

Perspectivism and the Philosophical Rhetoric of the Dialogue Form

Marina McCoy

Boston College
mccoyma@bc.edu

ABSTRACT

In this paper, I support the perspectivist reading of the Platonic dialogues. The dialogues assert an objective truth toward which we are meant to strive, and yet acknowledge that we as seekers of this truth are always partial in what we grasp of its nature. They are written in a way to encourage the development of philosophical practice in their readers, where “philosophical” means not only having an epistemic state in between the total possession of truth and its absence, but also growing in self-knowledge as being that kind of a being. I take up three particular qualities of the dialogue: they are multilayered, multivocal, and mimetic. Devices such as Platonic irony, multiple characters’ voices, and a reformulated notion of mimesis that encourages the development of rationality and autonomy are central to Platonic rhetoric and philosophy.

Keywords: Plato, dialogue, rhetoric, mimesis, irony, self-knowledge, perspectivism, image.

In reading a Platonic dialogue, we know the old saying: *quot lectores, tot Platonēs*.

There are probably as many Platos as there are readers of him. Perhaps it will be a surprise, then, for a commentator to begin by saying that I share a basic agreement with Gonzalez’s perspectivist approach to the Platonic dialogues. This kind of an approach to the dialogues has guided much of my own teaching and writing about them. The dialogues presuppose an objective truth toward which we are meant to strive, and yet acknowledge that we as seekers of this truth are always partial in what we grasp of its nature. I find this perspectivist approach warranted by the sorts of examples that Gonzalez offers on how topics such as the soul or the forms are treated across dialogues. To this, I would add that perspectivism fits well with the way that the dialogues often treat the human person as “in between”. The *Symposium* presents a vision of the human being as “in between” poverty and plenty (*Symp.* 203 b-204 a). In the *Apology*, Socrates claims a deep commitment to seeking the truth, coupled with an equally strong belief that his wisdom is a human wisdom, one that is better than other claims to wisdom insofar as he knows that he does not know (*Apol.* 20 d; 21 d). The *Meno* and *Phaedrus* alike claim that we are both beings of forgetting and of learning, of ascent and descent (*Men.* 81 b-e; *Phaedr.* 246 c-e). The *Phaedrus* describes souls on the philosophical path, the best of all possible paths that can be taken, as those who can have only a faint recollection of the forms that they pursue, but who nonetheless are in a state of ascent towards those same objects of our deepest desires (*Phaedr.* 247 b-248 d). Perspectivism captures the multiple ways in which Plato describes the human soul, as that which is neither divine nor animal, but always *en route*, in a state of becoming. Moreover, a perspectivist approach

to how to read the dialogues in relationship to one another also fits well with what I understand to be the relationship between language and Platonic ontology. If the forms of justice, beauty, and so on are not reducible to verbal definitions of justice, beauty, and the like, then all statements that we make about them will be limited. Although I cannot argue this point here, I would argue that Platonic argument frequently proceeds by way of images, and that such imagery is appropriate when there is a gap between the nature of being itself and language as a tool for talking about being. If the forms exceed what we can say about them, then various images of the forms both capture something of that which they describe and are limited in their vision.¹

In my response today, I will take up the topic of the rhetoric and poetic form of the Platonic dialogue as a development of perspectivism. The dialogues do not simply *present* a view, or even many views, to their readers. Instead, they are written in a way to encourage the development of philosophical practice in their readers. Although others have argued for a pedagogical value of one dialogue for another (as is the case with Kahn's proleptic reading),² I want to argue that the very construction of each *single* dialogue as a dramatic work encourages the development of the notion of philosophy *as* an ascent, as erotic, as perspectival, through its very dialogical construction. The reader's philosophical development is not merely accomplished through the development of specific *content* that Plato hopes for the reader to hold as his own belief by the time that the dialogue is read. Rather, the dialogue form engages in a form of poetics that leads its readers on the perspectival journey. Plato as author asks his reader to undertake particular practices in the course of reading or listening to a dialogue that form her into a lover of wisdom who, like

Socrates, recognizes the partial and perspectival nature of her own knowledge.

In contrast with many other forms of rhetoric and poetry among his contemporaries, Plato's dialogues engage in a rhetoric of activity rather than passivity.³ It is not a form of philosophy that simply transmits knowledge to an otherwise passive audience but rather one that asks its audience to become seekers along with Socrates and other seekers of truth in the dialogues. In the *Republic*, Socrates says that education is not a process of pouring true knowledge into an empty soul, or putting sight into blind eyes, but rather a turning around of the soul in order to make an ascent (*Rep.* 518 c). In the *Symposium*, Socrates says that it would be a wonderful thing if wisdom could flow between two people the way that water can flow from one cup to another, through a piece of yarn, but (alas for poor Agathon) this is not the case (*Symp.* 175 d). Socrates never claims to teach anyone through the direct transmission of knowledge. It would be surprising, then, if Plato as author of these words understood his own practice differently, as a process of writing that he undertook in order simply to transmit his ideas to us, the readers. Instead, I want to argue, that the perspectivism of the dialogues is accompanied by a dialogical, rhetorical practice that actively encourages us as readers to become philosophical— where "philosophical" is understood to be not only having an epistemic state in between the total possession of truth and its absence, but also becoming increasingly self-consciously aware of oneself as being that kind of a being. The forms exceed what can be fully grasped through language; beauty itself is always more than anything that we can say about the beautiful or about beautiful things.⁴ To practice philosophy, then, always requires that I seek with the virtues of courage and humility: where humility is an awareness of

both what I know and what I do not know, and where courage leads me to continue the pursuit without fear despite my own limits of knowledge. How does the construction of the dialogues encourage this to take place?

If Socrates is a torpedo fish that numbs (*Men.* 80 a-b), or a midwife who tests our ideas to see if they are only wind eggs (*Theaet.* 149 a-151 d), then the Platonic dialogue can be understood as a text that invites us into our own process of philosophical midwifery, whereby the dialogue and reader engage in a mutual process of exploring its central philosophical questions. The Platonic dialogues are read most fruitfully when we read them not as texts that report a Platonic truth to us, for us to absorb, accept, or reject, but rather as texts that take us through an ongoing dialectical movement between making claims and then *problematizing* the claims made. Within each dialogue, we frequently find that Socrates makes a claim and then shows why the claim that he is made is problematic. For example, the *Protagoras* features Socrates and Protagoras who begin with certain views as to whether virtue can be taught, and find at the end of their conversation that their positions seem to have been reversed (*Prot.* 361 a-d). The *Theaetetus* takes up multiple definitions and models of knowledge, ones that are increasingly better insofar as they are more inclusive in what they capture, but does not end with an adequately comprehensive view of what it means to know. A dialogue such as the *Sophist* includes the unfinished nature of its definitions by making divisions and cuts in multiple ways, where each genealogical sorting captures something importantly different than was found in a previous cut.⁵ We could understand each one of these dialogues to be aporetic, but surely no one would claim that in the course of reading them, we have learned nothing at all. In a dialogue such as the

Protagoras, where the question of whether virtue can be taught is not resolved, we as readers still have learned a great deal about what the relevant issues are; for example, we might leave the dialogue with a sense that knowledge is central to the practice of virtue, but that the *kind* of knowledge that is requisite to virtue is not taught in the same way that either traditional poets or sophists taught their students. In the *Theaetetus*, the role of judgment in relation to knowledge ought to be clearer than before we read the dialogue. The dialogues problematize philosophical problems in a way that emphasizes the lack of finality and comprehensiveness to the problem at hand, whether in an aporetic or non-aporetic dialogue. There is no finality because the process of inquiry always continues, both in other Platonic works, and in our conversations as communities of readers.⁶

I propose that three elements of a dialogue ought especially to be attended to as we seek fruitful approaches to interpret them: the dialogues are *multilayered*, *multivocal*, and *mimetic*. Let me take up each of these qualities in turn.

On the multi-layered nature of the dialogue: in reading any Platonic dialogue, there are potentially as many as four layers to each dialogue that we need to bring to our own interpretation of the text. First, there are the ideas and arguments that each character in the dialogue speaks. Second, there is dramatic information about the characters or action known at least some of the characters. At times, there is also a third layer, where we as readers have some information about the drama not available to the characters themselves (what Charles Griswold long ago named as dramatic irony).⁷ Sometimes, there is a fourth layer at work, when the Platonic text engages intertextually with other works by Plato's predecessors and contemporaries. Each of these layers does not function independently, but rather requires

that we use one layer to fully enhance our understanding of what is happening at another level of the dialogue, or to see where one level is as of yet incomplete in its analysis.

Let me give an example of how these dialogical layers might work in a dialogue such as the *Meno*. Socrates and Meno engage in argument about the nature of virtue and how it can be acquired. Simply at the textual level, we learn a great deal about the problem, for example, what it means to ask the question philosophically in seeking a single form of virtue; difficulties with understanding the possibility of the process of learning or coming to know; and the myth of recollection as one way to restore the possibility of learning in light of Meno's paradox. This level is fundamental to our philosophical exploration of the question of whether virtue can be taught. (I take this claim to be uncontroversial and so will not spend much time defending it.)

At the same time, we get a glimpse into Meno's character. Meno's very manner of asking the initial question at the opening of the dialogue is telling: "Can you tell me?" (ἔχεις μοι εἰπεῖν) (70 a) Where Socrates prefers to ask his interlocutors to inquire into such subjects by delving more deeply into their own beliefs and to serve as "midwife" to the giving birth of their ideas, Meno wants to be told. Socrates even describes this in terms of a habit: he says that Gorgias created in his students an *ethos* of promising to answer any question that might be posed to them. Meno's searching is oriented to someone outside of himself. He has a kind of passivity in terms of how he wishes to learn. He seems to equate learning with being taught or even simply told something by someone else. For example, he seems most to like philosophy when Socrates offers him stable answers to abstract questions, as when Socrates offers a definition of color as "an emanation from shapes commensurate with sight and so subject

to perception" (*Men.* 76 d),⁸ and Meno says that if Socrates could give more answers along *these* lines, Meno would stay to study with him (*Men.* 77 a). Meno does not much care for lines of philosophical inquiry that destabilize his own views, however. Socrates eventually criticizes Meno and calls him "hubristic" (76 a). Passivity and hubris are two sides of the same coin, for both assume the possibility of a totalizing knowledge in a way that the myth of recollection disavows. We can see through the dialogue's drama that Meno is even less willing to have his own ideas questioned than is the slave whom Socrates shows to lack mathematical knowledge, before being led to see what he *can* know. Meno demonstrates to us something about the nature of the acquisition of virtue that is not explicitly verbally articulated by any one of the dialogue's characters: namely, that if virtue is to be learned, we must first have a willingness to allow our pre-conceived concepts about virtue to be questioned. It is already a moral as well as epistemic virtue to know *when* one does not know, *that* one does not know. Meno lacks such epistemic humility. Socrates, however, openly professes his own ignorance in the *Meno* (*Men.* 71 b).

At the dramatic level, we as interpreters also know something about Meno's future that neither Socrates nor Meno as characters can know at the time of the dialogue's drama, namely, that he goes on as a military leader to lead Thessalian troops into enemy territory on false premises. His real goal is to assist Cyrus to overthrow his older brother, King Artaxerxes from the Persian throne. When Meno's men refuse to go ahead with his plan, Meno tries to promise favors and benefits to his troops, if they will only proceed. They do, but later Cyrus dies in battle, so Meno again plots, this time with a different friend, Ariaeus, to persuade his friend to take the crown. Meno was discovered

and tortured for a full year before being put to death (Xen. *Anabasis* 2.629).⁹ His subsequent history would have been well known to Plato's contemporary readers. Although some might say that it is speculative to incorporate such a fact into our reading of the dialogue itself, Jacob Klein suggests a direct allusion to these events is made in a play on words in the *Meno*.¹⁰ The Greek reads: "Οὐ πάνυ εἰμί μνήμων, ὧ Μένων" (*Men.* 71 c). One natural translation into English is "I don't have a very good memory, Meno."¹¹ But Klein suggests an alternative: "Mnemon" was a nickname given to King Artaxerxes, who arranged for Meno to be tortured and put to death. So another translation could be, "I am not at all Mnemon, Meno." However difficult the experience Meno has with Socrates, the experience is not meant to be punitive but rather an exercise in care. This kind of dramatic irony also contributes to our understanding of the philosophy of the dialogue. As readers, we are invited to explore the interconnection between Meno's beliefs about virtue and his passive approach to philosophical questions, and his willingness to go on and to commit acts that were nearly universally understood to lack virtue.¹² Plato presents us with a contrast between the topic of excellence and who Meno becomes, but he does not connect all the dots for us.

Jill Gordon in her book *Turning Toward Philosophy* suggests that irony has a philosophical meaning: "...the instability of meaning characteristic of irony in the dialogues is emblematic of the limitations of human knowledge. There are some things we just should not feel settled and comfortable about knowing once and for all. To do so is to stop dialectic and philosophical enterprise....Irony must remain as something to be puzzled about in the text, to be questioned, to be engaged by the active reader. The ambiguity of the irony stimulates

us to philosophic activity."¹³ Like Gordon, I understand the purpose of such irony to be to deepen our exploration of the question at hand. In the case of the *Meno*, the dramatic irony about Meno's personal history problematizes the final view of the dialogue that virtue is a "gift from the gods" which Meno possesses. Meno has no such gift, and moreover, his belief that he does possess that which he does not, may be precisely what leads him to take vicious and hubristic political and military action.

A fourth significant level by which we interpret the dialogues is that of intertextual analysis, that is, noticing ways in which the Platonic dialogues are either actively responsive to other texts, including those in non-philosophical genres. Such intertextuality is not always present, but occurs with surprising frequency. For example, we know that Aristophanes's *Assemblywomen* takes up many of the same proposals as is found in *Republic* Book V's proposal that men and women ought to be treated as equals and children held in common, but the two texts have significantly different approaches, to say the least! Socrates's tone in his proposal is so deadly serious one might wish to think that the *Republic* came first and the *Assemblywomen* as a parody only later, but we know that the *Assemblywomen* was performed in 391. If we share the general assumption that Plato did not undertake significant philosophical writing until after the death of Socrates, we would have to imagine the *Republic* to be among Plato's very first written works for it to predate the *Assemblywomen*. Thus, we as interpreters face a different task: namely, how to understand Plato's engagement with this other, comedic text which emphasizes the irrational, the bodily, and the contingent nature of love, over the rational. Might not Plato as author be working with a topic that is meant to ask us, as readers, to consider what the Socratic

approach excludes from its view and to hold that rationalistic approach to family and state in contrast? Such intertextual interplays invite us as readers to critique the adequacy and finality of the Socratic account with which we are presented. If Socrates in the *Sophist* sits silently at the feet of the Eleatic Stranger, perhaps Plato is willing to offer Socrates as both philosophical hero and implicit subject of criticism for the reader in dialogues such as the *Republic*, too.

We see many other instances of a Platonic dialogue's engagement with other texts and poetic genres. Socrates provides a critique of Homeric education in Book II of *Republic*, but as Patrick Lake has recently argued, Plato as author alludes to the *Republic* more than 90 times in the course of writing it.¹⁴ The *Phaedrus*'s discussion of writing in contrast to speech is clearly engaging with Alcidas' and Isocrates' similar treatment of the same topic.¹⁵ As I have argued elsewhere, dialogues such as the *Apology* often take up the rhetorical devices of previous forensic and even sophistic works.¹⁶

A second significant feature of the dialogues is their *multivocality*. Plato does not speak in the singular voice of his own person, nor only through the voice of his primary character, Socrates. Rather, all the voices of the dialogue enter into the horizon of our own consideration as readers. We know from teaching first time readers of Plato in our classes that Socrates is not always the most appealing character to them, either for his views or his actions. It takes time for Socrates to grow on us, and for us to see the larger arc of his concerns and the motivations behind his relentless questioning of others. The voices of those whom Socrates questions often present genuine challenges to the Socratic view, or raise significant points not always fully addressed by the end of the dialogue. In the *Gorgias*, Polus and Callicles raise the thorny issue of whether Socrates' approach

to questioning others endangers himself politically, and Callicles' silence at the end also leaves open the question as to whether Socrates' questioning is at all effective. A dialogue's many voices function to make problematic elements of the view presented by Socrates or the main character, such that the *incompleteness* of the view at hand is highlighted. Not only explicitly aporetic endings to the dialogues, but also questions raised by characters that are left aside in the course of some other turn in argument, remind us that we are, indeed, creatures of *eros* who are a mixture of poverty and plenty, and that incompleteness characterizes our inquiry even when we make progress in the course of answering our questions.

Third, the dialogues work in part to shape their readers through *mimesis*. That is, the dialogues are psychagogic not only for the characters within them, as Socrates tries to lead his interlocutors onto the path of philosophy, self-knowledge, and love and knowledge of the forms, but also they lead us. We are familiar with Socrates' criticisms of mimesis in the *Republic*, in which he argues that performing the views of bad characters in tragedies and other dramatic works is harmful to the soul (*Rep.* 395c-d). However, the dialogues do include many characters who hold immoral beliefs, or whose characters go on to undertake bad actions: Thrasymachus, Charmides, Critias, Meno, and Alcibiades, to name just a few. A reader who reads the parts of these characters takes on the work of mimesis; whether the words are spoken aloud or performed only in one's own soul, the soul of the reader takes on the viewpoint of the character's words. Such mimesis of different characters, however, allows for the deeper engagement of the Platonic dialogue in a way that encourages its questions to matter to us. Multiple kinds of readers will encounter a Platonic dialogue: those who are more like Thrasymachus, those more like Glaucon, those

who find Polemarchus intuitive, and perhaps the rare soul that comes to the dialogue already in love with the way of Socrates. The presence of these opponents allows for the reader to engage both intellectually and affectively in the dialogue. But a significant difference between Platonic dialogue and traditional pre-Platonic poetry is that the reader is led also to *imitate* a process of rational inquiry and assessment of these alternative standpoints. Most often, this takes place through taking on the voice of Socrates, whom we also imitate as we move through the course of the dialogue. For example, a student might initially find himself sympathetic to the view that Thrasymachus holds, that those who are unjust everywhere seem to have “more” of worldly things than the just do, but through the course of the dialogue, discover that his desire to have a harmonious soul is even deeper than the desire to have Thrasymachean goods.

Importantly, a Platonic dialogue does *more* than simply allowing us to “try on” different viewpoints, which might be true of many, if not most, dramatic works. Rather, the dialogue engages the rational part of the soul, and continually asks us to reason along with Socrates (and often also other characters) about the matters at hand. For example, if Thrasymachus appeals to the novice student who reads and sympathizes with the desire for power, wealth, and freedom from rules, Socrates’ words that we are more than our appetites, and his presentation of the notion that even our reason itself is a kind of a desire to be freed from our chains and see reality for what it is argues for a different view of desire and a different view of freedom that is based on a richer and more accurate conception of the human soul. Mimesis thus serves to *awaken* the rational part of the soul and to strengthen our rational capacities through their being mimetically exercised through the imitation of argument. The mimetic imitation of

these arguments also takes us through various affective and emotional responses—the fear, appeal, or disgust we might feel when we listen to Thrasymachus speak, or the excitement one might feel at the prospect of intellectual freedom as one listens to Socrates’ image of the cave. We are also invited to see where our affective responses “match up” to those of the speakers, especially in parts of the dialogues that offer more mythological language than straight argument. For example, when a reader takes on the voice of Socrates describing the imagery of the cave analogy, we might *feel* along with Socrates the great appeal of seeking intellectual freedom and being freed from our enslavement to popular opinion. Thus, the dialogues not only give us practice in engaging in dialectical interchange between multiple thinkers, and so strengthen our rational capacity to take on different intellectual perspectives that deepen our understanding of a philosophical problem. They also engage our affectivity in the issues at hand.

This kind of mimesis makes Platonic dialogue distinct from both earlier Greek poetic works and from later philosophical works that set forth a single viewpoint, that of a sole author. On the one hand, the Platonic dialogue engages the rational part of the soul and continually asks us to subject the various thoughts, feelings, and experiences we may take on, in taking on the views of its characters, to rational assessment. Earlier Greek dramatic works do not explicitly take this to be their task. On the other hand, because the mimetic nature is performative in what it borrows from earlier poetic genres, and includes the exchange of ideas between two or more voices, Platonic dialogue also draws our souls into the dialogue. We do not simply passively accept the voice of the single author, Plato, but rather are asked to take on the different voices of its characters and then to step back and to assess where we

are persuaded, where we are not, what more might need to be said, and where we find our own voices after engagement with these others. In this way, Platonic dialogue encourages an autonomy and responsibility in its readers through its rhetoric. Thus the very weakness of *mimesis* as presented in the *Republic*, that we become like those we imitate, becomes its strength when philosophers are among those whom we imitate. Socrates becomes a hero worthy of imitation not because he ever escapes his human state as one who seeks and grows in knowledge without fully comprehending it, but because he lives out this “human” way of knowing with courage and utter devotion.

A good commentator probably ought to be less agreeable than I have been with Gonzalez’s paper, to which I can only reply with Aristotle’s remarks that the truth is dearer than friends. But in the spirit of our shared enterprise that all truth is perspectival, including one’s hermeneutics, let me end with a question: must perspectivism always necessarily exclude all possibility of developmentalism? In fact, they might be compatible in certain cases. While here I do not want to argue positively in favor of what is *usually* understood to be a developmentalist position, it seems epistemologically more responsible to say that we must be *neutral* with respect to whether any two dialogues present us with both perspectivism *and* some kind of development, or only a new perspective on a similar idea. In other words, perspectivism does not automatically entail unitarianism.¹⁷ If one wants to say that there is progress or “ascent” in understanding over time, as I have tried to argue is evidently the case even *within* a dialogue, why not assume that there is the possibility of development *between* dialogues? I do not wish to argue for a fully developed, “final Platonic vision” towards which the dialogues are all heading; I agree with Gonzalez that is not the case. But I want to say that

we could still, on a case-by-case basis, take two particular dialogues, like the *Gorgias*’ picture of rhetoric and the *Phaedrus*’ picture of rhetoric, and argue that one does have a more fully fleshed out vision of a particular philosophical problem, like whether rhetoric is philosophical. We need not attribute this to a system of “early, middle, and late dialogues.” But we could at times simply pair two dialogues and argue that one has a fuller vision, in which “fuller” means that more questions are answered regarding a particular problem—a more inclusive vision. “Development” here would refer not to chronology, but rather to the idea that a richer account is given, one that answers more questions relevant to the problem at hand. For example, an account of rhetoric that can distinguish good rhetoric from bad rhetoric would be richer than one that simply argues that all rhetoric is bad. This does not exclude the possibility that the views are *also* perspectivist, in other words, that the way that the problem is presented also has to do with the interlocutors or the topic at hand. Here, I simply want to soften the idea of perspectivism and argue that we can still at times make comparisons between different dialogues and then discuss which has a more developed notion of a problem that we wish to understand better. In other words, one might be a perspectivist and still make some normative judgments about more or less developed views across dialogues.

In conclusion, I want to thank Frank for his insightful and thorough paper. Perspectivism opens up the dialogues to greater depth of analysis through understanding each one as further enrichment of our vision. Mimesis, multivocality, and the multilayered construction of the Platonic dialogue allow us to engage dialogically and responsibly with the text. The dialogue form engages in a form of rhetoric that educates and forms us as readers in accepting and growing in our perspectival understanding of the truth.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Burnet 1989: J. Burnet, *Platonis Opera, volumes I-IV*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 1989.
- Bartlett 2004: R. Bartlett, *Plato: Protagoras and Meno*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London 2004.
- Gordon 1999: J. Gordon, *Turning Toward Philosophy: Literary Device and Dramatic Structure in Plato's Dialogues*, Penn State University Press, University Park, PA 1999.
- Griswold 2002: Ch. L. Griswold, 'Irony in the Platonic Dialogues', «Philosophy and Literature» 26 (2002), 84-106.
- Hylans 1968: D. Hyland, 'Why Plato Wrote Dialogues', «Philosophy and Rhetoric» 1 (1968), 38-50.
- Ionescu forthcoming: C. Ionescu, 'The Techne of Dialectic: Elenchus and the Method of Division in the Sophist', forthcoming.
- Kahn 1996: Ch. Kahn, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 1996.
- Klein 1989: J. Klein, *A Commentary on Plato's Meno*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1989.
- Lake 2011: P. G. Lake, *Plato's Homeric Dialogue: Homeric Quotation Paraphrase, and Allusion in the Republic*, doctoral dissertation, Fordham University, New York 2011.
- Ledbetter 2014: G. Ledbetter, *Poetics Before Plato: Interpretation and Authority in Early Greek Theories of Poetry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ 2002.
- Long 2014: Chr. Long, *Socratic and Platonic Political Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York, 2014.
- McCoy 2009: M. McCoy, 'Alcidamas, Isocrates, and Plato on Speech, Writing, and Philosophical Rhetoric', «Ancient Philosophy» 29 (1) (2009) 45-66.
- McCoy 2007: M. McCoy, *Plato on the Rhetoric of Philosophers and Sophists*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2007.
- Nails 2002: D. Nails, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*, Hackett Press, Indianapolis-Cambridge 2002.
- Nightingale 2004: A. Nightingale, *Spectacles of Truth in Classical Greek Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge-New York 2004.
- Roochnik 1987: David Roochnik, 'The Erotics of Philosophical Discourse', «History of Philosophy Quarterly» 4 (2) (1987), 117-129.
- Schleiermacher 1973: F.E.D. Schleiermacher, *Introduction to the Dialogues of Plato*, translation by W. Dobson, Arno Press, New York, 1973 reprint of 1836 edition.

NOTES

- 1 Here my language of vision follows in a general way Nightingale's work on philosophy as theoretical "spectacle." See Nightingale 2004.
- 2 Kahn 1996.
- 3 For a helpful contrast between the passivity of Homeric poetry and the more active Platonic approach, see Ledbetter 2002.
- 4 Here I agree with Roochnik's assertion that the philosopher's state remains in between a state of total knowledge and total ignorance, such that his or her stance remains always "interrogative." See Roochnik 1987. However, I take Socrates' claim that there is an ascent to indicate the possibility of philosophical progress, and his description of contemplation as an alternative, non-discursive form of knowledge, both to be characteristic of philosophy. *Logoi* are insufficient to describe the forms, but our words about them can reflectively them in better or worse ways, and contemplation introduces the element of seeing, as well as speaking about, what is.
- 5 For an excellent account of how division in the *Sophist* is complementary to Socratic elenchus, see Ionescu forthcoming.
- 6 As Christopher Long argues, the dialogues lead to not only a relationship between reader and text, but also between communities of readers, in which readers' imaginations are at play in the acts of interpretation. See Long 2014, 166-186.
- 7 Griswold 2002.
- 8 Trans. Bartlett 2004.
- 9 Nails 2002, 204-205.
- 10 Klein 1989, 44. Klein cites both Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos as sources.
- 11 Bartlett's translation.
- 12 Drew Hyland long ago laid out clearly the argument for the interconnection between philosophy and life, such that philosophical practice is not reducible to argument. See Hyland 1968.
- 13 Gordon 1999, 130.
- 14 Lake 2011.
- 15 McCoy 2009.
- 16 McCoy 2007, 23-55.
- 17 Schleiermacher, for example, argued for a unified system that Plato possessed but then presented only in part through different dialogues. Schleiermacher 1973.