INTRODUCTION

As the title indicates I wish to discuss that classic and still partially unresolved problem about the relation between drama and argument. I would like to begin with the question our host, Lloyd Gerson, raised in 2002 in his commentary on various chapters, including mine, in Does Socrates Have a Method?

The larger question is, assuming that Plato did choose to set the written expression of his philosophical views in dramatic form, on what principles are we to understand how the drama contributes to understanding the philosophy? I think that many scholars assume that there is a clear answer to this question without explaining what it is.

I have reflected on that question and think I can propose a better answer than I did at the time, although I would not be surprised if Lloyd thinks otherwise. Let me begin by conceding that he puts his finger on a real problem. If Plato deliberately chose the dialogue form, rather than simply following a fashion, he must have had reasons for doing so, he must have had some theory about the relation between drama and argument, between methods and content. I believe that Plato holds principles in writing and reading in dialogue form, but I do not believe that he explained these principles in full. This is one reason why Lloyd’s question is so difficult, perhaps even more so than he himself believes. I think we are dealing here with a theory that is partially implicit, and I argue that the implicit character of this conception is related to the nature of the dialogue form itself. The term “implicit” could be translated into Greek by the participle ὑπονοούμενον or the substantive ὑπόνοια (“the underlying