The Mind of the Rhetor: Factions of Dialogue in Mendesios's

By the alphabetic and ethereal's dominion,
The impact of the mobile phone and the internet on society is a topic of great concern. It is not only raising questions about privacy and security, but also about the ethical implications of the rapid advancement of technology. The rise of social media platforms has revolutionized communication, allowing people to connect with each other in ways never seen before. However, this has also led to concerns about the spread of misinformation and the potential negative impact on mental health. As technology continues to advance, it is important for society to consider the implications of these developments and work towards creating a balanced and responsible use of technology.
The myth of optimization...
Though the editor provides a note claiming he is called British Eudox 
seiner patriotischen Gesinnungen halber (AS 27), modern commentators 
point out that his epithet references the British reputation for a high rate of 
suicide. In the ninth letter, Euphranor recalls Eudox at the very moment 
he introduces the new topic of the justifiability of suicide to the correspon 
dence. In the revised version, Euphranor adds,

Dort wandelt er in der Laube auf und nieder. Wie munter! Sein gesetzter 
Sinn muß so wertvöllig nicht seyn, denn der trübe Himmel scheinet 
ihn noch eher aufgeheiratet zu haben. Ohne ihn zu unterbrechen, fahre 
ich in meinen schmerzlichen Gedanken fort. (JA 272)

Ostensibly it is Euphranor who is heavy-hearted and Eudox who seems 
happy, but Eudox only comes to Euphranor's mind in this precise moment 
when he goes from contemplating the darkest thoughts to mentioning sui 
cide for the first time outright. Eudox appears³ to Euphranor at the transi 
tion between despair and suicide. He is a shade at the outer border of life.

Eudox is announced as the bearer of letter 6 to Euphranor. He is likely 
also the carrier for all of Theokles' letters 3-7 as a bundle: this would 
explain Theokles' calling the document a 'Schreiben' (piece of writing, AS 
27) rather than 'Briefe' (letters). It would further motivate the lack of 
salutations and personal conclusions at the beginnings and endings of this 
block of five letters. Though the text does not say so explicitly, Eudox must 
have also been the means of conveyance for Euphranor's letters in response 
(8 and 9). The messenger walking up and down in the garden, waiting to 
deliver a reply as the recipient writes in his study, is a common scene in 
epistolary fiction. Either way, it is very illuminating that although Eudox 
(who has already written) presumably carries both letters 8 and 9, he is only 
associated with the letter. Eudox then reappears in letters 13-15, in which, in reply to 
Euphranor's 9th letter, Theokles recites a dialogue with the messenger. Eu 
dox here carries on a two-day defense of suicide against Theokles' patient 
counterarguments. The non-writer Eudox never has authorial control over 
his own voice; instead, his appearances in the letters shadow the most dis 
murting moments in the other writers' epistles.

Mendelssohn's Briefe, in letting the philosopher and the youth communic 
ate directly, might seem to circumvent the problems of mediacy inherent 
in the writing position in Shaftesbury's Moralists. In fact, however, Men 
delssohn cannot dispense with the go-between. Shaftesbury's writerly, pan 
dering Philocles is rendered as Eudox into an uncanny figure who haunts 
those passages that aim most earnestly for deep, personal confession. Even 
when one attempts to bypass the procuring spirit of mediation, its shade 
inevitably veils any baring of soul. Instead of dismantling the Trinitarian

structure of the Moralists, Mendelssohn's Briefe convert Shaftesbury's holy 
spirit into an unholy ghost.

Dramatic Structure and Genre in Briefe über die Empfindungen

Letters 8 and 9 constitute a nodal crux in the text. They are the only replies 
Euphranor writes to Theokles. These two missives comprise or contain two 
centers of the Briefe: the middle of the 15 letters is the 8th, and the midpoint 
of the text (in terms of page numbers) occurs during the 9th. Like an ellipse, 
the Briefe have two foci. They alternately determine the two different dra 
matic arcs for the text as a whole. Letter 9 leads directly to the extended dis 
cussion of suicide (and dialogue with Eudox) in letters 13-15. Letter 8 leads 
to the aesthetic discussion of letters 10-12: the grounding of pleasure in the 
representation of a sensuous or intellectual perfection. The arrangement of 
the letters together with the narrative frame of the editorial conclusion cre 
ate a bifurcation that suggests two very different endings. The second half 
of the text thus emphatically avoids the clear, logical chronology that would 
have been easy to arrange. Both thematically and narratively, an ordering 
would make sense in which Euphranor's letter 8 is followed by Theokles' 
letters 10-12, to which Euphranor replies again with the melancholic letter 
9 followed by Theokles' letters 13-15: first aesthetics, then suicide, then 
the culminating resolution described by the editor. Instead, letters 8 and 9 
instigate separate paths that cannot transpire in a single, logical timeline, 
but that then converge in the personal discussion that makes up the text's 
conclusion. This puzzling order demands attention.

Eudox, as shown above, is still waiting for Euphranor to finish writing 
during the composition of letter 9. This means that the messenger must 
have brought both epistles 8 and 9 together to Theokles at the same time. 
Yet Theokles' replies take two separate paths based not on both letters, but 
on each separately (8 → 10-12; 9 → 13-15). Two narrative details make 
the successive transpiring of these paths both necessary and impossible. 
For one thing, Theokles opens the 13th letter with reference to the rup 
ture with which he closed the 12th: 'Ich war eben auf jenem Hügel mit 
meiner schwärmerischen Andacht, wie ihr sie zu nennen pflegt, beschäftigt, 
as ich untern Eudox von ferne erblicket' (AS 55). The sentence is wryly 
self-aware. Figuratively, Theokles says that he was in the climactic throes 
of rapture. Literally, Theokles says he was on the hill. When theatrical ac 
tors describe what they see as the distance — often other characters as they 
approach — they conventionally stand at a higher level in order to show 
that they see further. The literal meaning of Theokles' phrase thus sets the 
stage in turn for a figurative teichoskopia. This mise-en-scène of theatrical 
convention — in one of Theokles' rare moments of orientation within the