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*Nicolas Wiater*

# THE IDEOLOGY OF CLASSICISM

LANGUAGE, HISTORY, AND IDENTITY  
IN DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

Nicolas Wiater  
The Ideology of Classicism

# Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte

Herausgegeben von  
Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, Peter Scholz  
und Otto Zwierlein

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in Dionysius of Halicarnassus

by  
Nicolas Wiater

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*For Pamela, Tino, and Fabi*



## Preface

This book is a revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation which was accepted by the Philosophische Fakultät der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn in 2008. I am grateful to my referees, Professor Thomas A. Schmitz and Professor Konrad Vössing, and the other members of the examining board, Professor Dorothee Gall and Professor Otto Zwierlein, for their criticism and support, and to the editors of the *Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte*, Professor Otto Zwierlein, Professor Heinz-Günther Nesselrath, and Professor Peter Scholz, for accepting my manuscript for publication in the series; in particular, I wish to thank Professor Nesselrath who read the entire manuscript with extraordinary diligence and care and intercepted more than one error. To Professor Zwierlein I am most grateful not only for recommending this manuscript for publication in the *UaLG* series but also for his extraordinary support and encouragement over the years. Many thanks also to Katrin Hofmann and Dr Sabine Vogt of de Gruyter for their prompt assistance in bringing the manuscript through the final stages of publication.

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to express my gratitude to Professor Simon Goldhill and Professor Richard Hunter for discussing my ideas with me and for their manifold support both during my time at Cambridge and afterwards.

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Jamie Sutherland read the manuscript at an earlier stage and greatly helped me with my English.

Among the numerous people who have, in one way or another, contributed to this project, I would like to single out the following three: Fabian Meinel and my partner, Pamela Hutcheson, who read the entire manuscript, discussed my argument with me, corrected my English, and provided moral support. Tino Schweighöfer, my oldest and closest friend, was, as always, an unfailing source of encouragement and *sanum iudicium*. The only adequate way to show them my gratitude and affection is to dedicate this book to them.

## Table of Contents

Preface .....	VII
1. Introduction: The Aims and Methods of This Study .....	1
1.1 ‘Webs of Significance’ – A Novel Approach to Dionysius’ Classicism .....	1
1.1.1 Dionysius’ Classicism as a Cultural Phenomenon ..	1
1.1.2 Dionysius – an ‘Augustan’ Author? .....	8
1.1.3 A Cultural Identity Approach to Dionysius’ Classicism .....	18
1.2 The Conceptual Framework of Dionysius’ Classicism ....	29
1.2.1 Criticism as a Struggle for Authority .....	32
1.2.2 Dionysius’ Critical Method as Heir to the Tradition of Classical Rhetoric .....	40
1.2.3 The Power of the Text: Creating a Discursive Tradition .....	44
1.2.4 Criticism as Constituent of Communities of Intellectuals .....	47
1.3 Conclusions .....	52
2. Reviving the Past: Language and Identity in Dionysius’ Classicism .....	60
2.1 Introduction: Language and Time in Dionysius’ Classicism .....	60
2.2 Φιλόσοφος Ῥητορική, Μίμησις, and Continuity .....	65
2.2.1 Πολιτικοὶ Λόγοι: Learning Classical Identity from Isocrates .....	65
2.2.2 Classicist Self-Fashioning: Re-enacting the Past through Μίμησις .....	77

2.3	Language and Power: Getting the Romans into the Picture	92
2.3.1	Greeks, Romans, Barbarians: Dionysius' Interpretation of Augustan Rome	92
2.3.2	Dionysius' Interpretation of the Roman Present in Context	100
2.3.3	Greek or Roman? The Ambiguity of Dionysius' View of Augustan Rome	107
2.3.4	Coda: How Historical is Dionysius' Model of History?	110
2.4	Summary	116
3.	History and Criticism: The Construction of a Classicist Past	120
3.1	'Metahistory' <i>avant la lettre</i> : Dionysius on Historical Writing	121
3.2	Deconstructing Thucydides	130
3.2.1	Identifying with the Past: Why Herodotus Succeeded where Thucydides Failed	132
3.2.2	Classicist History: Theopompus' 'Isocratean' Approach to the Past	149
3.2.3	Between History and Criticism: Re-writing the Melian Dialogue	154
3.3	A Greek Past for the Roman Present: The Project of Dionysius' <i>Antiquitates</i>	165
3.3.1	Εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς: The Archaeology of Roman Power	171
3.3.2	Identity and Difference: Be Roman, Go Greek?	198
3.4	Summary	223
4.	Knowledge and Elitism: Being a Classicist Critic	226
4.1	'Ἀνάγνωσις Τροφή Λέξεως: Reading and Distinction in Dionysius' Classicism	230
4.2	'Authentic Reading': Becoming a Classicist Critic	235
4.2.1	The Failures of Scholarship Past: Redressing the Balance between Theory and Practice	235
4.2.2	Misreading Tradition: Deconstructing Chrysippus	239
4.2.3	Refuting the Idea of a 'Natural Word Order'	243

4.2.4	<i>On Literary Composition</i> : A Normative Aesthetics of Classical Style	246
4.2.5	Dionysius' Writings: A Classical Course of Education	257
4.3	The Mysteries of Education: Being an Elite Critic	263
4.3.1	Knowledge and Elitism	264
4.3.2	The Mysteries of Knowledge	267
4.3.3	Classical Politicians and Classicist Readers: Knowledge and Leadership	270
4.4	Summary	277
5.	Enacting Distinction: The Interactive Structure of Dionysius' Writings	279
5.1	Criticism as Dialogic Interaction: Creating an 'Imagined Community' of Classicists	281
5.2	Strategies of Distinction: Out-Group Reading	297
5.2.1	'Objective Critic' vs 'Subjective Critic': The Peripatetic on Trial	303
5.2.2	The Aesthetics of Criticism: Dionysius vs the Platonists	310
5.3	Summary	348
6.	Conclusions	352
	References	361
	Indices	387
1.	Key Notions, Persons, Places	387
2.	Greek Terms	391
3.	Passages Discussed	392



# 1. Introduction:

## The Aims and Methods of This Study

### 1.1 ‘Webs of Significance’<sup>1</sup> – A Novel Approach to Dionysius’ Classicism

#### 1.1.1 Dionysius’ Classicism as a Cultural Phenomenon

Ever since Bonner’s study of the development of Dionysius’ thought, now a classic itself, scholarly interest in the rhetorical works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus has increased steadily.<sup>2</sup> 70 years after the publication of Bonner’s treatise, Dionysius’ linguistic and rhetorical theories seem to have been exhaustively explored; scholars have examined Dionysius’ conceptual vocabulary (and its consistency), such as Schenkeveld’s and Damon’s detailed analyses of Dionysius’ notions of aesthetic evaluation, especially his use of ἄλλογος αἴσθησις, Vaahtera’s study of ‘Phonetics and Euphony in Dionysius of Halicarnassus,’<sup>3</sup> or Pohl’s study on the ἀρεταί and χαρακτῆρες τῆς λέξεως.<sup>4</sup> Dionysius’ critical methods too attracted attention: Viljama examined Dionysius’ analysis of sentence structures;<sup>5</sup> de Jonge focused on the use of *metathesis*, the technique of re-writing a passage from a Classical author,<sup>6</sup> and assessed Dionysius’ importance as a historian of linguistics.<sup>7</sup> The linguistic-historical approach to Dionysius’ works culminated recently in de Jonge’s dissertation ‘Between Grammar and Rhetoric. Dionysius of

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1 Geertz (1973) 5.

2 Bonner (1939); earlier studies of Dionysius’ critical works, or aspects of them, are, e.g., Blass (1863); Roessler (1873); v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1899); Kalinka (1924) and (1925).

3 Schenkeveld (1975); Damon (1991); Vaahtera (1997); cf. also Görler (1979).

4 Pohl (1968).

5 Viljama (2003).

6 de Jonge (2005a).

7 *Id.* (2005).

Halicarnassus on Language, Linguistics, and Literature,<sup>8</sup> the most comprehensive study to date not only of the sources of Dionysius' ideas, but also of how he combined theories from such various strands as musical, grammatical and rhetorical theory, and (mainly Stoic) philosophy in his own, original system of thought.

Dionysius is concerned with questions of grammar, rhetoric, and the aesthetics of speech, and every scholar working on his œuvre has to be familiar with this linguistic side of his. But even a study like de Jonge's, which takes Dionysius seriously as a theoretician of rhetoric in his own right, represents a shift only in the evaluation of Dionysius as a thinker, but not in method. With his predecessors de Jonge shares an approach to Dionysius which remains reconstructional in purpose: he, like the other representatives of the linguistic approach, attempts to identify the sources on which Dionysius drew,<sup>9</sup> which elements he adopted from each of them, and how he used these elements as the constituents of his own approach. The individual studies adopting the linguistic approach thus differ from each other mainly in the degree to which the authors allow for Dionysius' influence on the material he found in his sources.

Such an approach neglects (and maybe has to neglect) the fact that the various rhetorical, grammatical, musical, and philosophical theories which Dionysius applied in his criticism were not an end in themselves, but served a purpose beyond satisfying a purely intellectual interest in classical language and literature. de Jonge rightly remarks that 'Dionysius' views on literature are always subservient to the production of (rhetorical) texts through imitation of classical models,'<sup>10</sup> but he does not inquire further into the reasons for Dionysius and his addressees' desire to write 'Classical' (or what they thought to be Classical) texts:<sup>11</sup> focusing on the What and the

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8 de Jonge (2008); as I was writing this study, de Jonge's book had not yet been published. I am very grateful to Dr de Jonge for sending me a copy of his study and granting me invaluable insights into the results of his research.

9 de Jonge's approach should not, however, be confused with traditional nineteenth-century source criticism from which he rightly distances himself ([2008] 7–8). He explicitly rejects the attempt to speculate about concrete sources; instead, he defines as the aim of his study to 'point to the possible connections between Dionysius' *discourse* and that of earlier and contemporary scholars of various backgrounds' in order to 'draw a general picture of the set of ideas and technical theories that were available in the Augustan age' (*ibid.*).

10 de Jonge (2008) 7.

11 As ch. 2 will show, 'Classical' is a highly symbolically charged term for Dionysius with not only aesthetical and stylistic but also moral and political implications. His conception of 'Classical' rhetoric is therefore very different from ours. Hence whenever reference is

How, the linguistic approach neglects the Why. The emphasis on *mimesis* as the aim of Dionysius' criticism thus pushes the problem only one stage further back: understanding the purpose of Dionysius' evaluation of the style of the classical authors helps us accept the fact that his at times harsh criticism of such authors as Plato or Thucydides is so different from our own. Accepting that Dionysius' criticism served a specific purpose enables us to study his ideas and methods on their own and to appreciate Dionysius' intellectual achievement, instead of criticising him for his lack of taste.<sup>12</sup> But it does not help us to understand this desire for *mimesis* itself which motivates his criticism and thus leaves a crucial element of Greek classicism unexplained.

This study proposes a different way of looking at Dionysius' classicism. Rather than as a linguistic, I will approach Dionysius' classicism as a social-cultural phenomenon. This approach rests on the assumption that the fact that a group of Greek and Roman intellectuals in the first century BCE attempted to speak and write like authors who had lived three hundred or so years before their times is a phenomenon which requires explanation. Underlying this approach is a 'semiotic concept of culture'<sup>13</sup> and human interaction which was developed by the cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz. Following Max Weber, Geertz describes man as 'an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun,' culture constituting those webs.<sup>14</sup> Human actions are never neutral, but acts of communication; they carry a significance which needs to be interpreted by the recipient whose re-action will be determined by this interpretation. Human action is 'symbolic':

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made to Dionysius' particular notion of the 'Classical' and the world view bound up with it, 'Classical' will be written with a capital 'C' in order to distinguish it from other uses of the term. In the same way, 'Classicists' will designate those intellectuals who adopted Dionysius' Classicist ideology as opposed to 'classicists' meaning 'modern scholars of classics.' 'Neo-Classicists' did not seem an appropriate term to refer to Dionysius and the members of his community because they conceived of themselves as genuinely 'Classical' (see ch. 2.2 below), an aspect of Dionysius' self-definition which the prefix 'neo' might obscure to a certain extent. Consequently, 'Classicism' with a capital 'C' will refer specifically to Dionysius' conception of classical language and way of life as opposed to other '(neo-)classicist' movements at other times, for example in 19th-century Germany. See the discussion below, pp. 48–49 with n. 148.

12 de Jonge (2008) 7; however, de Jonge correctly points out that the latter attitude has been abandoned in recent scholarship (*ibid.* 8–9).

13 Geertz (1973a) 14.

14 *Ibid.* 5.



the peculiar and distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings [is] the fact that human beings interpret or “define” each other’s actions instead of merely reacting to each other’s actions. Their “response” is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning of one another’s actions. This mediation is equivalent to inserting a process of interpretation between stimulus and response in the case of human behaviour.<sup>15</sup>

The meaning of actions is understandable only from within the particular context in which they are performed. This context is culture: culture provides the parameters in which human beings expect each other’s actions to be interpreted:

As interworked systems of construable signs (what, ignoring provincial usages, I would call symbols), culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly – that is thickly – described.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore understanding human interaction depends on understanding how members of communities interpret each other’s actions. The anthropologist makes actions of members of a foreign society understandable to the members of his society by explaining the principles according to which the members of the foreign society invest their actions with meaning. Geertz calls this process the ‘thick description’:<sup>17</sup> ‘descriptions of Berber, Jewish, or French culture must be cast in terms of the constructions we imagine Berbers, Jews, or Frenchmen to place upon what they live through, the formulae they use to define what happens to them.’<sup>18</sup>

In the past, archaeological and historical studies of the ancient world in particular have greatly profited from cross-fertilization with anthropological methods: reading the *Odyssey* with the system of gift-giving explored by Marcel Mauss, Moses I. Finley offered exciting new insights into the society of the Dark Ages;<sup>19</sup> Eric R. Dodds’ *The Greeks and the Irrational* explored Greek religion applying, among others, anthropological theories of shame and guilt cultures; more recently, Leslie Kurke has furthered our

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15 Blumer (1962) 180; cf. Cohen (1985) 42: ‘any behaviour, no matter how routine, may have a symbolic aspect if members of society wish to endow it with such significance.’ This approach to human interaction ultimately goes back to George Herbert Mead and is now known under the name of ‘symbolic interactionism,’ a term coined by Herbert Blumer in 1969; see the overview in Rose (1962a) and the contributions collected in Rose (1962).

16 Geertz (1973a) 14.

17 *Ibid.* 6.

18 *Ibid.* 15.

19 *The World of Odysseus* (New York 1977).

understanding of the social mechanisms lying behind Pindaric praise poetry on the basis of native Indian potlatch.<sup>20</sup> This list could be extended considerably.<sup>21</sup> Yet, apart from the novel ways of looking at individual areas of ancient culture and society such as age-setting, agriculture, burial-rituals, the family, gender-protocols, law, sexuality, slavery, and drama provided by anthropology,<sup>22</sup> 'the greatest value to the classicist in the dialogue' with anthropology, as Finley pointed out, is 'the cultivation of an approach, a habit of thought – I might say a methodology.'

It seems to me that an investigation of Greek classicism can profit from this last aspect in particular. Anthropological studies remind us that the overwhelming influence of ancient culture on Western thought and civilisation can engender a sensation of familiarity with the ancient world which blinds us to the differences separating our culture from antiquity. In some aspects of ancient society these differences are blatant; Greek pederasty, the role of women, or slavery are obvious examples. In these cases comparison with other, non-Western societies can help us understand these phenomena. Intellectual activities such as studying classical Greek language and literature, by contrast, are more problematic because we seem to share these practices with the ancients. Here anthropology warns us against such cultural 'false friends' by reminding us that similar practices in different cultures can be deceptive as their respective meaning depends on the context in which they are performed, rather than on the activity being performed itself. To a Greek scholar from Halicarnassus, studying and teaching classical Greek grammar and rhetoric in Augustan Rome has an entirely different meaning than the same activity has to a twenty-first century Western European scholar.

An in-depth discussion of the similarities and differences of classics and anthropology is beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, I would like to suggest certain aspects in which the work of an anthropologist attempting to give a thick description of, for example, Balinese cock fight can be viewed as comparable to that of a classicist investigating Greek classicism in the first century BCE.<sup>23</sup> I hope that such a comparison will help to clarify my approach to Dionysius' classicism. Anthropologists and classicists alike aim to interpret actions of members of a foreign culture and to make

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20 *The Traffics in Praise. Pindar and the Poetics of Social Economy* (Ithaca 1991).

21 See the discussion of anthropological methods in classical studies by Humphreys (1978), esp. 17–30; Cartledge (1995a); Finley (1986); cf. French (1982); Kluckhohn (1961).

22 These and other topics are listed by Cartledge (1995a); cf. Finley (1986), 116–117.

23 The example of Balinese cock fight is from Geertz (1973b).

them comprehensible to their audiences. An important difference is that anthropologists seem to be in a more advantageous situation than classicists in that they focus on societies which are contemporary, but separated from them by space. Classicists, by contrast, deal with a society from which they are separated by time and space. Therefore anthropologists can rely on first-hand evidence for their interpretations: they are able to travel to Bali and watch a cock fight while classicists have to reconstruct the performance of a Greek drama, or the activity of Greek and Roman intellectuals, from literary and archaeological evidence alone.

This difference notwithstanding, both disciplines appear to be similar in that the very *interpretation* of the foreign culture, the 'thick description,' depends in both cases on informants from within the society which is being studied: the classicists' informants are texts and archaeological evidence, whereas anthropologists rely on observations which they seek to contextualize by means of statements of people. Again, anthropologists seem to be in the more advantageous position because they are able to ask specific questions and thus obtain more comprehensive information. But this information itself must be evaluated by the anthropologist because even an informant from within a foreign society does not, and cannot, provide the one correct explanation of a phenomenon but only his own interpretation of it.

A classicist's and an anthropologist's work might therefore be regarded as similar in the one fundamental aspect that both seek to render foreign cultural practices familiar to themselves and their recipients by interpreting interpretations, i.e., by providing a 'thick description' of the practices of a foreign culture on the basis of partial and selective information from within this foreign culture.<sup>24</sup> Classicists and anthropologists thus seem to differ mainly in the *kind* of sources on which they draw, but the process of interpretation, which is carried out by each of them, is similar: it has a similar aim, it employs similar methods to achieve this aim, and it is subject to similar imponderables.<sup>25</sup>

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24 Cf. Geertz (1973a) 20; *ibid.* 15.

25 Cf. Lévi-Strauss (1949) 18: 'the fundamental difference between the two disciplines [history and anthropology] is not one of subject, of goal, or of method. They share the same subject, which is social life; the same goal, which is a better understanding of man; and, in fact, the same method, in which only the proportion of research techniques varies. They differ, principally, in their choice of complementary perspectives. History organizes its data in relation to conscious expressions of social life, while anthropology proceeds by examining its unconscious foundations.'

The purpose of this book is to provide such a 'thick description' of Greek classicism, an interpretation, that is, of what meaning Dionysius and his readers attributed to reading and writing classical texts within their culture. Therefore the question I will pursue in this study is *why* it made sense to these intellectuals at this particular time and at this particular place to attempt to speak and write like classical authors.<sup>26</sup> An explanation of this phenomenon cannot be provided by an analysis of Dionysius' critical and aesthetical categories, his criteria of evaluation, or by tracing similarities and differences between Dionysius' opinion on classical texts and those of other critics, such as Ps.-Demetrius' *On Style* or Philodemus' essays. It must be sought in the way in which these scholars *imagined* their literary and rhetorical activity to be connected with their social and cultural surroundings, in their interpretation of the world, and of the role they ascribed to themselves in it, their self-definition. Such an approach is concerned with what may be defined as Dionysius' 'imaginary universe'<sup>27</sup> which endowed his literary criticism with meaning.

Recently, two studies have shown how fruitful it is to approach Dionysius' critical writings from such an angle: Hidber's *Das klassizistische Manifest des Dionys von Halikarnass. Die praefatio zu De oratoribus veteribus: Einleitung, Übersetzung, Kommentar* and Porter's 'Feeling Classical: Classicism and Ancient Literary Criticism.'<sup>28</sup> Hidber shows that Dionysius' Classicism implies an interpretation of Augustan Rome as the continuation of the Classical past and that Dionysius conceived of himself and his educational programme as the successor of Isocrates and his conception of civic identity. Porter draws attention to the importance of the reading experience for a 'Classicist's'<sup>29</sup> construction of identity: Classicists saw reading classical texts as a means to overcome the temporal distance between present and Classical past and, in this way, to feel classical themselves. These studies have demonstrated that Dionysius' literary criticism is bound up with a particular world view and a conception of identity; they have provided important insights into constituent elements of Dionysius' 'imaginary universe,' and suggested ways of how to explore it. But their scope is necessarily limited: Hidber deals with only one, albeit programmatic, text of Dionysius', and Porter

26 For an attempt to locate Dionysius within the culture of his times see Hurst (1982).

27 For this term see White (1969) 623; cf. Gehrke's 'imaginaire,' which he glosses as the 'Vorstellungshorizont einer Gesellschaft' ([2005] 51).

28 Hidber (1996); Porter (2006b); cf. *id.* (2006a).

29 On my use of this term see above, p. 2 n. 11.

confines himself to the role of the reading experience. Moreover, neither of them develops a theoretical framework in order to define their approach to Dionysius' Classicism, to base their findings on a solid methodology, and to create a foundation for further investigations. Thus while paving the way for a fresh view on Dionysius' criticism, they call for a comprehensive, systematic study of Dionysius' Classicism as a social-cultural phenomenon.

The present study aims to fill this lacuna. It will discuss Dionysius' Classicism from the angle of cultural identity and explore the outlook on the world which is bound up with literary criticism and the study of classical texts and language. Dionysius' criticism, I will argue, makes classical Greek language and literature constituents of a conception of Greek identity in Augustan Rome. Such an approach will, I hope, not only offer us a novel way of looking at Dionysius' criticism; it will also permit us to re-evaluate Greek classicism as an integral part of the intellectual culture of Augustan Rome. In the following section I will explain the concept of 'Augustan culture' that underlies this study and offer some suggestions as to how discussing Dionysius' literary criticism might influence our way of thinking about this concept. In section 1.1.3 I will then develop a theoretical framework which allows us to address Dionysius' Classicism as a discourse of cultural identity.

### 1.1.2 Dionysius – an 'Augustan' Author?

Based mainly on the works of Galinsky, Wallace-Hadrill, and Barchiesi,<sup>30</sup> our approach to the 'Age of Augustus'<sup>31</sup> has undergone what could be called a 'discursive turn.'<sup>32</sup> We have given up the idea of a uniform image of society and culture in Augustan Rome the different elements of which can easily be categorized as 'pro-' or 'anti-Augustan.' Instead, the prevailing notion of 'Augustan culture' is now that of 'a time of transition, of continuing

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30 See Galinsky (1996); (2005); the series of articles by Wallace-Hadrill (1988); (1989); (1990); (1997); (1998); and, most recently, his comprehensive study (2008), esp. 3–37 (ch. 1: 'Culture, Identity, and Power'); Barchiesi (1994), esp. 1–44. Other important works on the subject include the contributions collected in Powell (1992); Elsner (1996); cf. Phillips (1983). Further titles relevant to this subject are cited in my discussion of the relation of Dionysius' historical work, the *Antiquitates Romanae*, to its Augustan context below, pp. 206–223.

31 For this term see the title of Galinsky (2005).

32 Cf. Barchiesi (1994) 8.

experimentation'<sup>33</sup> in which many institutions 'were in a state of nascence and evolution.'<sup>34</sup> Augustan society is no longer seen as controlled by a monolithic ideology which the princeps sought systematically to impose on all different spheres of society, but as a complex and 'dynamic tension' between 'authorial intent' (identified by Galinsky as Augustus' *auctoritas*) and 'latitude of response': Augustus and his conception of rulership represented a 'strong center of ideas' which 'encourage[d] creative response and interpretation':<sup>35</sup>

We are not dealing with a political, let alone cultural, model that involves constant top-down commands and Augustus as the sole agent. Instead of a rigidly hierarchical "organization of opinion" in particular, the emphasis is on the initiatives of many, especially in the areas of art and literature.<sup>36</sup> [...] [Augustus'] actions suggested the broad themes [...]. These themes were expressed, elaborated, and extended by individuals in their own way. By connecting them with other themes of their own choice, these participants extended the range of references even further.<sup>37</sup>

The present study builds on this notion of 'Augustan' culture as a dynamic dialectics of different discourses (social, political, cultural, etc.) and the 'master discourse' of Augustus' imperial ideology, which evolved by mutually influencing and shaping each other. The most important consequences of this new approach are, first, that we have realized that Augustus' power was as much shaped by the different discourses as it sought to shape them: the notion of the *principate* itself was not a stable, monolithic given, but evolved and changed through the dialectics with other discourses. And second, we no longer view Augustan power as a process of actively imposing a political programme, or 'propaganda,' as it is often called,<sup>38</sup> on society. This does not mean, of course, that Augustus did not endeavour to influence different spheres of society and even use political reprisals to achieve his objectives – the fate of Ovid or Gallus clearly contradict such a view, and it is hard to imagine how Augustus could have achieved any kind of stability and control

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33 Galinsky (1996) 9, following Feeney (1992).

34 *Ibid.* 8.

35 *Ibid.* 12.

36 *Ibid.* 13; cf. *ibid.* 20: Augustus' rulership was not based on propaganda but 'a reciprocal and dynamic process in which the emperor's role is hard to pin down'; therefore, Augustus' *auctoritas* was 'directly reflected' in, yet not imposed upon 'literature and the arts, including the coinage.'

37 *Ibid.* 37.

38 Cf. the essays collected in Powell (1992).

without a certain political pressure. But the crucial point is that Augustus did not exert such pressure systematically to suppress elements of contemporary society that did not fit some sort of a predefined and unchangeable set of rules. Consequently, no attempt should be made to explain the politics, culture, and society of the first century BCE as the result of any such 'master plan' of the princeps and discuss their different elements in terms of 'pro-' and 'anti-Augustan.'

Yet, this discursive conception of 'Augustan' culture is sometimes employed in a way that seems problematic in that it onesidedly focuses on those spheres of society which are known, or can at least be reasonably assumed, to have *directly* interacted with the 'master discourse' of Augustan power. This narrow focus risks making the direct interaction with Augustan power the only standard by which we define (or exclude) certain elements of first-century Roman culture as constituents of 'Augustan' culture and, therefore, as relevant to our image of it. As a result, we are presented with an image of 'Augustan' culture which is as Augustus-centred as the one which the 'discursive' approach was supposed to correct. When applied in this limited way, the 'discursive' approach falls short of its possibilities: instead of offering the reader a novel conception of 'Augustan' culture it only offers a different way of conceiving of the way in which Augustus exerted his power within contemporary culture and society.

This tendency, however, does not concern the increasing number of specialized studies of individual authors of the first century BCE. Primarily, it is found in those studies that endeavour to present a comprehensive account of 'Augustan culture,' such as Galinsky's *Augustan Culture. An Interpretive Introduction* or *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, in the following pages, I would like to address certain problems that seem to me to be inherent in the image of 'Augustan' culture offered in such comprehensive studies. Naturally, such studies have to be very selective in which aspects of 'Augustan' culture they discuss because it was so multifaceted. But for this very reason, they risk presenting a somewhat distorted image of their subject. This seems particularly problematic because titles such as *Augustan Culture* might lead readers to assume that all essential aspects of 'Augustan' culture have been covered. Moreover, because of their

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39 The following discussion is therefore primarily concerned with Galinsky (1996) and (2005). Focusing on Galinsky's conception of 'Augustan culture' seems justified as his *Augustan Culture* can and has, in fact, been regarded as 'the most important single volume about the Augustan period since Zanker's *Power of Images*' (Smith [1997]).

apparent comprehensiveness such studies might often be the first or, indeed, the only works consulted on 'Augustan' culture and therefore have considerable impact on the prevalent image of first-century BCE Roman society and culture.

The difficulties of the concentration on Augustus can be illustrated with Galinsky's notion of 'Augustan' culture which he bases on Augustus' own conception of *auctoritas* at RG 34,<sup>40</sup> the essence of which he paraphrases as 'Augustus navigated on the stream of history and was successful because he did not oversteer. He saw himself that way [...].'<sup>41</sup> This metaphor implies that 'the stream of history' is relevant only insofar as it directly interacted with the 'steersman' Augustus who attempted to find the middle ground between influencing and being influenced. The core of the metaphor is the idea of a direct reciprocity between Augustus and cultural and societal discourses which implies that only those spheres of first-century Roman society are relevant to (our image of) 'Augustan' culture which can be shown to have interacted with Augustus.

Hence, 'Augustan' culture and society as a whole appears to be of interest only inasmuch it can help us understand the nature of Augustus' *principate* and the structure of his power. Sculptures, coins, texts, paintings, and other artifacts are thus reduced to testimonies which further our understanding of the nature of Augustan power by allowing us to study the interrelation of political power and cultural discourse.<sup>42</sup> The focus of Galinsky's studies

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40 [...] *auctoritate omnibus praestiti, potestatis autem nihilo amplius habui quam ceteri qui mihi quoque in magistratu conlegae fuerunt*. The fragments of Augustus' works are cited by Malvovati's edition, *Caesaris Augusti Imperatoris Operum Fragmenta* (Torino 1928). Galinsky gives a detailed discussion of Augustus' *auctoritas* in (1996) 10–20. I do not intend to deny that authority and the re-definition of authority are crucial, probably the crucial elements of the Augustan *principate* without which an understanding of 'Augustan culture' is impossible; the importance of authority to Augustus' rulership and its interaction with different areas of culture has also been demonstrated by Wallace-Hadrill in an illuminating study (1997). My point here is that the focus on authority risks reducing the complexity and diversity of 'Augustan culture.' For a similar criticism (although for different reasons) see Wendt's (2007) discussion of Galinsky (2005). Heinze (1925) remains the fundamental discussion of the meaning of *auctoritas*.

41 Galinsky (2005a) 6.

42 The close connection between exploring different elements of 'Augustan' culture and understanding the specific nature of Augustus' power is emphasised by Wallace-Hadrill (1997) 7: 'that power is restructured and exercised in different ways under Augustus is obvious. What makes the Augustan restoration revolutionary is that it involves a fundamental relocation and redefinition of authority in Roman society. By focusing on authority, it may be possible to grasp something of the links between the refashioning of political



is clear from his distinction between two types of power on which political superiority lasts: ‘hard power,’ i.e., military domination, and ‘soft power,’ i.e., ‘culture in its various aspects.’ Any investigation of ‘Augustan’ writers is thus centred on the question of how Augustus ‘appropriated [the] practitioners’ of ‘cultural activity.’<sup>43</sup> Underlying Galinsky’s approach to the ‘Age of Augustus’ is what Homi Bhabha has described as the assumption of a ‘preconstituted holistic cultur[e], that contain[s] within [it] the cod[e] by which it can legitimately be read.’<sup>44</sup> With Augustus’ conception of *auctoritas* Galinsky provides such a ‘code’ to first-century Roman politics and culture the legitimacy of which is supposed to be guaranteed by the fact that it was introduced by the princeps himself: ‘he saw himself that way ...’

The main problem with approaching first-century Roman culture and society through the spectacles of Augustan *auctoritas* is that it implies accepting a hermeneutical framework which pre-determines the questions which we address to social-cultural phenomena of first-century BCE Rome and the criteria by which we select certain phenomena as relevant while leaving others aside. Not enough attention has been paid to the fact that Augustus’ conception of *auctoritas* is not to be taken as an objective, factual description of the nature of his rule. Rather, Augustus’ definition of *auctoritas*, as opposed to *potestas*, as the foundation of his power is itself part of Augustus’ strategy to justify and maintain his superiority: defining himself as a *primus inter pares*, Augustus offered his subjects a conception of rulership which concealed his actual influence as much as possible and downplayed his attempt actively to impinge on the lives of his subjects. Augustus’ notion of *auctoritas* was thus a cornerstone of the illusion that the *principate* was firmly inscribed in the traditional constellation of power (*potestas*) of the *res publica libera* which Augustus claimed to have restored.<sup>45</sup> *Res Gestae* 34,

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authority on the one hand, and the refashioning of moral, social and cultural authority on the other [...].’

43 Galinsky (2005a) 4.

44 On the attempt to understand other cultures by extrapolating from them ‘the codes by which they can be legitimately read’ see Bhabha (1994) 179.

45 It is significant that Augustus introduces the notion of *auctoritas* in the concluding sentence to the very paragraph in which he describes that his rise to power was based on the consent of the whole populace; that he had used this power to restore the *res publica* to the senate and the people; and that this was the reason why he was awarded the title *Augustus* (*in consulatu sexto et septimo, postquam bella civilia extinxeram, per consensum universorum potitus rerum omnium, rem publicam ex mea potestate in senatus populique Romani arbitrium transtuli. Quo pro merito senatus consulto Augustus appellatus sum [...]*, emphasis mine).

and the self-definition of Augustus which it proclaims, are themselves means of *exerting* power, of achieving unity and homogeneity by convincing the subjects to accept Augustus' leadership.<sup>46</sup>

By constructing a homogeneous image of 'Augustan' culture and society based on Augustus' *auctoritas*, we are, in fact, adopting an Augustan perspective on the culture of his times. Augustus' aim to control society by establishing cultural, moral, and political homogeneity through *auctoritas* lurks behind the current image of 'Augustan' culture as centred on Augustan power. Imposing this idea of unity on the culture and society in Augustan Rome can itself be seen as an act of cultural imperialism which excludes all those authors from consideration who cannot be assumed at least potentially to have influenced the princeps or been influenced by him.

As a result, discussions of 'Augustan' literature are usually concerned exclusively with Latin authors and among these only those who were directly connected with the princeps. 'Augustan' literature thus appears to consist almost exclusively of Virgil, Horace, and Ovid, whose works are discussed under such headings as: how did these authors position themselves towards key topics of Augustus' moral and political programme? how did they negotiate, transform, or even undermine Augustus' power? what was the exact nature of their relationship with the princeps? The chapter on 'Augustan literature' in Galinsky's *Companion* is a case in point:<sup>47</sup> as has been pointed out,<sup>48</sup> all contributions in this chapter deal exclusively with poetry, re-investigating the relationship between the works and Augustan power.<sup>49</sup>

The image of 'Augustan' culture emerging from this approach is highly paradoxical because it defines 'Augustan' culture as a self-enclosed entity within the culture and society of first-century BCE Rome at large. 'Augustan' culture thus appears as a 'culture within a culture' the constituents of which are selected according to their relevance to our understanding of Augustan power. Maybe the most problematic aspect of this conception is that it implies that the only factor relevant both to the formation of a

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46 Although the exact meaning and implications of this passage are controversial, this point is acknowledged by virtually all interpreters, see, e.g., Eck (2007), 54; Hohl (1946), 114–115; Hoben (1978), 17–18; Diesner (1985), 34–36, 39.

47 Galinsky (2005) 281–360.

48 Brice (2006).

49 The same is true for Galinsky's (1996) chapter on 'Augustan Literature' (pp. 224–287), Galinsky's brief discussion of Livy's preface (*ibid.* 281–283) notwithstanding.

culture and society and our understanding of it is the dominating political discourse.

This is not to deny that the political discourse and its interaction with other discourses are objects worth studying, and the exciting new insights into the nature of Augustus' *principate* which have been provided by the studies discussed in this section prove this. But the reduction of 'Augustan' culture to those artifacts which Augustan power could have directly influenced is at variance with the conception of 'Augustan' culture as a system of discourses interacting freely with each other because it reduces the diversity of cultural production in first-century BCE Rome. Yet, as Foucault has emphasized, it is the very diversity and co-existence of different, sometimes incompatible themes, which distinguishes a discursive approach to culture. Culture, as Foucault puts it, is a 'system of dispersions':<sup>50</sup>

What one finds are [...] various strategic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes, or, again, the establishment of the same theme in different groups of statements. Hence the idea of describing these dispersions themselves; of discovering whether between these elements, which are certainly not organized as a progressively deductive structure [...] nor as the *œuvre* of a collective subject, one cannot discern regularities in their simultaneity, assignable positions in a common space, a reciprocal functioning, linked and hierarchized transformations. Such an analysis would not try to isolate small islands of coherence in order to describe their internal structure; it would not try to suspect and to reveal latent conflicts; it would study forms of diversion. Or again: [...] it would describe *systems of dispersion*. Whenever one can describe, between a number of statements, such a system of dispersion, whenever, between objects, types of statement, concepts, or thematic choices, one can define a regularity (an order, correlations, positions and functionings, transformations), we will say [...] that we are dealing with a *discursive formation*.<sup>51</sup>

In the contemporary debate about 'Augustan' culture, Foucault's stress on the co-existence of incompatible themes has been profitably employed to explain the broad range of reactions to the *principate* and thus to refute the idea of Augustus' rule as a monolithic, top-down system of propaganda and control. Yet, paradoxically, the focus on the nature of Augustan power carries the danger of turning the contemporary debate itself into an attempt to 'isolate small islands of coherence in order to describe their internal structure' rather than describing 'Augustan' culture as a 'system of dispersions.'

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50 Foucault (1966) 41.

51 *Ibid.*

One possible solution to this problem might be not to address the question of Augustus' influence upon culture and society solely or primarily in terms of the diffusion of political power. Approaching Dionysius' classicist criticism as a cultural phenomenon suggests a way of exploring 'Augustan' culture as a system of 'discursive formations' which owe their existence to Augustus but not to any direct influence of Augustus' power or direct interaction with it. Although Dionysius seems to have had close connections with the Roman upper class there is no question of him being in direct contact with or in any way immediately influenced by the princeps in the same way as, say, Horace, Virgil, or Ovid.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, as will be shown in the next chapter, Augustus and the image of himself and the *principate* which he proclaimed were an integral part of what I will call Dionysius' 'Classicist ideology.'<sup>53</sup> And although we can trace classicizing tendencies in Greek literature at least as far back as the third century BCE,<sup>54</sup> it is only with Dionysius, as far as we can judge,<sup>55</sup> that classicism turned into a *Weltanschauung*, a world view, and classical Greek language became a model of identity of Greek intellectuals under Roman rule. It is only when the pre-existing classicist discourse interacted with the novel discourse of the *principate* and the responses it stimulated in a variety of other discourses that it was transformed from a rhetorical phenomenon into a model of cultural identity.

Hence, though not directly influenced by Augustus and, compared with the works of Virgil, Horace, or Ovid, existing on the margins of the culture and society of his times, Dionysius' criticism is nevertheless deeply informed

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52 The social background of Dionysius' intellectual activities will be discussed in the next section.

53 On my use of 'ideology' see below, pp. 21–22.

54 A Hibeh Papyrus (edd. B.P. Grenfell/A.S. Hunt, vol. 1, London 1906, No. 15, pp. 55–61, dated c. 280–240 BCE) contains a rhetorical exercise in classicizing style; furthermore, Photius (*Bibl. cod.* 176, p. 121b 9 Bekker) mentions that one Cleochares wrote a *synkrisis* of Isocrates and Demosthenes in the third or second century BCE, and Cicero reports (*Orat.* 67.226) that Hegesias of Magnesia, heavily criticised by Dionysius for ruining the classical style, regarded himself as an 'imitator' (*imitari*) of Lysias, see Dihle (1977) 168. As Dihle (*ibid.* 167) points out, this 'rhetorical' 'Atticism' should be distinguished from the grammarians' attempt, equally dating back to the third century BCE, to install the vocabulary and grammar of the Attic dialect as the standard of correct Greek ('Ἑλληνισμός'), on which see *ibid.* 163–167 and most recently, Czapla (forthcoming) with a good overview of this complicated intellectual phenomenon; cf. Swain (1996) 22.

55 Cf. Dihle (1977) 168.

by the princeps and the *principate*.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the works of the three poets, Dionysius' writings might not grant us any insight into the mechanisms of Augustus' power. But just like the poems of his famous Latin contemporaries, Dionysius' works contributed to implementing the *principate* into the culture and society of his times by turning key ideas of Augustus' conception of leadership into the cornerstones of his Classicist ideology. Like Virgil, Horace, and (at least partially) Ovid, Dionysius disseminated Augustan ideas among his contemporaries. Adapting these ideas to and combining them with his own, he produced a discourse which was both 'Augustan' and 'Dionysian' and which inscribed the classical Greek cultural and political heritage into an Augustan framework, while re-interpreting this Augustan framework in terms of the classical Greek heritage.

In order to explore 'Augustan' culture as a system of discourses, as a 'group of statements' in Foucault's sense,<sup>57</sup> we would therefore have to shift the focus from Augustus' immediate influence on and interaction with the inner circle of society, his 'appropriation' of those who were closest to him. Instead, we would have to consider alongside each other the various ways in which the whole variety of discourses that constituted first-century BCE Roman society were shaped by the *principate* not by virtue of any political influence but because practitioners of culture such as Dionysius incorporated different aspects of 'the *principate*' into their systems of thought by adopting, adapting, and re-interpreting it. With regard to literature this means that Strabo's *Geography* and Dionysius' critical essays and *Antiquitates Romanae* are as important to our understanding of 'Augustan' culture as Virgil's *Aeneid*, Horace's *Odes*, and Ovid's elegies. Only by studying the works of these authors in their variety, without giving priority to those closest to the princeps, will we be able to detect the regularities between their different statements and thus to describe 'Augustan' culture as a 'system of dispersions.' This might enable us to discard the Augustocentric notion of 'Augustan' culture and to conceive of 'Augustan' less in terms of a relationship between society and power (*auctoritas*) than a flexible construct

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56 Luzzatto (1988) 240, too, stresses the importance of the cultural environment of Augustan Rome for the formation of Dionysius' Classicism; similarly, Hidber (1996) 42–43 (the conception of education underlying Dionysius' Classicism 'conformed to the requirements implied in the Augustan empire,' '[war ausgerichtet auf] die implizierten Bedürfnisse des augusteischen Weltreiches,' *ibid.* 43); v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1900) 45–46 (the instalment of the principate prompted the Greeks to review their attitude towards their own language and literature).

57 Foucault (1966) 40.

that applies to authors and their works regardless of whether they were Greek or Roman;<sup>58</sup> wrote poetry, scholarly literature, or historiography; were acquainted with the princes or not; or even lived in Rome or abroad.

Such a full scale analysis of 'Augustan' culture remains a desideratum and would probably require the joint effort of an equipt of scholars. It is, at any rate, far beyond the aims of this study although I will repeatedly read Dionysius' works against those of contemporary Latin authors in order to locate his ideas within the larger intellectual context of his times. But discussing Dionysius' Classicism as an element of 'Augustan' culture will, hopefully, make some contribution to paving the way for such an undertaking by demonstrating how central tenets of the dominating political discourse in first-century Rome cross-fertilized Greek rhetorical and literary criticism. This resulted in what might appear to us a somewhat idiosyncratic (re)interpretation of the *principate* and Augustan Rome but was, in fact, a conception of identity that seems to have appealed to Greek *literati* as much as to upper-class Roman politicians and intellectuals. Thus, although it is not the primary aim of this study to re-valuate Dionysius as an 'Augustan' author, it would certainly be a welcome effect if the subsequent discussion of his 'ideology of criticism' contributed to making us re-consider the parameters in which we conceive of 'Augustan' culture.

I have argued in section 1.1.1 above that we have to shift the focus from classicism as a linguistic to classicism as a social-cultural phenomenon in order to appreciate Dionysius' Classicism as an integral element of 'August-

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58 This point in particular deserves to be stressed as there is a noticeable discrepancy between scholarly interest in Roman cultural identity in the late Republic and early Empire and Greek identity in the Second Sophistic on the one hand and Greek cultural identity in the first centuries BCE and CE on the other: on Roman cultural identity see, e.g., Wallace-Hadrill (1988), (1989), (1990), (1997), (1998), (2008); Woolf (1994); Habinek (1998), and cf. the literature cited in ch.s 2.3 and 3.3 below; there is an impressive number of excellent studies on Greek identity in the Second Sophistic such as Bowie (1970); Gleason (1995); Swain (1996); Schmitz (1997); Goldhill (2001); Borg (2004); Whitmarsh (2001), (2010). The number of works with a similar interest in Greek intellectuals in the Roman Republic and early Empire, by contrast, is still remarkably small: see, e.g., Dueck (2000) and Dueck/Lindsay/Pothecary (2005) on Strabo; Sacks (1990), Clarke (1999), Schmitz (forthcoming), and Wiater (2006) and (2006a) on Diodorus Siculus; Wiater (2008) and (forthcoming) on Dionysius of Halicarnassus; a wide range of different authors and genres is discussed in Schmitz/Wiater (forthcoming) with further literature; for a more detailed discussion of the state of the research on Greek cultural identity in the first centuries BCE and CE and how this research might affect our view of the Second Sophistic see Schmitz/Wiater (forthcoming-a).

tan' culture. For focusing exclusively on the linguistic side of his criticism entails perceiving classicism as a preposterous retrograde activity which sacrificed the present to worshipping the better days long past. After all, the aim of Dionysius and his recipients was to reinstall classical Greek style and authors active in Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE as the only acceptable standard of literary and oral expression in first-century BCE Rome.<sup>59</sup> The question is therefore: how can we address Dionysius' Classicist criticism as an activity which productively and creatively interacted with the cultural-political discourse in Augustan Rome? Or, putting it in the terms explained in the preceding section, how can we produce a 'thick description' of Dionysius' Classicism? It is to this question that I will turn in the following section.

### 1.1.3 A Cultural Identity Approach to Dionysius' Classicism

Clifford Geertz's notion of culture as a 'web of significance' and his conception of 'thick description' provide a helpful general framework in which to approach a foreign culture. But Geertz's discussion is too abstract to provide an efficient heuristic tool for investigating concrete cultural phenomena. In particular, Geertz's conception of the constitutive elements of culture requires some qualification. Statements such as 'descriptions of Berber, Jewish, or French culture must be cast in terms of the construction we imagine Berbers, Jews, or Frenchmen to place upon what they live through, the formulae they use to define what happens to them'<sup>60</sup> show that Geertz risks equating 'culture' with national identity. Hence his notion of 'culture' suggests a homogeneity of human beings' perception of their actions which has no match in reality and produces a somewhat simplified image of social interaction. Social Identity Theory can help to devise a more complex conception of culture. Dealing not with culture as an abstract notion but with

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59 See, e.g., Kennedy (1963) 330: 'Atticism is the reaction against the excesses of Hellenistic prose style, but instead of creating good standards of contemporary usage, the new movement demanded an archaic return to the language, rhythms, and style of the classical period. Thus it is intertwined with classicism, the view that the great literary achievements of the Greeks was past.' The relationship of past and present implied in Dionysius' Classicism will be discussed in detail in ch. 2 below which will also argue against the view expressed by Kennedy.

60 Geertz (1973a) 15, quoted above.

the question of how culture is realized in everyday social action, it can be fruitfully employed to complement Geertz's discussion and thus provide the foundation for a 'thick description' of Dionysius' Classicism.

Contrary to Geertz's assertion, people seldom define themselves and their actions exclusively, or even mainly, in terms of their being Berber, Jew, or French. Rather, 'a society not only has a culture expected to be learned by all, but also distinctive groups with their own subcultures.'<sup>61</sup> Living within the confines of the same city, obeying the same laws and regulations, completing the same course of education, or being subject to the same authorities constitute an overarching community and are important elements of the self-definition of the people who live in it. But social life is organized in a variety of sub-groups or 'social worlds'<sup>62</sup> within this overarching community, and the various social roles an individual plays in different sub-groups provide the framework for his/her interpretation of his/her own actions and the actions of others.<sup>63</sup> Social Identity Theory therefore speaks of 'compartmentalized lives, shifting from one perspective to another as they participate in a succession of transactions that are not necessarily related. In each social world they [human beings] play somewhat different roles, and they manifest a different facet of their personality.'<sup>64</sup>

The various social worlds can take on very different, more or less flexible shapes, but this, it is important to note, does not necessarily affect their members' feeling of 'togetherness':

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61 Rose (1962a) 16.

62 Shibutani (1962) *passim*.

63 Cf. Hinkle/Brown (1990) 48: 'our sense of who we are stems in large part from our membership of and affiliation to various social groups, which are said to form our social identity.'

64 Shibutani (1962) 139. The term 'compartmentalized lives' should not give rise to the idea that these 'compartments' are hermetically closed units and that human beings live in a constant state of 'social schizophrenia.' Rather, the individual 'compartments' should be imagined as circles which partially overlap. It is the sum of all the different 'compartments' which constitute an individual's personality in all its complexity. But the prominence and importance of different sides of an individual's personality will vary according to the 'compartment' in which s/he is bound up at a given time, and some changes of context will require a more flexible role switching than others. For the present study this entails that Dionysius' texts will allow us insight into only one 'compartment' of his life: reference to Dionysius' identity should therefore be understood as referring to Dionysius' social role as a literary critic in Augustan Rome, to Dionysius, that is, as a 'social actor' in one of the many 'compartments' that constituted his life, but not to his 'personality' as a whole; see the discussion below.



Social worlds differ considerably in their solidarity and in the sense of identification felt by their participants. Probably the strongest sense of solidarity is to be found in the various sub-communities – the underworld, ethnic minorities, the social elite, or isolated religious cults. Such communities are frequently segregated, and this segregation multiplies intimate contacts within and reinforces barriers against the outside. Another common type of world consists of the networks of interrelated voluntary associations – the world of medicine, the world of organized labor, the world of steel industry, or the world of opera. [...] Finally, there are the loosely connected universes of special interest – the world of sports, the world of the stamp collector, or the world of women's fashion. Since the participants are drawn together only periodically by the limited interest they have in common, there are varying degrees of involvement, ranging from the fanatically dedicated to the casually interested. [...] Although these arenas are only loosely organized, the participants nonetheless develop similar standards of conduct, especially if their interests are strong and sustained.<sup>65</sup>

The decisive factor for solidarity in the various groups is thus not how often their members meet, how closely acquainted they are with each other, or how limited the interests are they have in common; nor are the boundaries of groups, which distinguish a community from the outside,<sup>66</sup> set by territory or formal group membership. Groups are constituted by the discursive practice, the communication among their members, and each social world is a 'culture area, the boundaries of which are set [...] by the limits of effective communication.'<sup>67</sup> This communication keeps present the interests shared by all members and the symbolic value they all attach to them and it is responsible for the members' adopting, and sharing, 'special norms of conduct, a set of values, a prestige ladder, and a common outlook toward life – a *Weltanschauung*.'<sup>68</sup>

At the same time, the discursive practice of a group and the *Weltanschauung* created by it distinguish a group as an 'in-group' from the discursive practice and the *Weltanschauung* of other, 'out-groups':<sup>69</sup> knowing who and what we are is as important as knowing who and what we are not. The existence of the boundaries which separate the different communities is 'not a matter for "objective" assessment: it is a matter of feeling, a matter which

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65 *Ibid.* 135–136.

66 Cohen (1985) 2.

67 Shibutani (1962) 136.

68 *Ibid.* 137.

69 Hinkle/Brown (1990) 48; cf. Abrams/Hogg (1990a), esp. 3–4.

resides in the minds of the members themselves.'<sup>70</sup> Therefore, 'boundaries perceived by some may be utterly imperceptible to others.'<sup>71</sup> Communities, and the commonality on which they rest, are mental constructs, they 'exist in the minds of [their] members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of "fact."<sup>72</sup>

Instead of 'culture,' we should therefore speak of the 'cultures' of different communicative networks of which an individual is a part.<sup>73</sup> The *Weltanschauung* provided by each of these networks is the common basis for the members' 'understanding and experiencing of their social identity, the social world and their place in it.'<sup>74</sup> Thus it becomes the reference point for their perception of their own actions and for their anticipation of the other members' interpretation of, and reactions to, them:<sup>75</sup>

men living in groups do not merely coexist physically as discrete individuals. [...] On the contrary they act with and against one another in diversely organized groups and while doing so they think with and against each other. These persons, bound together into groups, strive in accordance with the character and position of the groups to which they belong to change the surrounding world of nature and society or attempt to maintain it in a given condition. [...] In accord with the particular context of collective activity in which they participate, men always tend to see the world which surrounds them differently.<sup>76</sup>

Following Paul Ricœur, I shall refer to the discursive practices through which a 'group [gets] an all-encompassing comprehensive view not only of itself, but of history and, finally, of the whole world,'<sup>77</sup> as a community's specific 'ideology.' Thus understood, the term 'ideology' describes not, as in its Marxist use, the conscious manipulation of the lower classes by the ruling

70 Cohen (1985) 20–21.

71 *Ibid.* 2.

72 *Ibid.* 98.

73 Cf. van Dijk (1988) 130; Davies/Harré (1990) 45 refer to such communities as 'social practices,' which they define as 'all the ways in which people actively produce social and psychological realities.'

74 Davies/Harré (1990) 45–46.

75 The group that provides the conceptual framework which a human being accepts as the standard for his behaviour is called the 'reference group,' as opposed to 'the others'; see Shibutani (1962) 132, who defines 'reference group' as 'that group whose presumed perspective is used by an actor as the frame of reference in the organization of his perceptual field'; cf. *ibid.* 138–139: 'For each individual there are as many reference groups as there are communication networks in which he becomes regularly involved.'

76 Mannheim (1936) 3; cf. Cohen (1985) 2; Blumer (1962) 182.

77 Ricœur (1978) 46.

elite; rather, it describes a characteristic of human perception in general, the selective perception and concomitant shaping of the world according to a set of rules or norms which are provided by the social worlds in which we are organized – ‘something out of which we think, rather than something *that* we think.’<sup>78</sup>

Social Identity Theory thus helps us to complement Geertz’s conception of ‘thick description.’ The observer of a foreign culture has to take into account that the symbolic meaning of an action cannot be explained sufficiently when it is considered only within the general framework of a human being’s society. There is no uniform culture which permits us to explain all actions of a Berber, a Jew, or a Frenchman alike, but the significance man attributes to his actions varies according to the *Weltanschauung* of the different social worlds in which they are performed. An observer’s access to a foreign society is therefore limited to different compartments of the lives of the actors, and understanding the way in which a human being acts in one social world does not allow conclusions about how s/he will act in another, let alone about his or her identity in general. On the contrary, the compartmentalization of life often results in actions which are incompatible with each other, because an action which is acceptable, maybe even required, in one group might be unacceptable in another.<sup>79</sup>

Social Identity Theory offers a novel perspective on a well-known historical fact, namely that Greek classicism was performed within a ‘circle’ or, as some prefer to call it, ‘network’ of Greek and Roman intellectuals to whom Dionysius addressed his writings.<sup>80</sup> His collection of essays *On the Ancient Orators* and his *First* and *Second Letter to Ammaeus* (*Amm.I* and *Amm.II*) are addressed to one Ammaeus, about whom nothing else is

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78 *Ibid.* 47; Ricœur also calls ideology a ‘code of interpretation’ (*ibid.*).

79 Shibutani (1962) 140.

80 Wisse (1998) rightly points out that this ‘circle’ should not be compared with ‘circles’ that were centred around one patron, e.g., the circles of Maecenas or Messalla. There is no evidence that Dionysius’ ‘circle’ was such a ‘tightly knit group,’ and the degree of Dionysius’ acquaintance with the individual addressees of his essays obviously varied: Pompeius Geminus, for instance, was certainly ‘not one of Dionysius’ closer associates’ (Usher [1985] 352 n. 1, quoted by Wisse *ibid.*). Nevertheless, this is no reason to abandon the term ‘circle’: *pace* Wisse (*ibid.*), it need not necessarily refer to such “‘circle[s]” in the stricter sense, *i. e.*, in the sense in which we talk of the circle of Maecenas,’ or to any ‘tightly knit group’ in general (italics mine); it might simply be used (as in the present context) synonymously with ‘community’; cf. Luzzatto (1988) 235–237.

known than that he corresponded with Dionysius.<sup>81</sup> Dionysius also wrote a letter-essay to a certain Pompeius Geminus who had received a copy of *On the Ancient Orators* from a common friend, Zeno, and had criticized Dionysius for his judgment on Plato; the *Letter to Pompeius* (*Pomp.*) replies to, and refutes, Pompeius' objections.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, Dionysius communicated with Roman nobles, politicians, and writers like Q. Aelius Tubero,<sup>83</sup> the dedicatee of Dionysius' essay *On Thucydides* (*Thuc.*), and Metilius Rufus, to whom he addressed his *On Literary Composition* (*Comp.*).<sup>84</sup> The

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81 See Klebs (1894) 1842; Bowersock suggests plausibly that he might be Roman (Bowersock [1965] 130 n. 4). *On the Ancient Orators* consists of a preface, Dionysius' 'Classicist Manifesto,' which is commonly abbreviated as *Orat. Vett.*, and a series of essays on individual orators, *On Lysias* (*Lys.*), *On Isocrates* (*Isoc.*), *On Isaeus* (*Is.*); probably, also Dionysius' treatise *On Demosthenes* (*Dem.*) was part of *On the Ancient Orators*, but see below p. 233 n. 606.

82 Hidber (1996) 7 n. 50 points out that attempts to identify Pompeius Geminus with the astronomer and mathematician of the same name (see *Géminos. Introduction aux phénomènes*, ed. Germaine Aujac. Paris 1975, XXII–XXIII) are as hypothetical as the assumption that he was a freedman of Pompey the Great (Schultze [1986] 122) or that he may in some way have been connected with him (Rhys Roberts [1900] 439). His nationality (Greek or Roman) is still a matter of dispute: some scholars assume that he was Greek (Lendle [1992] 239; cf. Bowersock [1965] 130 n. 4; Rhys Roberts [1900] 439–440), but there is epigraphic evidence that in 98 CE one Pompeius Geminus was senator, most likely even consular, which implies that this person must have been a free-born Roman (Hanslik [1952]); Delcourt (2005) 32; cf. Goold (1961).

83 Tubero was part of the Roman patrician *gens* of the *Aelii*: he himself was a historian (HRR, 308–312 = Beck/Walter [2004], 346–357) and jurisconsult (in 68 BCE he lost a case against Ligarius, who was defended by Cicero); his sons, Q. Aelius Tubero and Sex. Aelius Catus, were *consules* in 11 and 4 BCE, respectively (Bowersock [1965] 129; Beck/Walter 346–348; see further Wiseman [1979] 135–139; Bowersock [1979] 68–71). Dionysius refers to Tubero's historical work at *Ant.* 1.80.1–3 (HRR F 3 = Beck/Walter F 4), and Tubero most likely defined himself as an 'imitator' of Thucydides (cf. Beck/Walter [2004] 347). Whether Dionysius' contact with the Tuberones brought him in touch with other Greek and Roman acquaintances of theirs, such as Strabo (the only contemporary author to mention Dionysius at 14.2.16) or the Roman politician Sejanus (Bowersock [1965] 124, 129), is, at best, a plausible conjecture; even more speculative is the idea that it might have been via the Tuberones that Dionysius became familiar with Roman Atticism and with intellectual and literary discussions and trends among the contemporary Roman educated elite in general (*ibid.* 68–69). For a reassessment of the influence of Cicero's rhetorical theory and practice on Dionysius see now Hidber (forthcoming); Fox (forthcoming).

84 Rufus Metilius might be identical with the proconsul of Achaëa and legate to Galatia under Augustus; references in Bowersock (1965) 132 with n. 2; *id.* (1979) 70; Hidber (1996) 6; Delcourt (2005) 33.

renowned Greek critic Caecilius of Caleacte was also among Dionysius' closer acquaintances.<sup>85</sup>

So far, this information has been used only to place Dionysius' writings into a historical framework. Social Identity Theory allows us to assess the literary circle from a social perspective and, thus, offers a novel interpretation of the role of Dionysius' writings in it. We can now identify the literary circle as one of the social worlds constituted by an ideology which is shared by its members and endows their activity with significance, thus allowing them to define their place in the world. Heterogeneous though they were, Dionysius' addressees were united by their common interest in and knowledge about Classical Greek language and literature, by a common repertoire of methods and a common conceptual vocabulary with which they expressed their knowledge and shared it amongst each other, and by the common purpose of their studies, to write Classical texts themselves.<sup>86</sup> Analyzing, discussing, and writing classical texts is the discursive practice which defined them as a community.<sup>87</sup> The ideology which provided them with an interpretation of the world, a *Weltanschauung*, in which their attempt to be Classical made sense is the Classicist doctrine which Dionysius expounds in his critical writings. Being the medium through which the discursive practice is carried out, his writings created and sustained the communicative network, and thus the common ideology, on which the members' shared outlook on the world was based.

It is not of importance that the literary circle, as Wisse asserts, was not 'a closed school of thought, with official members, and an official policy and

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85 Caecilius of Caleacte, whom Dionysius mentions in his *Letter to Pompeius Geminus* (*Pomp.* 3.20; Bowersock [1965] 124 n. 1), is regarded as the second most important representative of Greek classicism after Dionysius and probably was a younger contemporary and friend of the latter (cf. Hidber [1996] 5 n. 43 and *ibid.* 41 n. 184). His oeuvre included critical writings as well as an Atticist lexicon, historical works, and works on the theory of history, cf. Brzoska (1897); Kennedy (1972) 364–369; Weißenberger (1997); the fragments of his works are collected by Ofenloch (Leipzig 1907).

86 Dionysius' conception of *mimesis* will be discussed in ch. 2.2.2 below. Suffice it here to point out that Dionysius does not mean by *mimesis* simply combining characteristics of the styles of various Classical authors (quite to the contrary, this he regards as a serious mistake) or imitating the style of one Classical author in particular; *mimesis* means writing as the Classical authors would have written, in the 'Classical spirit'; for a comprehensive discussion of Dionysius' notion of *mimesis* see now Hunter (2009).

87 Cf. Meyer (1992) 396 on the function of the term 'practice' in discourse theory; on classicism as a 'discursive practice' cf. Porter (2006a), esp. 51.

programme.'<sup>88</sup> Apart from the fact that it is questionable whether anything like 'a closed school of thought, with official members, and an official policy and programme' ever existed in antiquity at all, the above considerations have shown that social identity is not a matter of objective assessment, but of subjective experience of those involved in it. A person's identity is shaped by the communicative frameworks of the different communities in which s/he is engaged. These communities do not require such physical realities as Wisse's official membership, policy, or programme in order to be experienced by the social actors as real; they are mental constructs which are constituted by their members' *feeling* of being part of them. Dionysius' writings prove that a regular, communicative structure united him and his addressees. This is sufficient for the literary circle to qualify as a 'social world' with a specific 'culture' which informed the members' perception of the world and of themselves.<sup>89</sup>

Dionysius' essays are the 'informants' on which our 'thick description' of Classicism is based. They grant us access to one compartment of the lives of a group of Roman and Greek intellectuals and allow us glimpses into their world view and their self-definition as intellectuals in Augustan Rome, in short, into their 'imaginary universe.' Therefore the task of this study is not to go 'beyond the text' and to use Dionysius' writings as documents to discover 'historical realities,' such as how closely acquainted Dionysius and his addressees were, if they were Greeks or Romans, or whether Classicism was a 'movement' with real political or cultural influence in Augustan Rome. Instead, it addresses questions such as how Dionysius and his addressees defined their activity within their social and cultural context; what outlook on the world, what interpretation of history it implied; what ideals and ideas the Classical past represented for them so as to make this past so desirable to them; how they imagined their relationship with the Classical past; finally, how they conceived of the relationship between Roman present and Classical past.<sup>90</sup>

It might be objected that such an approach is hampered by the fact that we have access to the culture of the literary circle through the testimony of

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88 Wisse (1995) 70.

89 Cohen (1985) 98 aptly paraphrases 'culture' as 'the community as **experienced** by its members' (emphasis mine).

90 For a discussion of such an approach to culture see Gottowik (1997), esp. 299; for an exemplary analysis of Maori culture see Hanson (1989) with the comments by Linnekin (1991).

only one of its members. There is no denying that it would be preferable if the voices of other members of the circle had also been preserved so as to set Dionysius' conception of Classicism in perspective. Yet, this objection does not hold, because it relies on the dubious assumption that all members of a community share the exact same outlook on the world. As seen above, communities exist first and foremost in the minds of their members and are not based on objectively assessable criteria. A community's ideology is not a monolithic set of rules which imposes a certain world view upon each individual member of the group. Individual members of a group might not attribute the same significance to their actions, but this does not affect the feeling of community among them, provided that all members are *convinced* that a certain action has the same meaning to all of them. As Benedict Anderson has shown, what the members of a community *think* they have in common is more important than what they *really* have in common.<sup>91</sup> The decisive point is that the discrepancies between the world views of individual members of a community are kept within certain limits or, at least, pass unnoticed.

The degree to which the world views of members of a community can differ without affecting the feeling of togetherness depends on the communicative structure which sustains the group. In large communities, such as nations, in which direct communication between all members is impossible, a feeling of community is more likely to be preserved despite great differences between the world views of individual members; smaller communities with a closer communicative network, such as the literary circle, by contrast, allow for less flexibility in the *Weltanschauung* of their members. But this does not entail either that all of them share one, uniform world view. Culture is a necessarily subjective experience and, therefore, accessible only through an individual's 'private, idiosyncratic mode,' 'for it is here that we encounter people thinking about and symbolizing their community. It is in these depths of "thinking," rather than in the surface appearance of "doing" that culture is to be sought.'<sup>92</sup>

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91 Anderson (1991), on which see below, p. 297 with n. 723; Cohen (1985) 18: the 'symbols,' on which the togetherness among the members of a community is based, "express" other things in ways which allow their common form to be retained and shared among the members of a group, whilst not imposing upon those people the constraints of uniform meaning.'

92 Cf. Cohen (1985), the quotation 75.

Even if the writings of all members of the literary circle had survived, a comprehensive study of the culture of the literary circle would nevertheless have to assess the conception of Classicism and the concomitant outlook on the world of each member individually. Therefore studying Dionysius' conception of Classicism alone is not an insufficient substitute for a comprehensive analysis of the culture of the whole community. *The* Classicist outlook on the world does not exist; what exists, is the members' conviction that they all share the same outlook on the world. Thus Dionysius' writings permit us to study the constituents of the world view which one member of the circle thought he shared with all others. And even if we were able to compare Dionysius' Classicist world view with that of his addressees and to extrapolate the elements all of them have in common, we would not have discovered *the* Classicist world view, but constructed an abstract concept of classicism detached from the individuals' ideas and beliefs and their enactment in everyday discursive practice. But such an abstract construction would be of no heuristic value to understand the social reality of the individual actors each of whom performed their own actions and interpreted them and those of the others from within their idiosyncratic perspective.

However, keeping these precautionary remarks in mind, we might argue that the fact that the literary circle appears to have been a relatively small community makes the assumption plausible that Dionysius' conception of Classicism was shared by most of his addressees. A relatively high degree of conformity between the members' *Weltanschauung* is more likely to occur in such a small community than in a large one; we might therefore take Dionysius to a certain extent as a representative of the world view shared by most of the members of the circle.

Such an assumption is supported by the fact that Dionysius, as we will see in the second part of this chapter, claimed a leading role within the literary circle: his writings provided the 'canon' (*Thuc.* 1.2) to which his addressees were expected to subscribe, and according to the information which Dionysius gives us on the origins of his essays, most of them were written on request of his addressees who had asked for Dionysius' advice on literary and critical matters.<sup>93</sup> This suggests that Dionysius' conception of Classicism influenced that of his addressees and that his addressees willingly accepted this influence. Therefore, although we have no testimony from any other member of the circle to confirm this assumption, there is good

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93 See the discussion pp. 22–23 above.



reason to suppose that an interpretation of classicism based on Dionysius' writings provides a fairly accurate idea at least of the major tenets of the *Weltanschauung* which was accepted by most members of the literary circle.

It will be the purpose of the remainder of this study to explore the individual constituents of this Classicist *Weltanschauung* which is at the same time implemented and represented by Dionysius' writings. Although this approach relies heavily on heuristic concepts drawn from anthropology and sociology, this study does not purport to contribute to an 'anthropology' or 'sociology' of the ancient world in the way in which the works of Moses I. Finley, Leslie Kurke, and Sarah C. Humphreys have so masterfully done.<sup>94</sup> Rather, it is more appropriate to conceive of it as employing anthropological and sociological approaches to write a chapter of intellectual history. As Felix Gilbert defined it, the task of the intellectual historian is to 'reconstitut[e] the mind of an individual or of groups at the times when a particular event happened or an advance was achieved.'<sup>95</sup> This is an accurate description of the purpose of this enquiry: to reconstitute the outlook on the world and the conception of identity of a Greek intellectual (and, potentially, his recipients) in one of the most crucial and most influential periods of ancient history and, probably, of the development of Western civilization at large, the reign of Augustus.

We can now undertake the first step of this enquiry. The second part of this chapter will be centred on the introduction to Dionysius' *First Letter to Ammaeus*. As I will demonstrate, this text can be read as a programmatic statement in which Dionysius defines himself and his recipients as the members of a community of *literati* whose knowledge about and methods of dealing with classical texts distinguishes them from other communities of intellectuals, especially the representatives of the traditional philosophical schools. On the one hand, the introduction to the *First Letter to Ammaeus* will thus lend further support to the interpretation of the literary circle as a social sub-group; on the other, it will allow us to identify the conceptual framework in which Dionysius expects his recipients to conceive of their activities as literary critics. On this basis we will be able to define individual

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<sup>94</sup> See above, pp. 4–5 with nn. 19, 20.

<sup>95</sup> Gilbert (1971) 94. The tasks and methods of intellectual history have been the subject of intense debate over the last few decades, see LaCapra (1982); *id.* (1983); *id.* (1985); White (1969); *id.* (1997); Kellner (1982); Poster (1982); Henning (1982). Cf. also the discussion of the 'histoire des mentalités' approach of the French *Annales* School, such as Barthes (1960) and Chartier (1982), in Schulze (1985) and Reichardt (1978).