τη διαμάχη *Συλλογιστική απόδειξις* του Ευστρατίου.