

The Meaning of ἀλαζονεύεσθαι in the Forty-Fifth Oration of Dio Chrysostom

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This paper examines the meaning of ἀλαζονεύεσθαι in the *Or.* 45 ('In Defence of His Relations with His Native City') of Dio Chrysostom, a leading Greek intellectual in the so-called 'Second Sophistic' period. Despite growing scholarly attention to a series of Dio's (tongue-in-cheek) descriptions of his experience of banishment, exile and return, the word, apparently linked to his narrative about the experience, has unjustly been neglected by critics. This study aims to show an importance the orator would have given to the word by investigating Dio's usage of the verb and its cognates in his other orations, its location within the oration and socio-political context against which it should be understood.

According to such influential writers as Aristotle, Xenophon and Aristophanes, the notion of ἀλαζονεία is more or less associated with the acts of travelling, lying and boasting. A quick survey of the occurrence of ἀλαζονεύεσθαι-related vocabulary in Dionean corpus reveals the fact that the orator uses these words in almost the same way as the writers mentioned above. The usage of ἀλαζονεύεσθαι in the *Or.* 45 is no exception, but careful examination of its location in the piece makes us notice that the verb has other, much more important, meanings, especially in terms of Dio's ways of self-fashioning as a political agent.

A figure I think revealing in relation to his use of the word is Odysseus. In the oration, Dio mentions the Homeric hero in order to make his apologies reasonable. Though the reference is very brief, it should not be overseen because the man is a key to solve the problem of his enigmatic presentation of exilic experience; Dio's comments on the hero in his other speeches manifest the importance. I believe it right to connect the latent concepts given to ἀλαζονεύεσθαι (travelling, lying and boasting) to activities of Odysseus; we learn from Homer's *Odyssey* that he is an embodiment of these concepts.

The above considerations lead to the conclusion that the word is used to indicate the orator's self-comparison to his vagabond predecessor Odysseus, who establishes his authoritative position by returning safely to his native city after longtime journey in unknown worlds. Dio, cunningly inviting his audience to remember the experience of Odysseus, implies that he too is a returning hero who has power and so whose claims are worthy to be heard carefully. The word thus gives Dio an Odyssean authoritative status by which the orator can make his voice more strong and persuasive for his audience.